

GENDER AND TEACHER EDUCATION: AN (UN)SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

GÊNERO E FORMAÇÃO DOCENTE: UMA REVISÃO (AS)SISTEMÁTICA DA LITERATURA

GÉNERO Y FORMACIÓN DOCENTE: UNA REVISIÓN (AS)SISTÉMICA DE LA LITERATURA

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims to discuss the relationship between teacher education and gender issues through an (un)systematic literature review. It is about reviewing part of the extensive bibliography already produced in Brazil on this theme, seeking to identify its advances, obstacles and gaps. As a result, some repetitive elements were identified in the texts, focusing on “training” as the main element of strengthening education to transform the patriarchal and heteronormative society. This led us to question this proposed magic formula, presenting teacher education as a fundamental part, but not the only one that could change the status quo.

KEYWORDS: Diversity. Teaching. Education.

RESUMO: Este artigo tem como objetivo discutir a relação entre formação de professores e a temática sobre gênero por meio de uma revisão (as)sistemática da literatura. Trata-se de revisar parte da extensa bibliografia já produzida no Brasil sobre essa temática, buscando identificar seus avanços, entraves e lacunas. Como resultados, foram identificados alguns elementos repetitivos nos textos, focando a “formação” como elemento principal de fortalecimento da educação para transformação da sociedade patriarcal e heteronormativa. Isso nos levou a questionar essa fórmula mágica proposta, apresentando a formação do professorado como parte fundamental, porém não a única que poderá modificar o status quo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Diversidade. Docência. Educação.

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RESUMEN: *Este artículo tiene como objetivo discutir la relación entre la formación docente y las cuestiones de género a través de una revisión (as) sistemática de la literatura. Se trata de revisar parte de la extensa bibliografía ya producida en Brasil sobre este tema, buscando identificar sus avances, obstáculos y vacíos. Como resultado, se identificaron algunos elementos repetitivos en los textos, centrándose en la “formación” como elemento principal de fortalecimiento de la educación para la transformación de la sociedad patriarcal y heteronormativa. Esto nos llevó a cuestionar esta fórmula mágica propuesta, presentando la formación docente como parte fundamental, pero no la única que puede cambiar el statu quo.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Diversidad. Enseñanza. Educación.*

Introduction

Thus, professors show the tensions and contradictions that permeate their personal and professional lives from the perspective of gender relations. Sometimes they endorse traditional roles reserved for men and women in our society, sometimes they seek to imprint more egalitarian relationships in their lives and deny, even partially, some traditional values of masculinity and femininity. They experience the tension that characterizes each one's personal and professional lives as they embrace in a different way the meanings of man/provider and “dad” and of the woman who alone bears her projects or with whom the man can share responsibility for the family (VIANNA, 2002, p. 102-103, our translation).

The purpose of this article is to scrutinize possible relationships between gender issues and teacher training. It is not intended to exhaust the subject, but to establish an overview of what has already been researched and developed both in the initial training of teachers (in Brazil, carried out in undergraduate courses in the licenciatura modality), and in continuing education, mainly in-service training, or that is, of teachers who are in the classrooms. We start with the important warning made by Vianna (2002) in the epigraph about the tensions caused by gender issues at school, after all, many (if not all) are topics qualified as taboo. They concern, as well pointed out by the author, the possible contradictions between the social expectations and the individual beliefs of the teachers.

As already outlined by Alícia Fernandez (1994), the so-called “cultural forms” (prescriptions of behavior) enter the school walls and tend to designate what is up to men and women, in terms of values and attitudes, therefore, to women. girls and boys of school age. As it was well expressed by Ataide and Sandano (2019, p. 730, our translation):

In order for patriarchal and sexist attitudes to cease to be a problem, sometimes attributed to women's fault, sometimes to men's fault, it is necessary to educate boys and girls so that current gender relations are transformed and so that, above all, masculine and prejudiced attitudes towards women are banned. Thus, it is necessary to fight the prevailing paradigms at school, which still

rely on classical dualisms, between the androcentric model and the feminist conception as competition in place of cooperation and hierarchy in place of equality.

This idea of “fighting paradigms” is something that has a direct impact on the educational work carried out on a daily basis, since it is up to teachers not only to transmit content, but also the difficult task of educating children and adolescents (without obliterating young people and adults). If the combat analogy makes sense, then teachers are part of the front line, becoming, according to public opinion, responsible for this paradigm shift (although society is not leaning towards this rupture).

