

**GENDER AND DIVERSITY AT SCHOOL AND THEIR INTERFACE IN TEACHER
EDUCATION: THE EXPERIENCE OF GDE/UFPB**

***GÊNERO E DIVERSIDADE NA ESCOLA E SUA INTERFACE NA FORMAÇÃO DE
PROFESSORES/AS: A EXPERIÊNCIA DO GDE/UFPB***

***GÉNERO Y DIVERSIDAD EN LA ESCUELA Y SU INTERFAZ EN LA FORMACIÓN
DOCENTE: LA EXPERIENCIA DE/LA GDE/UFPB***



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How to reference this article:

SILVA, J. F. da; CARVALHO, M. E. P. de; MIRANDA, J. dos R. Gender and diversity at school and their interface in teacher education: The experience of GDE/UFPB. **Revista Ibero-Americana de Estudos em Educação**, Araraquara, v. 18, n. 00, e023127, 2023. e-ISSN: 1982-5587. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21723/riaee.v18i00.16681>



Submitted: 15/04/2022
Revisions required: 23/05/2022
Approved: 15/11/2022
Published: 12/12/2023

Editor: Prof. Dr. José Luís Bizelli

Deputy Executive Editor: Prof. Dr. José Anderson Santos Cruz

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ABSTRACT: This paper focuses on the Gender and Diversity at School (GDE) program, a pioneering nationwide teacher continual education policy proposal. Initially, it places this initiative in the current Brazilian political context. It then presents the experience of its first class, sponsored by the Interdisciplinary Gender Center (NIPAM) of the College of Education of the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB), in 2014-2015. Mainly, it addresses the recent experience of its second class, in 2020-2021, through distance education, during the social isolation resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on responses to a questionnaire applied in July 2021, it describes its students' motivations and expectations. At this time of attack on gender studies and policies, especially in schools, it concludes by arguing the importance of including the gender perspective in teacher education.

KEYWORDS: Gender. Diversity. Teacher education. GDE.

RESUMO: Este texto trata do Curso de Especialização Gênero e Diversidade na Escola (GDE), uma proposta pioneira, de âmbito nacional, destinada à formação de educadoras/es. Inicialmente, recupera a proposta de oferta desse curso de formação docente continuada, situando-a em seu contexto político. Em seguida, apresenta a experiência do Núcleo Interdisciplinar de Pesquisa e Ação sobre Mulher e Relações de Sexo e Gênero, do Centro de Educação da Universidade Federal da Paraíba, em sua primeira oferta, em 2014-2015. Focaliza, então, a experiência recente de sua segunda turma em 2020-2021, no formato à distância, durante o isolamento social decorrente da pandemia de Covid-19, e descreve seu alunado, suas motivações e expectativas, com base em um questionário aplicado em julho de 2021. Neste momento de ataque aos estudos e às políticas de gênero, especialmente na educação escolar, finaliza argumentando sobre a importância da inclusão da perspectiva de gênero na formação docente.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Gênero. Diversidade. Formação docente. GDE.

RESUMEN: Este texto trata sobre el Curso de Especialización en Género y Diversidad en la Escuela (GDE), una propuesta pionera, en Brasil, dirigida a la formación de educadores. Inicialmente, recupera la propuesta de formación continua de profesores sobre esos temas, situándola en su contexto político. Luego presenta la experiencia del Centro Interdisciplinario de Investigación y Acción sobre Mujer y Relaciones de Género, del Centro de Educación de la Universidad Federal de Paraíba, en su primera oferta, en 2014-2015. Enfoca la experiencia reciente de su segunda promoción en 2020-2021, en el formato a distancia, durante la pandemia del Covid-19, y describe a sus alumnos, sus motivaciones y expectativas, con base en un cuestionario aplicado en julio de 2021. En este momento de ataque a los estudios y políticas de género, especialmente en la educación escolar, termina argumentando sobre la importancia de incluir la perspectiva de género en la formación docente.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Género. Diversidad. Formación de profesores. GDE.

Introduction

Think of a course that I will never regret taking! The GDE is an academic and life experience that greatly expanded my views on sexuality, gender, ethnic-racial relations and methodological knowledge as a teacher/student. I just have to thank (STUDENT, man).

