

POLICY PAPER | 3



CHALLENGES OF TEACHER TRAINING: PROMOTING PEDAGOGY WITH A GENDER EQUALITY PERSPECTIVE IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

2023

About this report

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This document was prepared within the framework of the Community of Practice on Gender Equality Perspective in Public Education that was developed between August 2022 and February 2023 under the coordination of the Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Center of Latin America and the Caribbean (KIX LAC).

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About KIX

The KIX initiative aims to connect the experience, innovation, and expertise of Global Partnership for Education (GPE) partners to help developing countries build more robust education systems. Through the sharing and funding of proven solutions and innovations, KIX (a) ensures that evidence-based solutions get into the hands of national policymakers and directly feed into dialogue and planning processes; (b) builds and strengthens capacities to produce, integrate and scale up knowledge and innovation in GPE partner countries. To this end, KIX has created regional hubs where partners share information, innovation, and best practices in different regions. KIX is also a funding mechanism that provides global and regional grants to invest in knowledge generation and innovation and to scale up proven approaches. The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is the grant-making agent for KIX. Led by SUMMA in partnership with OECS, the KIX for Central Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has been working since April 2020 to support the development of partner countries' education systems and contribute to guaranteeing the right to education in Dominica, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. To achieve its objectives, the KIX LAC has defined three pillars:

1. Setting priorities for the education policy agenda
2. Mobilizing and sharing knowledge
3. Strengthening regional and local capacities

About SUMMA

SUMMA is the first Educational Research and Innovation Laboratory for Latin America and the Caribbean. It was created in 2016 by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), with the support of the ministries of education of Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay. Since 2018, the ministries of Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama have also joined. Its mission is to contribute to and increase the quality, equity, and inclusion of education systems in the region, improving the decision-making process of education policies and practices. To fulfill its mission, SUMMA organizes its actions in three strategic pillars to promote, develop, and disseminate:

1. Cutting-edge research aimed at diagnosing the region's main challenges and promoting shared work agendas.
2. Innovation in educational policies and practices aimed at providing solutions to the region's main educational problems.
3. Spaces for collaboration that allow for exchange among policymakers, researchers, innovators, and the school community, based on a shared regional agenda.

About the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)

The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) was created in 1981 as an intergovernmental organization to promote cooperation, harmonization, and integration among its member states. OECS has developed a considerable amount of valuable knowledge sharing and direct technical assistance between Ministries of Education. It has also been part of the Regional Education Strategy and has supported participatory planning and processes. In this regard, the OECS plays a decisive leadership role with the Caribbean States, especially in supporting the countries belonging to this territory: Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. As a current partner of the GPE, the OECS has led the implementation of the Education Sector Plans in these states.

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Glossary of acronyms and abbreviations

CLADE | Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education.

ERCE | Regional learning assessment of UNESCO's Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education.

GPE | Global Partnership for Education

IDRC | International Development Research Center IDRC: International Development Research Center

KIX LAC | Knowledge and Innovation Exchange for Latin America and the Caribbean.

LAC | Latin America and the Caribbean.

OECS | Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States.

PAR | Participatory Action Research

UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

UN | United Nations

WHO | World Health Organization.

Introduction

This working paper was prepared within the framework of the Community of Practice on Gender Equality Perspective in Public Education developed between August 2022 and February 2023 under the coordination of the Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Center of Latin America and the Caribbean (KIX LAC, 2020).

Communities of practice can be understood as groups of people who share an interest in something they do and interact regularly to learn how to do it better (Wenger, 2015), thus accounting for an understanding of learning as an inherently social process, which is built in interaction and cannot be detached from the context. The purpose of convening this community of practice was to generate a space to exchange experiences and knowledge among its members regarding gender issues in education based on the challenges faced by the countries in this area. This document is based on a review of the relevant bibliography and on the collaboration of members of the community of practice who shared experiences of teacher training in their territories and recommendations for pedagogy with a gender perspective.



First, the document addresses the problem of gender gaps, inequalities, and violence in the education systems of Latin America and the Caribbean, highlighting the role of teachers as mediators in addressing these issues. Gender disparities in access to and permanence in the educational system, gender biases in the curriculum, inequalities, and teachers' attitudes towards boys, girls, and sexual dissidence are presented as some of the areas in which these inequalities and gender violence are reproduced in the educational systems of the region. Secondly, some background information is presented, and public policy is analyzed, reflecting on the

articulation between the space where knowledge is generated and shared, the classroom and the teacher, emphasizing that classrooms are privileged places for teaching and learning processes and that teachers play a vital role in the regulation of these spaces.

