

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY AND THE LGBTQIA+ POPULATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN EXPERIENCE REPORT

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ABSTRACT

This work is a report of the of School Psychology professional experience with the university management of attention to LGBTI+ students, based on Critical School Psychology. This document points out the practices carried out by two psychologists and trainees, both from the Psychology undergraduate course and from other courses, with regard to reception, awareness, recognition, respect for diversity and the fight against LGBTIphobia at the university. As a prelude, the activities carried out between students and the institution's administrations presented characteristics of the educational psychology traditional praxis and emerging, pointing out the importance of research, studies and the professional's ethical role, with the LGBTI+ population.

Keywords: school psychology; university education; sexuality

Psicología escolar y población LGBTI+ en la enseñanza universitaria: un relato de experiencia

RESUMEN

Este estudio es un relato de experiencia profesional de la Psicología Escolar junto a la gestión universitaria de atención a estudiantes LGBTI+, basada en la Psicología Escolar Crítica. Este documento apunta las prácticas realizadas por dos psicólogos y psicólogas en formación tanto de la graduación en Psicología como de otros cursos, en lo tocante a la acogida, sensibilización, reconocimiento, respeto a la diversidad y al combate a la LGBTIfobia en la universidad. Como prelude, las actividades realizadas entre estudiantes y las gestiones de la institución, presentaron características de la praxis tradicional de la psicología educacional y emergentes, apuntando la importancia de investigaciones, estudios y el papel ético del profesional, junto a la población LGBTI+.

Palabras clave: psicología escolar; enseñanza superior, sexualidad

Psicologia Escolar e população LGBTI+ no ensino superior: um relato de experiência

RESUMO

Este trabalho é um relato de experiência profissional da Psicologia Escolar junto à gestão universitária de atenção a estudantes LGBTI+, embasado na Psicologia Escolar Crítica. Este documento aponta as práticas realizadas por dois psicólogos e estagiários tanto da graduação em Psicologia como de outros cursos, no tocante ao acolhimento, sensibilização, reconhecimento, respeito à diversidade e o combate à LGBTIfobia na universidade. Como prelúdio, as atividades realizadas entre estudantes e as gestões da instituição, apresentaram características das práxis tradicionais da psicologia educacional e emergentes, apontando a importância de pesquisas, estudos e o papel ético do profissional, junto à população LGBTI+.

Palavras-chave: psicologia escolar; ensino superior; sexualidade

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INTRODUCTION

In the last decades, Brazilian public policies for inclusion of diversity by means of affirmative action have been implemented and supported by law number 12.711, from 2012, so that vacancies could be reserved for people with special necessities, African descendants, indigenous people, quilombola populations and trans people.

With an amplification of access to university, there was a consequent amplification of the diversity of the population that attends such institutions. Universities started to embrace a whole new range of groups and identities with different necessities, perspectives, and approaches. One example is the LGBTQIA+ population, that is: Lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender people, transexuals, intersex people, queers, asexual people, and other identities that do not correspond to cis-normativity¹.

Concerning the reality of the LGTBI population, in 2018, according to a report on violent deaths of LGBT people produced by the Grupo Gay da Bahia, 420 violent deaths were motivated by LGBTQIA+ phobia². Concerning educational environments, Abramovay (2015) interviewed a universe of 8283 students from high school, and young people and adults from the Pró-Jovem Urbano project. The result indicated that 19.3% of these young people would not like to have LGBTQIA+ classmates.

Considering such reality, the present study intends to present a report on an experience in the area of school psychology, promoted by an education Bureau connected to the central administration of a federal institution of higher learning, in collaboration with the LGBTQIA+ community. Rather than exposing oppression, the intention of the experience is to promote practices that involve embracing, promoting awareness, recognizing/respecting diversity, as well as fighting LGBTQIA+ phobia at universities.

Our basis is the perspective of the Critical School Psychology, which is an epistemological perspective that, according to Patto (1990), problematizes and identifies student failure as something produced by the education system itself when it perpetuates historical processes of de-qualification and social discrimination.