The student's speech used to open this text served as a motto to inspire his writing, which aims to present the experience of the Interdisciplinary Center for Research and Action on Women and Sex and Gender Relations (NIPAM), of the Education Center (CE) from the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB), offering the second class of the Gender and Diversity at School Course (GDE). The Course was held between August 2020 and December 2021, in a distance format, due to the context of social isolation resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The “Gender and Diversity at School” Course (GDE) had its origins in the mid-2000s, from a joint initiative of the Special Secretariat for Policies for Women (SPM/PR), Special Secretariat for Racial Equality Policies (SEPPIR/PR), Secretariat for Continuing Education, Literacy and Diversity (SECAD/MEC) and the British Council, a UK body focused on promoting human rights, education and culture. It was part of the Diversity Education Network (Network), responsible for disseminating the necessary and urgent policies for the inclusion of gender, sexual orientation and race/ethnicity in Brazilian basic education, in which teacher training is strategic, as can still be found in the Ministry of Education website:

The Diversity Education Network (Network) is a permanent group of public higher education institutions dedicated to the continued training of education professionals. The objective is to disseminate and develop educational methodologies for the inclusion of diversity themes in everyday classrooms. Continuing training courses are offered for public basic education teachers in eight areas of diversity: ethnic-racial relations, gender and diversity, training of tutors, young people and adults, rural education, integral and integrated education, environmental and diversity and citizenship (BRAZIL, c2018, our translation).

The first offer of the GDE occurred in 2006 as a pilot project, offered by the Latin American Center for Sexuality and Human Rights of the Institute of Social Medicine of the State University of Rio de Janeiro (CLAM/IMS/UERJ). It provided a 180-hour certificate, as an extension course for participants with a high school level, and as an improvement course for participants with a higher education degree. In this first offer, 1,200 education professionals were enrolled from the municipalities of Niterói and Nova Iguaçu (Rio de Janeiro), Maringá (Paraná), Dourados (Mato Grosso do Sul), Porto Velho (Rondônia) and Salvador (Bahia). Around “900 education professionals” completed the course (HENRIQUES *et al.*, 2007, p. 54).

For the initial offer, CLAM/IMS/UERJ prepared the Course's teaching material, which was organized into four modules – Diversity, Gender, Sexuality and Sexual Orientation, and Race and Ethnicity⁴. Thus, another important gain of the GDE stands out: the articulation between gender relations, ethnic-racial relations and sexual diversity, as well as between the issues of androcentrism, sexism, misogyny, racism, heterosexism and homophobia, indicating its thematic complexity.

The GDE was a commitment by Brazilian educational policy to contribute to reflection on issues of gender, sexuality and ethnic-racial relations in schools, with a view to contributing to the reduction of prejudices associated with the differences and diversities of our population. To achieve this, its central objective was:

[...] train educators from public basic education networks on the topics of gender, sexual orientation and ethnic-racial relations, aiming to provide them with tools to critically reflect on individual and collective pedagogical practice and combat all forms of discrimination in the school environment (HENRIQUES *et al.*, 2007, p. 54, our translation).

However, it is worth noting that the GDE, within the scope of federal management, was developed in an educational context in which policies of equality and appreciation of differences and identities emerged and were strengthened. In this context of public, social and specifically educational policies in which the GDE Course is inserted, there are some documents and laws, published since the end of the 1990s, listed below:

- National Curricular Parameters (PCN) – Cross-Cutting Themes Sexual Orientation and Cultural Plurality, from 1998, a milestone in the inclusion of gender, sexuality and diversity in Brazilian curriculum policy (BRASIL, 1998);
- National Education Plan (PNE) of 2001 – document that established guidelines and goals for education for a period of ten years since its publication, in which gender issues were considered in actions ranging from thematic insertion in the continuing training of education professionals to textbooks (BRASIL, 2001);
- National Policy Plans for Women – PNPM I, 2004, PNPM II, 2008 and PNPM III, 2013, remembering the creation of the Secretariat for Policies for Women, with the status of a ministry, linked to the Presidency of the Republic (SPM-PR), in 2003 (BRASIL, 2004a,

⁴The Course materials can be accessed on the CLAM website: <http://www.e-clam.org/gde.php> It is worth highlighting that this material, although it was produced within the scope of an action by the Ministry of Education, was taken from its official page.

