

Activismo femenino para una educación no sexista en Japón

Feminist activism for a gender free education in Japan

Les mouvements féministes en faveur d'une éducation *gender free* au Japon

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Summary:

Coeducation for girls and boys in Japan was enacted and implemented by the 1947 Basic Law of Education. However, coeducation does by no way mean gender equality in education. This article aims at showing how Japanese scholars, feminists and teachers have been working together to define and to realize a non-sexist education. It will show how these connections between academics and activists sustained a specific movement in the 1990s to eliminate sexism in education, named “gender free education”. Both activists and feminists were forced to react when the “gender free education bashing” occurred during the 2000s.

Key words : Japan, gender free, education, feminist, scholars

Introduction

In 1947, in Japan, the Fundamental law for education (*kyôiku kihon hô* 教育基本法) has enacted coeducation for the school system (*danjokyôgaku* 男女共学). This measure is made by imitating American school system which claims coeducation value. However, coeducation is only set for the Japanese public school and compulsory education: that means both primary schools and junior high school. For the first time of Japan modern education system, all the girls must go to school: this phenomenon is quite different with the previous system, in which primary education was compulsory for girls, and secondary education was still a privilege for well-bred and high class family girls.

However, coeducation does not mean sex equality: both girls and boys are addressed in a different way, and some classes are for boys only or girls only. The first measures for sex equality date back the 1960s, so about twenty years after coeducation enforcement. During this decades, sections within the two main teacher unions are created and also some teachers organized themselves in association or research group to think about pedagogic and teaching contents while considering sex equality. For instance, there were at that time different groups for “thinking about girls education” (*joshi kyôiku mondai* 女子教育問題)¹. Those initiative were still at a local scale (primary schools, junior high schools and high schools) and few teachers were leading such actions. For historians, unfortunately, we do have only a few documents of this kind of local groups. From the 1970s, Japanese sociology defines a “hidden curriculum” (*kakureta karikyuramu* 隠れたカリキュラム) to show the difference of attitude towards girls and boys during all their schooling. This concept was operating since then for sociological research. Moreover, teachers and teachers unions were using this concept to work on gender difference.

After the implementation of gender studies at Japanese University, the words ‘hidden curriculum’ were introduced with the key concept of gender. This communication aims at showing how Japanese scholars, feminists and teachers have been working together to define and to realize a non-sexist education. In particular, I will present how these connections between academic and activist background sustained a specific movement in the 1990s to eliminate

¹ Kaoru TACHI 館かおる : “ *Jendâ furî kyôiku toiu konseputo* ” 「ジェンダー・フリー教育」というコンセプト (The concept of *gender free education*), en Hidenori FUJITA 藤田英典 (eds), *Jendâ to kyôiku* ジェンダーと教育 (Gender and education), Yokohama, Seorishobô 世織出書房, 1999, p. 111.

sexism in education. Feminist scholars coined the loan expression “gender free education” (*jendâ furî kyôiku*) to give a name to this vision of education.

How womens’s studies sustained educators and activists movements during the 1970 and 1980s

In 1947, after having enacted the Basic Law on Education (*Kyôiku kihon hō*), Japanese school system is open for both boys and girls: almost all primary schools are for boys and girls, few junior high schools are for only boys or only girls, and almost one third of high schools are only for boys or only for girls. This is a great change and during the 1950s, few scholars, like Morita Sôichi 森田宗一 (1915-2007) are questioning the moral and social transformations due to girl’s education (especially girls of farmer family or living in rural area)². During the 1960s, the first boys and girls educated cohorts graduated junior high school and high schools. Some of these girls entered University and then graduated. Those girls are aiming at being hired like their male comrades. Since then, Japan society is looking at these girls graduated. Many studies or researches are examining girl’s university schooling and also female employment after university³.

During the 1970s, following the academic implementation of women’s studies, scholars began to investigate female schooling.⁴ Those academic works are insisting upon the concept of “hidden curriculum” (*kakureta karikyuramu* 隠れたカリキュラム) to show up the hidden gaps and invisible discrimination between female and male schooling⁵. This coined phrase is an extract of the book released in 1965 *What is learned in classroom?* written by the American sociologist Robert Dreeben, and can also be found in a book written in 1968, *Life in Classroom*,

² Sôichi MORITA 森田宗一 : “ Shôjo no seitekihikô ni tsuite no kyôiku shakaigaku teki kyôsai ” 少女の性的非行について教育社会的考察 (Reflexions of education sociology about bad behaviours of young girls), *Kyôiku shakaigaku kenkyû* 教育社会学研究 (The Journal of Educational Sociology), 2 de 1952, p. 134-141.

