

The movements of basic education teachers in the constitution of gender policies at school*

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Abstract

This article aims to understand the movements of basic education teachers in the state of Espírito Santo, Brazil, in the constitution of gender policies for education and its deployment exercise at schools. The object of the study is to analyze the nature of actions that can be observed in the teacher's course of pedagogical action and in the way of organizing the teaching work. It presents the central hypothesis that, even in the face of various contentions possibilities (e.g. precariousness of working conditions, patriarchal culture, fragmented organization of the teaching work etc.), teachers have conducted educational actions that seek to denaturalize the asymmetries and hierarchies in the field of gender relations. The thesis is that the teachers' pedagogical actions indicate the existence of a gender pedagogical movement in progress at schools. This is a qualitative and quantitative research carried out with teachers who attended the course *Gênero e Diversidade na Escola (GDE, Gender and Diversity at School)* between 2011-2012 and 2013-2014, using data collected through a survey and focus groups conducted in 15 cities where the course was offered. The studies on the sociology of action were the theoretical-methodological basis for this investigation, in particular regarding the concepts of *habitus* and gender *habitus*. We concluded that the advancement of public policies from 2003 to 2016 and the action of teachers, either in a optimistically-articulated or silent-individual way, indicate the occurrence of a gender pedagogical movement at schools that, despite emerging from an empathy of those teachers concerning the theme, was potentiated by the GDE public policy.

Keywords

Educational policy – Gender studies and education – Gender policy – Gender pedagogical movement.

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Introduction

Our object of study are the actions of basic education teachers² in the face of the production and implementation of gender public policies for education in the state of Espírito Santo, Brazil. This is a doctoral-level research study concerning the nature of pedagogical practices of teachers and their work organization in the performance of gender policies. The general objective of this study was to analyze teachers' movements in the constitution of gender policies in their deployment exercise at basic education schools.

In this text, we shall deal with part of the data collected in this study, specifically those collected among teachers from public schools of the state of Espírito Santo, Brazil, who attended the course *Gênero e Diversidade na Escola* (GDE, Gender and Diversity at School). The GDE was created within the Federal Government through in-class and distance courses with the aim of promoting the culture of respect and guarantee of human rights, ethno-racial and gender equity, and appreciation of diversity. It was a high-impact and long-duration public policy in Brazil (VIANNA; UNBEHAUM, 2016), which was an important gender public policy for the education of Espírito Santo due to its coverage, reaching teachers from all regions of the state.

This study was developed, among other issues, due to our understanding that a political-educational boosting concerning gender issues was in course in Brazil. This boosting, in our view, was potentialized mainly by the policies made effective in the governments of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2011) and Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016), from the creation of institutional mechanisms such as the Secretariat of Policies for Women (SPM) and the Secretariat of Continuing Education, Literacy, Diversity, and Inclusion (Secadi), which significantly expanded gender public policies for education in the country.

The study, carried out with the support of the Center for studies and research on educational policies (Nepe), is justified by the need to develop scientific studies that reveal the paths/dead ends faced by gender policies, from an important social institution, which is school education, and the women who work in it. Furthermore, the case of the state of Espírito Santo is very special and deserves to be studied, since it presents very alarming statistics about the reality of women, especially those from popular classes and black women. This state appears in national statistics as one of the first in domestic violence compared with other federal entities in the country, according to data from Unesco and Flacso.³

In addition, the need for studies in this field is thickened by the resumption of social conservative forces in Brazil that, since 2014, have been organized against what came to be called "gender ideology." These forces, expressed by conservative Catholic and neo-charismatic wings, through religious and parliamentary leaders in the House of Representatives and Senate, claim that "[...] an international conspiracy that wants to 'pervert' children, teach them to be gay and destroy the traditional family" is happening (CNBB, 2015, p. 1). Under this claim, we now live, at national level, with the attack of a supposed "gender ideology" that some state to be present in the National Education Plan

2- In the original version of this article, in Portuguese, we opted to use the term "professoras" ("female teachers") as a generic form of treatment of the people who participated in the study whenever it expressed the teachers as a whole.