2008, 2013);

- National Human Rights Education Plan (PNEDH), in two versions, the first launched in 2003 and the second in 2006, focusing on building a culture of human rights, exercising solidarity and respect for diversity;
- Brazil Without Homophobia Program – Program to Combat Violence and Discrimination against LGBT and Promote Homosexual Citizenship, from 2004, which had a specific section focused on actions to combat homo/lesbo/transphobia in the educational context (BRASIL, 2004b);
- Laws No. 10,639, of 2003, and No. 11,645, of 2008, establishing the mandatory inclusion of the theme “Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous History and Culture” in the basic education curriculum (BRASIL, 2008);
- Racial Equality Statute, Law 12,288/2010, aiming to guarantee rights and equal opportunities for the black population (BRASIL, 2010).

Thus, the Gender and Diversity at School Course can be considered “the most important national educational policy initiative aimed at continuing teacher training on the issue of gender inequality relations, linked to issues of race/ethnicity, sexuality and sexual orientation” (CARVALHO; FREITAS, 2018, p. 55, our translation), translating the investment of the Brazilian State, during this period, “to establish a culture of human rights and confront the various forms of discrimination present in social relations, through education, and from school” (CARVALHO; FREITAS, 2018, p. 55, our translation).

After the first offer, the GDE was decentralized and began to be offered in a distance or blended format by several Brazilian public universities, through the Universidade Aberta do Brasil (UAB) system, reaching the different regions of the country and providing, in addition to training specific to addressing issues of gender, sexuality and ethnic-racial relations, “the digital inclusion of basic education teachers” (CARVALHO; FREITAS, 2018, p. 55, our translation) in practice, an important gain in digital skills in continuing teacher training.

In this context of the GDE being offered decentrally by universities, the Course was offered by the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB), through the Interdisciplinary Center for Research and Action on Women and Sex and Gender Relations (NIPAM) of the Education Center (CE), with a workload of 200 hours, granting the aforementioned extension and improvement certificates. In 2009, NIPAM/CE/UFPB carried out the GDE Extension/Improvement Course in 12 municipalities in Paraíba that had UFPB-Virtual centers,

reaching 520 enrollments and 295 completions (CARVALHO, 2010).

In 2014, once again with the support of UFPB Virtual and its Distance Education Unit, NIPAM/CE/UFPB offered the Gender and Diversity in School Specialization Course (1st GDE - Specialization), aimed at teachers in the network public, education professionals in general, social educators and others interested in the topic, with a workload of 360 hours, in the distance education modality (EaD), but with some face-to-face classes and assessments. Certified by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies and Research (PRPG), according to Resolution No. 49/2013 of CONSEPE/UFPB, with financing from SECADI/MEC/FNDE (Process SECADI 23000.017937/2013-42) and financial management from COMFOR/ CPME/PRG, the course offered 300 places, completely free. Through partnerships with the Education Departments of the Paraíba municipalities of Alagoa Grande, Areia, Araruna, Cabedelo, Pitimbu and João Pessoa, it enrolled 339 participants, 267 women and 72 men, the majority from João Pessoa (NIPAM, 2015).

Its curriculum was composed of seven successive modules, with printed and digital material, via *CD-rom*, namely: Introduction to distance education (IEAD), Diversity, Preparation of a Pedagogical Project (EPP), Ethnic-racial Relations, Gender Relations, Sexuality and Sexual Orientation, and Research Project Methodology (MPP). On the *Moodle PEX* platform, the modules were taught by teachers with a doctorate, supported by postgraduate or postgraduate tutors, with specialization and/or activism in their themes, and intensive work in the virtual learning environment (AVA), aiming to avoid evasion, common in distance learning courses (NIPAM, 2015).

The in-person Inaugural Class of the 1st GDE-Specialization took place on June 16, 2014, in different shifts and times to accommodate the maximum number of participants. The course was expected to take 18 months, but it lasted until December 2015 (NIPAM, 2015), with the completion of 148 participants, 110 women and 38 men, who presented their course completion work (TCC) in September 28th to December 11th.

The orientation for the TCCs was that they should articulate theory and practice, focusing on intervention proposals in the curriculum, management, teaching and school relations; treat gender across any theme; and adopt intersectionality, including other differences and inequalities, such as social class, disability, age/generation, in addition to race-ethnicity and sexual orientation. Thematic interests were organized into umbrella projects to enable collective guidance in research groups (NIPAM, 2015). Thus, the 1st GDE-Specialization was an unusual mass postgraduate experience, made possible by distance learning and MEC funding, with an

overall yield rate of 45.53%, subtracting the 14 registrants who never accessed *Moodle Pex* (NIPAM, 2015).

