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**Professors' representations on gender and sexualities in higher education**

*Representações dos professores sobre gênero e sexualidades no ensino superior*

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**Abstract**

The main aim of this research is to analyze the professor's representation in the inclusion of themes and questions related to gender, body, and sexuality in the course's syllabus at the Major Education in the Federal University of Sergipe (UFS), Itabaiana Campus, Sergipe, Brazil. The methodology was qualitative with the application of questionnaires and interviews with eight teachers (five women and three men) of the Department of Education. The results showed that the inclusion of themes and questions related to the body, gender and sexuality on Education Activities in the Pedagogy Course have been raised by the professors in personal measures, developing and raising this questions by themselves, considering their experiences and formation on gender, body and sexuality questions.

Keywords: Gender. Sexualities. Course's Syllabus. Teaching Work.

**Resumo**

O objetivo principal desta pesquisa é analisar as representações de docentes sobre a inclusão de temas e questões relacionadas a gênero, corpo e sexualidade no currículo do curso de Pedagogia da Universidade Federal de Sergipe (UFS), Campus Itabaiana, Sergipe, Brasil. A metodologia foi qualitativa com a aplicação de questionários e realização de entrevistas com oito docentes (cinco mulheres e três homens) do Departamento de Educação. Os resultados mostraram que a inclusão de temas e questões relacionadas ao corpo, gênero e sexualidade nas atividades docentes do Curso de Pedagogia foram levantadas pelos professores em medidas pessoais, desenvolvendo e levantando essas questões por si mesmas, considerando suas experiências e formação sobre gênero, questões de corpo e sexualidade.

**Palavras-chave:** Gênero. Sexualidades Programa do curso. Trabalho Docente.

## **Introduction**

The aim of this article is to analyze professors' representations on gender and sexualities at the Major in Education of UFS, Itabaiana Campus, result of an original research. One understands *representation*, according to Meyer (2010), as a way of meaningful production inside culture, a process that implies power relations and occurs thru language.

The importance of studying the faculty is the perception that, although the increase of academic studies concerning teachers' training linked to the discussions on gender and sexualities, we are still far from a reality in which teachers may be trained in order to question the generified curriculum present school daily life. In the school context, there are discourses that seek to normalize gender and sexuality. Therefore, this text is concerned with the knowledge spread by professors in charge of higher education and whose discourses are being given priority to the detriment of another and what is the aim of the adopted curriculum, since the curriculum can select contents, conceptions and subjectivities that it wants to form. Thus understanding curriculum as “[...] a cultural craft engaged in power relations and in the production of individuals” (CAMPOS; PARAÍSO, 2015, p. 01).

However, it is important to identify that sex, as a biological being, is not determinant of sexuality and gender, insofar as “[...] gender builds the intelligibility of the body and behaviors in the public space [...]” (LE BRETON, 2014, p. 19) and that the female and male genders are not absolute at all; they exist by means of repetitions and behavioral norms.

According to this, Bourdieu (2014, p. 23) states that gender relations are inscribed in power relations, by means of which “[...] the male principle is taken as the measurement of all things”. The differences between male and female have been produced out of the “socialization of the biological” and the “biologization of the social”, by inverting cause and effect. As for sexuality, Bourdieu (2014) shows heterosexuality as also social-historically produced and reproduced and becoming the pattern of “normality”, by pointing out that, historically, there are three main institutions that guarantee the production and reproduction of gender: family, church and school. School has an important role in reproducing the differences and it is in its premises there are the means for the change in the relations between genders (BOURDIEU, 2014). One

of the possible change factors would be the inclusion of the gender theme in teacher training through two ways: the first one would be theoretically teaching about gender relations. The second one starts from the analysis of concrete opportunities cases in the curriculum by providing examples and analyzing how one produces and reinforces gender relations at school (CARVALHO, 2003).

One still works with the logics that there is an adequate way of living gender and sexuality, a formal pattern of femininity and masculinity and a healthy way of sexuality, which are central positions, and everything that gets away from this understanding is considered eccentric (LOURO, 2010). The repetition of this “truth” makes one believe in its permanence, universality and naturalness and forget its constructed character.

