


## Chapter 169

# Why discuss sexual and gender diversity in school?

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### **ABSTRACT**

The uniqueness of different subjects and cultures within the school leads us to reflect on the socialization processes that take place in this environment of social relations. Several currents have been propagating ideas and producing theories, in order to categorize relationships that involve equality, inequality and difference. The purpose of this work is to investigate how gender and sexual diversity issues are addressed in the school context and to try to think about sexual and gender diversity in school from a relational perspective, problematizing the role of the teacher in an attempt to seek the essentialization of identity. Understanding this issue as indispensable for discussions on this theme, and bringing not only authors who work with gender and sexuality, but also the contributions of analyses on culture, interculturality and the development of equity within the school. The research methodology is qualitative, and the analyses started from a bibliographic study. To support this production, works by authors such as Castro, Louro, Candau, Silva and others were used. The results show the importance of the teacher's social work in understanding and discussing the theme of sexual and gender diversity.

**Keywords:** Sexuality, Gender, Interculturality, Education.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Today's reality, not unlike other times, presents us with countless contradictions. As in every period of transformations, at the same time that we see and live with sexual diversity increasingly present and less labeled, prejudiced, discriminatory and violent attitudes of conservative groups are sustained.

In the family, in the circle of friends, in the community, at work and, of course, at school, these discussions between new and old views on sexual and gender diversity is a current and quite comprehensive subject. And it is known that the school, as an institution responsible for the construction of knowledge has a relevant role in the socialization and interaction of knowledge and practices related to diversity. From this perspective, the research problem presents itself as bringing the following question: Are the school and the teacher really prepared to treat sexual and gender diversity in the educational environment? What is the importance of discussing these relationships in schools?

To answer the leading questions, the general objective of this study was to investigate how gender and sexual diversity issues are addressed in the school context and to try to think about sexual and gender diversity in school from a relational perspective, problematizing the role of the teacher in an attempt to seek identity essentialization.

This work is justified by judging that, in schools, certain behavioral patterns of boys and girls are attributed homogeneously, and when a boy or girl does not follow the standards established by the school, these individuals are marginalized for not meeting an expected social model. (LAUREL, 2013).

To perform this work and considering the particularities of this theme, as a School Psychologist, it was perceived the need for discussions and reflections that address the issues about sexual diversity, in order to minimize the conflicts raised within the school environment, the research methodology is qualitative and the analyses started from a bibliographic study in an attempt to reflect on the fundamental issues previously mentioned. According to Gil (2002), this type of research allows the coverage of a wider range of phenomena than that that could be investigated directly. To support this production will be used works by authors such as Castro (2004), Louro (1999 and 2013), Candau (2012), Silva (2013) among others who will dialogue with us expanding the discussion on the proposed theme.

## **2 EDUCATION FOR DIVERSITY**

In the course of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st century, the struggles for gender equality and respect for diversity have been regular. However, the preponderance of discriminatory attitudes in all social groups is still as persistent a reality as it is naturalized.

In order to offer the country an education with rights of all and egalitarian, the Ministry of Education created a bill of guidelines and bases of national education, which resulted in the first Law of Guidelines and Bases No. 4,024/61, sanctioned in December 1961. Over the years it was modified and reformed until it was replaced by LDB 9,394/96.

In this sense, every legal wording related to the LDB goes to meet with the conception of the Federal Constitution, establishing the standardization of the educational system over time. However, there is still a legal foreplay for equity, with the exception of the Maria da Penha Law, which clearly presents the need to debate gender inequality in school, the other legal instruments such as ldb, mentioned above, do not explicitly guarantee the approach of the rights of people LGBTs, for example.

According to Barros (2007) the school should be an environment of construction of new social knowledge that will be shared and learned, school life is a critical experience to discriminatory practices. There has been a growth of discussions such as discrimination by: race, sex or disability being part of the school education agenda in the last decade.