³ Shigeo MORI 森繁男: “ Jendâ to kyôiku kenkyû no suii to genkyô. Josei kara jendâ e ” 「ジェンダーと教育」研究の推移と現況: 「女性」から「ジェンダー」へ (Present situation and evolution of researches on gender and education: from women to gender *Kyôiku shakaigaku kenkyû* 教育社会学研究 (The Journal of Educational Sociology), 50 de 1992, p. 167.

⁴ Masako AMANO 天野正子 (eds.), *Jendâ to kyôiku* ジェンダーと教育 (Gender and education), Tôkyô, Iwanami shoten 岩波書店, 2009, p. 2-3.

⁵ Yôko UJIHARA: “ Jendâ furî no chishiki to jendâka no keiken no kattô. Seikatsu sekai no shiten kara ” ジェンダー・フリーの知識とジェンダー化の経験の葛藤—生活世界の視点から— (About gender free education and practical difficulties of gender socialization during daily routine), *Kodomo shakai kenkyû* 子供社会研究 (Journal of Child Study), 120 del 2003, p. 60.

by Phillip W. Jackson⁶. *Hidden curriculum*, for these two authors, is the unformal education between dominant class educative norms (that is to say middle class and high class of white people) and the educative norms of unfavored classes, especially black Americans⁷. In the Japanese context, this hidden curriculum became synonymous of unformal education between girls and boys, especially through curriculum designed only for girls or only for boys⁸. Those academic works are showing how much sexism is deepened into Japanese school system, especially within orientation curriculum during University and also women's discrimination during recruitment period. Therefore, during the 1970s and 1985, key words for both scholars and school people are education and employment, and also girl's education. Girl's education is mainly studied through high school and university curricula and employment opportunities. From the mid-1980s, researches are changing their perspectives because they do not only consider girl education and sexism towards girls. They don't limit themselves to a binary system in which girl and boy schooling are opposite and never converge: scholars are now questioning the relation between "feminine" and "masculine" values regulating the school system⁹. Even if the word "gender" did not always appear, those academic works are the first analysis of gender and school. Key words have changed: now scholars are investigation sexual roles division at school (*gakkô ni okeru seiyakuwari* 学校における性役割), sexism at school (*gakkô ni okeru sekushizumu* 学校におけるセクシズム) or even research on gender and education (*jendâ to kyôiku kenkyû* ジェンダーと教育研究). The title of an article written by Amano Masako, *Actuality of studies on sex (gender) and education. Continuity of a hidden research field*, is the perfect illustration of the shift between the paradigms of women's studies and gender studies: scholars began to distinguish the sex (*sei* 性) with gender (*jendâ* ジェンダー)¹⁰. Within this

⁶ Ikue KIMURA 木村育恵: *Gakkô shakai no naka no jendâ: kyôshitachi no esunomesodorôjî* 学校社会の中のジェンダー: 教師たちのエスノメソドロジー (Gender within school sociology: an ethnomethodology with teachers), Koganei 小金井, Tôkyô Gakugeidaigaku shuppankai 東京学芸大学出版会, 2014, p. 35.

⁷ Mayumi HORIUCHI 堀内真由美: *Danjokyôgakusei ha shinpo no toride? Igrisu no kyôgaku seido kara mita nihon no gakkô* 男女共学制は進歩の砦? イギリスの共学点検からみた日本の学校 (Coeducation as the best progress? Comparing Japanese schools with English school system), en Ryôko KIMURA 木村涼子 y Sakura FURUKUBO 古久保さくら (eds), *Jendâ de kangaeru kyôiku no ima. Feminizumu kyôiku o mezashite* ジェンダーで考える教育の現在 フェミニズム教育学をめざして (Thinking now education with gender: for a feminist education), Ôsaka 大阪, Kaihō shuppansha 解放出版社, 2008, p. 33.

⁸ Mayumi HORIUCHI 堀内真由美, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

⁹ Shigenobu MOCHIZUKI 望月重信, "“Jendâ to kyôiku” kenkyû no suii to dôkô ni miru “kodomo to jendâ”. *Jendâ keisei no agenda*” 「ジェンダーと教育」研究の推移と動向にみる「子どもとジェンダー」—ジェンダー形成のアジェンダー (State of art of researches on “gender and education”: gender and children, notes on gender socialization), *Kodomoshakaikenkyû* 子ども社会研究 (Journal of Child Study), 3 del junio 1997, p. 58.

¹⁰ Masako AMANO 天野正子, "“Sei (jendâ) to kyôiku” kenkyû no gendaiteki kadai. Kakusareta “ryôiki” no jizoku” 「性 (ジェンダー) と教育」研究の現代的課題—かくされた『領域』の持続 (Actuality of studies

new frame, scholars are now interested on both girls and boys schooling, and the way they construct each other their gender identity, and no more only girls education. From the 1990s, gender studies development at Japanese universities allowed this shift of research paradigms. Then, many researches were part of a new research field, named as research on “gender and education” (*jendâ to kyôiku* ジェンダーと教育), which has been growing since.