Therefore, there is the need of discussing the naturalized notions and those of gender and sexuality, because they seek to produce a normal body that behaves in a culturally accepted way so that a male individual is supposed to have relationship with women, and a female individual with men. Such norms are in several spaces and institutions, which have authority in the production of discourses; one of such institutions is the school, which daily produces separation practices and the naturalness of bodies.

According to Altmann (2013), undergraduate courses still have resistance as for the insertion of the gender and sexuality themes in their official curricula and the approach of the theme is still dependent on the individual initiatives of Professors. The author still points out the possible causes for that fact, such as the universities autonomy concerning knowledge. On one hand, this autonomy guarantees the Professors who are sensible to such theme that they approach or offer disciplines; on the other hand it makes that other professionals do not consider this theme. Another factor would be the traditional and stable structure of the curricula that face difficulty in following the flexibility of the themes gender and sexuality.

Therefore, one must question: what is and what should be the curriculum of teacher training as far as gender is concerned? Which dimensions of *savoir-faire* should be explored? What are the required skills and competences? What are the greatest challenges to be faced? According to Félix (2015), teachers often consider the gender and sexuality themes unnecessary.

In order to reflect upon the possibilities of approaching gender and sexuality in teacher training, it is mandatory to understand that the process of selecting the contents is a disputing space, which will reflect interested social views, because curriculum is not neuter. Everything operates around meaning production and power relations, and the process of generification and gender pedagogies act in a subtle way, as natural processes that are reproduced at school and in teacher training. Dias (2013) points out that most teacher's beginning training courses do not approach such themes and, consequently, they face difficulty in the classroom.

Thus, teacher training is really important in order to reach the expected goals in relation to the inclusion of the discussions about body, gender and sexualities in the classroom, mainly because the teaching reality in Brazil is already too complex, increasingly demanding a wider training in order to approach transversal, political, ethical, theoretical and practical aspects.

After Félix (2015), we believe that teacher training is an open-ended process in constant movement. "Teacher training results from the set of changes that we are facing and relates itself to social, historical, political, ethic and cultural aspects and contexts" (FÉLIX, 2015, p. 229). She still remembers that teacher training approaches cultural tensions and thus there is no way to disconnect oneself from the gender matter. The author still lists some theoretical and practical questions that need to be addressed in the training,

- gender is a marker that organizes our society, that we become men and women by means of intense pedagogical processes that, in general, do not account for the multiplicity of possibilities of being man and woman in this world;
- gender crosses the organization of spaces and institutions; it acts in the elaboration and in the operation of the laws and the public policies;
- to break through the homogenizing, classifying and excluding pedagogical practices and open space for creation, novelty, [...];
- to plan and implement less unequal educational processes, more just and significant for all the engaged people, that may value the differences and diversities of all kinds;
- to articulate the questions of gender to other social markers, such as sexuality, generation, race/ethnic groups. (FÉLIX, 2015, p. 229).

By taking these questions as a starting point, it would be necessary that teacher training included questions of gender and sexualities in their syllabus and methodologies

to promote discussions that show the teacher the need to act in situations of disrespect, violence, prejudice etc.

### **Methodology**

The methodology used in the research was the qualitative approach, because it considers the need of a “set of interpretative techniques in order to express the meaning of the social phenomena and the understanding of the meanings of human actions and relations” (DIAS, 2014, p. 32). According to Denzin e Lincoln (2016), the qualitative research methodology is important for the study of individuals and the meaning of relations. Thus, we consider that the professors taking part in this study are inserted in a space of “multiple meanings / signifiers, in which beliefs and social-cultural values are directly affected from the elements of human interactions of teacher training” (DIAS, 2014, p. 32). This questioning dialogs with some presumptions of the qualitative research: knowing the nature of the human beings e their realities, understanding the relationships between subject and researcher and how it is possible to know about the reality which the subjects belong and how is possible to acquire knowledge about them (DENZIN; LINCOLN, 2006).