3- To illustrate the gravity of the situation, the study of the 2013 map of violence (WAISELFSZ, 2015) mentions the state of Espírito Santo has a 9.3 homicide rate per 100,000 women, more than doubled compared with the national average.

and in the State and Municipal Education Plans. Despite resistance in all the areas of the Federation, it is possible to observe the withdrawal of the terms 'gender' and 'sexuality' from the plans in order to "undermine" this important guiding instrument of the country's educational policy.

Our study assumes that gender policies, when addressed at schools, must pedagogically reflect on the principles of freedom, equality and solidarity, respecting differences. In this way, the initiatives from the Federal and State Government in the last 13 years (2003 to 2016), such as designer instances of the national and state education policies, especially those on gender, were taken as relational movement of the demands and actions of teachers in the schools of Espírito Santo. In other words, we understand that the actresses (the teachers) have influenced the development and were influenced in their pedagogical practices when gender public policies were implemented.

This mutual influence happens through actions that are organized above all by political and ideological affinities. This study seeks to understand these actions, specifically those that can be observed in the pedagogical performance of teachers and also in the way they organize their work.

The pedagogical practices are understood as those carried out by teachers in schools and linked not only to qualification and experience but also constituted through life experiences. In a way, between the teachers' knowledge and the intervention itself lies a planning mediated by a series of tensions. The practice is generated in/by the dialectic relation between understanding and intervention (SACRISTÁN; PÉREZ GÓMEZ, 1998). Mediation happens primarily by life's objective issues, but also by teachers' culture or cultural capital (BOURDIEU, 2005).

In this sense, the pedagogical practice is a historically constituted formative and self-formation process, also by the feminine work itself and by the teaching profession. In this logic, pedagogical practices have the potential of producing movements, as they are linked to social practices, including social movements, which are generating sources of knowledge and innovation (GOHN, 2011). In this context, our gaze is directed to perceive the tensions established in teachers' actions, specifically regarding what they claim to be their gender pedagogical practices at schools.

Our central hypothesis is that, even with various contention possibilities (e.g. precariousness of working conditions, patriarchal culture⁴, fragmented organization of the teaching work etc.), teachers have conducted educational actions to denaturalize the asymmetries and hierarchies in the field of gender relations. Such actions indicate the existence of displacements in the way teachers act regarding gender inequality at schools and in society. Teachers' actions, commonly perceived as permanence, in view of the existence of conservative social forces in the field of gender policies for education, seem to suffer changes. Our thesis is that teachers' pedagogical practices indicate the existence of a gender pedagogical movement in progress at schools. And also the hypothesis that this gender pedagogical movement was potentiated by the gender policies for education

4- Although the Brazilian society has repositioned the concept of patriarchy and women have been constituted as individuals of right, a culture based on the primacy of patriarchy as the moral authority, social privileges at work, social control of properties, among others, still weighs on gender relations.

implemented over the past 13 years by the Federal Government in the mandates of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2011) and Dilma Vana Rousseff (2011-2016).

This text is organized into two sessions, in addition to this introduction and final considerations. The first session addresses the adoption of the sociology of action as the theoretical-methodological basis and the concepts of *habitus* and gender *habitus*. In the second session we analyze the data collected in the survey and focus groups, specifically on what the teachers perform in their pedagogical practices and the collective senses incorporated that cause leakages in the gender *habitus* constituted in the education field.

Theoretical-methodological paths: important tension between the concept of *habitus* and gender *habitus*

In the theoretical-methodological approach of the study and data analysis, we were based by some studies on the Sociology of Education; specifically the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1996, 1997, 2002, 2005) contributed to the reflection on permanence and contentions, in view of the agent's tendency of producing practices objectively adjusted to structures, the *habitus*. The work of Bourdieu also contributed to the reflection on the educational field as a space for strategies in which agents fight, create, and re-create from a room for maneuver that exists in the field. Bourdieu's concept of room for maneuver and the perspective that the *habitus* is a trend and not a determination, it accentuates the tension as an important mechanism to give visibility to the phenomena as complementary and not as polar and binary.

From this idea, in the analysis of the data we observed the existence of a complementarity between what we call coinages and leakages. *Coinage* comes from the term *coining*⁵, and it means to mark, highlight, imprint (in coins, for example), but, at the same time, it carries within itself the possibility of creation and invention. We see in this fissure the possibility of creating and recreating, which we call *leakages*, meaning what cannot be controlled, the uncertainty produced by the mere fact of acting. We understand there is always a fissure through which the agents may move.