The importance of teacher training with a gender perspective is also discussed, presenting some strategies that could contribute to this perspective, such as critical reflection on teaching practices, the inclusion of contents and methodologies with a gender perspective in the curriculum, and the promotion of inclusive and non-discriminatory pedagogical practices. Subsequently, some teacher training initiatives with a gender perspective are identified in the countries belonging to KIX LAC: Dominica, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Saint Lucia. The need for regulatory frameworks in the region that promote the inclusion of the gender perspective in education and provide teacher training in this area is discussed. Finally, conclusions are presented, and some recommendations are shared, pointing out the need for policies and strategies that promote teacher training from a gender perspective, as well as the importance of this training being comprehensive and cross-cutting. Also recommended is the implementation of programs and projects that promote gender equality in education and the need for educational resources and materials that adequately address this issue. Finally, the importance of involving the academic community in constructing more inclusive and equitable educational systems is emphasized.



1. Problem statement: gender gaps, inequalities, and violence in the educational systems of Latin America and the Caribbean and the role of teachers as mediators.

Reducing gender disparities and adequately addressing diversity in the region has been identified as one of the main challenges in education (KIX-LAC, 2020). Gender inequality and violence are reproduced in different areas of education systems, including access to and permanence in the education system, gender bias in the curriculum, inequality in school safety, and teachers' attitudes towards boys, girls, and sexual dissidence (UNESCO, 2020). On the other hand, Sustainable Development Goal No. 4 (SDG 4) states that "quality education" has two targets associated with gender equity; the first is related to equal access of men and women to post-school education (technical and university), and the second more general, linked to eliminating gender disparities in education, ensuring equal access to all levels of education (United Nations, 2015). The gender approach in education, therefore, is understood from a perspective of equity and human rights, where the school should be a space of equality and inclusion for all children and adolescents (UNESCO 2019, 2020).

The World Health Organization states that "gender refers to the roles, characteristics and opportunities defined by society as appropriate for men, women, boys, girls and people with non-binary identities" (WHO, 2022). Gender is thus a constitutive element of social relations based on the differences that distinguish the sexes; and at the same time, it shapes historical and sociocultural power relations between women and men (Scott, 2013).



As a social practice, school education is shaped by the same structures that organize societies, one of them being gender, so gender-mediated relationships are necessarily produced in schools (Connell, 2010). This is why it is so relevant to observe these relationships from educational spaces, analyzing in depth how schools reproduce gender norms and stereotypes (sexism) through different mechanisms, such as the curriculum, the organization of areas, the roles assigned to boys and girls, and the inclusion of other genders and non-heteronormative sexualities in educational spaces. In addition, it is necessary to address the gaps and inequalities in access, continuity, and educational outcomes for boys and girls in schools.

In terms of access to education, historically, it has been girls, especially in sectors of greater socioeconomic vulnerability, who have had more difficulties in accessing school and who are at greater risk of experiencing educational disengagement for different reasons. In addition, it should be noted that today, in some countries, boys and young men are at risk of seeing their educational trajectories interrupted and not completing secondary education (Opazo and Villalobos, 2022).

The [GEM 2020 Report on Educational Inclusion in Latin America and the Caribbean](#) prepared by SUMMA and UNESCO (2020), shows no significant differences in access for boys and girls in the initial years of education. Up to the first cycle of secondary education, there are no significant gender gaps in enrollment. Still, in the second secondary and tertiary education cycle, men are at a disadvantage. Additionally, women in the region are more likely to complete the different education cycles, and this gap increases as one moves up the educational levels. For every 100 women, 96 men complete primary education, 94 comprehensive lower secondary education, 91 complete upper secondary education, and only 83 have access to some form of post-secondary education. These gender disparities in educational trajectories are, in turn, associated with conditions of socioeconomic vulnerability since, in many countries in the region, structural inequalities have an impact on the link between gender and child labor and, in contexts of poverty, men start working earlier, with greater possibilities of accessing paid work than women (UNESCO, 2018). On the other hand, women's abandonment is related to teenage pregnancies, care work, domestic work, or work outside the home many times or paid work (Community of Practice KIX LAC, 2022; CLADE, 2022).



In the Caribbean economies, men with lower levels of certification are favored over women with higher certificates for specific jobs and positions, reflecting the dominant role of men in wage labor and income generation (Bailey, 2014). In Guyana, among the 15-year-old population, 18% are out of the school system, with gender differences in exclusion: in the case of 15-year-old males, 22% do not go to school, and in the case of females, 13.5% are out of the system. Among the reasons for school exclusion is child labor, which affects 18% of children between the ages of 5 and 17 (UNICEF, 2017). In Eastern Caribbean countries[1], the male secondary school disengagement rate is almost double the female rate (32% and 15%, respectively) (Clarke, 2020). In the case of Saint Lucia, for example, in public secondary schools, between 2018 and 2019, of the total number of students who left the system, 72% were male and 28% female (Department of Education, Government of Saint Lucia, 2020). In all countries, the repetition rate is also higher among males, which appears as a risk factor for school dropout (Clarke, 2020). * [1] The study covers Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Turks and Caicos Islands.