But how does this happen in issues related to gender and sexuality? Is it possible for a teacher to dictate rules of conduct to students without letting their own beliefs and values interfere with the teaching process? Would it also be possible to carry out interventions without contradicting the values learned by students in other places, such as in the family and in their community?

To answer such questions, those responsible for educational management readily say that teacher training may be sufficient and, in the case of teachers already working at the school, continuing education does the trick. The Brazilian Ministry of Education itself takes care of this, as seen, for example, in the “Gender and Diversity Course at School” (BARRETO; ARAÚJO; PEREIRA, 2009), whose Content Book was prefaced by the ministers of the Special Secretariat for Policies for Women, from the Special Secretariat for Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality and the Ministry of Education, respectively Nilcéa Freire, Edson Santos and Fernando Haddad. In this text, they recognize the school as a place of gender and sexuality violence (not only, because they also include racial violence), at the same time they delegate to teachers the promotion of a “culture of respect for the guarantee of Human Rights, of ethnic-racial, gender equity and valuing diversity, contributing to the school not being an instrument for the reproduction of prejudices” (FREIRE; SANTOS; HADDAD, 2009, p. 10, our translation).

By offering this course – and similar ones, at the local or national level – there is no doubt that the “training of teachers who work with children and young people is the most consistent and promising path to a world without intolerance, more pluralistic” and democratic” (p. 10). Not only that, as they recognize teacher training as “the first step” taken in this more just, egalitarian, humanitarian direction. This ideal falls into the following vicious circle: who forms whom? Offering training, therefore, is fundamental and indispensable, but it is not a

magic formula – it never was. This is because training is (almost) always external, coming from outside, from an institution, a specialist, a government, etc.

With this, it is necessary to emphasize the subjective aspects of people who become teachers, such as beliefs and values that promote the tensions and contradictions mentioned in the epigraph: how is it possible to promote progressive education while being traditional? Or vice versa? And what does traditional and progressive really mean? Can one value them in the sense that one is better than the other? In other words, how is it possible to preach, for example, that men and women have equal rights and duties when it is believed that women should remain at home, taking care of the home and raising children, while the man goes out to work, promoting the sustenance of the house? Or, how can one think of spreading a society in which people are free to love and marry whoever they want, when same-sex marriage is repudiated? That's why Vianna's (2002) warning: the teacher's identity is (re)constructed by the individual biography, thus making up part of the reproduction or rupture of the status quo.

As Brauner (2018, p. 132, our translation) recorded, “the school and the university are thus privileged places of permanence or ruptures”, however, it is necessary, in some way, to “disturb” the normative standards, as the disturbances have to do with rupture attempts. Contradictorily, these disturbances seem to be delegated to teachers who, according to the educational authorities, not having been adequately trained for diversity, continue to reproduce discriminatory, heteronormative and sexist behaviors. In a way, there is even a tendency to blame teachers – and their consequent unpreparedness – for maintaining the status quo.

This article, then, tends to develop, as outlined in the title, as an (as)systematic review of the relationship between teacher education and gender. It is unsystematic for two reasons: first, because there is an enormous amount of academic products (theses, dissertations, articles, books) on the subject - or at least adjacent to the subject -, making the effort to systematize all this Herculean³. Second, because part of this effort was already carried out a short time ago, in research that located about one hundred thousand postgraduate works produced in Brazil between 2005 and 2015 on gender and education, of which only a minimal portion of it was analyzed. (FORTUNATO; DAYS, 2018)⁴. By the way, on Teacher Training and Gender, we saw Cardoso, Bertoldo and Santos (2020, p. 1759, our translation) pointing out in their mapping that

³ Only in CAPES' webqualis database it is possible to find more than 15 journals that have the word *genre* in their name; access in Feb. 2020; Furthermore, Vianna et al (2011) mapped the national academic production on education, gender and sexuality between the years 1990 and 2006, recognizing its growth.

⁴ When accessing the CAPES Theses and Dissertations Catalog in March 2021, the number of defended graduate works that result with the combination “education” + “gender” is higher than 216 thousand, with data from theses and dissertations between 1987 and 2019. In 2019 alone, the number exceeds 15 thousand. Available in: <https://catalogodeteses.capes.gov.br/>.

“increasingly, research is piling up on the subject”. The numbers of theses, dissertations and articles have, in fact, grown exponentially.

In this work of (partially) systematizing, however, we see a certain tendency to treat as urgent the transformation of the way of thinking and conducting gender issues in school education. Regarding the teachers, the fundamental role in what was called a “breakup” with prejudice, with control, with machismo and with the silence that silences the subject in schools was highlighted. We also highlight the more incisive insertion in the training processes, with the subject being included, many times, in a reduced way to just one discipline, an annual meeting and/or a teacher who cares.