In this sense, when we talk about coinage we indicate the permanence constituted by the *habitus* (BOURDIEU, 1996, 2002, 2005), understanding them as a trend. Thus, actions of teachers are linked to the dispositions incorporated by them, functioning as a system that generates strategies regarding feeling, thinking, and acting. On the other hand, there is room for maneuver, as there are possibilities for teachers to produce leakages, to resist, to open new ways and establish new coinages by the force of their action.

In order to seek possible leakages, we tensioned the *habitus* in Bourdieu (1996, 2002, 2005) by adopting the concept of gender; we understand it as a social and political significance historically attributed to the sex of a human being, capable of highlighting asymmetries that arise in different spaces (SCOTT, 1995). As such, it is present in all social practices of human beings (teaching, union militancy, family relationship, etc.),

5 - According to the Brazilian Portuguese language dictionary Michaelis. Available from: <<http://michaelis.uol.com.br/busca?r=0&f=0&t=0&palavra=cunhar>>. Access on: July 6th, 2017.

composing – along with class and ethno-racial relations – the structuring alchemy of society (YANNOULAS, 2013). Furthermore, the concept of gender is seen as a category of relational analysis that questions the binary system that provide fixed and naturalized places for genders. In this sense, the sociological analyses, particularly in the feminized educational field, cannot dispense a gender framing, as it is an important category of analysis of social relations and practices exercised in the educational field and, therefore, present in the pedagogical practices that characterize the teaching work.

This tensioning of the habitus category by the concept of gender, directed us to the concept of gender habitus (McNAY, 1999; McLEOD, 2005; ALMEIDA, 1997; RAMIRES NETO, 2006; SETTON; VIANNA, 2014), which enables us to better understand the actions of teachers as practices also crossed by internalized gender dispositions. The incorporation of a gender habitus affects the teachers' qualification, individually and collectively, (in) forming their pedagogical practices.

In addition to the theoretical references cited above, studies by Alan Touraine (1994, 1998, 2011) brought significant contributions to the study regarding, among other things, the realization of the possibility of teachers becoming actresses. In the process of becoming actresses, teachers incorporate actions with pedagogical potential to produce what we call gender pedagogical movement.

The author adds that women's thoughts and actions should be considered in their historic reach, and no longer as a process of individual personality formation. Touraine (1994; 2011) speaks of an engaged and critical actor/actress who does not seek a status of full reality constructor, since their potential may be sometimes bloomed, sometimes malleable and flexible, but an actor/actress is always inserted into the social articulations and has the ability to transform the 'spirit of the time' of our societies.

Research procedures

To respond to the objectives of the study we opted to collect data through a survey sent to 581 participants of the GDE course offered by the Federal University of Espírito Santo (Ufes) between 2011-2012 and 2013-2014. Of all participants, 126 teachers responded the survey. We also carried out 14 focus groups in the cities that offered the GDE course and one in the city of Itarana.⁶ The analysis of the survey data was conducted by the software Statistical Package for Social Science for Windows (SPSS). The analysis of the focus groups was based on content analysis (BARDIN, 2008), mainly about actions and attitudes of teachers who were recurrent and showed some differences among each other.

To protect the identity⁷ of the people who participated in the focus groups and to guarantee the anonymity of their statements, we decided to use names of flowers [in Portuguese] for the participants because in this process we felt like Carlos Drummond de Andrade's gardener in the poem "*Maneira de amar*" [Way to love], who "[...] chatted with

6- The city of Itarana was added because most the teachers who attended the GDE in the center Colatina resided in Itarana.

7- As agreed through the informed consent form and following all ethical recommendations for research with human beings, in accordance with Resolution no. 510/2016.

the flowers, and they became used to the dialogue [...] telling things to a carnation or listening to what a geranium had to say.” (free translation).

The content analysis was adopted as the possibility of interpreting the data from the discussion, of the interconnection and correlation of data, whether by simple presentation of the survey data or by its correlation to the categorization of the focus group data.