Table 1: Participation in the education system of children and youth in KIX LAC countries, by sex and indicators available in KIX countries

Country	Indicator	Men	Women
El Salvador	% of students dropping out of basic education 3rd cycle (2021)	7,1%	5,2%
	% of students dropping out of high school (2021)	17,3%	12,3%
Guatemala	of school enrollment (2020)	51,4%	48,6%
	High school completion rate (2020)	37,7%	38,2%
Honduras	% of secondary school-aged youth out of school (2018).	47%	42%
Nicaragua	% of secondary school-aged youth out of school in (2014).	30%	28%
	% of school enrollment (2022)	50,5%	49,5%
	% of school system graduation (2022)	53,8%	46,2%
Guyana	% of secondary school-aged youth out of school (2019).	28%	19%
	Net enrollment rate in secondary education (2017-2018).	59%	65,61%
Haiti	% of secondary school-aged youth out of school (2017).	14%	15%
Dominica	Net enrollment rate in secondary education (2021)	88,5%	89,2%
Grenada	Secondary education gross enrollment rate (2020)	111,9%	115,2%
St. Lucia	% of enrollment in public secondary education (2019-2020)	50,2%	49,8%
	% dropout rate in public secondary education (2018-2019).	1,3%	0,6%

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Net enrollment rate in secondary education (2018).	87,4%	91,6%
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Source: UNESCO World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE); UNESCO, Institute for Statistics; Education Statistics, Ministry of Education of El Salvador; Education Statistics, Ministry of Education of Nicaragua; Education Sector Plan, Ministry of Education of Guyana; Statistical Summary, Department of Education of St. Lucia; Jacir de Lovo, 2022.

On the other hand, several Latin American and Caribbean countries have participated in large-scale international learning assessments. The results of ERCE[1] 2019, applied in third and sixth grades, show that there are disparities in learning achievement associated with gender that, in general terms, translate into advantages for girls in reading and boys in mathematics, while in natural sciences, the results are mixed. In most countries, there are significant differences in reading achievement in favor of girls in the two grades evaluated.



The approach to gender in the curriculum is another relevant aspect to consider. The curriculum represents a selection of theoretical and practical knowledge that students are expected to acquire based on a specific vision of what is valid knowledge and, therefore, is mediated by power relations (Apple, 1993). In this sense, gender determinations are also present in official curricula (Connell, 2010). An analysis of the same study implemented by UNESCO of the curricula of 19 countries in the region [1] found that the concept of "gender equity" appears in less than 55% of the curricula analyzed, concluding that this is an issue that needs to be strengthened in regional curricula. At the same time, there are essential differences in how gender is addressed. While the curricular documents of some countries constantly emphasize the need to pay attention to the diversity of gender identities and options as part of the educational process and in a cross-cutting manner, in others, a

[1] It corresponds to the fourth round of regional learning assessment of UNESCO's Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education, applied in 16 countries: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

binary approach to gender persists, and sexual diversity is mentioned only from a non-discrimination perspective (UNESCO, 2021b). It should be noted that although some countries have made progress in gender inclusion, there is no guarantee that there will be no setbacks in this progress.