Therefore, the methodological body which better corresponds to the questionings of this research is the post-critical theory, since it quits with the normative features of the research and thinks the social phenomena as multiples and heterogeneous, without the intention of creating theories or meta-narratives (PARAÍSO; MEYER, 2014). This perspective shuns from the theoretical chains which spread the theory/practice of binarism, bearing in mind that there isn't how to give meaning to experiences and discourses without a theoretical body to rely on, as well as, without the practice, it won't be possible to formulate theories, as well as Louro (2008), demarcating that for long periods the research on education field had the concern to bring up solutions, exits and proposals to the problems, putting itself in the place of the high knowledge.

Thus, we are interested in knowing which discourses cross the representations of Professors of the Major in Education of UFS/Itabaiana Campus. One developed data collection, at first, by means of a questionnaire sent by e-mail to all Professors from the Education Department of UFS, Itabaiana Campus, with 13 of its members. However, since

only five of them (two men and three women) had answered the questionnaire, we requested the others to take part in an interview with the same questions of the questionnaire, and that was accepted by other three professors (a man and two women), having eight at the research.

The data survey was made since the running of an application form and the interviews which done were considered as being of the natural location since the research does not have the objective of make generalizations, but appreciate the singular context, least of all give origin to generalizations which can be applied to any context, because the narrative represents the educational experience of the subject to “extract lessons that worth as knowledge made a posteriori, resulting in a confrontation of experience and theoretical studies done after the “narrated experiences” (LIMA; GERALDI; GERALDI, 2015, p. 27).

The strategy to identify the representations that the Professors attributed to the body, gender and sexualities occurred out of some directed questions in which they had three alternatives: yes, sometimes, no and none of the options<sup>i</sup> and to present a justification for the answer. The idea was to identify out of the problem situations the professors' representations on the inclusion of the approach of body, gender and sexualities in the Education course.

### Results and Discussions

Besides from the findings, we could notice that some participants in the research presented previous knowledge on gender and sexualities, since they use these themes in their lectures at the university. However, other professors approach it with less intensity when some situations in which the body, the gender questions and those on sexualities are focused on, noticed and lived in the lectures. There were also participants who did not express themselves or did not have any interest in the themes in their lectures according to answers exposed in the chart 1 below:

Table 1: First impressions of professors on the themes.

Questions	Yes	Som etim es	No	None of the alternatives
Do you understand that gender prejudice and sexual diversity is society problem and not the individual's?	6	1	1	-

When students tell sexist, homo-transphobic or racist jokes, do you explain why they are not correct?	4	1	-	3
Do you think that women as well as men can develop leadership skills?	7	-	-	1
Do you try to revert gender stereotypes at the university?	7	-	-	1

Source: Field research, 2016.

The first question in this phase was whether the professors understood that gender prejudice and sexual diversity is a society problem not the individual's. Seven participants said yes. Here we can see some hints in the arguments used to justify the answers, which enable us to reflect:

*It is because society is made up of discursive basis composed of different arguments (religion, science, biology) and there subjectivities will be formed. Then when the individual is prejudiced, that's because he or she has a basis formed by such discourses; therefore it's no use to work only individually; I think that to work out the question of prejudice and discriminations, that has to be work at the social level, to argue against what is divulged as right, as normal. (PROFESSOR 03).*

*Values and patters taken as "correct" or "normal" influence the individual, thus leading him/her to assume as proper a position that has naturalized itself, without even reflecting upon it. (PROFESSOR 08).*

*Of course, that's a social question, but I do not see society and the individual in a disconnected way. To me what matters most is the environment. Thus, I think that it's neither one nor the other; it's a relational question. It's a social problem and if we end up thinking of that which is on the news: the question of the rape of that girl and there one is seeking the villains, "ah one must kill the rapist". In this sense, it is not something individual because we may kill fifty thousand rapists and that is a question of a certain construction of a rape culture. In this sense, it is social, but those who give life to such culture are men and women of a certain time, of a certain space; then in this sense, it's relational, individual and social at the same time. (PROFESSOR 05).*

Professor 03 says that people do not create prejudices, but they reproduce discourses that were produced by the family, church, Biology, which have turned people prejudiced and then they start to reproduce them, that is, they start to work as truths because they are naturalized.