According to Louro (1999) the school must exercise a pedagogy of sexuality and gender, putting into action various government technologies, determining their ways of being or way of living through their sexuality and gender. It is at school that disrespect for sexual diversity is presented through verbal and/or

physical aggression, isolation and exclusion, where the consequences can be school dropout and the suffering of the individual.

The pedagogical practices we observe in the school environment are constructed through the relationship of the subject with himself, when dealing with demands aimed at sexual diversity in the day-to-day of school, it is possible to make a deconstruction of prejudiced speeches and even bullying, leading the student to reflect on such situations, this reflection allied to a psychoeducation focused on the theme will change according to the experience it has of itself, this is the result of the historical process that intersects with the discourses that define the truth, and the practices that regulate its behavior, thus constituting its subjectivity, (LARROSA, 1994).

Sexual orientation, with the proposition of the National Curricular Parameters, was incorporated into the cross-cutting themes Issues about sexual health, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancy, themes related to sexual and reproductive rights, with the educational function of identifying and questioning taboos and prejudices that are linked to sexuality and deconstruction of gender stereotypes. (BRASIL, 1998).

School dynamics suppose different components to break with homogenizing and standardized trends. For Moreira and Candau (2012):

The school has always had difficulty dealing with pluralities and difference. It tends to silence and neutralize them. You feel more comfortable with homogenization and standardization. However, making room for diversity, difference and the crossing of cultures is the great challenge that is called to face (p. 161).

It is understood that the school, while an educational institution can understand the dynamics of society, that it is constantly changing and changing, that discussions about sexual diversity is of great importance for the construction of critical thoughts evoked in students, and the same results through an understanding of this knowledge.

It is essential to think of the school for diversity, and to think of education not as an indoctrination capable of converting people to homosexuality or bisexuality, as if this were possible. The aim is to create opportunities within the school so that teachers and students can learn and teach conviviality with the differences that naturally exist within all of us. This dialogue in the school environment may minimize the suffering experienced by the students, such as harassment and bullying made by their own colleagues, as well as the distancing of certain school spaces.

According to the PCNs, the discussion of sexual orientation in schools is a factor that contributes to the knowledge and appreciation of sexual and reproductive rights. This debate on sexual orientation also serves to prevent serious problems such as sexual abuse and unwanted pregnancy. Studies on gender and sexuality influence the survey of issues and planning actions in school from a perspective of education for diversity and, thus, to an education that combats discrimination and prejudices, gender violence and violence against women.

The school, which includes this discussion about sexual diversity in its pedagogical project, enables children and adolescents from the focus of interest that marks this stage of their lives, which is so important in the construction of their identity. It is necessary that the school be an open space for reflection and acceptance of the student in his individuality and freedom of expression.

In order to promote diversity in school, it is necessary that in the process of teacher education take place more in-depth debates on gender and sexuality issues, with mandatory disciplines that deal with the theme. As well, it is essential to deconstruct the resistance to talk about sexual diversity and differences in the educational environment.

It is essential today that public policies be expanded, created and established for education professionals who work on discussions on diversity beyond common sense. In addition to bringing this universe closer to the sexual and gender diversity of educators who are not fully aware of it, thus expanding the debate about sexuality, gender, sexism, in short, a series of broader issues that are fundamental to overcome an intrinsic heteronormative environment in school.

### **3 THE SOCIAL ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN THE FACE OF THE ISSUE OF SEXUAL AND GENDER DIVERSITY IN SCHOOL**

Teachers should improve their knowledge and follow the changes in society, the importance of the teacher's knowledge on this theme is in line with what the PCN (2011) states about the need for this subject in teacher education, to raise this discussion with students from a professional posture that will provide the construction of a guided and conscious debate on the subject.

There is a need to work on sex education in the educational environment, this theme is part of the construction of the subject, because questions will appear on the part of students and the teacher cannot simply ignore this demand. The discussion of this subject in the classroom is extremely relevant, since according to the PCN's it is a topic to be addressed, given the circumstances that adolescents tend to face at this stage of life due to their sexuality.