We understand that the practice of the school psychologist with the LGBTQIA+ population at universities must consist of actions that promote

“new problematizations on inclusive policies that contemplate new sexual and gender expressions, and that consequently trigger new processes of subjectivation, and new modes of existence”, as Peres (2010, p. 58) emphasized.

In this sense, we emphasize the scarcity of references when it comes to the role played by educational psychologists in higher education and in the fight against discrimination, stigmatization, and prejudice against the LGBTQIA+ population.

In addition, Sampaio (2010) points out that “universities and their populations are practically unexplored spaces by psychologists who pay attention to the area of Education” (p. 96) – which is the reason that justifies the production of the present study.

THE SCOPE

The Coordination for Sexual Diversity and the Fight Against Gender Violence - or “Coordenadoria de Diversidade Sexual e Enfrentamento da Violência de Gênero” (CDGEN) - is a subdivision of the Bureau for Affirmative Action and Diversity - Secretaria de Ações Afirmativas e Diversidades (SAAD) - of the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC). These institutions were created in 2016 with the objective to establish policies for fighting LGBTQIA+ phobia, violence against women, and the promotion of the rights of oppressed minorities.

Since the Bureau is connected to the central administration, the work of the CDGEN is extended to the five campuses of the university (Araranguá, Blumenau, Curitibanos, Florianópolis and Joinville), where the activities for fighting LGBTQIA+ phobia are discussed with the teams for educational/ pedagogical/ management support, while considering the local necessities discussed in occasional meetings, which are based on assistance to students³, reports and the LGBTQIA+ calendar.

At the CDGEN, the work is based on supporting students in cases of violence, on providing guidelines and referrals to other internal departments of the UFSC, and external services. Concerning cases of violence, the work is realized in collaboration with the ombudsman, the bureau for institutional security, the comptroller, and the course coordination staff, in order to provide and receive guidelines regarding internal rules of the institution.

The professional team is made up 2 educational psychologists and interns in the courses of Museology, Psychology and Law (most of them are LGBTQIA+ people

¹ Socially imposed norm regarding the linear coherence of all people when it comes to sex, gender, and gender expression.

² “LGBTQIA+ phobia, which is the practice of inducing or fostering discrimination or prejudice due to sexual orientation or gender identity against lesbians, gay people, bisexual people, transvestites, transsexual people, or intersex people” (Public Ministry of Paraná, 2020, s/p).

³ The choice for the use of genderless language throughout the study is directly connected to the political aspect of visibility for all gender identities, sexual orientations, and the respect by psychologists for all subjectivities of the LGBTQIA+ population.

who participate in social movements in Florianópolis). Each one of the participants is supported in their previously described activities of the supervisor/professor based on the necessities of the coordination, by the educational psychologists in weekly and monthly meetings for the planning and execution of the discussed annual calendar, assessed and approved at the end of the previous year.

With the development of the works, we observed that there was a preoccupation with turning the university environment into an inclusive and diversified environment. Therefore, in collaboration with the Communication Agency, we created a poster with the following announcement: "The UFSC embraces diversity. Let's all respect sexual orientations and gender identities" – displayed in the central area (beside the rectory) –, containing contact information for the coordination (email and telephone), as well as the *leitmotiv* of the theme for the institution and the LGBTQIA+ calendar, promoting debates on the current scenario regarding gender and sexuality.

Based on this initiative, the students' reports are the necessary material for a work on awareness, visibility, and respect. Those are elements that need to be discussed by means of extension actions, search as lectures, mini courses, roundtables, debates on movie productions, theme exhibits etc. Concerning the dates for visibility, pride, and fighting LGBTQIA+ phobia – replicated in accordance to demands and particularities of the other campuses of the institution.