The teachers' movements and the gender habitus at schools: what do the teachers' actions announce?

As previously highlighted, our first listening moment to understand the actions of teachers happened through the survey. In a question in which respondents could choose up to three variables we asked about actions related to gender and sexual diversity that the teachers performed at school after completion of the GDE course. Of the total respondents, 78% claimed to perform some action, while 22% reported not developing any gender-themed activities.

These data were confirmed in the focus groups. However, in this procedure, a higher percentage of teachers claimed to perform actions (and described them) daily in their classes. This may have occurred through dialogue with the group enabled by the focus group technique. Of 56 participants in the focus group, 47 teachers (83.93%) claimed to perform gender actions⁸ at schools. Of these people, only two did not provide examples how they performed it. Of the total of participants in the focus groups, only three stated not conducting any action after the GDE course and four people did not address the issue. We noticed in our study that something different is happening at schools, and we need to seize this process.

In this sense, we seek to identify the practices that teachers claim to perform, recognized in the study as gender pedagogical practices, which bring the collective sense of transformation and explain how they influence school conducts and, consequently, contribute to transforming the “spirit of the time” of our societies (TOURAINÉ, 2011) and cause leakages in the gender *habitus* (McNAY, 1999; McLEOD, 2005; ALMEIDA, 1997; RAMIRES NETO, 2006; SETTON; VIANNA, 2014).

We believe that the educational field and, more precisely, the actions performed at schools are essential in this process. Thus, we also seek to understand how these actions are perceived and connected with the existence of gender public policies and social movements of women and feminists.

By crossing the dialogues teachers carried out through the focus groups and the answers obtained by the survey, we identified at least three characteristics that were more present in their actions. We organized these characteristics as data grouping units called optimistic-articulated, silent-individual, and pessimistic-impotent. We understand these characteristics in a relational way, therefore, not essentialized. Thus, we sometimes notice in the same action the presence of the optimistic-articulated and the silent-individual

8- We call gender action at school any action that considered a gender approach to be performed, such as: debates in the classroom from a situation that emerged as a gender demand, for example, use of toys by boys and girls; classes with content articulated with gender issues; lectures to the school community; projects; planning etc.

characteristics, or of the silent-individual and pessimistic-impotent. The characteristics organized in data grouping units are a theoretical-analytical resource to better understand the empirical reality studied; thus, it is impossible to generalize all teachers in the state of Espírito Santo. The use of this resource did not intend to end all possibilities of interpretations of the empirical reality studied on each grouping unit.

Optimistic-articulated action: producing leakages and resisting gender coinages

The teachers who take an optimistic-articulated action are those who believe their action changes reality; they believe the assumption of a self-responsibility and a shared and collective responsibility concerning these facts can generate social transformations. The teachers understand the importance of articulation with other teachers, with social movements, institutions, the school community, among other social actors, as a possibility of a more democratic and expanded construction of these actions. In this sense, they seek to carry out articulated actions, despite the difficulties they represent to the current organization of the teaching work, which, for the most part, does not enable the time required for collective planning or conduction of continued pedagogical training in gender.

Among the participants in the focus groups we identified 26 (46.43%) teachers who presented these characteristics in a more emblematic way. In the survey this identification was more diffuse since the instrument was closed, but we considered the following answers⁹ as constituent of this data grouping unit: 26.8% claimed having carried out planning and implementation of projects, collectively, on the subject of gender; 18.1% claimed having carried out planning and implementation of extra-curricular projects; and 9.4% claimed having conducted individual or collective projects¹⁰ that have been partially implemented. Finally, 3.9% reported having created study groups. The fact they performed a collective action coordinated with various actors/actresses demarcates the approach to this unit of data grouping.

In this type of action, we believe the indication of performance of gender activities at schools is a leakage to the gender *habitus* in itself, since this theme was very little debated at schools a few years ago, before the turn of the 21st century.

Our research data indicate that the teachers' empathy (RIZZATO, 2013) with gender issues, experienced personally or within their professional reality/with their students, is a significant factor in stimulating the implementation of actions that cause leakages in the gender *habitus*. However, there is no evidence of a significant relationship between the fact that the teacher was already concerned with gender issues before attending the GDE and the implementation of gender actions in the school.

