

## Correct gender socializing in school avoids the fabrication of divisions among girls and boys

**Dr. Marta Topçiu**  
University "A.Xhuvani" Elbasan

### Abstract

The paradigm of gender based role socializing is supported by the postulate: men and women learn gender based attitudes and behaviours of the environment which surrounds them. Gender based socializing serves to teach individuals the difference between sexes, as well as, the hierarchy between them. Education is an extremely important instrument whereby social change can be achieved. School should take the indispensable responsibility to clearly demonstrate that both genders possess equal values in the present society. It is time for the education in schools to seriously take in consideration issues concerning gender based education with a view to prevent the violation of women's and girls' rights and integrity in both, private and public environments. It is time for the education in schools to lend a helping hand in addressing pupils toward non-traditional stereotypes, yet in development. This education should similarly focus on the natural difference between both genders and the equity between them. School remains one of the social institutions that should set up intentional gender education. Especially the secondary education cycle which coincides with the "culminating age" of the youth development should identify the latter one as a necessity. To avoid the creation of a masculine subjectivity, radically different from the feminine one, school education ought to be led by a correct, affirmative, representative, integrative curriculum that includes experiences, necessities and interests of girls and boys.

**Keywords:** Gender based socializing, gender based equity, education, and gender based stereotypes.

### Introduction

Socializing, according to the sociologist *Muriel Darmon*, constitutes the entirety of the processes whereby the individual himself/herself is built (is educated, is shaped, is formed, is fabricated, and is elaborated) by both, the local and global society where he/she lives. To him/her this is a process during which the individual provides (learns, appropriates, integrates) ways of doing, thinking, and being in accordance with the surrounding environment. Socializing is conceived as a programming process in order to accomplish certain duties within a complex system. Roles represent the way the individual contributes within this system. The same thing happens with the social and gender based roles, which has a pivotal importance for the personal identity. Gender is seen as a social and dynamic structure, originating from the cultural and subjective indicators, which change in time and space. The idea that gender is a "social building" may seem equally abstract and arbitrary. Since its inception, gender based sociology was focused on the ways whereby gender is taught and transmitted from a generation to another. These ways, according to *Emile Durkheim*, exercise an external impact on the individual. Gender based studies have put in their foundations the analysis of socializing. Throughout gender based socializing

we come to know what is appropriate and what is not appropriate for both genders.

Socializing paradigm of the gender based roles is supported by the postulate:

*Men and women learn gender based attitudes and behaviours of their surrounding environment.*

It is exactly in this environment where cultural values, norms and ideologies, as regard to being a woman or a man, are reinforced and shaped. Gender based roles are behaviours which match with the ideas that the society has built as related to the masculine and feminine. This paradigm is based upon the idea according to which people are not born with a gender. They learn it ("being a man" and "being a woman") within a particular society and in a given era. Both, men and women learn and assimilate, throughout socializing, the social standards, norms and behaviours which are expected by both genders.

### **Different dimensions of gender based socializing**

In order to analyze gender learning, its various dimensions should be initially conceived. Starting from the idea that "you are not born a woman, but rather become one", the most explored problematics by the social sciences regard the "role of the sexes". Original works of gender based sociology have studied various "norms" of behaviour that are embedded to boys and girls. Education gives a considerable contribution in developing the roles of the stereotypes. These sex roles are not symmetrical: boys and girls are not developed regardless each-other, but rather within a social unequal relationship.

*What is being learned by the individual during the gender based socializing is not limited only in his/her role, but rather extends to the "political economy" which gives sense to it. This asymmetrical economy organizes the construction of the masculine as a division with the feminine, whereas the opposite is less true*

Finally, learning gender means getting involved step by step within the regime of truth. The latter helps perceive the limit between sex, gender and sexuality, and under a subjective level, the sense of gender. Therefore, a correctly socialized human being nowadays, i.e. the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century, wants to know that there exist only two sexes. This is a truth that no one can change. You can be homosexual, yet a male, and a man transformed in a woman does not make him similar to a woman. The same thing happens with a masculine woman who is known as lesbian.

All these dimensions aim at clarifying gender based socializing. Nevertheless, norm imposing is not translated as an abolishment of the sexes' segregation. *Claude Zaiman* underlines in the preface of the classical work of *Erving Goffman*, that social relationships of sex are included in a very particular social relationship between segregation and indifference where men and women stand "united and separated" (Bereni, Chauvi, Jaunait & Revillard, 2012, 35). The last dimension of the gender based socializing consists in learning step by step what sex, gender and sexuality (or sexual orientation) are as distinctive areas of human existence.