Rosa (2016), in her master's thesis, investigated the impacts of the 1st GDE-Specialization offered by NIPAM/UFPB on the pedagogical practice of the participants, analyzing written texts from 69 teachers who took the Gender Module to highlight their learning throughout the life and at the end of the module, and the possibilities for new meaning provided by the course. The author concluded that the aforementioned module contributed to teachers redefining their learning and seeking to develop pedagogical practices that were more gender-equal, and committed to respecting diversity at school.

The Experience of the 2nd GDE-Specialization at NIPAM/CE/UFPB

In 2020, NIPAM/CE/UFPB started offering a second class of the GDE-Specialization. The curriculum for the second offer of the Specialization Course in Gender and Diversity at School was approved through CONSEPE/UFPB Resolution No. 45/2019, which established a total course load of 390 class hours distributed across 7 modules, as in the first offer, and the Course Conclusion Work. These curricular components were taught by teachers from the Education Center/UFPB under the responsibility of NIPAM/CE/UFPB (UFPB, 2019).

It is worth noting that for the second group, as indicated in the Course Resolution, face-to-face meetings were planned at two moments, at the beginning and at the end of each subject. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the system needed to be reorganized and activities began to take place synchronously (through the *Google Meet platform*) and asynchronously (based on activities carried out through the *Moodle Pex platform*). This second course offering began in August 2020, ending in December 2021.

With regard to the Course Completion Work, this consisted of the preparation, by the student, of a text resulting from empirical or bibliographical research, in the form of a scientific article, whose object of study was related to the field of Education in interface with the themes of Gender and/or Sexuality and/or Ethnic-Racial Relations.

Offering 100 places, completely free of charge, the course had 75 people signed up for the selection process and 74 duly enrolled, 43 women, 30 men and 01 non-binary person, aged between 24 and 50 years old. With the closing of the course in December 2021, we recorded an evasion – either due to withdrawal or failure – of 19 students, 7 men and 12 women; Therefore, 55 students completed the course, including 1 non-binary person, 31 women and 23 men.

In relation to the characterization of the group of students who remained on the course, we have the following profile: regarding race/color, 54.9% self-declared mixed race, 17.6% black and 27.5% white /to the; regarding sexual orientation, 54.9% self-declared heterosexual, 29.4% homosexual, 11.8% bisexual and 3.9% another orientation; Regarding marital status, 60.8% of students reported being single, 15.7% married, 19.6% in a stable union, 2% divorced, and 2% in another marital status.

The initial training of students in the second group of the GDE was quite diverse, consisting of the following courses: Pedagogy, Biological Sciences, Physical Education, History, Geography, Literature, Social Work, Psychology, Law, Physiotherapy, Librarianship, Anthropology, Cinema and Audiovisual, and Agricultural Sciences.

When characterizing the group of students in the second class with regard to religion and religious practice, the following portrait of the class was obtained through their self-declarations: 23.5% are Catholic, 13.7% evangelical/ 9.8% are spiritualists, 7.8% have religions of African origin, and 49% have no religion. Among the students who self-declared to have some religion, 43.1% said they were practitioners and 56.9% were non-practitioners. Regarding individual income, data from the questionnaire revealed that the majority of students on the GDE Course, that is, 76.4%, receive up to three minimum wages, with 43.1% receiving up to one minimum wage and 33.3% receive between two and three minimum wages.

Given this detail of the characteristics of the second class of the Specialization Course in Gender and Diversity at School-GDE, it can be stated that the themes/discussions/reflections involving gender, sexuality and ethnic-racial relations in training must permeate all areas of knowledge. In this context, regardless of the religion and religious practice adopted, course participants feel the need and are open to dialogue and training on these contents, which are part of everyone's daily life. From this perspective, Alevato (2012) corroborates this by mentioning training in subjects related to Sexual Education (adding, in the case of GDE, gender and race):

[...] it is not a separate 'discipline'. It is human formation that is related not only to the choice of a partner or to obedience to the determinations of 'curricular parameters'. It relates to all spheres of life. It is related to the organization of society, the politics of subjectivity, power relations and even the suffering experienced by those who dare (or do not dare, since they also suffer) to go beyond the material and symbolic artifacts that identify and frame their gender (ALEVATO, 2012, p. 84, our translation).