Specifically, regarding teacher training, it has also been noted that, even in places where gender equality is something widely present and accepted, the way to go is still too long (FORTUNATO; MENA; SORAINEN, 2018). This is because, as pointed out in that article, the so-called “cultural forms” continue to associate – and even reinforce – the roles of men and women in a binary society, imprinting beliefs and patterns of behavior. It should be noted, then, the fundamental role (and consequent responsibility) of teacher educators in the transformation of this status quo, promoting, as stated, a perspective in which the “different” would become the socially accepted norm, placing at the center of all the idea (and practice) of social justice – people should not be discriminated against, blamed, belittled, hurt, etc. for what they are or for their options.

Thus, starting from the first attempt to systematize a state of the art and from this broader perception that society is still heteronormative, even where it thinks it is not, is that the review proposed here on the relationship between teacher training and gender is something only partially systematic. It is also added the fact of a possible “saturation” of some recurrent ideas in several publications, such as: the affirmation that the university is not able to prepare the professor for diversity or the idea that professors are [...] always] unprepared to deal with issues of sexuality and gender roles (BRAUNER, 2018); the existence of a conservative posture on the part of teachers, restricting students to their roles as boys and girls, not allowing for cultural, only biological discussions (SOARES; MONTEIRO, 2019); the [practically exclusive] delegation to the teaching staff to rethink cultural forms, from the use of address pronouns to the end of the division of school activities by gender, or even an assumption that all teachers are made up of heterosexual and cisgender people, having what to deal with students; these are different (FURLAN; FURLAN, 2011).

Let us look, then, at the literature already produced on teacher training on and for gender issues.

From the (as)systematic review of teacher training and gender

In França's dissertation (2009), having carried out a direct intervention with professors, the author collected data that reveal how much the faculty reinforces stereotypes, even without realizing it. For example, they say that boys are more undisciplined, violent, concentrate less and fail more, while girls are calmer, dedicated to studies and learn better the arts and studies focused on the Human Sciences. According to the author, if the school serves as a reinforcement of cultural forms, it is because its teachers “end up reproducing concepts of gender and sexuality through a merely biological, religious or moralist bias, a product of what social instances legitimize” (p. 18, our translation). It seems, then, that the faculty carries a certain “guilt” for conducting an educational process that fixes and normalizes male and female identities, as their attitudes and beliefs are directly responsible for the formation of the students' identity.

In the course of her dissertation, França (2009) highlights statements by teachers, in order to demonstrate that teachers, participants in her gender intervention project, carry their beliefs and prejudices about playing with cars and dolls, being gay or to be “normal”, appealing to God, etc., revealing that they are human beings, incapable of giving in to differences, thus helping to promote and maintain a binary society.

França (2014) returns to the theme in her doctoral thesis, recognizing that, without a larger project (institutional, national, global) of pedagogical intervention with teachers, in the sense of problematizing and promoting reflections and concerns about gender, there will hardly be significant changes within and outside the school [this becomes quite paradoxical, as such larger projects exist, organized by the UN, by ministries, by state and municipal secretariats, etc.]. For the author, “simple and everyday attitudes, such as gestures, looks, statements and disapprovals carried out inside and outside the classroom” (p. 16, our translation) are teaching instruments about cultural forms for men and women.

This is due to the fact that the topic is silenced throughout life, with no place to discuss fears, (pre)concepts, taboos, beliefs, feelings, doubts, etc. at any time during the schooling of the teachers participating in their research. By highlighting this direct relationship between the absence of the theme at school and its maintenance throughout the teaching practice, a kind of belief is created that these teachers are prejudiced, because they did not have access to an education that showed them the opposite, when younger. Or things are really more complex, deep and even perverse, making it necessary to rethink this shallow linearity that it is enough to address the issue at school.

In the work of Furlan and Furlan (2011), for example, it was found that a group of male and female teachers admits their own conditioning regarding the division of expectations of male and female behaviors, considering whoever transgresses such expectations is different and even abnormal. Teachers, according to the authors of this article that reports their work as trainers, are unprepared to deal with gender and sexuality in schools. There is a condescending, even presumptuous posture on the part of the trainers, stating that changes in thinking and practice on the part of these teachers are imperative “so that they do not limit knowledge issues to limited and distorted views of reality” (p. 323, our translation). They insist on the difficulty of others (teachers, in this case) to deal with the rupture of the patriarchal and binary model of society, necessary to reduce oppression, discrimination and violence.

