



Research Article

Curriculum, gender, teaching training, teaching gender and wage: Crossed Dialogs

¹Eliara Cristina Nogueira da Silva Teixeira and ^{*2}Cláudio Pinto Nunes

¹Master's Student in Education at the State University of Southwestern Bahia, Brazil; member of the Study Group on Didactics, Training and Teaching Work (Difort). E-mail: edyaraegui@hotmail.com.

²Doctor in Education; Professor at the State University of Southwestern Bahia, Brazil; leader of the Study Group on Didactics, Training and Teaching Work (Difort)

*Corresponding author E-mail: claudionunesba@hotmail.com

Abstract

This article aims at discussing the school curriculum within the post-critical approach, specifically the questions related to gender, recognizing the important role played by teachers/and their training in this process. In addition, it deals with the teaching gender, i. e., the assumed configuration by the teaching work with the feminization of teacher training along education history, resulted from the expansion of schooling taken place with Brazil's urbanization and industrialization, in the 19th century. In relationship with the aforementioned issues, in a sort of crossed dialogs, one debates the devaluation of the teaching profession as noticed since its origins – when school education had been established as a kind of priesthood –, up to the current days, with the intention of contributing to a better understanding of the period that preceded the passing of the Law of the National Professional Wage Floor in Brazil.

Keywords: Curriculum and Gender; Teaching Training; Teaching Gender and Wage

INTRODUCTION

The wide territory of Education, with its different knowledge fields, the curricular field for instance, is composed today by a multiplicity of theories that guide knowledge production.

Regarding the evolution of the studies and tendencies that define the curricular field, that is, the traditional, technicist, critical and post-critical approaches, Silva (1999) describes it by giving the impression that there is a certain linearity in the development of this theoretical-methodological process. Pacheco (2000), on the other hand, while approaching the question of the curricular tendencies, does not put them as if one had been surpassed by the other, but that these (curricular approaches) transit freely, though there are conflicts among them, which is something positive, since they express different theoretical places. In the meantime, the indifference, the exclusion or the reluctance to the dialog on the approaches under discussion may lead to the isolation and/or scientific racism, which may impede the advancement of knowledge, thus being necessary to proceed to a reflection on how to face them and to combine them in a positive and productive way.

Still reflecting on that issue, Pacheco (2000) argues that the post-critical theory is not a third approach, but it integrates the critical field of the curriculum, by reinforcing that what its supporters do is nothing but another kind of curricular criticism that views culture like a central aspect, not emphasizing economic problems (ideology, class, hegemony, production relations), but cultural problems, such as gender, sexuality, nation, generation, identity, subjectivity, among others.

Thus, even recognizing that there are different conceptions of *curriculum* elaborated along the history of education, in this article it will be approached in a post-critical perspective, focusing on the work with the question of gender in school, establishing crossed dialogs between the way this question (of gender) materializes itself in the school setting and its relationship with teacher training (both female and male), the teaching training and/or the feminization of training, which, in turn, will be discussed by relating it with its possible implications with the devaluation of teachers and the struggle for deserved wages for the teaching professionals.

The curriculum in the post-critical approach

Theorizing the curriculum in the post-critical approach, Silva (1995) states that it has different crossings and constitutes itself in a space/time for the production of singular subjects and/or production of identities and differences. Meyer and Soares (2004) take this view further by stating that the school curriculum has always been implied in the construction of the identities and differences; however, there was no concern in questioning them and problematizing them. That is, the school curriculum has historically been legitimating the hegemonic (western, white, male, heterosexual) identities and it has been contributing to place the non-hegemonic ones as being inferior, deficient, pathological, deviating: “the cultures or voices of the minor and/or marginalized social groups, which are not provided with important structures of power, are normally silenced, when not stereotyped and deformed, in an attempt to annihilate their reaction possibilities” (Santomé, 1995, Pp. 161).

This lack of concern in questioning which identities the curriculum produced, according to Louro (2004), is related to the fact that school and, therefore, its curriculum, initially emerged to welcome some, but not all; it (school) was slowly being required by those (both male and female) to whom it had been refused. The new social groups have been provoking changes to this institution.

Thus, it is with the emergence of the critical approach of the curriculum (which questions the class identities) as well as the post-critical one (which questions the identities/differences of race / ethnicity, gender, sexuality, beliefs, generation), that the theoretical reflection on the curriculum begins to problematize the processes by which the curriculum legitimates certain ways of life and cultural practices and deauthorize others. Ratifying this idea, Silva (1995, Pp.195) adds that the curriculum is no longer seen as “a merely cognitive operation, in which certain knowledge is transmitted to given individuals who are formed beforehand”, as if they had a human essence to be extract.