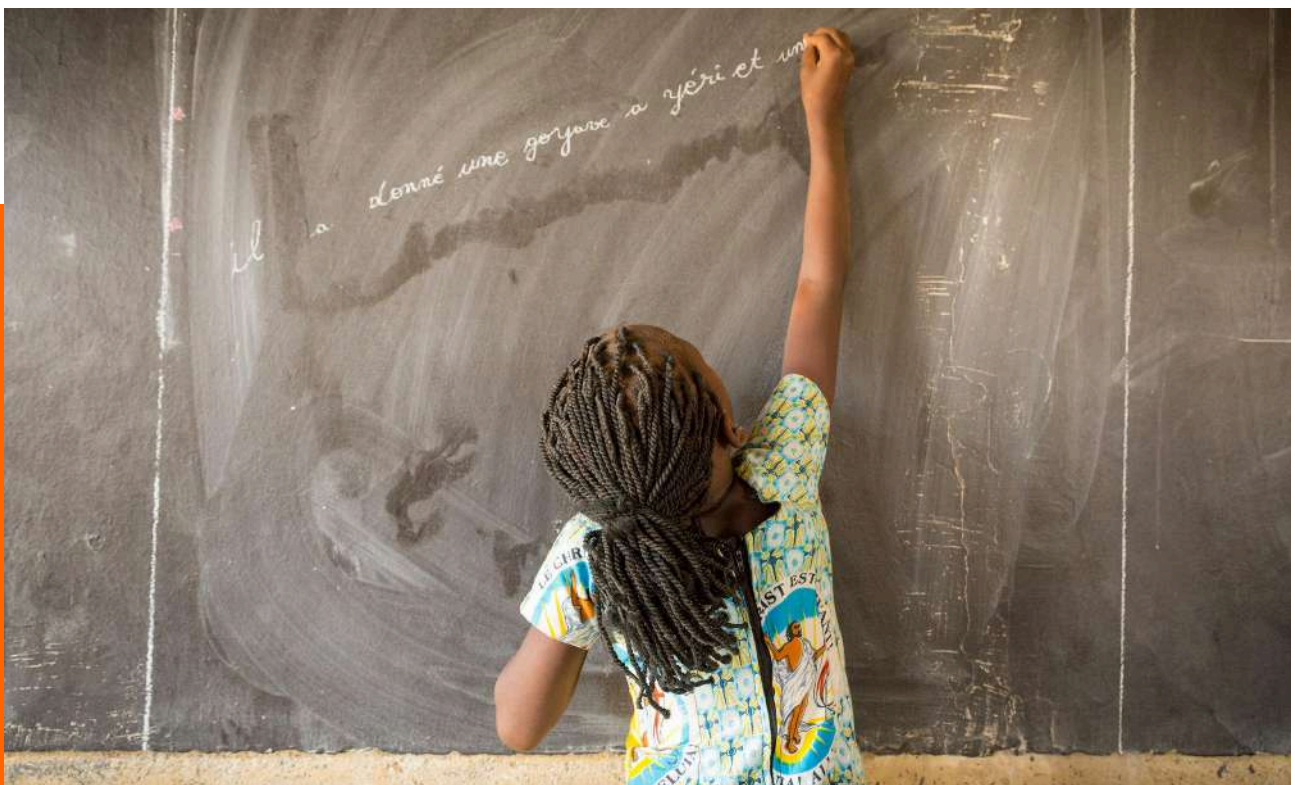
Safety in the school environment also has a gender expression, and the school environment can be unsafe for many girls and boys. Gender-based violence in educational spaces affects millions of children and young people in the region who are victims of acts or threats of sexual, physical, or psychological violence. Children and young people have different experiences of such violence depending on their sex, gender identity, life experiences, country, and context. For example, girls are more likely to experience psychological bullying, cyberbullying, and sexual violence, while boys often have higher rates of corporal punishment (UNESCO, 2020; UNESCO and UN Women, 2019). Children and youth who do not conform to dominant gender norms are also more likely to be victims of violence. As noted in the GEM report for LAC, surveys of LGBTBI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) secondary school students show that this group faces a hostile school environment (UNESCO, 2020). Specifically, it is recognized that between 47% and 81% of these students felt unsafe in their schools because of their sexual orientation, and between 32% and 63% did so because of their gender expression; therefore, they avoided certain spaces in schools, most commonly bathrooms, dressing rooms and physical education classes.

A quarter of students reported missing classes because they felt unsafe, and most reported hearing homophobic comments from teachers or other school staff (Kosciw & Zongrone, in UNESCO: 2020). Homophobia and its expression through homophobic bullying undermine the right to education, free development of personality, and free affective and sexual association. Poor school performance and dropout frequently result from sexual orientation discrimination (UNESCO, 2015). The scenario is equally complex for transgender students because issues such as policies on the use of school uniforms and sanitary facilities are based on the binary gender (male and female) and are not adapted to the needs of these students (UNESCO, 2013). In this regard, it is essential to recognize the socio-educational and cultural context of countries to address the challenges of inclusive education for all, establishing educational policy objectives that can be achieved and ensuring each student's right to education.

The background information presented here shows that gender differences and inequalities are manifested in school trajectories, educational outcomes and in the processes and causes of school disengagement. These results are also linked to the condition of socioeconomic vulnerability and, in contexts of poverty, gender roles are often exacerbated, with greater pressure towards child and youth labor on the part of men (UNESCO, 2018), and exposure to gender-based violence, overload when assuming care roles, and child and adolescent pregnancy in the case of women (UNESCO, 2022). Evidence shows that discriminations and exclusions are articulated in what is called the intersectionality of gender, race and class (Connell, 2010) and thus, for example, in Guyana indigenous girls are in a particularly disadvantaged position for educational continuity (Prouty, 2019). Additionally, it is relevant to pay attention to gender-based violence in educational spaces, considering that one of the relevant challenges to addressing this type of violence is that many of them are not reported or even recognized given that social and gender norms make it difficult for boys and girls to report or recognize certain behaviors and actions as violence. Vulnerability is another obstacle as the most vulnerable children tend to have less support and fewer links to report abuse (UNESCO and UN Women, 2019).

Addressing gender-related gaps, inequalities and violence for inclusive and rights-based education requires an explicit and deliberate effort at all levels of educational policy and practice.