This difficulty, the authors explain, must be tackled by training, because, in addition to being unprepared, this limited and outdated posture would be a lack of awareness. It is sufficient, therefore, to raise awareness through continuing education activities, such as occasional workshops, so that secular problems arising from the patriarchy of lack of tolerance and respect for those who do not behave as expected are resolved. It seems simple to destroy centuries of patriarchal domination deeply ingrained in Western culture with the flick of a magic wand promoted by such activities.

In a similar direction, Soares and Monteiro (2019, p. 302) also express that “there is a need for continuing education for education professionals, including managers and support staff who deal directly with children and adolescents”. In addition to this training, they explain that it is necessary to develop institutional projects, involving the entire school community in the matter – which becomes more difficult, they explain, because gender and sexual orientation were removed from the National Education Plan and the National Common Curricular Base. Even so, whether present or not in official documents and curricula, it is necessary to consider the subjective aspects of each person involved, their beliefs and values crystallized throughout their own training processes.

According to these authors, therefore, there are three obstacles to the promotion of broader and more serious discussions about gender in education, being (i.) the mentioned lag in training, (ii.) the absence of institutional support, making the theme becomes individual initiative and even contrary to [hetero]normativity; and, more importantly, (iii.) teachers are human beings and, as such, carry their beliefs, prejudices, doubts and taboos, which makes the issue of gender not something given, but complex, involving their own idiosyncrasies.

As examples, the authors cite the speeches of two teachers in different contexts; the first was afraid of using didactic material created to combat homophobia, as she believes that, if she

touches on the subject, she may incite some adolescents to experience homosexual relationships; the second claims not to believe in the union between people of the same sex, because that way there is no procreation for the perpetuation of the species. These two examples portray how complex the subject is and reveal that it cannot only be said that overcoming prejudices and taboos depends on education and teaching, as these are carried out by teachers, that is, people who also carry prejudices and doubts. Likewise, this transformation cannot be credited solely to the training of these teachers, since, recursively, this training is conducted by other people. So, what is the role of teacher education when it comes to promoting a break with the status quo of heteronormativity?

When producing a doctoral thesis on the subject, Hampel (2013) also identifies several prejudices and taboos present in the speeches of professors and professors. Some of these prejudices are crystallized, such as the idea that women should be wives and caretakers of the home – although the paradox is quite evident in this case, as the teachers who maintain this idea work outside the home. The taboos concern sexual relations, and adolescents should preserve themselves for marriage, even avoiding masturbation. Regarding sexual education/orientation at school, this should be restricted to the biology of the thing, as a way of preventing diseases and pregnancy early. Thus, there would be no reason for teachers and professors to deal with this at school, because, in addition to not being a place for the subject, it is necessary that the process be conducted by doctors or other more qualified professionals. After all, from the point of view of the teachers interviewed for the production of the thesis, this is not a school problem.

In fact, Hampel (2013) recognizes that gender and sexuality are not themes that appear in school curricula (except in the transversal form, conducted as projects by health professionals) nor in teacher training curricula. Such themes, when there is no way to silence them in the school routine, are treated as problems to be solved urgently. All this – the absence of cultural and personal discussions about gender and sexuality at school and in teacher training, except for the look of biology – recalls the author, has support outside the school, including mainly families, who prefer to keep this matter silent, under penalty of influencing students to early sexual practice and/or inducing homosexuality and/or, mainly, causing the necessary changes to the status quo.

Sexual education through the strict look of biology seems to be a consensus in the school universe, as we saw in Araújo, Rossi and Teixeira (2019, p. 1418, our translation): “the school still assigns the task of sexuality to teachers in the areas of health and of science, thus looking at sexuality as a topic of a biological nature, discarding the social, political, economic and

cultural nature”. Thus, the place of education remains silent. To comment, Hampel (2013) believes that it would be enough to invest in the initial and continuing education of teachers

In order for the school to develop competent projects that meet the needs of students, it is necessary to invest in initial and continuing education courses, in a perspective of rights and under the principles of equity, which brings us immediately to the issue of professional training, since teachers are key players in the implementation of any program (HAMPEL, 2013, p. 99, our translation).

Interestingly, the author seeks to identify how this continuing education could be carried out, based on the doubts and anxieties of the teachers invited/convened to participate in these courses. In doing so, she recognizes that there is a great expectation that such training would serve to bring recipes on how to act in certain atypical situations at school, with regard to gender issues.