Another question is about sexuality; people have been led by discourses that inform that as soon as we are born men or women we would have only one form of living sexuality, thus excluding other ways of living gender and sexuality, such as gays, bisexuals, asexual ones and others. In this sense, to Professor 03, the prejudiced person "has a basis formed by such discourses", that is, these discourses would be the face-to-

face focus, thus building strategies of “work at the social level, to argue against what is divulged as right, as normal”.

That argument also appears in Professor 8's talk when she argues that the individual is “influenced by the values and patters taken as ‘correct’ or ‘normal’ thus leading him/her to assume as proper a position that has naturalized itself, without even reflecting upon it.” (PROFESSOR 08). One notices that the professor brings forth arguments of someone who has maturity or readings on the themes, because she reflects upon the uses and the effects of the discourses produced and reproduced in society.

However, is it worth questioning which would be the social values and patterns reproduced as right or normal? Dias (2014, p. 21) calls our attention to that, because in the process of socialization men and women reproduce a “social and cultural discourse” from their “family, school and social backgrounds in an active/passive way, in a process of influencing/being influenced by one another”, attributing meanings to the body, gender and sexuality.

That appears in the statements by professor 05 when she mentioned the case of the young woman who was raped by many men in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro, as in her talk there appears: “ah one must kill the rapists”, a discourse that was reproduced by many people. What is exposed in the professor 05's talk is that gender and sexuality prejudice is not only individual, but social, because in the case brought in the rape enunciate “we may kill fifty thousand rapists”. However, the construction of a rape culture as social will go on being produced and reproduced, insofar as “those who give life to such culture are men and women of a certain time, of a certain space; then in this sense it's relational, individual and social at the same time” (PROFESSOR 05). Professor 06, on the other hand, says that sometimes gender prejudice is both a social and individual problem:

*I believe that prejudices are a two-way street, that is, fed by society and practiced by the individuals, who in turn feedback society in a circular way. Thus, the fight against prejudice must pass through school and the formation of the individual's consciousness (PROFESSOR 06).*

One notices that most of them point out that prejudice is a problem created and developed by society and it is in it that we should develop a non-discriminatory education

policy. However, according to Professor 06, prejudice goes through a double-way street: on one hand, society wants to dictate the rules and, on the other hand, the individual wants to have his/her right to live with his/her sexuality free from judgements.

As for the second question in which one aroused the reflection on the statements by professors about situations in which the students tell sexist, homo-transphobic or racist jokes, they explain why such jokes are not right. One evidenced that half of the professors taking part in the research take a stand for the situations in which they noticed sexist, homo-transphobic or racist jokes, those answering the questions made the following comments:

*I think that it is an absurd to tell jokes about sexual orientations, the color of the skin etc. We need to understand that the differences are relevant for our life. In my opinion, it is a flighty behavior. (PROFESSOR 02).*

*Professors are responsible for a considerable part of people's development. Values, behaviors and the valorization of stereotypes are part of that development. Therefore, professors cannot neglect to explain, mainly, the consequences of such jokes in our society. (PROFESSOR 04).*

*When professors practice the education out of day-by-day living, learning is much more effective. (PROFESSOR 06).*

For a teacher, there is a whole preparation so that his/her class be productive and it does not mean having only production by the scientific theoretical contents. It is necessary that the teachers bring with them the essence of comprehension, of accepting and mainly of respect towards each student, as evidenced in Professor 04's talk: "Professors are responsible for a considerable part of people's development". Professor 05 deals with a discourse that is common among people: "oh the poor brunette boy', no, he is black; I talk about that, and I make a discussion out of it". Thus, she ends up helping her students to have a perception of what they talk and how they talk, and to realize the prejudiced discourses that cross their talks.