According to the post-critical perspective, there is no such thing as a human essence. The human essence, by a power/knowledge operation, has been confused with the hegemonic identities. All individuals are effects of discourses, which install themselves in their bodies, producing identities and differences. Therefore, “the curriculum may be viewed as a discourse that, while it embodies the particular narratives on the individual and the society, it constitutes us as individuals – and very particular ones as well” (Silva, 1995, Pp. 195).

When the curriculum is conceived in such a way, the central questions to be problematized no longer refer to how the process of “transmitting” school subjects considered “neutral” and “uninteresting” should be improved, but to whom these school contents are being built; and, in this text, priority is only given to the way how school curricula have operated in producing gender identities/differences, as well as the important role played by the teacher (male and female) and their training in such a context.

The school curriculum, the construction of gender identities and teaching training

According to Meyer (2003), the concept of gender was introduced in Social Sciences in the 1970's of the 20th century, and, in spite of carrying the marks of the controversies of the feminist movement, it is possible to state that there is convergence in at least one point:

(...) with the concept of gender, the intent was to do away with the equation in which the linking of a certain gender to an anatomic sex which would ‘naturally’ be correspondent to it, resulted in innate, essential differences, in order to argue that the differences and the inequalities between women and men were socially and culturally constructed and not biologically determined. (Meyer, 2003, Pp.15).

As one can notice, the same criticism that the post-critical theory does to the so-called human essence is also present in the concept of gender when the essentialist and naturalized conceptions of both men and women are questioned, as

if that were only a biological question, and not the result of the power relations, which are present in every social and cultural context; therefore in the school curricula as well.

Thus, without taking into account the complexity that such term carries, the concept of gender is used here in order to emphasize the constructed character of the sexual identities, which are the results of a historical, cultural and social construction permeated by power relationships. In that sense, more than abiding to supposed biological and natural differences, the intentionality is to show how the differences and identities are constructed by means of the culture and history in the different spaces/times, in the present text, in the school curriculum.

In that perspective, research on gender (Meyer, 2003; Louro, 2004; Felipe and Guizzo, 2004; Junqueira, 2009; Sabat, 2004) has pointed out that, within schools, one experiences a curriculum that tends to reproducing the hegemonic sexual and gender identities and to pathologizing the other identities; for instance, the fact that the gender questions are still pervaded by an essentialist and heteronormal conception. Thus, by acting the way they do, the school and the teachers, even though they do not notice it, are contributing to legitimate certain gender identities “[...] in most cases they continue to teach, even discretely, ways of being and behaving in a differentiated and unequal way for both boys and girls” (Felipe and Guizzo, 2004, Pp. 39).

Quinlivan and Town (1999) point out, too, the impact of the curriculum in the perception of gender and sexuality issues, by arguing that the given treatment, often focused on anatomy, operating around the dualism and the body and mind separation, thus evidencing binary divisions in the curricula related to sexuality, health and science, ends up reinforcing the division body/mind and normal/abnormal. This separation also contributes to perpetuate the separation between the physical body and feelings and thoughts, which means that the questions related to identity and to the affection are ignored, thus enabling a lack of opportunities to explore the emotional development associated to sexuality.

It is important, however, to take into account that the approach of questions related to gender and sexuality in the context of sciences curriculum does not necessarily needs to be prescriptive, dualist, normalizing or linked exclusively to right and wrong answers. It should be considered that the questioning by students (male and female) regarding wider situations, related to both the functioning of the body and to feelings of discrimination processes present in their own lives; or, what is more, the opening of the possibility of developing knowledge by taking into account its epistemological bases as well as the historical and social conditions involved in its construction, as well as the developments implied in using such knowledge in their acting in society, in their subjectivity and in their living the individual's sexuality.

By adding to this, Sabat (2004) states that the gender studies signal that, since the beginning of the elementary education, those responsible for the children have often “patrolled” the school in order to control the way boys and girls behave in relation to the activities, to the color of the chair where they are sitting in the classroom, to the toys that they choose; finally, the behaviors considered adequate for boys and girls. That is, research, in general, show that teachers are not prepared to deal with their students' sexuality (both boys and girls) and with the construction of gender identities. Santomé (1995) evidences that although some schools endeavor to contemplate the differences, most of themselves restrict themselves to what the author calls “touristic curriculum”, that is, besides a superficial approach to different cultures and/or expressions of sexuality and gender identities, they are always presented as exotic.

As for the described situation, the following issues arise: Can teachers (both male and female) be guilty for that situation? Or the guilt should be attributed to the cultural, social and historical context and of training where they both male and female were produced?