The teachers, including those that were already concerned with gender issues before attending the GDE, stated that the training courses, such as GDE, GPP-GR, EDC, among

9- In this question, the respondents could indicate up to three options of answers.

10- In this group, we consider the collective action as constitutive of the optimistic-articulated action.

others, which resulted from the Federal, State and municipal public policies, were essential for their actions to be more qualified.

It is interesting to note that out of the 56 participants in the focus group, when questioned about the changes caused by the GDE, 52 (92.85%) stated they felt personally and professionally empowered after attending the course, and two did not address the issue. When asked what changes they were able to notice after the course, teachers (71.43%)¹¹ indicated a change in the way of looking at and handling differences at school, a deeper reflection on gender issues and on the school curriculum, etc. Teacher Mimosa, for example, said that: “[...] after the course, we start to see things differently” (participant’s interview in 2016).

The teachers also indicated changes perceived in the attitudes and actions of their students: the manner of speaking of boys and girls, the more respectful treatment between students of different genders, the empowerment and political organization of students through the formation of movements of girls/women and black girls/women, of LGBTI, within the school, among others.

In this production of leakages in the gender *habitus*, in addition to the courses mentioned, which we believe have collaborated for teacher training in gender, it is important to highlight the influence of the growth of gender discussions at universities, promoted to a large extent by study and research groups on gender and sexuality. In her PhD thesis, Unbehaum (2014) points to a growth in the number of research groups in the education field that have been registered in the Directory of Research Groups of CNPq since 1992, when this Directory was created. In 1993, CNPq had 201 research groups and in 2010, 2,236. This academic-scientific movement, in addition to demonstrating an increase of groups in the area of education, also expresses the growth of groups researching gender.

This growth in the institutionalization of groups influences and is influenced by policies, which demonstrates the consolidation of the field of gender studies. The debates at universities end up bypassing the teachers’ training beyond the initial one, such as the trainings offered by the cities and states due to the discussion of curricula, conferences, seminars, lectures, etc. The pedagogical praxis, in this sense, is also affected, although moved by a slow and complex reflective process (BOURDIEU, 2005; McNAY, 1999).

However, this does not seem to be an easy task, as most respondents of the focus group (66.07%) believe that performing a gender-themed action provokes a kind of tension, either with families, other fellow teachers, or students, usually occurring for reasons of intolerance, religion, or ideology.

Although most pointed out tensions in the thematic discussion, it is evident that the teachers perform some action that pedagogically addresses the issue of gender in their classrooms or, collectively, at the school. It is important to highlight that a work articulated collectively and democratically through planning is presented as a way to reduce tensions among teachers regarding the discussion of gender in school and the

11- Of the 56 teachers, 16 did not address the issue during the focus group. In this sense, it is impossible to affirm which among these teachers noticed changes and which did not.

possibility of establishing some articulation concerning the teaching work. From the statements that emerged in the focus group we observed that the performance of gender pedagogical actions tends to be more evident and frequent in schools where there is time reserved for collective planning.

We found a better structured organization in some schools regarding what we call gender pedagogical movement: the *campi* Linhares and São Mateus of the Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Espírito Santo (IFES) are examples. The experience of IFES Linhares, whose teachers constituted a Commission of Gender and Sexuality, is innovative. There are also other student organizations and according to teacher Gerbera (2016), organized groups “[...] of girls with curly hair called ICacheou. We have Colorifes, which is a LGBT¹² social movement, as well as other groups that are forming and strengthening that speech”. (interview of a participant in 2016). The narratives presented indicate a very strong articulation of teachers from these schools and their peers regarding the gender issue, and that extends to the community and to other schools of neighboring cities.

For Touraine (1998), the actor (social actress) is someone engaged who acts to increase his/her own autonomy and control his/her working and existence conditions in concrete relations such as gender issues. Taking historicity and change as constituents of social relations, the sociologist believes it is possible for individuals to become actors (actresses) and act in order to bring changes in attitudes and thoughts. This process, for the author, generates a historic change.

The working conditions of IFES teachers much differ from the ones of state and municipal school teachers in the state of Espírito Santo and, therefore, there is a different work organization for collective activities. At IFES the conditions for collective planning are better because teachers are civil servants working for 40 hours in an exclusive dedication regime.