It is important to emphasize that in 2015, at the UFSC, there was the publication of resolution number 059/2015 (2015), which prescribes the use of the social name by the community, while promoting respect to trans people in the premises of the institution. However, the document does not intend to understand the universe regarding the use of the social name and adjacent difficulties in the university environment and systems as well as its permanence and the way we could amplify our practice. That is a responsibility of the CDGEN team. The team also has a responsibility to keep in touch with students by means of dialogue.

As a result of such dialogue, an explanatory booklet was created. Its layout describes the process of the use of the social name, as well as information concerning guaranteed rights. Besides that, the booklet explains the importance of its use in the spaces of the institution with the support of our trans intern, who was careful enough to: Use the colors of the trans flag (blue, white, and pink), symbolizing and identifying the target public and register the contact of the CDGEN.

A campaign for awareness and respect was created concerning the use of the social name (UFSC news, 2020), as well as what term of address is adequate when addressing people. This campaign was supported

by LGBTQIA+ students, a UFSC transvestite teacher, the communication agency, and the UFSC TV, which broadcast the campaign during the trans visibility week (January 29th), with the objective to promote awareness in the community concerning the LGBTQIA+ theme, for subsequent advertising in a printed campaign.

As part of the array of demands, a preparation course was developed. The course was named "Gender and Diversity in the University Environment", whose target public included the teachers and administrative technicians of the Trindade campus (pilot project), with the intention to raise issues related to the classroom and contact with the students. The singularity of the course consisted of the support and the participation of LGBTQIA+ researchers from the Netrans. Feedback from the participants was a 100% positive. Since the initiative had positive results, we considered extending this articulation of the project, also by means of extension activities in collaboration with the pro rectories of graduation and post-graduation, as well as other departments of student assistance, trans healthcare (health care system), with Centers for research - especially the nucleus for studies and research on transgender and transsexuality (NETRANS), LGBTQIA+ NGOs, and the project named Coletivo Mães pela Diversidade (Mothers for Diversity Collective) etc.

The interventions were conducive do a better understanding of the universe of the LGBTQIA+ population. They were a driving force and provided the synergy that has transformed the university environment into a space for embracing sexual diversity and gender identities and for fighting all forms of violence that to make it difficult for individuals to stay in the university, such as trans phobia and prejudice. In their publication, Cantelli, Pereira, Oliveira, Tozo and Nogueira (2019) point out the daily obstacles as reasons why the trans population drops out of learning institutions.

The previously mentioned initiatives demonstrated that dialogue and collective construction guaranteed respect and the right for trans students and teachers to express themselves. The initiatives were also conducive to greater proximity with the population in the fight against invisibility and transphobia, while making the university environment a powerhouse for collective constructions with LGBTQIA+ students by means of sharing their experiences and life histories.

The positive feedback for these activities caused such a great impact that it can be observed in the massive attendance to the exhibits and other activities that promoted the debate, and discussions concerning respecting and guaranteeing the permanence of LGBTQIA+ students in the university environment. Most importantly, it is necessary to come up with an education proposal for all community that embraces gender identities and sexual diversity at institutions

where values are based on inclusion, democracy, and plurality.⁴

In a nutshell, it is possible to observe that the practice of the school psychologist with the LGBTQIA+ community has required series of competences not only in high school, but in all levels of education. These competencies intend to build a space for deconstruction, embracing, and decriminalization, with actions aiming at permanence and that contribute to “the mitigation and eradication of racism, sexism, homophobia, lesbophobia, transphobia, and transgender phobia, and for the creation education spaces for all” (Peres, 2010, p. 59).

It is also worth it to emphasize that this study presents, as Martinez (2010) identified, the “emergent practices” of psychologists at school. These actions are based on a perspective that is connected to “the psychosocial dimension of the school institution” (p. 53). Without disregarding the historically recognized practices, the interventions by the school psychologist amplify our understanding concerning pedagogical management, and institutional reading, while always elevating the political ethical parameters of an intervention committed to citizenship and human rights.

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⁴ Recovered on April 8th 2020 from de <https://estrutura.ufsc.br/missao/>.

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