These inequalities, as well as the roles and expectations associated with gender, are rooted in socialization practices deeply rooted in cultures and are often transmitted in schools. Teachers have a fundamental role in this area as teaching agents, and it is necessary that from their role they can promote gender equality in their daily work (Aikman and Rao, 2012). The transmission and reproduction of gender-stereotyped roles is often not planned, but happens implicitly through games, in the tasks assigned to boys and girls, and in the way teachers relate to their students based on their gender. For example, it is common for teachers to treat boys and girls differently, disciplining boys and girls differently, and that in group interactions gender stereotypes referring to both the intellectual and emotional characteristics of each sex are put into play (UNESCO, 2016). This reproduction is due to the fact that male and female teachers, in turn, have been socialized in gender-stereotyped norms, so that a change in their practices requires awareness and the ability to self-observe their own patterns and beliefs regarding gender. In this regard, in a survey applied to education professionals from 12 countries in the region, 81% of people felt that in their country there is no adequate training to advance gender equality through the integration of this perspective in their work (OAS-RIED, 2012, cited in UNESCO, 2016). This is why teacher training that promotes an inclusive and equitable gender perspective in teaching processes should be an essential part of both their initial and ongoing training (Aikman and Rao, 2012).



3. Background and analysis of public policy

3.1. The classroom space and the teacher as an agent in classroom interactions

Expressly, classrooms represent spaces with unique characteristics since they are the privileged spaces for teaching and learning processes. They are often considered as places of "authority" exercised by the teacher in charge of them, who generally have control over these spaces in various ways. For example, they can control who can enter and when they are allowed to leave the room and have the power to establish the physical layout of the space and regulate how students use it (Mellor & Epstein, 2006).

Additionally, there is a power relationship in the teacher-student interaction, where teachers exert influence through this interaction, which often tends to reflect gender stereotypes (Liu, 2006). Rebollo et al (2011), following Crawford's (1997, 2006) work on the subject, emphasize the relevance of a sociocultural understanding for the incorporation of a gender perspective in schools. This implies understanding and analyzing gender as a *system of social organization* in which it is men who have greater power and status; as a *dynamic process of representation* where gender is elaborated in face-to-face interactions of everyday life; and as an *aspect of identity and personal attitudes* (Crawford 1997, 2006, cited in Rebollo et al, 2011). This sociocultural perspective is useful to understand how gender is constructed and reproduced in everyday interactions in the classroom space.

For example, regarding classroom layout, under the idea that men are more active, disruptive or disorderly, while women are calmer, mature and responsible, it is expected to seat men next to women to discipline and control their behavior. Behind these practices is an assumption that active masculinity and passive femininity are reflected in many ideas about how boys and girls should be (Mellor & Epstein, 2006). Likewise, in the classroom, there tends to be a focus on the masculine, given that boys, in general, are more dominant in a double sense: they tend to be more active and participate more and, therefore, receive more teacher feedback, but at the same time, they tend to have more behavioral problems, demanding greater attention from the teacher (Liu, 2006). Additionally, academic activities and tasks within the classroom and roles in group dynamics and games at the school also tend to reproduce gender-stereotyped forms. This gender-differentiated treatment in the classroom space causes boys and girls to perpetuate these hegemonic gender roles outside school and simultaneously limits their possibilities of learning new ways of treating and relating to their peers (Liu, 2006).

3.2. Horizons for teacher training with a gender perspective

A key aspect of pedagogy with a gender perspective is the understanding that school cultures are dynamic. Although schools reflect the dominant gender construction of the society in which they are inserted, they are not necessarily a passive reflection of society, but actively reproduce these gender relations. In this sense, schools have the possibility of being agents of change, and mainly, the classroom, which is the space where most gender interactions take place, can be a space for change when teachers can assume a role in it (Liu, 2006).

García-Pérez et al. (2011), in a study on teaching competencies to recognize gender inequalities, found that both men and women find it challenging to identify imbalances at the relational level of their educational practice. Considering the sociocultural perspective of gender, it is especially relevant for male and female teachers to be able to analyze their actions and the meanings that materialize in those actions. To this end,

gender awareness and training of teachers play a fundamental role in educational change in this area. They must actively reflect and revise their teaching habits and methods, intending to offer new forms of socialization to students (García-Pérez et al., 2011).

Teacher training, whether initial or in-service, should provide knowledge and tools so that those who become teachers can question their own criteria and meanings regarding gender, as well as tools to confront discrimination. This knowledge includes appropriate language that allows conceptual distinctions to be made between sex, gender, gender role, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc., as basic social concepts; and tools for critical analysis of the story told to understand how gender (and the relations of domination based on it) is socio-historically constructed. This includes analyzing how gender roles have been exposed, with the absence and invisibility of women's contributions, and also the social construction of the prevailing masculinity in order to value other types of masculinities. Training must also provide tools to distinguish and eliminate prejudices, as well as sexist attitudes in educational spaces and tools to educate students and families on the subject (García-Pérez et al, 2013).