On the other hand, the fact that most teachers work in temporary condition in state schools hinders work organization to achieve collective and integrated educational activities. In this context, it is more complex to establish deeper educational and affective relationships with the group and also to perform future projects because of the temporariness and instability of employment. This is a factor that significantly affects the financial and psychological security of professionals, as they do not know where they will be or if they will be in the same school the following year. Moreover, even among teachers that have passed civil service examinations, the time of dedication to work in one school is usually 25 hours, which forces them to “run” from one school to another on the same day.

Despite the difficulties, including family and violence, the teachers who exercise an optimistic-articulated action have provoked coping and overcoming. With that, they end up causing leakages regarding various objective and subjective situations that contribute to legitimize a *habitus* that maintains gender inequalities. In this sense, they exercise a policy of tension of this *habitus* in the daily life of their performances at school,

12- The acronym LGBT stands for Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Transgender. Currently, other acronyms have emerged to include other gender manifestations. We can also find the acronym LGBTTT, which stands for Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transsexuals, Transvestites, Transgender. Internationally, the most widely used acronym is LGBTI, which includes intersex people.

which indicates a pedagogical movement that seeks to build a gender *habitus* directed to overcome inequalities between the sexes.

The silent-individual action: what the apparent silence produces

The second action was named silent-individual. This action can be observed among those teachers who, for various reasons, were unable to articulate with other teachers to perform activities, but feel the responsibility to develop actions on gender issues, even if individually.

They adopt this characteristic because they lived some situation of conflict when attempting to perform some specific action on gender issues and, currently, are afraid of going through another experience that can create tension (usually regarding religion or ideology); or because they imagine/foresee that this conflict could arise if they performed some action involving gender issues; and also for having proposed some gender action in the school and her colleagues ignored it in an awkward silence. Given these issues, these teachers prefer to act individually, silently, performing activities often restricted to their classroom.

The silent-individual action, however, does not mean devoid of optimism. On the contrary, there are actions that demonstrate optimism by who performs them; however, these teachers believe the best way to achieve the changes is “slowly”, “without crashing head-on”. This characteristic is presented by the idea of “beating around the bush” and “taking opportunities” to introduce the subject and debate gender and sexuality, according to the teachers’ statements. In the focus group conducted in the countryside, teacher Cravina’s speech (2016) confirms this characteristic.

[...] working in my subject, I consider it a point of greater ease, because I guide them by History, since the valorization of women, that time when women were seen as reproductive machines, in which roles were embedded, she was only good if she was at home, had no right to leave or vote, and then you work the evolution since the Constitution and the advancements, and I take these opportunities because they are part of the subject. (Participant’s interview, 2016).

Despite several interesting experiences narrated by teachers, lack of time was a complaint in almost all focus groups conducted and is a factor that hinders the performance of gender activities in school by teachers. In the survey, the unavailability of time to meet with colleagues was indicated by 30.7% of respondents, followed by problems of lack of financing for projects (20.5%), and issues related to the lack of willingness of colleagues (18.9%).

In state schools there is a time, although insignificant, for the planning of each teaching area. However, in municipal schools this is not a reality, despite the promulgation of the Law of the National Professional Wage Floor (PSPN) (Law no. 11.73/2008) and the LDB (Law no. 9,394/1996), which regulated the working hours of teaching professionals.

The option for a quieter and individual work seems to have no relation with the lack of autonomy of teachers, since, as already stated, most of them claim to have the autonomy to work the theme, although there are tensions particularly in communities where religion is stronger and more conservative. These teachers’ attitude seems to be related to the fact

they do not want to generate tension with their peers or with the community, not openly assuming a pedagogical-political position that might not be unanimously accepted by the group. Pinto (1992, p. 131) reminds us that the “the non-explicit adherence” to a movement allows individuals “[...] to easily keep their network of relations intact within the community they belong”. Acting in such a way, thus, silently and individually, the teacher avoids what the author calls “[...] the rite of passage from the private to the public world” (PINTO, 1992, p. 131). The rite of passage requires ruptures to be made and, at the same time, the constitution of a public identity. Consequently, the teacher seeks to avoid tension within the school, in relationships with the students’ families and in their own family.