Professor 01 states: "it is more with Elementary and Secondary School; at the University I don't see that, I have a bottom assessment of it, you know it's natural, we have to accept it, that is a question of globalization, it's a gender question, which today is really on focus". This professor brings in his talk a discourse that is widely spread in the common sense in relation to diversity; that nowadays we need to accept the presence of

the different and “be OK with it”, that is, even though the difference be troublesome we have to accept it.

In this case, when he says it is a trend, he refers as in common sense to the non-normative sexual and gender identities that are victims of prejudice; they refer to the “other”, the different one and they emerge with a negative connotation, since the logics that imposes normality as heterosexual is invisible, is around, everywhere and naturalizes itself in the behavior, ideas and attitudes (LOURO, 2008). Then, if the position of heterosexuality was built in society as normal, any sexuality that is different than that is considered abnormal.

Another question is to convince, that the studies on gender and sexuality are important contents as the other contents listed in the menu of the disciplines taught at the graduation course, that they aren't short trend, as an attempt to deconstruct the discourses which “try to “disqualify our studies and name them as a kind of militancy, what for us isn't a negative or a “contamination” as some people say” (SOUZA; BARBOSA; QUEIROZ, 2017, p.110).

Three professors have not taken a stand in those situations stating that they have never faced that situation, however they had one of the arguments that although not passing through that it renders problematic situations as:

*By speaking of the learning context makes it easy for me to discuss a thing that I like and it's part of my background and my inquietudes that they are just about gender and sexuality. Then, at this moment I always talk about the jokes; I present some ideas that when you talk, that's a boy or a girl. You are not describing yourself; you are with nomination, thus creating a generified environment..., transphobic and transsexuality, I feel that complicates a little; it's more difficult; I hear and feel the bodies agitating at the desks, but I speak of these hidden curriculum that we are building; we make up gender and sexuality; at last, in order to form diversity it is in fact for homogeneity, but I'm worried with transmitting this transcultural like this or that of the multicultural; it's not only that; it's more than thinking, it's more than social markers; it's about thinking the inanimate, the difference of everyone having to deal with it like this; it's the difference of everyone... (PROFESSOR 05).*

*When teachers practice education out of the day-by-day living, learning is much more effective. (PROFESSOR 07).*

Although Professor 05 has not faced such situations, she renders them problematic, because she is familiar with the subject matter and she knows that these discussions are necessary for the training of her students, because the power relations,

violence and suffering are present in the process and reproduction of the hegemonic masculinities and femininities in the most diverse social instances. She also explains that the gender and sexuality themes were part of her background and we notice the importance thereof when she points out important contributions for the training of her students by including that theme in the classroom.

That data is important for us to think about how the approach of the body, gender and sexualities are seen inside the classrooms and the graduation courses, because upon taking a stand on sexism, homo-transphobia and racism in the training environment, the professors render these questions problematic. It is important to notice that a significant part of the Education faculty is concerned with the approach of gender and sexuality whenever they notice that need in their classes. This data brings a novelty because it shows that the discussion of the theme is present in the Education Major curriculum of UFS/Itabaiana Campus from what was referenced by Altamann (2013), the autonomy of the teacher that can even overcome the traditional structure from the professors' initiative.

However, we should not forget the group of professors who believe that there is no need of intervention at the classroom. One notices that the gender theme was ignored during those teachers' training; the discussion about difference was not approached at their training. Nevertheless, the fact that these themes have not been approached in the curriculum does not mean that they are exempt, neuter, because they are directed by the binary logics, by the hetero-normative, religious and biologic discourses. "As one of the main space-time that it plans and dynamizes, the official or invisible curriculum, the institution school is also responsible for the production of identities of gender, sexual, ethno-racial, religious, professional, of social class, among others." (MELLO, 2011, p. 168).

The school also being producer and reproducer of identities can reinforce the importance of approaching such themes at the Education major, since they are Elementary School teachers to be and the way the body, gender and sexualities themes are brought to the Elementary School is based on the way teaches were trained, without intending to give it a determinist feature, but recognizing the importance of teacher's

initial training that forms the subjectivities of Elementary School students. Therefore, they will tend to reproduce their training experiences in their classrooms.