Sex-learning also relies on reasoning. In our society, every subject belongs to a determined sex to that extent that it is almost impossible for someone to appear and his or her gender has not been preliminarily defined by us. Although, we often present it as a natural development, which is submitted to a predefined finality, psychologists have described, in

an empirical way, the different phases that children pass through before “integration”, in the regime of truth that dominates as concerned to sex. The psychologist, *Lorenc Kolberg*, determines three consecutive stages of the cognitive development.

These stereotyping are eternalized by the members of the family, the teachers and other people who express their different expectancies in case either a boy or a girl is concerned. Parents are the first agents of socializing who this child will come into contact with. Thus, as long as gender based identity and its social building originates from the family, the latter should pay a close attention to the following actions:

- to assess equally boys and girls;
- to educate both, boys and girls, with the sense of work, good relationship, compromises, relationship-comprehension;
- to educate both, boys and girls, with the idea of being fair with the house chores/problems;
- to cultivate self-restraint and courage as essential qualities in gender based equality and identity building;
- to facilitate a positive building of individuality both, for the girl and the boy;
- to learn both, boys and girls, the importance of respecting timetables and schedules;
- to avoid using different terminologies while communicating to boys or girls;
- to educate girls to fight for their aspiration to be achieve;
- to educate girls to have the courage to desire difficult professions as well;
- to educate both, boys and girls, with the idea that girls as well can make their way through.

### **Gender based socializing in school**

Nowadays, schooling constitutes a major socializing instance outside family. Researches on gender based relations in school have shown that after an unequal period as regard to knowledge and positions to the detriment of girls, in the 1960s this position has changed. Girls have their own performances as regard to knowledge and positions in the society. This lack of equity, in favour of girls, has been continuously distorted by the strong segregation according to the school and professional career sexes. A considerable part of the youngsters, frequenting either general high schools or technical and professional high schools, are being oriented toward careers that within a social aspect are attached to their sex. This sexual segregation highlights the role of the school in reproducing gender based disparities. Feminine careers are globally less prestigious and less rentable in the labour market compared to the masculine careers.

A great number of works have been dedicated to the opening of the black box of the mixed school which apparently seems neutral and dedicated to equality. Meanwhile, it highlights the “hidden curricula” (Durut-Bellat, 1995, 146) which is unconsciously transmitted by the school institution actors and produces diverse guidelines toward pupils of both genders.

### **Conformity or nonconformity of girls**

In their book entitled “Allez les filles!” (“Go ahead girls”), the sociologists *Bodelot* and

*Establet* propose a model to clarify the paradox between the school progress of the girls and the addressing toward the most under valued professions and less paid careers in the labour market. According to them, these two social facts have the same explanation: girls in their childhood, starting from their family, are socialized in ways which are in conformity with the school universe expectations more than their peers, the boys. (Baudelot; Establet, 2006, 114)

The same learning of those society rules and attitudes which go in conformity with the school universe expectations generate from the masculine dominance, because girls are socialized while using a limited space and they are obliged to submit to the authority. They have less freedom to leave home. They are more oriented toward serious entertaining, thus imitating their future role as an adult female. It would be easier for them, compared to the boys, to master the “profession of the pupil”.

Besides, their mother plays the busiest role in the family, taking care of the cultural feeding of the children. Girls are easily identified with their mothers and this leads them to an easier school and cultural life. Whereas the identification of the boys with their fathers (sportive activities), does not guarantee them the same thing. (Baudelot; Establet, 2007, 65-66)

On the contrary, learning masculine identity causes the acquisition of several skills which are far away, and often contradictory to the school institution expectations. This is particularly true for those boys belonging to the ordinary stratum of society. They present more risks to get exposed to the so-called street culture.

As long as feminine socializing allows us to understand that girls performs better in school, it allows us, as well, to realise, according to Baudelot and Establet, their missing of the most prestigious and well-paid school careers.

In fact, since girls are less socialized than boys as far as competition and confrontation are concerned, they have the tendency to withdraw whenever a school selection occurs. Masculine socializing prepares boys better in having self reliance and toward a conflictual culture. The latter seem to be also the winning cards in the moment decisive selections are required as regard to career orientations.