The concept of *habitus* (BOURDIEU, 2005) may help us understand the difficulty since, considered as a system of unconscious dispositions that constitutes itself as a product of internalization of objective structures, it tends to produce practices and, in this way, careers that are objectively adjusted to objective structures. However, as the educational field is basically a space for a strategy game in which relationships among the participants are established, it is also a space for subjective hopes. These established relations are related to struggles, to conflicts of interest. Each agent that participates in this strategy game does it from a position within that field and there they can fight, create, recreate, not being static individuals since in this field there is room for maneuver.

Therefore, the teachers, as agents (of different classes, gender, race/ethnicity, and subjected to various types of inequalities), positioned in this field, fight for a symbolic capital for which they establish alliances and strategies. In this sense, it seems to us that the silent-individual posture has been the way some teachers found to break gender asymmetries and hierarchies from the inside, while their subjective aspirations tend to adjust to objective opportunities (lack of training for all, lack of enough collective time for deepening discussions etc.).

Bourdieu’s theory (2005) may lead us to consider this would be the path to the reproduction of naturalization of gender inequalities by some teachers, as he argues that gender *habitus* assumes that the field is its own condition of possibilities, i.e., the *habitus* expresses a “practical faith,” a belief in the veracity of rules of this field that would “incline” the agent to act in accordance with them.

However, considering the possibility of leakage of actions of the agents/actresses, when Bourdieu (2005) says this would be an inclination and also considering what we heard in the focus groups, we understood these silent-individual actions as fighting strategies in the educational field, which is constantly undermined with indications on how to act and what to do, either from experts, the community, churches¹³, or governments. Even though silently, teachers seem not to act in full compliance with the trend of the field and according to the gender *habitus* socially and traditionally attributed to women.

Our analysis is that, at present, in spite of the existence of actions – including among the optimistic-articulated teachers – marked by a *habitus* of legitimation of the naturalization of gender inequalities, on the other hand are actions that in a subtle and strategically silent way have sought to break with the culture of gender prejudice and discrimination.

13- These include the projects “*Escola sem Partido*” [apolitical schools] and “Gender Ideology.”

It cannot be denied that the position occupied by a teacher in the educational field and the way they occupy it depend on their trajectory leading to their starting position in the field (BOURDIEU, 2005). However, we noticed that, in the case of the studied teachers, even if they have experienced situations of domestic violence, they did not consider themselves as victims. On the contrary, their trajectories showed the desire to overcome this social issue. Some saw their performance in the schools as a chance to do so. Thus, as Touraine (2011, p. 23) tells us, “[...] women carry within them positive projects as well as the desire to live an existence transformed by themselves”.

Probably because of the above-mentioned reason some teachers suggest that the GDE course be attended by all the teachers of the school; according to them it would become easier to talk, dialogue, and articulate actions that address a debate on the subject of gender. Sometimes it is possible that the teacher who attended the GDE course was the only professional of the school to do so, no other colleague who have attended a course of longer duration on the theme. This fact leads them to opt for or be “forced” to perform individual activities that involve gender and sexuality issues.

It also seems that, held back by a particular *habitus* of the schools forged by the objective question of not having the time necessary for collective planning, the teachers isolate themselves and end up isolating other people from their surroundings. Breaking with this *habitus*, that has a rooted gender framing, depends on a huge personal effort and extensive training, since it involves not only the desire of the agent/actress, but also the concrete confrontation of a strong structural issue. In fact, the importance of a more perennial training policy was indicated by many teachers as essential to the strengthening of the work on gender in schools.

Many teachers who were part of the focus groups also highlighted the intensification of the teaching work, as many curricular activity requirements created in the past few years hinder the collective organization. In this sense, when the issue of gender is not provided for in the curriculum, it is difficult for the teachers to approach it. According to them, public administrators began to designate many attributions to the schools that did not use to be their responsibility.

After all, the educational reforms that have been implemented since the 1990s provoked a strong decentralization of activities in the school units. New political experiences became part of the global and national scenario with the escalation of the neoliberal ideology as a more individualistic and competitive worldview. In this regard, governance replaced politics.