These researches were the first ground for activism and fostered the willing of some group to understand school sexism mechanisms. The first item of this sexism to be named is the segregated course of study. More or less visible depending of the school level, those segregated course of study are blamed as a breach of coeducation. Rather than teachers, feminist groups mobilized to make light on this segregation of girls and boys. During several years, groups like the Women Groups Federation (*Fudanren* 婦団連), New women (*Shinfujin* 新婦人), the Japan Federation of Bar association (*Bengoshikai* 弁護士会), the feminine section of Japan Federation of Teachers (*Nihon kyôshoku kumiai joseibu* 日本経職組合女性部) and a few teachers has been naming and shaming the segregated courses of study. Considering the Minister of Education, only teachers involved within research group on girl’s education are supporting this movement¹¹.

Those feminist group are taking advantage of the context of the 1970s to bring to the United Nations machinery the problem of course of study sexism¹². When 1975 was declared by the United Nation the international Women’s year, some Japanese groups began to make lobbying pressure and organized themselves in order to represent Japan to UN¹³. In particular, they presented to the UN instances several reports while insisting on the necessity of having similar course of studies for both girls and boys. All these feminist groups are making their arguments on the “education” field of the CEDAW Convention (Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women), especially the article 10 which says that “Governments must end discrimination against girls and women in education. Girls and women have a right to education, just as boys and men do. Girls and women should have access to career guidance

on sex (gender) and education. Continuity of a hidden research field), *Shakaigaku hyôron* 社会学評論 (Sociological topics), 39 (3) de 1988, p. 266-283.

¹¹ Keiko ITANI 井谷 恵子, *Gakkô taiiku to jendâ* 学校体育とジェンダー (Gender and physical education at school), en Takako IIDA 飯田貴子 y Keiko ITANI 井谷 (eds.), *Supôtsu jendâgaku e no shôtai* スポーツ・ジェンダー学への招 (Discovering gender studies about sport), Tôkyô, Akashi shoten 明石書店, 2009, p. 175.

¹² Akiko MURATA 村田明子, *Josei mondai gakushû no kenkyû* 女性問題学習の研究 (Researches on studies about feminine studies), Tôkyô, Miraisha 未来社, 2006, p. 85-86.

¹³ Kaoru TACHI 館かおる, “*Jendâ furî kyôiku toiu konseputo*” 「ジェンダー・フリー教育」というコンセプト (The concept of gender free education), en Hidenori FUJITA 藤田英典 (dir.), *Jendâ to kyôiku* ジェンダーと教育 (Gender and education), Yokohama, Seorishobô 世織出書房, 1999, p. 114.

and professional training at all levels; to studies and schools; to examinations, teaching staff, school buildings, and equipment; and opportunities to get scholarships and grants, the same as boys and men.”¹⁴. They denounced the contents of differentiated courses, the sexist stereotypes in textbooks, as well as the asymmetry of schooling between the universities of the short cycle (feminized) and the long (mixed) cycle.

This strategy worked: the Japanese government began to undertake major reforms in the field of education. As a Member State of the United Nations since 1956, Japan was officially obliged to comply with the CEDAW Convention it signed in 1980: the Japanese Government was beginning to consider amending several national laws to ensure that it suits the criteria of the Convention¹⁵. Japan then ratified the Convention in 1985. The government then began to introduce reforms on women's employment and also revised various legal arrangements concerning gender equality issues¹⁶. Similarly, as a result of these local pressures relayed internationally, the Japanese Ministry of Education revised the programs in the late 1980s and took into account criticisms of differentiated programs. So we can conclude that during 1970s and 1980s, even if they work in parallel, scholars and feminist activist were focusing on girl education and they mainly fight against segregated course of studies.

The 1990s in Japan: a turning point for gender and education

During the 1990s, gender studies settled in Japanese University¹⁷. However, concerning the specific topic of education, the turning point for using gender as a conceptual tool was not exactly the same among feminist and activist working out for a non-sexist education. First of all, let's introduce the concept and the movement for a gender free education in the 1990s Japan. We will see how this group was using academic sources, but was not working with Japanese scholars.

¹⁴ This Convention (*Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*) was adopted in 1979 by the United Nations Assembly. It is available on <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/fconvention.htm> (consulta 25 marzo 2017)

¹⁵ Kumiko FUJIMURA-FANSELOW y Atsuko KAMEDA (eds), *Japanese Women. New Feminist Perspectives on the Past, Present and Future*, New York, Feminist Press at the University of New York, 1995, p. 356-357.