Experiences in the KIX LAC countries

Based on the contributions of members of the *Community of Practice with a Gender Equity Perspective KIX-LAC*, some teacher training initiatives with a gender perspective have been identified in the territory. For example, at the **Universidad del Valle de Guatemala**, between 2015 and 2020, the pilot course "Development and Gender Equity" was implemented in all initial teacher training programs of all specialties. The system's objectives were that students could understand the interrelationship between gender equity and development, identify the different manifestations of gender-based violence, and assume a critical and ethical stance in the face of gender inequality. The **University of El Salvador** implemented the specialization course "School Management and Administration with a Gender Perspective" as a requirement for the bachelor's degree in education. The components of the system were related to school management and administration approaches and gender and country normative approaches.

In addition, another approach to gender in schools was developed, which includes teachers from the perspective of participatory action research (PAR) with a gender approach. From this vision promoted by the KIX project implemented by the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE) called "Equality in Education: overcoming gender violence in rural schools," educational communities (teachers, families, and students) investigate their practices and strategies for transformation. This project was developed in rural schools in **Nicaragua, Haiti, and Honduras** to address gender-based violence, especially sexual violence, based on processes of shared creation of knowledge that would be meaningful to the educational communities, integrating the contexts and ways in which they are expressed (Community of Practice KIX LAC, 2022; CLADE, 2022).

It should be noted that an inclusive gender perspective in schools also requires that there be diversity in the teaching staff that can reflect the diversity of society as a whole. In many Latin American and Caribbean countries, due to the stigmatization and prejudice faced by marginalized groups, as well as the lack of institutional support and regulatory protection, the diversity of society is not expressed in the teaching staff. It is therefore essential that teacher training programs actively promote their participation, as the lack of diversity among teachers and other education professionals puts difficulty in adopting inclusive gender perspectives in schools (UNESCO, 2020).

Teacher training component in educational policies with a gender equality perspective in the territories

Educational policies have the relevance of guiding decisions and actions in academic development in a coherent manner and represent the public commitment to the future orientation of the sector (Jallade, Radi, and Cuenin, 2001, cited in UNESCO 2016). Considering the relevance of the role of teachers as mediators of gender relations in schools and the need for training and education so that they can exercise pedagogy with a gender equality perspective, it is relevant to analyze the existing normative frameworks for gender mainstreaming in education, and specifically, how teacher training is addressed in these normative frameworks.

In recent decades, there has been progress in gender equity and equality policies in LAC, although their incorporation into education systems is heterogeneous. An analysis of gender legislation in 18 countries of the territory¹ shows that the gender dimension, in many cases, is interwoven in legislation focused on other issues or as part of general education laws, as part of a broader view of inclusion or equal opportunities in general and, in these cases, the implementation of specific actions on gender is less frequent. On the other hand, in cases where there are specific laws oriented towards gender equity, "these become the foundation and oblige the implementation of valid actions through a democratically voted regulatory framework" (UNESCO, 2021c, p. 8).

In general, the incorporation of gender into the political agenda is related to the existence of international legislation and international political commitments (conferences and agreements), on the one hand, and to the action of social actors who lobby for gender rights and equality, such as women's or feminist organizations and movements, on the other. In the case of LAC countries, the international commitments and agreements that have been key as a framework for their public policies on gender are the 1984 *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* and the 2015 *Sustainable Development Goals*. Along with this, there are other commitments that some countries have signed, such as the *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women* (Belem Do Para Convention, OAS 1994) (UNESCO, 2021c).



¹ Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay.

Table 2:
Teacher training in educational policies with a gender perspective in the KIX LAC countries

Country	Year	Name of policy/strategy	Responsible entity	References to teaching practice and teacher training
El Salvador	2020-2025	Equity Policy and Gender Equality	Ministry of Education	It contemplates initial training through Higher Education Institutions, which are responsible for the training of teachers and bachelor's degree programs in the area of education at all levels; and continuous training (with emphasis on active teaching personnel in the public sector).
Guatemala	2008-2023	National Policy for the Promotion and Integral Development of Women (PNPDIM) and Equal Opportunity Plan (PEO)	Presidential Secretariat for Women's Affairs (SEPREM)	It contemplates initial and ongoing training and specifies in which areas: training for teachers of the national education system at all levels and in all disciplines in the use of materials, guides and texts about sex education; create and implement training programs for teachers on the national and international legal system related to women's human rights, with emphasis on in sexual rights.
Honduras	2021-2023	Strategic Gender Roadmap for Gender Equality and Equity	Secretary of State in the Office of Education of Honduras	One of the strategic axes proposed in the Roadmap is the strengthening of technical, pedagogical and administrative management processes. of the Secretariat's institutional of Education under the approach of gender equality. Within this line of action, one of the lines of action is a "Training Program Gender and Human Rights", in charge of the General Directorate of Human Talent Management.
Nicaragua	2006-2010	National Gender Equity Program	Executive Power	In the area of education, one of the lines of action proposed is to include in education programs the ongoing training of teachers in gender equity, as well as community and religious leaders.
Guyana	2021-2025	Education Sector Plan	Ministry of Education	Not specifically noted.