The model of socializing that considers the submission of girls a key to their school progress and a key to selecting a less prestigious and less paid profession does not constitute unanimity. It is criticised for the following reasons:

- it is supported in part on some gender based stereotypes (submitted girls toward courageous boys);
- it neglects the resisting capability of girls and their active usage of the institution.

According to Duru – Bellat, the selections of girls’ orientation are not simply a product of feminine socializing, but also a “strategy” due to hardship. Girls are oriented toward professions that will allow them to get better integrated in the labour market. This labour market is widely divided according to gender and excludes women from those jobs that are concerned with power exercising (Durut-Bellat, 1995). More and more successful achievements of the girls constitute a positive investment for the school capital and creates them new professional chances compared to the ones of their mothers (Marry, 2004, 152). Studies on concrete practices of the school institution have highlighted the active role of the latter in the (re) production of gender based order beyond gender based socializing,

simply transmitted by the family mechanisms.

### **School, the place of gender based division fabrication**

The admixture, far from cancelling the differentiation and hierarchy according to sex, constitutes a favorable environment for their development.

- Gender based relations touch the division of roles and positions within the school institution (teachers, boarding custodians, professional consultants, psychologists) emphasizing more the female gender. In school, besides the official school programmes, pupils learn the fact that one can find more leaders among men and more subordinates among women, and teaching in elementary classes is a typical job for women;
- Studies on teaching practices show that teachers do not behave similarly with pupils of both sexes. In mixed classes, they interact more (in an unconscious way) with boys than with girls (Bereni; Chauvi; Jaunait; Revillard, 2012, 15), despite the fact if the teacher is male or female;
- Male pupils are more perceived as individualities, whereas female pupils seem more undifferentiated;
- Teachers' evaluations toward girls' and boys' homework change, too. Boys are assessed for skills and intellectual levels, whereas girls are assessed for the form and the appearance;
- Teachers assess more the performance as concerned to boys, whereas they assess more the adaptation as concerned to girls;
- Girls are praised for the cleanliness, whereas boys for their richness and originality;
- Beside this, teachers attribute the progress of their efforts to the girls; meanwhile, they entrust intellectual capacity and talent to the boys;
- In case of failure, they think boys do not avail themselves of the full intellectual capacities they possess;
- As far as maths is concerned, for the same level in both, boys and girls, teachers orient boys toward scientific branches and girls toward literary ones. This is due to the fact that they believe boys have stronger capacities as related to maths. Consequently, girls being in the same level with boys are often oriented in a less favourable way.

Teachers have the tendency to present stereotypes as concerned to the behaviours of both sexes:

- Girls are expected to be polite and boys are expected to be less focused;
- Girls are expected to sit in forefront desks, while boys sit at the last desks;
- Girls are often asked to be the "pedagogical assistants" for the boys.

This kind of attitudes, that teachers present, have an effect to the self-realization of pupils. They provoke in these pupils behaviours that are partly compatible with these ideas. Consequently, we are faced with a mutual reinforcement, teachers' expectations and pupils' behaviours toward the reproduction of gender based stereotypes: diligent and careful girls versus unattentive and impulsive boys. Beyond the norms of behavior, these expectations have effects on the future orientation.

When speaking of school orientation, one hears the influence of the scheme “zealous girl” and “brilliant boy”. Unfortunately, these stereotypes are strengthened more by the school manual content, as well. Our concern has to do even with the contribution that school manuals give as regard to the differentiation that take place while considering career orientation for girls and boys.

School socializing does not occur only in the relations between the teacher and the pupil. The school is the so-called “horizontal” socializing place among similar subjects. School playground is one of its landscapes, as well. Teachers consider the playground as something outside the pedagogical aspect; they assess those children who free themselves and show an autonomous behavior in the relationships among them. While playing, gender based relationships are built up under the shelter of disparity, officially ensured by the school institution. However, a division according to sexes occurs within a given space and through games. Boys play with the ball at the center of the playground, while girls are placed at the periphery of the playground, playing skipping rope.