¹⁶ The most emblematic measures of this reform movement are the Law for Equal Employment Opportunities (Danjo koyô kikai kintô hô 男女雇用機会均等法) in 1986, the revision of the directives of the Ministry of Education in 1989 and The revision of the Law on Nationality (Kokuseki kaisei hô 国籍改正法) in 1985.

¹⁷ Aline HENNINGER, “Des recherches sur la question féminine aux études queer : un tournant épistémologique”, *Cipango*, 22 del 2017 (coming).

During the 1990s, the term 'gender-free education' (*jenda furî kyôiku* ジェンダー・フリー教育 or sometimes *jendâ furî na kyôiku* ジェンダー・フリーな教育). The first mention of this term appeared in 1995 in a booklet entitled *For young teachers: is your class gender free?*. It was published by a feminist association, the Tôkyô Women's Group (*Tôkyô josei dantai* 東京女性団体)¹⁸. In this booklet aimed at teachers, the mechanisms of discrimination between girls and boys were analysed and several means are proposed to discuss the equality of the sexes with the pupils. The authors, members of the Tôkyô Women's Group, explained that the term *jendâ furî* was the English transcription of gender free in Japanese katakana alphabet. They argued that the term gender free corresponds to an article by American academic Barbara Houston¹⁹. Published in 1994, this text, actually entitled *Should Public Education be Gender Free?*, is a reworked version of an article first published in 1985²⁰. In this article, Barbara Houston urges educators to consider differentiated pathways in a sexist setting that encourage boys²¹. She begins by questioning the different meanings of the term gender-free education. Houston shows that one can aim for free gender equality either by paying attention to gender biases (the primary meaning it gives gender-free), or by deliberately ignoring all that is gender-related (The second meaning it gives to gender-free). The term gender-free therefore refers to the different ways in which gender biases can be taken into account with one and the same objective: to provide non-sexist education.

The transcription in Japanese is delicate: on the one hand the polysemy of the English term disappears. The Tôkyô Women's Group has adopted the term gender free for the realities it encompasses: an education which does not take into account the gender of the pupils and does not make it a criterion of discrimination (free of gender Bias) to provide education without gender stereotypes (free of gender stereotypes). On the other hand, in Japanese, the term gender free becomes an adjective (word of quality). In English, in the title of the article in Houston, gender free is an attribute of the subject, and when used as a qualifying adjective, it is spelled gender-free. The term does not therefore exist as an adjective. These two elements make the

¹⁸ TÔKYÔ WOMEN'S GROUP 東京女性団体, *Wakai sedai no kyôshi no tame ni: anata no kurasu wa jendâ furî?* 若い世代の教師のために: あなたのクラスはジェンダーフリー? (For young teachers: is your class gender free?), Tôkyô, Tôkyô josei dantai 東京女性団体, 1995, 64 p.

¹⁹ Barbara Houston is actually Professor at the New Hampshire University and works on gender and education.

²⁰ Barbara HOUSTON, "Should Public Education be Gender Free?" en Lynda STONE (eds.), *The Education Feminism Reader*, New York, Routledge, 1994, p. 122-134 y Barbara HOUSTON, "Gender Freedom and the Subtleties of Sexist Education", *Educational Theory*, 4 (35) del diciembre 1985, p. 359-369.

²¹ HYÛSUTON BÂBARA バーバラ・ヒューストン (Barbara HOUSTON) y MARUTIN JÊN ジェーン・マルティン (Jane MARTIN), "Jendâ o kangaeru ジェンダーを考える (Thinking gender)", en Chizuko UENO 上野千鶴子 (eds.) *Bakkurashu! Naze jendâfurî ha tatakareta noka? バックラッシュ! なぜジェンダーフリーは叩かれたのか* (Backlash! Why gender free was attacked?), Tôkyô, Sôfûsha 双風舎, 2006, p. 200-240.

Japanese term rather vague. Finally, for the Tōkyō Women's Group, gender-free education (*jenda furi kyōiku*) is a non-sexist, non-differentiated education.

These booklets of the Women's Group of Tōkyō, published for a wide diffusion, devote the term gendered education which gradually diffuses in the educational and feminist circles. In 1995, the Tōkyō Women's Group also published a book, *Education for Gender-Free: a report to develop gender-sensitive training*²². A second revised version was published in 1996. In the same year, the Tōkyō Women's Group published a booklet entitled *Gender check: for a society, environment and gender-oriented guides*²³. This brochure is reprinted in 1997 with content adapted for each target audience: teachers, pupils, high school students and adults. In 1997, too, the Tōkyō Women's Group published *Wait a little, boys: guide gender free for boys*. It is these booklets and this book that are disseminated to teachers: their dissemination allows the use of the term gender free.