That is, if undergraduate students do not have the space for questioning gender, body and sexualities, if their bodies are erased at training, their day-by-day practices may reproduce this model that is only concerned with the mind, separating it from the body. In a course syllabus where the discussions of gender and sexuality are incipient, anchored in traditional structures can be related to the fact that:

We were not trained to live together with the instability, with doubts or changing categories, For this reason, is too difficult to project yourself on this perspective, subverting the source of thought, host the fluidity, in a field which traditionality have tried to establish lasting truths. (LOURO, 1997, p. 146).

The educational spaces must not be places where are reproduced “genderized truths”, but also spaces of deconstruction of differences among students that give rise to prejudicial jokes daily, “the school participates directly or indirectly in the action and in the omission of this problems and gaps” (CARVALHO, 2003, p. 79).

It is evident that only the initial training is not a guarantee of the reproduction of the generified curriculum, because the individual is multiple in its development. However in the curriculum that we investigate most professors take these discussions to the classroom or at least they show that they have some knowledge on the gender and sexuality theme; obviously not by formal curricular determination, but by individual initiatives based on their training. It is important that these questions find a definitive place for this course because:

The course syllabus must be a place to host the differences, to affirm the life and multiply the meetings which make us wish and expand – there are years that we have been struggling for syllabus course that take into account the relations of gender and sexuality. We fight to this gender relations get out of the place of silence and accommodation, from the veiled teaching and all kinds of omissions [...], inconsequent at the school, to the center of the denaturalization and questionings about the masculine and feminine, in the most diverse syllabus (PARAÍSO, 2018, p. 24 e 25).

The questions on gender and sexuality have already achieved important spaces in research and investigations through several fields of scientific knowledge and now, it must solidify itself in several courses syllabus, in a way to problematize the traditional structures which turn invisible and make difficult the accommodation and the expansion of the differences, including the university spaces (DIAS; AMORIM, 2015; DIAS; MENEZES,

2017). Upon being questioned whether women as well as men may develop leadership skills, 07 (seven) answered yes, presenting the following justifications:

*The leadership skill has no relation to people's sex or gender. By taking into account that skill is a "savoir-faire", thus it needs to be learned/developed. It's not a genetic question. (PROFESSOR 02).*

*If today we have a context in which if women are not in the leadership power, that is so because of that social basis, which did not educate, motivate or produce feminine subjectivities of leadership, not because women aren't able, it's on account of that society that formed this kind of subjectivity. But down the last years, the last decades I may say that it has changed; there are different movements, different researchers who seek to fight these arguments that the woman has no leadership space. Obviously, that takes some time to produce an effect; our society is extremely conservative. But that has brought forth good fruits. (PROFESSOR 03).*

*Alright, but I think that this is a social construction; to me that question is a trap. It's reminded me of a short video that a colleague has sent me in which teachers asked children to sketch the following professionals: a firefighter, an astronaut, a physician and others, and they sketched all these professionals like men. But when the teachers brought them they were stupefied, as saying 'ah, I don't believe it!' Because they are women professionals. I think that this is also questioning: as early as in children's education it has to do with the question of leadership, because the way we teach there that the little car is a boy's toy and the teddy bear is for the girl, then the women are caretakers and pedagogues; women are nurses and when a man performs such jobs, everybody is surprised, and they even say he's gay. (PROFESSOR 05).*

Only 01 (one) professor preferred not to answer, arguing that: "I've never experienced any such situation in the classroom" (PROFESSOR 07). The silence before such question ends up reinforcing the stereotypes that differ women from men, where the female characteristics are linked to the household tasks and the mother's role, always in a private space, while man is linked to characteristics of the public life. According to Cruz (2005), one of the most plausible justifications to differ, gender is the naturalization of inequality, which considers as biological the social constructs and the practices by men and women. However, she adds that gender stereotypes help to perpetuate the strict ideas and attitudes, but that they have suffered, in western societies, changes and have become more flexible.