Haiti	2017-2027	Plan National de Lutte Contre Les Violences Envers les Femmes (National Plan for the Struggle Against Violence Against Women)	Ministry of Women's Affairs and Women's Rights MCFDF Ministère de la Santé Publique et de la Population	The area of action proposed is to improve the educational and professional guidance of girls and boys by promoting gender equality among the agents of the educational system and eliminating sexist stereotypes in learning environments at all levels of higher and university education.
Dominica	2006-	National Policy and Action Plan for Gender Equity and Equality	Government of Dominica	Not specifically noted.
Grenada	2014-2024	Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan	Ministry of Social Development and Housing. The education component is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development.	In the Action Plan, under the Education and Training component, there is a commitment to "Integrate gender awareness and gender-sensitive sexuality education into teacher training at all levels, including mediation, counseling and life skills."
St. Lucia	2015-2016	St. Lucia Education Sector Development Plan	Government of Saint Lucia	Not specifically noted.
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	2014-2019	Education Sector Development Plan St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Ministry of Education	Not specifically noted.

Source: Prepared by the authors based on government documents from the different countries.

As shown in Table 2, of the 10 KIX LAC partner countries, 5 have policies specifically oriented to gender equality, of which 2 are policies of the ministries of education and 3 are part of intersectional policies for gender equality that have an education component whose implementation is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. In these cases, there is a more complex approach to the gender perspective from the education system: in general, the starting point is conceptual definitions of gender that allow a more sensitive look from the system, and concrete perspectives are assumed, such as "inclusive non-sexist education" (El Salvador) or "gender-transformative approaches" (Honduras). Along with this, in general, there is an intersectoral approach to gender and institutions and actors responsible for the implementation of the strategy are identified, as well as coordination actions between sectors (Ministry of Education of Guatemala, 2010; Ministry of Education of El Salvador, 2020; Secretariat of State in the Office of Education of Honduras, 2022).

In the other five countries, the inclusion of the gender perspective is part of a broader view of equity in education systems. It is addressed in national plans for the education sector as a variable or factor associated with equity. For example, in Guyana, addressing gender is associated with planning strategies to ensure that students complete secondary education, such as having gender-sensitive materials and resources and implementing programs and measures to address social problems, including bullying and gender-based violence in schools (Ministry of Education from Guyana, 2021). In Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the emphasis is on reducing gender gaps in access to education and educational outcomes (Government of Saint Lucia, 2016; Ministry of Education from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, 2014).

In addition, only in countries with specific gender policies for education is a reference to teacher training with a gender perspective. On the other hand, in countries where there are no policies specifically oriented to gender but where the inclusion of the gender perspective is part of a broader view of equity in education systems, addressed in national plans for the education sector, there are no references to teacher training in this area. This reinforces the importance of education systems adopting gender policies and strategies, where there is a cross-cutting approach that includes all actors involved in the system.

It should be noted that in the case of the countries of the Eastern Caribbean, the OECS has an "Education Sector Strategy" that is proposed as a framework that provides a regional approach to achieving quality education in the territory for the period 2012-2026. This identifies as a cross-cutting issue the need to strengthen education for boys, given the lower attendance and poorer school performance of boys and young men. In this regard, guidelines for gender-sensitive teaching are proposed, noting that it is necessary to "improve the quality of teaching, including positive reinforcement in behavior management, use of learner-centered approaches, and provide improved teaching materials that respond to the interests of male students" (OECS, 2012, p. 29, own translation). Likewise, the Caribbean Development Bank has developed a guide for the implementation of gender equity in development plans for the education sector called "Guidelines for the application of a gender perspective in the design and implementation of education sector development plans", whose use is promoted by OECS. Among the recommendations, at the school level, the relevance of providing professional training for teaching and non-teaching staff on gender equity and ensuring that this is reflected in all teaching/learning activities is emphasized (Caribbean Development Bank, 2018). There is, therefore, a regional concern for incorporating a gender perspective in teaching that so far is not reflected in all the educational plans of the countries of the region .