The Tōkyō Women's Group booklet was well used within Tokyo areas, especially for primary schools. In fact, these booklets were summarizing what some activist teachers were defending to foster a non-sexist education. Let's summarize their main propositions: removal of call lists where boys and girls are separated, boys being called before girls (*danjo betsu meibo* 男女別名簿), removal of the pink / blue color code in mandatory accessories (school bags, tissues, sneakers, bellows piano for elementary school), encouragement of girls and boys in all subjects, removal of sexist representations in textbooks and other school materials, boys and girls together for all courses and notations (especially physical education), introduction of boys and girls mixed group in small working groups (*han* 班) and pairs of pupils responsible or delegated (*kakari* 係), indistinct use of the politeness suffix -san for girls and boys (not the differentiated suffixes -chan for girls and -kun for boys) and also awareness-raising and teacher training on gender issues²⁴. Indeed, all these measures, who were not detailed into the Ministry of

²² TŌKYŌ WOMEN'S GROUP 東京女性団体, *Jendā furī na kyōiku no tameni. Joseimondai kenshū puroguramu kaihatsu hōkokusho* ジェンダー・フリーな教育のために: 女性問題研修プログラム開発報告書 (*Education for Gender-Free: a report to develop gender-sensitive training*), Tōkyō, Tōkyō josei dantai 東京女性団体, 1995, 130 p.

²³ TŌKYŌ WOMEN'S GROUP 東京女性団体, *Jendā chekku: danjobyōdō e no shishin chiiki shakaiseikatsu otona hen* ジェンダーチェック: 男女平等への指針 (*Gender check: for a society, environment and gender-oriented guides*), 学校生活 大人編, Tōkyō, Tōkyō josei dantai 東京女性団体, 1996, 11 p.

²⁴ ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY AT SCHOOL 男女平等教育をすすめる会, *Dōshite, itsumo otoko wa saki na no? Danjokongo meibo no kokoromi* どうして、いつも男は先なの? 男女混合名簿の試み (Why boys are always first? Let's try mixed alphabetic call list), Tōkyō, Shinhyōron 新評論, 1997, p. 13-20.

Education instructions, were sometimes applied on some schools where teachers were aware of school sexism.

It is interesting to see that this feminist group used the English terms, before the word gender gained popularity outside of the academic sphere. In that sense, we can see that the circulation of knowledge is more complex than some direct relation from activist to scholars. Other expressions in Japanese refer to gender equality in education: feminist education (*joseikaihô kyôiku* 女性解放教育), the problem of female schooling (*joshi kyôiku mondai* 女子教育問題), egalitarian education between girls and boys (*danjo byôdô kyôiku* 男女平等教育), mixed education (*danjo kyôsei kyôiku* 男女共生教育) or education which aims at the autonomy and equality of both sexes (*ryôsei no jiritsu to byôdô o mezasu kyôiku* 両性の自立と平等をめざ教育). The English words “gender free”, increasingly used among teachers and researchers in the mid-1990s, undoubtedly produces a fashion effect that makes these expressions in Japanese become less used. Thus, in the late 1990s, as gender studies developed in Japanese University, the term gender free education attracted some feminist circles, whether academics, teachers or activists. The influence of the Tôkyô Women's Group is worth noticing, since Japanese academic scholars decided to keep the coined phrase.

The backlash towards gender free education in the 2000s: conservative politicians against both activist and researchers

From first third of the 1990s, the Japanese government committed to gender equality in a very clear way²⁵. This decade is characterized by a series of legislative and political reforms²⁶. This state feminism was at the crossroads of a new determination by the Japanese government to correct gender inequalities and the accomplishment of the commitment of various feminist groups to the UN bodies.

In June 1994, the Government of Japan, the Cabinet (Naikaku 内閣), established by order an internal advisory body to the Prime Minister, the Council for Gender Equality and the Assembly for Gender Equality. The importance of this Council for Gender Equality was increasing gradually. Its prerogatives were increased by a law passed by Parliament in March 1997 under

²⁵ Vera MACKIE, *Feminism in Modern Japan: Citizenship, Embodiment and Sexuality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 179.