Bourdieu (2014) adds that school, besides being a decisive instance for change, the inclusion of women in the carriers, it is also an institution that perpetuates the distinction between genders, thus guaranteeing the reproduction of the idea that to men is attributed a nobler and more synthetic character and to women the more analytic, practical and least prestigious one.

Professor 03 brings arguments that agree with Bourdieu, according to which if the woman is not at the power and leadership position that is because of the social basis, which has not put her in such position; only the man had the power. These stereotypes, when led by teachers to the classroom they help to form the idea that there are ideal and expected behaviors for each gender, thus making one believe that behaviors linked to social life, such as leadership, are natural for men.

The idea that leadership is a more adequate characteristic to men is based on social skills linked to gender stereotypes also brought by Elementary School teachers to the classroom (re)producing a sexist and unequal view that ends up reinforcing ghettos and inequalities. According to Safiotti (1987), this discrimination is a social and cultural question, as one can notice in the talks by professors 03 and 05.

One can, thus, detect once more the process of naturalizing an exclusively sociocultural discrimination. Understanding this process may promote huge advances in the walk of awareness both of women and men, so that one may demystify the supposed natural character of the discriminations practiced against the feminine elements (SAFIOTTI, 1987, p. 15).

In the last question about trying to change the gender stereotypes 07 (seven) participants state that they are alert to gender stereotypes as in the talks below:

*For example, this week I gave class in the discipline of teaching Sciences in the early years and I always bring them an activity in which they sketch something that represents science. Thus, I put it like this and almost all of the students do that sketch of men in lab coats working; that already denotes their view that those doing science are only men with white people features etc. Then we already start the discipline by performing this disconstruction that not only men do science; it's already a way of breaking stereotypes and also in the very monographies [...]. (PROFESSOR 03).*

*It's up to the educating teacher to promote reflections about the dangers of the labels and of generalization that society imposes on our way of living. Considering determinist presuppositions, be they of appearance, financial conditions, behavior, sexuality etc. that would be the propagation of ethnocentric attitudes. (PROFESSOR 02).*

*While fighting stereotypes, the teaching action has one of its most important aims. (PROFESSOR 06).*

In the talk by Professor 03 (three), one brings an example that illustrates very well the difference of social roles brought as natural, which is the collective imaginary of the science individual pictured as a white heterosexual man in lab coat, as showed in films, comic books and other media. It's worth reminding that the feminist movement in the 1970's and the 1980's - the second wave feminism - among other aims had the objective

of changing women's conditions in different social walks, including Science; to do so, it had to reexamine the basic suppositions in the traditional fields of academic work in the human, social and natural sciences. Keller (2006) sought to understand the sexual work division, which dominated his generation, in which mind, objectivity and rationality were viewed as male and the feeling and subjectivity as female; a fact that included Science women, mainly those of natural and exact sciences. Keller (2006) states that feminism may not have completely succeeded in its aim, but it brought changes as for the insertion of women in Science.

Only 01 (one) Professor does not try to revert the gender stereotypes, by saying that: "I've never experienced such a situation in the classroom" (PROFESSOR 07). When we do not use gender "eyes" we do not see prejudice, we do not identify certain jokes as homophobic and we minimize the suffering of the other. Therefore, we reinforce the need of the professor's contact with the gender and sexuality themes, under penalty of going on naturalizing the learned behaviors and which do not respect difference. Professors who stated that they reverted the stereotypes render it problematic as in the talk by Professor 03 who take to her lectures concepts to be broken; her talk fits the thought by Meyer (2003, p. 25):

In several ways, contemporaneous studies on the school space, the pedagogical practices that are developed there, as well as studies that are engaged with the cultural pedagogies have shown how in our society we are always operating from an identity, which is the norm, which is accepted and legitimated and becomes, because of this, almost invisible - the white heterosexual, medium-class, jewish-christian masculinity. What such studies seek to discuss and question is exactly how the norm and the difference are brought about, which social instances are involved there and which are the power effects of such production. It is the difference that marks and reduces to it the individual or groups of individuals [...].

