Colombian education policies, programming and pedagogical projects on SRHR need to become more context-specific and youth-inclusive.

how can the enactment of legislation and education policies on gender equality enable a school culture that empowers youth to transform their gender-related beliefs, expectations and interactions in Medellin?

Methodology
- two case study design
- in-depth interviews with local policy-stakeholders and educational agents
- focus group discussions with teachers and students (Likert-scale activity and photo-elicitation method)
- quantitative questionnaire with students

Policy enactment in schools – A culture of gender (in)equality
Set within a ‘post-conflict’ context, this research project addresses the mutual constitution between violence and the existence of unequal power in gender relations. Hereby, I contrast Colombia’s legislature and policy on addressing gender equality in the education system with opinions and perceptions of local policy stakeholders, educational agents and students in Medellín.

Policy enactment in schools – A culture of gender (in)equality
How can the enactment of legislation and education policies on gender equality enable a school culture that empowers youth to transform their gender-related beliefs, expectations and interactions in Medellin?

Deeper Level of Empowerment
- Structural relations that connect gender with other social inequalities (gender & religion, machismo, sexuality, race, class,...)

Intermediate Level of Empowerment
- Institutional rules and resources (policy enactment on gender equality in schools)
- Resources (preconditions)
- Agency (process): power to vs. power over
- Achievements (outcome): Transformation of gender-related beliefs, expectations and interactions

Immediate Level of Empowerment
- School rules available for all members of the educational community (‘Manual of coexistence’)
- Student-centred learning experiences (e.g. peer education, guided debates, investigative projects)
- Youth-led educational projects (e.g. LGBTI club, mediation programme)

Immediate Level of Empowerment
- Resources (preconditions)
- Agency (process): power to vs. power over
- Achievements (outcome): Transformation of gender-related beliefs, expectations and interactions

Fieldwork site Castilla (Comuna 5) Fieldwork site Popular (Comuna 1)

It’s a conceptual contradiction because it’s a state that talks about equity but the first thing they do is generate a foundation of inequality.”

Resources


Preconditions for empowerment
- Coeducational model
- School rules available for all members of the educational community (‘Manual of coexistence’)
- Sexuality education
- Psychological support
- Health care

Tackling agency and achieving transformation
- Creating alternative life plans
- Student-centred learning experiences (e.g. peer education, guided debates, investigative projects)
- Youth-adult partnerships (e.g. construction of school artefacts, organisation of diversity festival)
- Youth-led educational projects (e.g. LGBTI club, mediation programme)
- Youth-led accountability mechanisms against discriminatory practices

Recommendations
- Prevent “magical legalism” (Mcevoy, 2007) by
  - holding schools accountable for poor implementation of sexuality education
  - imposing penalty on teachers for sexual misconduct
  - training male educators and engaging boys
  - focusing on unequal power relations
  - addressing gender issues in relation with conflict and peace processes

- Shift onto self-learning experiences and meaningful youth participation (MYP) by
  - acknowledging youth as active actors on policy and school-administration level
  - providing financial means for MYP
  - increasing capacity strengthening of young leaders
  - increasing adult commitment for MYP