²⁶ Yasuo TAKAO, “Japanese women in grassroots politics: building a gender-equal society from the bottom up”, *The Pacific Review*, 2 (20) del junio 2006, p. 148.

the government of Hashimoto Ryûtarô 橋本 太郎 太郎 (Liberal Democratic Party, LDP). In 2001, during a general reorganization of the government (defined by law of June 1998), the various gender equality bodies were restructured and installed in the Cabinet, which directly administers four other ministerial offices on which the Council for Gender Equality²⁷. This reorganization gave much more power and prestige to the Council for Gender Equality, which is placed on the same level as the other Councils. The creation of the Council of Gender Equality, the Assembly and Headquarters for Gender Equality transcended political divisions. It works culminated in the drafting of the Basic Law for Gender Equality (Danjo kyôdo sankaku shakai kihonhō 男女共同参画社会基本法). Validated by the parliament on 23 June 1999, this law comes into force on 22 December 1999²⁸. The guidelines of this law have a limited value, since their non-compliance is not punishable by law²⁹. In order to put in place the guidelines laid down in the Basic Law for Gender Equality, the Council established a Basic Plan for Gender Equality (Danjo kyôdo sankaku kihon keikaku 男女平等参画社会基本計画). The Basic Plan indicates concrete measures to be taken in several areas: education is one of this area³⁰.

In this specific context, education was administrated as a specific field. However, I will show that the activist agenda and the government priorities on education were very different. In fact, the government was far from the way the feminist activist imagined an education without sexism. By analysing the controversial debate on gender free education, I will point out how feminist group initiatives were wiped away by national political measures.

Since the establishment of a national machinery for gender equality in the mid-1990s, there was evidence of opposition to government reforms for gender equality in education. These divisions were expressed in the political sphere as well as in the civil sphere and the daily media³¹. In particular, many of the LDP members did not feel well represented by Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryûtarô, who had a very liberal view of the status of women and did not represent the Party official line³². These disagreements, however, did not raise during the late 1990s but only at the beginning of the 2000 decade. Moreover, only one area of the Basic Law seems

²⁷ The Cabinet office organization is available on the official website of the Cabinet office on <http://www.cao.go.jp/about/doc/soshikizu.pdf> (consulta 25 marzo 2017).

²⁸ Japanese Council for Gender Equality website: http://www.gender.go.jp/about_danjo/law/kihon/9906kihonhou.html#anc_3rd .

²⁹ Laura DALES, *Feminist movements in contemporary Japan*, New York, Routledge, 2009, p. 27.

³⁰ The document in original Japanese version and its English translation is available on the Council official website on http://www.gender.go.jp/english_contents/about_danjo/lbp/laws/pdf/laws_01.pdf (consulta 25 marzo 2017).

³¹ Kimio ITÔ 伊藤公雄, “Bakkurasshu no kôzu バックラッシュの構図” (The Backlash structure), *Nihon josei gakkaiishi* 日本女子学会誌 (The journal of Japanese women’s studies), 11 del 2004, p. 8-19.

³² Mari OSAWA, “Government approaches to Gender Equality in the mid-1990s”, *Social Science Japan Journal*, 1 (3) del 2000, p. 4-5.

particularly problematic for those opposed to the government project: education. For example, in February 2000, Tsuchiya Takayuki 敬之 敬之, a member of the Democratic Party of Central Japan (Minshutô 民主党), criticized and banned the Gender check booklets of the Tōkyō Women's Group at the Metropolitan Assembly Of Tōkyō, of which he has been a member since 1997. As a result, several libraries in the city are withdrawing books where the term gender free appears. Several demonstrations and speeches which are claimed against gender-free education succeed each other: it is thus that what is now called the "bashing of the gender free education" (*jenda furi kyōiku basshingu*).

The bashing gained visibility with its media coverage. The collusion between the conservative media and many political and public figures effectively relays the arguments of anti-gender free. For example, the Sankei newspaper, one of the main newspaper in Japan, regularly published articles denouncing gender-free education. These media supported the need for differentiated gender roles and agitate the scarecrow of a society that would ultimately be destroyed by sex no-distinction and a supposed hermaphroditism (sic)³³. Several newspapers partially funded by religious organizations, such as the Viewpoint magazine, Sapio, Jiji hyōron magazine and Sekai Nippō, accuse the Basic Plan for Gender Equality of all evils, criticize gender-free education and vilify its supporters, Whether they be teachers, researchers or activists. The various newspapers gathered in the Fuji Sankei group thus support the Group's arguments to protect children from sexual education or education³⁴.

During the 2003 year, this bashing turned out to have direct consequences for primary schools and also junior high schools. The newspaper Sankei, under the guidance of Ishihara Shintarō, at that time governor of Tokyo, published in July 2003 fake news on a specialized school in Tokyo suburbs: they claimed the school was giving explicit sex contents instead of sexual education, with special dolls and song. Even if this was not true, the Tokyo education board punished some teachers and the director of the school. After this event, which was over mediatized in the newspaper Sankei, The Tōkyō Education Board sanctioned 22 principals and