Answering these questions, Pavan (2013) states that what refers to the teachers (both male and female), to their speech, to the silences and to the silencing in relation to the gender questions in the school day-by-day, these must not be considered as a way to guilt them or attribute them individual responsibility, as if teachers (both female and male) had a sexist “interior ego” that takes them to express certain conceptions of curriculum and gender. She also exposes that its theoretical field makes her understand that the individuals (and, therefore, the teachers) are not and do not act according to their individual will, but they are the effects of the discourses that fold and unfold in their bodies along their life trajectories. The individuals do not exist outside the discourses, cultures and representations: “the representation is, therefore, a process of meaning production through the different discourses. The meanings have, therefore, to be created. They pre-exist as things in the social world” (Silva, 1995, Pp. 199).

Thus, it is important to point out that in order to operate changes in this context it will be necessary to question the hegemonic representations of gender that are present in the culture and in society, that is, pluralizing the representations – since they are the ones who produce us as subjects -, it will also be possible to obtain different teachers. And, certainly, this change will only be possible if the reflections on the construction of gender identities be incorporated in the training of teachers (both initial and continued).

After being presented, then, the way how teachers(both male and female) have been dealing with the gender questions in the school curriculum and what to do in order to subvert such a situation, it is now time to reflect upon the feminization of teacher training and its relation with the work with the gender questions at school and with the

devaluation of the teaching profession, mainly materialized in the low wages.

The feminization of teacher training, wage devaluation, the gender questions at school and the role played by the teachers (both female and male): possible dialogs

It is characteristic of any society the establishment of typical activities for men and for women. For a certain time, the explanation for this kind of social division of work took a naturalistic character, that is, women would perform tasks according to the feminine nature and men, according to their male essence. However, according to Silva (1997), this biological justification for the social phenomena is already surpassed; studies revealed that what is considered women's and men's typical work varies in diverse culture contexts.

Until the end of last century, women's work place restricted itself to the private world and to the work performed by men, the public space was destined. Such idea guides a practice of restricting women's action to the home space between medium and high society groups, because within the inferior layers the reality is that the woman shares the public world, primarily working as a slave (in the case of black women) and then as a working woman when industrialization begins. It's worth standing out that the cited feminine occupations are considered inferior to those occupied by men, with different wages, too.

In the complex contemporary societies, in turn, the sexual work division is also another factor among others, which must be considered for understanding the social world.

Regarding the teaching work, Apple (1995), in an important study that circulated around different countries, states that it is necessary to think teacher's training simultaneously from the varieties of gender, class and race, but in this work only the feminine teaching work, with the objective of unveiling possible nuances that may clear its relationship with the current devaluation of the public teacher training in Brazil, which constitutes part of our study object – The Law of the Wage Floor and the teaching valorization.

Along the 20th century, teaching was taking a mainly feminine character. Rosemberg(1994, p. 57), in a study conducted on the predominance of women in teacher training, exposes: "The teaching body in Brazil is composed, mainly, by women (87% of feminine participation according to the 1980 Census). The author also reveals data collected regarding the distribution of teachers in the teaching levels and the distribution of wages among teachers. The elementary school has a teaching body composed by 99% of women whereas the higher education has only 30% of feminine working-force. Still according to the 1980 Census, male teachers reach higher wages than those of women: 51,4% of the teachers get more than 5 minimum wages, while 14,3% is the percentage of female teachers within this wage range.

The exposed data reveal *per se* the gender look for the research, because of the fact that the female sex predominates in the teaching job. By considering this, doubts are raised regarding to the questions and/or reasons that lead the choice of such profession, even before the social discrediting of teacher's training and the wage devaluation; and, in order to understand them some historical phenomena of the teaching profession must be remembered.

Women acquired the right for education in October 1827, when the first vacancies emerged for girls in schools and the work opportunities increased for the feminine gender in the elementary teacher training. However, according to Dermatini(1993), this increase contributed to enhance the social discrimination of women, because they were only admitted to teach classes and they did not teach geometry. And, teaching this discipline was the criterion used for the establishment of wage levels between female teachers and male ones, although the legislation of the time determined the payment of wages equivalent to both sexes.

In the 19th century, when the first institutions to train teacher (s) for the teaching practice, to women it was forbidden to carry on the studies until the higher education, so that to them the study was only restricted to the normal school. Besides that, the ideas of the past were still prevailing, according to which teacher training used to be a form of exercising its traditional social role, motherhood, through children's care.

It is important to point out that this process of including women in teacher training did not happen without discussions; some claimed that the education was delivered to the women usually unprepared and carriers of poor developed brains, because of its disuse.

Apple (1995) in his studies on the teaching work evidences that its feminization takes place from the moment when men abandoned this activity, because the urbanization and the industrialization increased the work opportunities for that sex. Another reason for the abandonment was due to the fact that teacher training no longer represented a way for social ascension because of the lowering in wages within this category, a devaluation which occurred because of the simple fact this job was performed by women.