4. Conclusion and recommendations

Gender inequalities are expressed in multiple dimensions and forms in the educational systems of Central America and the Caribbean: in school trajectories, in academic results, in the processes and causes for school disengagement, and in the experiences of violence in educational spaces that boys, girls and young people in the territory have; and schools frequently act as reproducers of hegemonic gender relations. The transmission and reproduction of stereotypical gender roles often occur unintentionally by teachers in the daily practices of the school, which is why teacher education and training in gender perspective is of utmost relevance for a change in the relationships within the school, which in turn could have an impact on the gender patterns that boys, girls, and young people adopt in school as well as outside of it. At the same time, education and training can provide teachers with tools to address gender inequalities within educational spaces.

The analysis of the policies of the KIX LAC countries shows that only 5 of them have specific guidelines for the education sector aimed at gender equality. In contrast, in the other 5, the gender dimension is addressed in the education sector plans as part of a broader view of inclusion or equal opportunities in general. In these cases, there are no specific guidelines or actions for pedagogy or teacher training with a gender perspective, as there are in the cases where there are particular policies. Based on the literature review and the contributions of the *Community of Practice*, the following recommendations for teacher training with a gender perspective in Central America and the Caribbean are proposed:

1. At the public policy level

Incorporate **specific policies aimed at gender equality** in all countries with an intersectional view of gender and strategies and actions for teacher education and training. A policy has at least three essential components: definition of the problem, objectives, and instruments; and in the case of teacher training policies, both the conditions in which training is carried out in terms of gender equity (male and female teaching staff, completion of studies, etc.), as well as curricular content with a gender perspective and, strategies for an inclusive look at gender in education must be addressed (UNESCO, 2016).

2. At the level of teacher training institutions, programs or initiatives

- Include in initial and continuing teacher training the study of **legal frameworks, policies, and regulations** safeguarding gender equality in their countries (KIX-LAC Community of Practice, 2022).
- To situate educational and pedagogical work with a gender perspective from a **Human Rights approach** to understand that the transformation of the school into a space of equality and inclusion is an aspect of social change in that direction (Booth and Ainscow, 2000; Barrientos et al., 2018, KIX-LAC Community of Practice, 2022).
- Conduct a **critical review of teacher training institution curricula** to identify gender notions transmitted and include gender-transformative content in curricula and programs to help teachers explore ways to challenge gender discrimination and norms within schools (UNESCO and UN Women, 2019).

- Incorporate an **adequate conceptualization of gender in teacher training programs** that allows teachers to make conceptual distinctions between sex, gender, gender role, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc., to have an adequate language and a gender-sensitive perspective (García-Pérez et al., 2013). This, in turn, would allow teachers in training to reflect and open discussions with a gender perspective on the school, the curriculum, pedagogical practices, teaching materials, and evaluations (Barrientos et al., 2018).
- Considering that teachers themselves have been socialized in specific gender patterns, it is valuable and relevant to **take as a starting point for awareness-raising their own life stories**, beliefs, and experiences as men and women to analyze how they understand, replicate and emulate gender relations at school (with colleagues and students), as well as gender discrimination and violence in the school environment (Barrientos et al., 2018; UNESCO and UN Women, 2019).
- Make part of teacher training the open and evidence-based discussion of **how gender roles and sexualities are constructed at different times in history** to open the space for teachers to think outside the dominant norm and thus give greater possibilities for personal expression to all individuals (Mellor & Epstein, 2006; García-Pérez et al., 2013).
- **Analyze the "hidden curriculum,"** i.e., the attitudes, values, and norms that are transmitted through institutional structures, relationships, and systems, making them more explicit and visible and providing tools so that teachers can work with their students, teaching them to critically analyze these structures and norms (UNESCO and UN Women, 2019).
- Include **Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in teacher training** for an adequate understanding of the interdependence between sexuality, health, and education and its link with other rights, which in turn constitutes a tool for knowledge of sexual diversity to address discrimination against those who live diverse sexuality (Muñoz, V., 2010 cited in UNESCO, 2015, Community of Practice KIX-LAC).
- Train teachers on **the causes, scope, and consequences of gender-based violence** and include in teacher training the **promotion of anti-discriminatory behaviors**, including anti-homophobic and anti-transphobic principles, from a perspective of inclusion and human rights (UNESCO, 2015). It also provides tools to act in the classroom and generate a school climate free of violence (UNESCO 2013, 2015).
- Addressing the issue of **non-violent and co-responsible masculinities in teacher education and training, with a critical look** at their construction and reproduction through everyday practices such as punishment and harmful practices. Include a critical reflection on the role of power and how it is articulated with gender systems (KIX-LAC Community of Practice, 2022).
- Incorporate **Participatory Action Research (PAR) with a gender approach** in initial and continuous teacher training as a methodological strategy for a community-based and culturally relevant approach to gender discrimination in educational spaces. PAR is a tool that allows academic communities (teachers, families, students, directors) to investigate their practices to make a diagnosis and design their strategies for transformation (Community of Practice KIX-LAC).

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