³³ Mari KOTANI 小谷真理, "Tekuhara toshite no bakkurasshu. Mahōgari no tokkōyaku, shohō shimasu" テクハラとしてのバックラッシュー魔法狩りの特効薬、処方します (There is the miracle remedy for the witch hunt: backlash of agressing technocrats), en Chizuko UENO 上野千鶴子 (eds.), *Bakkurashu! Naze jendā furī ha tatakareta noka ? バックラッシュ！なぜジェンダーフリーは叩かれたのか？* (Backlash! Why gender free was attacked ?), Tōkyō, Sōfūsha 双風舎, 2006,

³⁴ Tomomi YAMAGUCHI, "“Gender Free” Feminism in Japan: A Story of Mainstreaming and Backlash", *Feminist Studies*, vol. 3, n° 40, 2014, p. 556-558.

vice-principals, as well as 102 teachers (moral blame, wage cut, imposed mutation)³⁵. Even if the school lodge a complaint against the Education Board and won it several years after, this event, known under the name of the specialized school, the case of Nanaoyôgo School, has destroyed the trust between teachers and Ministry of Education bureaucrats. Schools were scrutinized by the reactionary politicians. Especially, in 2005, Member of Parliament Yamatani Eriko and Abe Shinzô created the Gender Education and excessive sex education investigation Team, in order to stop what they defined as gender free education³⁶. Since then, schools and teachers are very un-at-ease to handle with gender or sex education.

In a few years, gender-free education has become a polemic subject and well-known to the public. These attacks on gender-free education also turned from 2005 to the academic world. Through the gender free education bashing, gender studies and gender as conceptual tool were attacked by the more conservative politicians. The need for feminism and the reality of women's studies or gender studies in Japan were denigrated. Some politicians were directly saying that University speech was dubious and the accelerated publication of anti-pro and gender-free works contributed to blurring the debate. For example, the governor of Tôkyô Ishihara Shintarô banned in January 2006 a conference of Ueno Chizuko probably the most famous feminist scholar of contemporary Japan. Ishihara Shintarô was explaining that the term gender free could be used³⁷. Ueno Chizuko and many scholars protested but finally the conference was cancelled. From that time, many scholars wrote about gender free education, and tried to explain what occurred during the 2000s³⁸. Kimura Ryôko, a professor specialist of gender and education field, directed the first book aiming at defusing the backlash effects. Entitled *Gender free trouble. Understanding the bashing phenomenon*, this book is explaining how Japanese government came to attack education. Many of the authors referred to the American context of the 1990s,

³⁵ Yûji KODAMA 児玉勇二, *Seikyôiku saiban: nanaoyôgo gakkô jiken ga nokoshita mono* 性教育裁判: 七生養護学校事件が残したもの (Sexual education in process: what is remaining of the case of Nanaoyôgo school), Tôkyô, Iwanami shoten 岩波書店, 2009, p. 7-8.

³⁶ Hisashi SEKIGUCHI 関口久志, “Seikyôiku basshingu sono nerai to haikai” 性教育バッシング—その狙いと背景— (Context and consequences of the sexual education bashing), *Minshu kyôikukenyûjo nenpô* 民主教育研究所年報 (Research Institute of Democracy and Education bulletin), Tôkyô, Minshu kyôiku kenkyûjo 民主教育研究所, 5 del 2004, p. 64-65.

³⁷ Chizuko UENO 上野千鶴子, “Fuan na otokotachi no kimyô na rentai. Jendâ furî basshingu no haikai o megutte” 不安なオトコたちの奇妙な連帯—ジェンダーフリー・バッシングの背景をめぐって (The strange solidarity between men who feel in danger. Around gender free education bashing), en Chizuko UENO 上野千鶴子 (dir.), *Bakkurashu! Naze jendâ furî ha tatakareta noka ?* バックラッシュ! なぜジェンダーフリーは叩かれたのか? (Backlash! Why gender free was attacked?), Tôkyô, Sôfûsha 双風舎, 2006, p. 380-381.

³⁸ Noriko HASHIMOTO 橋本紀子 y Reiko YOSHIMURA 吉村玲子, Danjo kyôgaku no seido no jôkyô to kadai 男女共学の制度の状況と課題 (Actuality and problems set by the school system and coeducation), *Minshu kyôikukenyûjo nenpô* 民主教育研究所年報 (Research Institute of Democracy and Education bulletin), Tôkyô, Minshu kyôiku kenkyûjo 民主教育研究所, 5 del 2004, p. 4-8.

when conservatism turned out to be the mainstream political frame, and when feminism was harshly criticized. Similarly, Ueno Chizuko directed one of the two main books on the topic: *Backlash! Why gender free was attacked?*, published in 2006 and written on the spot of the bashing context. These two books are focusing on academic and political debates but are also presenting and supporting initiatives risen by teachers and activists. At that point, scholars and activists were both concerned by the bashing. Exchanges between activist and scholars were at that time reinforced. For instance, the NGO the National Network for Education Promoting Gender Equality (Danjo byôdô o susumeru kyôiku zenkoku nettowâku 男女平等をすすめる教育全国ネットワーク) was gathering more scholars to work with teachers. This association, which dates from 1997 and has its headquarters in the department of Saitama, easily accessible from the north of Tokyo, brings together many teachers around Tôkyô³⁹. Teachers may, for example, carry out activities that lead children to reflect on gender equality / sexuality / sex education and thus link them to the different local actors involved in educational policies for gender equal education⁴⁰.