In addition to identifying this search for ready-made formulas, it brings a list of fundamental questions on the subject that, nevertheless, bring nothing but an extensive list of questions, all with the same answers: reflection, discussion and investment in teacher training are needed. These are questions that range from “what to do when a student masturbates in the classroom?”, passing through the resistance of families when the subject is gender, to the strategies, dynamics and reference works to be used to address the issue. Here, such questions also remain without dictated answers, as they always depend on a complex situational understanding - but this does not only concern elements of the taboo type, since everything that happens at school is situational, including the most common activities, such as teach reading and writing, for example.

Even identifying and recognizing all the complexity of gender issues, their historical silencing and the social efforts to maintain the heteronormative and binary status quo, individual, collective and institutional difficulties, etc. educate and teach respect for Human Rights. Thus, Hampel (2013, p. 162, our translation), under the idea that it is necessary to “prepare all teachers competently so that they can effectively promote discussions, problematizations and respect for diversity that is so desired”, logs its instructions:

If it is the role of education to foster the construction of an ethics based on respect for human rights, a basic condition for life in society, the educator must be attentive to the representations of gender conveyed by various cultural artifacts and by various social instances, especially in the school space, often a producer of prejudice, homophobia, intervening in any and all situations of discrimination, reinforcing human dignity, and the defense of citizenship (HAMPEL, 2013, p. 117, our translation).

Thus, as much as the literature consulted on teacher training and gender deals with the subject in depth, examining potential reasons for the perpetuation of the sexist society as it is, the writings always return, in some way, to teachers and their lack of capacity. and empowerment.

In the same direction, Brauner (2018) also recognizes that there is, in fact, a lack of the subject in initial teacher training, qualifying the training processes of universities as insufficient, as there is only one subject (if any) on the subject. Even so, the author identifies, through her own activities conducted in the classroom, how much of heteronormative and sexist beliefs and prejudices undergraduate students present, often without recognizing their own attitudes and thoughts as such. Thus, the author tends to believe that transforming a binary, retrograde, prejudiced society, etc. in a fair, egalitarian society that respects human diversity “it depends on each one of us from propositions, problematizations, deconstructions in our pedagogical practices as teachers and social agents” (p. 132, our translation).

And with this quote we end the review, as the literature seems to tend to a saturation that can be expressed as follows: it is necessary to invest in teacher training, as it is the only solution to the end of patriarchy, prejudice and all injustices towards human diversity.

Final considerations

From this brief commentary on the analyzed literature, it is clear that the top spins, spins, but does not move. This is because, perhaps, there is a belief in a magical solution - teacher training - which, however, is reduced to rational, normative prescriptions, of an issue that cuts across all of society and is rooted in its depths: the beliefs and values that perpetuate for centuries in the cultural landscape of humanity. In our contemporaneity there is a tendency towards generalizations resulting from a rationalized perception of the world. That is, by studying the part, the whole is necessarily deduced, not knowing that this is never the sum of the parts. But when it comes to human phenomena, generalizations are always reductive, because they ignore the complexity of intersubjective relationships between people and between people and the world. They prevent the recognition of one-off actions. And, despite the importance of the analyzed writings, it seems that such generalizations are presented with some frequency.

Especially in our highly rationalized contemporary culture, there are already well-defined paths that demonstrate the need to abandon the search for immediate solutions to scrutinize where the problem (and perhaps the solution) actually lies: at the latent level of our

culture, at the “shadow side” of the social, where our prejudices, our fears, our values, our faults reside...

A fertile path for training subjects and disciplines linked to the fields of the humanities, especially psychology, philosophy and anthropology. But that, unfortunately, are reduced to a minimum in teacher training curricula.

It is not, therefore, a question of denying teacher training (now referred to in the literature as training) as a fundamental strategy to fight for Human Rights and the promotion of freedom and gender equality. On the contrary, we seek to understand how this training takes place and, more importantly, by whom this training takes place. This is because each of us carries beliefs, values, prejudices, etc., which do not simply disappear when participating in a prescriptive course, ordered by politically correct discourses. It is necessary, then, to dig in, allowing yourself to recognize your own limits and taboos. Without this, we only have reproductions of words repeating that the best – if not the only – way to make people respect the human being is through education.

And it is necessary to rethink this idea of delegating the task of transforming the world to teachers, as if this were something so simple to do, without considering the complexity of human life and our society. Transformation requires much more than proposing more and more teacher training and more and more “education”, using this as an element that disguises fascism and secular patriarchy that shape and control our status quo. If we have to resist, let it be through education, but also through art, science, religion, legislation, economics, politics... in short, through all spheres of culture.

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