There is a gap in teacher education in relation to didactic techniques and strategies when it comes to inclusive pedagogy. Working with respect and sexual diversity at school and establishing some actions may reduce homophobia. Some actions can be experienced, and will certainly decrease the possibilities of homophobia in school:

- Welcoming and strengthening young people who isolate themselves from the group;
- Promote a frank debate on respect for different sexual orientations.
- The teacher should give an opinion on the subject only at the end of the discussions.
- Present sociocultural data and research;
- Propose activities that favor the participation of the shyest.
- Encourage them to draw their own conclusions.

- Invite parents to participate in a chat about homophobia and sexual diversity with students whenever possible;

The teacher's social role is to speak openly about sexual diversity, prejudice, not only about homosexuality, but other minorities in terms of representativeness. Silva, (2013) states:

The "social role" of the teacher and the teacher is to discuss prejudice, to speak openly, without fears. Speak with subtlety, without offending those who commit the crime of intolerance. With affection and good argumentation we can stop not only prejudice, but also make people who commit hostilities realize how *naïve or ideologically driven they are by reproducing* what society itself *reproduces* and from there sensitize students to the path of tolerance and mutual respect. (p. 17).

Sex education is not an education for sex, it is a clarification education related to sexuality in general as well as appears in the cross-sectional PCNs, due to sexual orientation being found in several areas of knowledge. In addition, this theme will be introduced in educational practice, because each area will work on this theme from its work practice (BRASIL, 1997).

Sexuality is something natural that is part of the life of the human being, and it is not possible to "pretend" that such a sphere does not exist, especially in the life of adolescents. Sexuality is related not only to the biological, but to the social and cultural, but it remains seen as taboo for most people. So when dealing with adolescents this subject will appear in an evident way, and the school context is the opportune place to discuss it.

According to Borges and Tardif (2001), the school is the place of knowledge and knowledge formation, in which teachers are considered as practical and reflective, establishing a connection in the formation of basic education. Thus, it is possible to identify that this reflexive social formation that should occur within the educational environment may have been lost over time. The school should remain more open to social discussions and should not lose its essence when it comes to debating social issues.

In the view of Paulo Freire (1987) the educator has the task of acting dialogically, working in an interdisciplinary way, in which the content is not an imposition, but a revolution added to the students, with no forbidden themes in this scenario, since those that seem to promote more controversy or conflicts are precisely the ones that need to be worked on best. The dialogical in the classroom still needs to go beyond the vision of being worked on sexuality only in biology content, and it is evident the role that biology teachers assume in the classroom when it comes to sexuality.

The educational institution should reflect to understand the changes that occur in society, that discussions on sexual diversity are of great importance for the construction of critical thoughts with students, because the school is seen as one of the most appropriate places for this type of discussion, since students are there to learn and exchange experiences, without that look of judgment or violence.

Moreira and Candau (2012) state that the school has difficulties in dealing with differences, but has a great challenge to face when making room for diversity. Some personal problems of the students are identified by the teachers from a simple listening, in which the student feels alone, has no attention from

the family, nor the opportunity to talk about certain subjects that are making him or her distressed, and some of them are related to sexuality.

The school needs to recognize that sexual and gender diversity do not follow the hegemonic patterns of behavior, and that everyone has the right to quality public education, as well as full education, which does not have as a price the invisibility of their identities and the denial of their individuality.

#### **4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

From the research carried out, it is perceived that sexuality is still generally seen as a taboo to be discussed in the school environment.

Given the theoretical context explored, sexuality assumes several forms of expression that are related to the social life of the human being, not limited only to the biological. So, with regard to the school context, the debate about sexuality must be growing, expanding beyond the biological context, especially considering its cultural dimension.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that addressing topics such as this is essential by parents, educators, psychology and psychiatry professionals and all individuals belonging to society. Only with a focus, truly consistent and effective, will we train people who think the collective, empathically and less egocentric, in order to reduce inequalities.

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