This overlap and implication of GDE themes, in all spheres of life and in the needs of

human formation, is revealed in the motivations and expectations of its students, as illustrated below.

Who makes the GDE? Motivations and expectations of your students

In July 2021, already in the final phase of the course, through a qualitative research approach, the course coordination applied an *online questionnaire*, with open and closed questions, with the participants, with the purpose of knowing their profile, motivations and expectations regarding the course. Among the main motivations are the need for professional training and expansion of the theoretical and methodological repertoire in relation to the course themes; the desire to learn about how to approach these themes in the context of schools; and the desire to understand the themes through personal experience. Below are some excerpts from the responses to the questionnaires regarding the contributions of the GDE to the training of its students:

I decided to take this course, as I have come across countless sexist, racist and homophobic speeches on a daily basis at school, which are often made invisible or come from people who work in this environment. Therefore, I felt the need to learn more about issues involving gender and diversity, so that I can know how to deal with and combat the most diverse forms of prejudice (STUDENT, woman).

Because I feel the need to understand the importance of gender, diversity and their appreciation, and to know how to approach and conceptualize them in the school environment. The contribution of the course is extremely important to train us as welcoming teachers, who value differences and fight to break violence, prejudice and devaluation, so present in the school space (STUDENT, woman).

Act ethically with the diversity of students, respecting their singularities. The course made it possible to break paradigms as well as allowing me to access previously unimaginable spaces (STUDENT, man).

The excerpts highlighted above point to the need for teachers to feel prepared to address issues of gender, sexuality and ethnic-racial relations in schools. Insufficient teacher preparation to deal with these issues in schools is not exactly recent: initial teacher training courses have little space for discussing these themes in their curricular matrices, leaving these discussions in optional curricular components, that is, Only students interested in these themes will have the opportunity to study them in their undergraduate courses (CAVASIN; UNBEHAUN; GAVA, 2011), which demands continued training efforts.

However, although these themes have little space in initial training curricula, they are

in schools and, in some way, will demand positioning from teachers, which does not always occur in an appropriately educational way, being restricted to some type of reprimand or silencing. According to Meyer and Felix (2012, p. 124), “the fact that a professional does not feel prepared to deal with these issues may also indicate that he/she simply does not want to work with these topics, precisely because they are potentially conflicting”.

Regarding the space of these themes in undergraduate courses, in their initial training, students say:

During graduation, there were many gaps on these topics, given the breadth and need to develop the debate (STUDENT, woman).

[the GDE brought] personal and professional learning, as well as to fill some gaps that my course left me with in relation to sexuality and gender (STUDENT, woman).

Improve and expand on the concept of gender, taking into account that we did not have a specific subject in graduation (STUDENT, woman).

These responses corroborate the argument that it is essential to expand the debate on the themes covered in the GDE in initial and continuing teacher training courses, particularly in the midst of political tensions surrounding the (non) approach of these issues in schools. Felix (2015, p. 255), when referring to the political disputes surrounding the approach to gender and sexuality issues in schools, indicates that this happens because these “themes have been considered “controversial”, secondary, unnecessary, by teachers and other school workers, but also by public managers and an important and significant portion of society”.

Consequently, in times of disputes surrounding the educational approach to these themes in schools, it is necessary to strengthen teacher training so that these professionals have theoretical-practical arguments to exercise their function of educating children, young people and adults to live in a dynamic and plural society, respecting differences. About this, a GDE student said:

My motivations were to understand the differences between gender and sexuality, and all the dynamism around these themes. So that I would have the opportunity to defend LGBTQIA+ issues with more security and control, whether in face-to-face conversations or online. The fight in defense of rights, and for respect, is still necessary and I felt the need to have this domain to be able to explain the agenda to anyone and of any age (STUDENT, woman).

This statement indicates the complexity and implications of the themes covered by the course. In this sense, it is necessary to invest in qualified teaching activities regarding issues of gender, sexuality and ethnic-racial relations, particularly because these themes have been

misrepresented and confused in the educational sphere and in society in general. Therefore, it is understood that the educational approach to these issues in schools and teacher training courses “is fundamental both to promote a culture of respect for differences and human rights, and to foster a pedagogy that teaches, among other things, that differences in sex [gender, race-ethnicity] cannot be materialized in inequalities of rights and access” (FELIX, 2015, p. 225, our translation).

