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paper

Preliminary title :

31 maart 2017 om 16:37

MATHEMATICS FOR WOMEN IN TEACHER TRAINING SCHOOLS IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY IN SPAIN

Abstract :

The need to organise the primary education for women began to be taking into account in Spain in the second half of the nineteenth Century in the Ley de Instrucción Pública (Law of Public Instruction), adopted on July 17th 1857, and known as “Ley Moyano” (“Moyano’s Law”), by the name of its promoter. In spite of the progressive character of this law in its intention to improve women education, the law establishes important differences in the syllabus of mathematics, both in primary education for boys and girls and in the teacher training schools for men and women. Indeed, Moyano’s Law first establishes the syllabus for boys, and in a later article says that for girls some parts of the syllabus for boys have to be omitted. As regards to mathematics, the part that has to be omitted is Geometry. Furthermore, the law establishes that, instead of the parts omitted, girls have to be taught “*Labores propias del sexo*”, literally “the tasks befitting her sex” (meaning sewing, embroidering, weaving and homework), and “*Elements of drawing applied to those tasks*”. The law establishes also that in the teacher training schools for women they have to study the subjects included in the syllabus for girls in primary education. As a consequence of this, Geometry is also excluded in the teacher training schools for women. Moyano’s Law also established that there will be a teacher training

school for men (Escuela Normal de Maestros) in each of the fifty provinces of Spain, but, as far as teacher training schools for women (Escuela Normal de Maestras) are concerned, the law only stated that the Government would try to promote them “where convenient”. In Valencia, a Escuela Normal de Maestras was promoted in 1860, and opened its doors in 1867, 150 years ago. Teachers in the teacher training schools for women were both men and women. In the one of Valencia there are two women teaching mathematics who also publish textbooks for their students, thirty years after its opening. Carmen Cervera published a 110 pages book on fractions, entitled *Lijero estudio de las fracciones comunes* [Slight study of common fractions], and Francisca Ferrer a 174 pages book, entitled *Elementos de Geometría plana y descriptiva y nociones de dibujo, con aplicación a las labores de la maestra* [Elements of plane and descriptive geometry and notions of drawing, with application to the tasks befitting the women teacher]. This second one represents the way in which geometry reappears in the syllabus for women through its application to one of the “tasks befitting her sex”. We present an analysis of both books and compare them with what was taught in teacher training schools for men. Cervera, C. (1897). *Lijero estudio de las fracciones comunes*. Valencia: Imprenta de Francisco Vives Mora. Ferrer, F. (1897). *Elementos de Geometría plana y descriptiva y nociones de dibujo, con aplicación a las labores de la maestra*. Valencia: Imprenta Gombau, Vicent y Masiá. Ministerio de Fomento (1857). *Ley de Instrucción Pública*. Madrid: Imprenta Nacional.