The State, under the logic of good governance, no longer controls the society directly. Among the new regulation forms in force, decentralization is emphasized as a transfer mechanism of the implementation of public policies for the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and subnational entities. In addition, the power of social investment becomes smaller, considering that it is necessary to “obey” an organization standard of the globalized capital that requires governments to prioritize actions based on good financial behavior, at the same time that it must be efficient to manage social issues to minimize conflicts.

This is presented in the education field through several reforms that increasingly place demands on teachers, thus provoking an increase in the amount of responsibilities

of workers regarding the pedagogical process, such as: integrating types of knowledge, working in group with colleagues, attending to gender and sexuality issues, participating in ethno-racial discussions, conducting and evaluating institutional projects, generating and managing financial resources, managing human resources, promoting the control of results through large scale evaluations, among others.

All these demands make teachers feel incapable in their teaching performance and, to some extent, lead them to refuse the projects and proposals presented to the school, particularly due to lack of time and technical and financial resources. This situation, to Fanfani (2005), creates a paradox: knowledge is put as central for institutions and for the production of goods and services by this modernization perspective; however, education, which should be part of this ideal, is going through a crisis manifested also in its agents. In our research we perceived modes of resistance to this crisis through the teachers' statements, for example, in the increment of their own training.

The pessimistic-impotent action: "hell is other people"

The pessimistic-impotent action can be evidenced in the almost-actions¹⁴ or in the lack of actions of teachers. It is a posture assumed by the teachers who have knowledge about the gender issues, know the need and importance of discussing this theme at school, and even plan some activity, but fail to act because they assume a posture of victimization, saying that the activities are not performed because of another teacher, because of the pedagogue, of the direction. As Sartre (1970) would say, hell is other people.

It is worth stating that few teachers (only three) who participated in the focus groups presented this characteristic, being interpellated by other members of the group who encouraged them or even criticized this pessimistic stance. From the reported, this inertia noticed in the statements is generated by several factors: feeling of isolation from the work group, victimization, trouble to overcome difficulties imposed by the organization of the teaching work etc.

Final considerations

The development of our research proves the importance of the existence of educational policies that encourage teachers to develop new reflections and pedagogical practices within the educational units. The development of the GDE course in a favorable context to broaden the debate on gender issues and on the deep inequalities that affect women in Brazil caused and/or revealed the existing pedagogical movements among teachers. That is, there are gender pedagogical movements that have become more apparent and/or flowed when teachers had access to a continuing training policy with emphasis on gender issues. The teachers of our research have adopted actions with different characteristics; most assumed an optimistic-articulated and silent-individual stances, which shows that these teachers are performing actions at schools in order to the denaturalize gender relations.

14- We call almost-actions the activities that were planned or designed by the teachers, but that, for some reason, were not carried out.

In the period and context studied here (2003-2016), we identified actions that seek to break with the culture of gender prejudice and discrimination in schools, despite the existence of actions marked by a *habitus* of legitimation of the gender inequality naturalization.

These actions are formative for all people who participate in it but are also dialectically self-formative for the teachers. In addition, the studies indicate that these actions are not random. Directly or indirectly, they are built in a dialectical relationship with the historical knowledge that emerge from social movements, feminist and gender studies, new social media, formations arising from public policies, trade union movements, and scientific associations of education.

Thus, our hypothesis was confirmed that, even in the face of various contention possibilities (e.g. precariousness of working conditions, patriarchal culture, fragmented organization of the teaching work etc.), the teachers have conducted educational actions that seek to denaturalize the asymmetries and hierarchizations in the field of gender relations. Such actions indicate displacements in the ways teachers act regarding gender inequality in schools and in society, thus generating a movement within school education.

These movements, combined with empathy of the teachers for people who suffer discrimination and prejudice in schools, boost the discussion of gender in schools and provide a greater reflection of the teachers about their gender experiences. Thus, the training policy of the GDE influenced pedagogical action of teachers, enabling actions that create leakages in the socially legitimized gender *habitus*. The leakages that have been caused in the culture of schools demonstrate the occurrence of gender pedagogical movements that act dialectically in the formation of an alternative gender *habitus*, in order to influence a cultural change. These network movements influence the conduct of teachers and contribute to the transformation of the “spirit of the times” in our schools.

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