As can be seen, the motivations for taking the GDE were diverse, with emphasis on the need for continued training on its themes, the recognition of the importance of learning how to approach such issues in the classroom, and the understanding that it is necessary to face the inequalities and fight for a fairer and more equal world for all people. In this sense, below, the inclusion of these themes in teacher training is highlighted.

The importance of including gender themes and perspectives in teacher training

When referring to the inclusion of the themes of gender, sexuality and ethnic-racial relations within the scope of teacher training, the students highlighted the contributions of the GDE course, particularly in expanding knowledge and analyzing different ways of thinking about the insertion of these issues in schools. Furthermore, the course's contributions to the deconstruction of prejudices and self-knowledge were also mentioned, as indicated in the following excerpts:

[the course made it possible] *Deepening and theoretical basis, and methodologies, for teaching. In the personal sphere: deconstruction of my own prejudices* (STUDENT, man).

In addition to professional training in terms of the accumulation of theoretical and methodological knowledge on the subject of gender, sexuality and ethnic-racial relations, the GDE contributes to self-knowledge, to the expansion of our perception of ourselves, as sociocultural subjects, bearers of different identities. We learn to recognize our identity and cultural belonging, deconstruct conservative ideas and practices, recognizing ourselves as diverse, subjects of rights. It also offers us a dynamic favorable to self-management and organization of our academic and professional life (STUDENT, Woman).

[The GDE brought contributions] *as a professional: More scientific knowledge; intellectual development and confidence to deal with the subject at school. As a person, in addition to developing culture and intellect, I feel more empathetic with the causes of people who suffer discrimination and I can see cases related to themes of social exclusion and ethnic/racial, sexual and gender diversity in other ways* (STUDENT, man).

The students also highlighted as relevant the fact that, taking place in times of pandemic, the course provided a way for them to change the focus of their concerns, as they needed to manage the course's weekly activities, as one of the students highlighted below. This perspective demonstrates the importance of study as a way of expanding perceptions of the world and occupying minds beyond the problems that affect us individually and collectively. Furthermore, according to the students, the Course provided an expansion of the theoretical repertoire on the issues addressed in the curricular components.

It was wonderful to take the GDE. Firstly, as the course began at a time of great tension due to the new Coronavirus pandemic, the course came as an "escape valve" amid concerns, with many deaths occurring because of the disease. According to the routine of developing activities and weekly readings on subjects that are so important in the teaching routine, it was extremely pleasurable and important for the development of criticality and deconstruction. Third, as a Biology teacher and pedagogue, I feel the obligation to improve myself at every moment, at every opportunity, and the GDE offered by a quality educational institution like UFPB was an unmissable chance for professional development (STUDENT, man).

Gender and sexuality are very broad terms, from which we can understand our individual role and our collective duties. We created critical awareness, which in addition to being liberating, was also necessary discomfort to increase the will to fight for a more just society. I wish to be able to see, more and more, people engaging in this defense, and it is my duty to transmit this knowledge in a respectful and welcoming way, which encompasses everyone (STUDENT, Woman).

Expanding knowledge about gender, sexuality and ethnic-racial issues, particularly by teachers, is fundamental to contributing to the construction of a more just society. Therefore, it is argued here for its educational approach in the initial and continuing training of teachers. In the words of Vianna (2012, p. 139, our translation), “teacher training is one of the multiple areas in which we can acquire mechanisms to overcome some preconceived ideas and build new knowledge and practices”.

In order to expand the process of constructing ways of being and being subjects of gender, sexuality and race in a sexist, heteronormative and racist society like ours, the questionnaire asked what the contributions of the GDE were. The following answers to this question stand out:

The GDE made me deconstruct several prejudices, give a new meaning to teaching, research, education, use lenses, such as gender, ethnic-racial relations, to analyze society and thus identify and act against forms of violence and inequalities. It also contributed to my positioning myself politically today as a black, lesbian and feminist woman (STUDENT, Woman).

Participating in the course significantly contributed to my being able to further expand my perspective on issues of gender, race and sexuality. This is because I have now gained theoretical knowledge, which I can use both in my personal life and in the professional field (STUDENT, Woman).

It allowed, as a black woman, to analyze various social issues, which society establishes from the perspective of gender and race (STUDENT, Woman).