This kind of cooperation between activist and scholars was particularly important when the conservative politicians tried to remove from the Basic Law for Education the concept of coeducation, at the same time the gender free education bashing was occurring. Article 5 of the Basic Law for Education, which guarantees co-education and mutual respect between the sexes, was being said useless in nowadays Japan by the Ministry of Education⁴¹. When the Ministry of Education proposed to abolish it in the early 2000s, teachers and feminist networks strongly opposed it. Several teachers' organizations or feminist groups, helped by scholars, have been mobilized to ensure that Article 5 would be retained. In addition to an information campaign on Japanese territory, these organizations have sent extensive reports to the General Secretariat for the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) for the meeting of the 2009 Commission of Inquiry. The Japan Network on Education for the Advancement of Gender Equality, a majority of teachers and professors, provided a detailed report. It is explained that removing the article on coeducation is irrelevant in terms of the proportion of colleges and single-sex schools and the proportions of male and female students at university or in the most prestigious courses. Nevertheless,

³⁹ Their official website is on <http://danjo-bsk.net/index.htm> (consulta 25 marzo 2017).

⁴⁰ Laura DALES, "Connection and Collaboration: Women's Centre and NGO Women's Groups in Japan", *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asia Context*, 15 del 2007, available on <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue15/dales.htm>. (consulta 25 marzo 2017)

⁴¹ Christian GALAN, "La réforme de la Loi fondamentale de l'éducation de 2006 : quelle réponse à la "crise" du système éducatif japonais ? ", *Japon pluriel 9, Actes du neuvième colloque de la Société française des études japonaises*, Arles, Philippe Picquier, 2014, p. 497.

actions to retain Article 5 failed. After a synthesis of the various reports of the Japanese representatives, the CEDAW Committee expressed its concerns about the deletion of Article 5 and recommended its reinstatement in the Basic Law⁴². The Japanese government has not yielded and these international pressures have not had any effect. Article 5 was therefore deleted in the final version adopted in 2006⁴³.

Efforts of the activist for keeping the article 5 stating coeducation were not successful during the 2000s. The bashing towards gender free education was spreading through the national machinery, even if the government was supporting measures for a gender equal society. Academics failed at that time in their mission of popularization: the term gender free still carried with it a negative image of scandal, especially when dealing with sex education. Media bashing declined after 2006 but remains very present in the minds today. It is very interesting to see how, from the gender free education movement, the conservative government tried to aggress gender studies, by focusing on the word “gender” and by accusing feminist to destroy the “traditional” Japanese family. In that sense, we can see that circulation from activist to scholars were far more complex when political context intervened during the backlash.

Conclusion

During the 1970s and 1980s, scholar’s works on girl’s education were the reference for feminist groups who managed to push pressure on the Ministry of Education to change the course of study. However, from the 1990s, school teachers and groups were engaged in a concrete way to change schools customs relative to coeducation and sex equality, precisely during the decade during which gender studies gained their academics status at Japanese University.

To the surprise of feminist groups and scholars, when the Japanese government became involved in gender equality in the mid-1990s, only the educational area of the Basic Plan for Gender Equality provoked a severe rejection. The most conservative politicians mobilized to defend their vision of the gender roles they felt threatened by gender-free education. This campaign of backlash, well spread by the conservative and nationalist newspapers, has left a stigma on every attempt to reform the school system with regard to sex education and gender

⁴² The CEDAW committee report for Japan is available on <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/co/CEDAW.C.JPN.CO.6.pdf> (consulta 25 marzo 2017).

⁴³ Kumiko FUJIMURA-FANSELOW y Midori WAKAKUWA, Backlash against gender equality after 2000, en Kumiko FUJIMURA-FANSELOW (eds.), *Transforming Japan: how feminism and diversity are making a difference*, New York, Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2011, p. 348-355.

equality issues. Since gender free education activists were especially targeting primary schools routine sexism, primary schools were the most stricken by the bashing. When considering the backlash more than 10 years later, it is still surprising to see how touchy the words “gender free education” had become. Political reactions and gender free education bashing in Japan during the 2000s reminds us how educational principles reveal the fundamental conception of the citizens the government want to norm and why the authorities wish to regulate the norms defined by the school system.

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Short Curriculum Vitae

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