Gender based roles in the school context call into question the admixture in school, on behalf of girls. In several schools and universities in the USA, the lack of admixture is translated as an environment which permits girls to raise their performances and their ambitions in a non-mixed context, compared to an environment which permits the contact with boys. Thus, it is thought that they would develop, in an easier way, their competences, their tastes in determined areas which in mixed contexts are a known as a monopoly of boys (Bereni; Chauvi; Jaunait; Revillard, 2012, 155). Beyond these relations with the parents, educators and co-evals, gender based viewpoints are embodied in a difused way to the periferical agents of socializing, such as: clothes, toys, albums, books, television programmes, internet, publicity, etc. Gender based division of objects and cultural products are widely defined by the world of the adults. The latters offer children different material environments addressed to boys and girls.

Finally, it should be said that: *a child is not the simple product of the family socializing and the school socializing, as well, but rather a “Trojan horse” of the gender in both these socializing institutions* (Bereni; Chauvi; Jaunait; Revillard, 2012, 137).

- Publicity

Nowadays a woman is still a body, an image, a picture. An aesthetic and sexual dictatorship is being exercised on female bodies; ugliness is a scary and horrible counterweight in building feminine identity. Woman’s body and aesthetics proves her personality, her radiation, her sensitivity, the perturbation she may cause, her fragility and inferiority.

Publicity plays its role in gender based stereotypes for commercial effects. The products it proposes are segmented according to the consumators’ sex it aims at. More than anything else it reduces women to their beauty which substitutes every other capability.

- Masculine/Feminine

In general, while speaking about masculinity and femininity, we are referring to the social and personality’s characteristics. The latter generate throughout a socializing or genderizing process which further proceeds in the family, school and society. We understand this by the different ways they address, touch, treat

and wear. It is through these rules, samples or gender schemes that children are taught to behave as a part of the same society where they live. Different social mechanisms serve to teach children the masculine and feminine part, and make them adopt their behaviour, attitudes and roles within a given context.

Fairly enough the following question is raised – If socializing is a continuing process, then why does the debate between nature and education proceeds?

This is due to the fact that education is held responsible for the prevailing differences among boys and girls.

## Conclusions

As regard to behaviours, both genders present themselves differently, throughout language, various activities, school environment, and media presentation. In every generation, each child is faced, from the moment he/she is born, with socializing pressures, such as: school, game, media, job, etc. Consequently, this child develops gender based schemes, leading to the creation of a gender based identity. This process occurs throughout a direct enforcement, shaping and imitation. The idea that gender based inequality is being protected by institutions is the one on which this chapter insists the most. Inequality protected by institutions gives strength to this disparity. Nevertheless, gender could not be motionless or indisputable. We can change gender by altering those institutions which produce it. The same social actors may be situated at the center of this potential deviation, because “they” (both male and female) are not passive in front of the gender based socializing which creates them as gender based human beings. “They” (both male and female) have the self-power to resist this disparity.

**Education** is an extremely important instrument whereby social change can be achieved. School should take the indispensable responsibility to clearly demonstrate that both genders possess equal values in the present society.

- Introducing the gender based issue in schools helps the gradual rooting of the values concerning gender based equality in this area; brings hope to the gender based equality for the whole society; helps those efforts made to eliminate gender based stereotypes which mean women’s and girls’ inferiority;
- School remains one of the best organized social institutions, with an internal structure, which should build an intentional and strategic education with an emphasis on gender. *The school and the teacher*, through school knowledge, have the necessary potential to transmit to youngsters approaches to gender based issues which are associated with the historical retrospective and future projections;
- *The school and the teacher* are the institutions which can and should “govern” gender based education in all senses and in all dimensions;
- *The school and the teacher help* pupils cope with integration and gender based equality notions, such as: human being rights, citizenship, family violence, European integration, media, reproductive health, career development, environment, etc.

These are some of those questions that this thesis has been trying to give an answer to throughout investigation. It aims at showing that both, the school and the teacher

are institutions that should build gender based education, should show how healthy a high school environment is in shaping gender based identity, and should identify as an intentional gender based education the following points:

- the dimension which relates to the self meaning, as a boy and as a girl, and the meaning as regard to the another one;
- social role identification;
- gender origin stereotypes identification;
- behavioral repertoire of the grown-ups which has been “preserved” by the society through decades, and which is lived by both, boys and girls;
- all these issues should become central issues to the education and will eventually help in building a self meaning and respect toward oneself. It labels as intentional gender based education the need for more emancipation for the highschool boys and girls, a need which should be felt continuously as the sound of democracy on high school;
- it will perceive the education of the natural difference as a fair and intentional gender based education to the boys and girls, therefore it should come at all costs as such, that is *Intentional*.

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