The excerpts above highlight the importance of the GDE both in terms of professional training and its contributions to the private lives of students, with emphasis on their self-perception as subjects of gender, race and sexuality. Considering that gender, race and sexuality are social constructions and, therefore, possible to be taught and learned, the contribution of the GDE to the personal and professional training of its students stands out.

When asked about their expectations for approaching the themes studied in the Course in their professional practices, students highlight some difficulties and, above all, potentialities:

My expectations are the best possible. I feel that the GDE enabled me to develop subjects such as "Gender and Sexuality" at school, considered controversial and abhorrent by conservative society. I confess that, as a professor hired at a Federal Education Institute, I feel a little afraid of dealing with these matters so blatantly, I deal with them discreetly, deconstructing prejudice and discrimination at all times, at every opportunity, whether through reading or debates of texts that deal with diversity and that are related to the themes covered in the contents of the syllabi of my subjects (STUDENT, man).

My expectations when applying my knowledge acquired at GDE are the best possible. During the specialization, there were many discoveries and learnings that enriched my vocabulary and my discussions about gender and sexuality. As a teacher, I saw the need to learn more about this topic, and today I feel more confident in being able to help students in the best possible way, bringing this subject in an empathetic, didactic and welcoming way to the classroom (STUDENT, Woman).

Although we are living in a complicated period, the knowledge acquired during the course is becoming more and more essential. To fight against prejudice and discrimination, it is necessary to be on top of the issues, with a good theoretical basis to be able to debate (even if the other subjects are not open to it) and explain what is correct and protect the vulnerable population, in this case, children. In this way, my expectation is to put into practice what has been learned in order to empower the subjects around me, whether in schools, private classes, even friends (STUDENT, Woman).

In these statements, it can be seen that students feel, in addition to being more capable, positively motivated to contribute and intervene in controversial issues, such as gender and sexuality. They are aware of the risks of confrontation with conservative people and groups, but are willing to deconstruct prejudices and discrimination, in an empathetic and didactic way,

as one of the students points out, as well as protecting the vulnerable population and empowering individuals at school and outside, as indicated one of the students. It is considered that the educational approach to gender and diversity issues in schools is fundamental and, for this, it is necessary to invest in the initial and continuing training of teachers. Therefore, courses such as Gender and Diversity at School need to continue to be offered, expanding the training dimension of education professionals.

Final remarks

Given the evidence exposed through student reports, as well as our experience as teachers and coordinators of the GDE Course, we ratify the need for investment in public policies for continuing education that address diversity themes, especially for teachers and teachers. Gender, sexuality and ethnic-racial relations are structuring issues in a sexist, homo/lesbo /transphobic and racist society like ours and, therefore, they need to be addressed educationally in schools and teacher training courses.

It was found that the Course provided a deeper understanding of the themes of gender, sexuality and sexual diversity, race and ethnicity in theoretical-practical processes, which allowed students to reflect on their professional performance, as well as on their constitution with human beings in a society unequal, increasing awareness of the need to contribute to the construction of a more just and supportive world. Reflecting on these themes is to understand how the structures of sexual, racial and gender inequality operate producing different prejudices, which need to be faced, and this confrontation involves, above all, educational processes, whether school or not.

We could not fail to mention that this second offering of the GDE Course took place in a context of social isolation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and, despite all the difficulties and challenges of this situation, it provided course participants from all over Paraíba and, also, from other states, experience an intense training process, as well as giving new meaning to the use of technologies as educational resources.

Finally, we hope that other training experiences on the themes worked on in the GDE are reconfigured and offered to an increasing number of people, provoking reflections and practices that contribute to the strengthening of a society committed to human rights.

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CRediT Author Statement

Acknowledgments: We would like to thank all the students from the 2nd class of the Specialization Course in Gender and Diversity at Escola-GDE/UFPB who participated in the research.

Financing: Not Applicable

Conflicts of interest: Not Applicable.

Ethical approval: Following the ethical principles of research with human beings, all students participating in the research signed the Informed Consent Form. We emphasize the objective of the study and the guarantee of non-disclosure of their identities.

Availability of data and material: Not Applicable.

Author contributions: All authors and the author acted in research planning, in the data generation process, in the analysis of the information produced and in writing the Article.

Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.
Review, formatting, standardization, and translation.