Thus, the progressive lowering of the wages paid for teachers, together with the loss of acquisitive power by the middle class, made the female teachers expand their working hours, so that the needs for consumption became

accessible; and, from that time on, teacher training began to no longer to represent a waged profession, but a priesthood, a donation, as it had been in the time of Jesuit teaching, the first teachers in Brazil.

Another important aspect to be pointed out and related to the feminization of the teaching profession, is that, although the gender questions were the result of the feminist movement along the country's history and had been instituted as urgent in order to be included in the school curriculum, which is still noticed today, it is a certain expressive distance between theory and teaching practice; and, a possible explanation for the aforementioned situation may be attributed to the fact that most teachers belonged to the feminine gender and women remaining submissive, for a long time, to the patriarchal organization, by silencing themselves before their own sexuality and the gender questions, treating them under the heteronormality view; or for the simple fact that teacher training courses for these professionals did not pose the question of gender as central in the curriculum.

Still approaching this absence of discussion of the gender questions in the school environment, Foucault (1993), in his itinerary on the history of sexuality, pointed out that sex was what the Christian societies needed to supervise, confess, change into discourse and, consequently, such sociocultural constructs made school work not only as a teaching machine, but also for supervising, hierarchizing, recompensing (Foucault, 2009), so that there was a production of discourses on sex and human sexuality, but with the objective of supervising, punishing, taking the individuals to confess their sexual practices, which were not allowed by the Church. Also, according to Louro (2000), sexuality has always been the focus to which the most supervising eyes turned; that is, for it (sexuality) and because of it, the most diverse forms of control and government were invented.

Given the above, what one can conclude is that the official history is pervaded by "truths" that are imposed as "absolute" and "consummated", contributing to the permanence of some taboos about human sexuality, and it is up to the contemporary educator, based on a post-critical view of curriculum, to doubt and question these truths and certainties on the bodies and sexuality, questioning the ways they are normally thought and the forms as identities and practices have been consecrated or marginalized (LOURO, 2000). Only so, can teachers (both female and male) try to break away from a neutrality that is imposed by a traditional scientific paradigm and also by a school curriculum that works as a power and discrimination mechanism.

CONCLUSION

At last, it is worth pointing out that sexuality has become in the last few decades an increasingly important subject in the public debate. It has become, by means of a long process of historical changes, an area of life to which one attributes a lot of meaning, by expressing a place for realization, definition of personal identity. Therefore, the various issues related to gender, to sexuality are and will always be basic in students' training, for sexuality is only within school because it is part of the individuals, that is, gender is a central dimension of people's life and is continually constructed and reconstructed in the social relations and the interactions with other individuals.

Thus, it was based on such understanding that, along the text the questions of gender were approached and its insertion in the school environment, in the perspective of the post-critical curriculum, and the role played by the teacher (from both genders) in this process. It is up to teachers the important task of discussing, problematizing and questioning the discourses on sexuality and gender at school, since, in the institution of the differences, power relations are implied.

Besides the quoted approaches, this article also presented, by correlating it to the discussion on gender, the process of feminization of teacher training and its relationship with the way sexuality and genders have been approached at school and, mainly, their relationship/implication with the wage devaluation of the teaching profession. At school women prevail as teaching agents, but the contents and teaching forms have been constituted through men's view. And, this new configuration of public teacher training has taken place due to the expansion of schooling during the process of urbanization and industrialization of the country, which made room for the insertion of women in the teaching work, making them double their working hours, when inversely proportional, wages were being devalued.

This devaluation of the profession, in turn, is seen by some authors as the result of the emerging process of disinterest by men in teacher training and, also, because they consider women as "people provided with inferior brains", and so they should hold only children's education and they never teach geometry, a subject which was used as a criterion to differentiate the wages between men and women in the past.

Therefore, it is easy to perceive the linking nets between the discussed themes in this text, because it is not possible to deal with gender questions today without taking into account the important role played by education and, consequently, of teachers (both male and female) and their training in this process; as it is also impossible, when correlating curriculum, gender and teaching, not to talk about teachers' gender and/or feminization of teacher training and about the representations that these working women, teaching professionals, have taken in the history of education

in this country and the process of devaluation of their work, a result of the representations that teacher training has assumed since the early days when it had appeared associated to the image of priesthood, of donation.

At last, at the end of the crossed dialogs so far, it is necessary to point out the relevance of this study for the critical reflection about the school curriculum as a means of deconstructing the dominating hegemonic education that is still present in several schools, the importance of the work the questions of gender in the school space and of the role played by teachers (both male and female) and their training in this process. In addition, it is also necessary to point out the contribution of this research in order to understand the possible influence of feminization of teacher training in the process of devaluation of the teaching profession, so debated in the current academic environments, mainly what concerns the evaluation of public policies implemented for this aim, for instance, the Law of the National Professional Wage Floor, instituted by the Law n.º 11.278 (Brasil, 2008).

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