Along with Professor 02, who talks about the professor's accountability to expose such situations to the students, Professor 08 commented that there are discussions in the classes when she takes there toys and jokes, because the relation to which the students think of the gender is still strong. According to Louro (1997), it is necessary to distrust the 'normal and natural':

After all, is it 'natural' that boys and girls be separated at school for group activities and for standing in lines? Is it necessary to accept that 'naturally' the choice of the toys be differentiated according to sex? Then, how to explain that many times boys and girls 'mingle' to play or work? Is it a surprise that performances in the different subjects reveal the differences of interest and

aptitude 'characteristic' of each gender? Thus, should we evaluate these school boys and girls by means of different criteria? As Elementary School teachers, do we have to accept that boys are 'naturally' more agitated and curious than girls? And when an opposite situation of the expected one takes place, that is, when we find boys that dedicate themselves to more tranquil activities and girls who prefer more aggressive games, should we be 'concerned' because this is an indication that they are presenting behavior 'deviations'? (LOURO, 1997, p. 64).

Such differences found in both men and women, so strongly naturalized, are in fact produced inclusively and mainly at school, as one may exemplify from the research by Cardoso and Santos (2014), in which one noticed that the teacher stimulated only the boys into taking part in the Mathematics class and underestimated the girls, thus leading the researchers to conclude that the feminine experience was not part of the Mathematics curriculum. The school scars the bodies and teaches them to be used in a given way.

Louro (1997) adds that the school environment teaches girls to obey, to be docile. All tools and strategies of school produce boys and girls, resulting in the production of inequalities, hierarchies completely related to the power nets present in society (LOURO, 1997). Thence the importance of including the gender and sexualities theme in teacher training so that the questions that emerge daily in the graduation environment may be rendered problematic.

### **Conclusion**

The approach of gender, body and sexualities are not superficial in the Curriculum of the Education Major, but there is much to advance in the reformulation of the orientation of the practices that prioritize training for diversity. It is necessary that the school curriculum be able to highlight and make visible the equality of gender and sexualities to the socially marginalized groups and to women, by means of the insertion of these aspects in the objectives that lead and direct the pedagogical actions that aim to develop citizens for an education in sexuality and gender.

Even though it is a challenge to bring to the school and university space the introduction of such themes, it is necessary to review the need to spread the information and the education, as a subjective human right, so that one may develop a respect position towards diversity and difference.

University and school should not coadunate with the construction perpetuation that standardizes the hierarchies based on stereotyped conceptions in the binary male and female, but to make feasible an open and empathetic approach with the other, questioning universalism in an intercultural optics.

In this sense, while seeking to identify the representations of the participants about body, gender and sexualities, one noticed that a part of the professors has a certain familiarity with the theme and recognizes the hetero-normative, biologic and religious discourses as problematic, because they exclude people and cause suffering. However, we also find representations crossed by such discourses that do not recognize the difference; thus, the curriculum still needs to be stimulated for the confrontation and the incorporation of such theme in their daily life, using them in their disciplines and discussions.

Such themes have the power to disturb, destabilize, and propose deconstructions and unlearning. In this thought line, the challenges of including and debating about bodies, genders and sexualities in the education field and in teacher training are anchored in the widening of the complexities of the analyses about the educational field, from the perspective of alterity and difference. The first challenge is to understand the importance and the need of further research about the body, gender and sexuality, in order to enable the understanding of these themes beyond “strangeness” and “deviation”, that is, that the bodies be thought of only as bodies that may have several possibilities of being in the world. The second challenge is to transcend (or overcome) the gender approaches based on women’s and men’s roles, behaviors, activities and functions to focus on a relational and performative approach on the bodies, beyond the binary and dichotomy of gender. The third challenge is the development of an initial and continuing training on gender and sexual diversity for principals, teachers and other school professionals.

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### **Nota**

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<sup>i</sup> This option was inserted during the analysis, because some participants informed that they would write none of the options exposed in the questionnaire.

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