



## Teaching and LGBTQIAPN+ identities

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**Abstract:** We live in a society where, unfortunately, intolerance toward differences is very intense. Reflecting on these issues is extremely important in society, especially within education, so that we can try to eradicate prejudice against diversity. This research sought to reflect on the challenges and potential barriers related to prejudice directed at LGBTQIAPN+ teachers during their professional practice and how issues related to gender, sexuality, and LGBTphobia can interfere, in some way, with the process of acceptance of the professional by those involved (school/family) in education. The aim was also to emphasize the importance of equality among people within society in the perception of their roles and behaviors and the impact this has on the educational context.

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## INTRODUCTION

This article seeks to bring reflections on very pertinent topics related to scope of school/education, addressed in the subject “Education, ethnicity, gender and class”, in which we discussed in class and in this article I sought to analyze some aspects related to prejudice in the school environment in the daily lives of teachers who consider themselves part of what is today we know as LGBTQIAPN+ (lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transvestites, transsexuals, Queers, Intersex and Asexual People)<sup>2</sup> and the challenges faced in the educational context.

As a research that aims to dialogue and encourage reflections on the ways As LGBTQIAPN+ teachers experience everyday school life, it is important to identify experiences that led to interest in this research object. In this context, I locate my experiences as a subject who suffers from the interference of this society and who needs to deal

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<sup>2</sup> 3 It is important to highlight that the movement has created different acronyms to identify itself, such as: LGBTTIA, LGBTTQIA+, but in this work I will only use the acronym LGBTTQIA+



daily with the negotiations arising from the assumption of an LGBTTTQIA+ identity, especially when choosing the teaching profession.

In this context, we seek to reflect on the challenges and potential barriers related to the prejudices directed at LGBTQIAPN+ teachers during their professional activities and how issues related to gender, sexualities and LGBTphobia can interfere, in some way form, in the process of acceptance of the professional by those involved (school/family) with education. It was also intended to emphasize the importance of equality among people within of society in the perception of their roles and behaviors and how this interferes in the context educational.

Researcher Fernando Seffner (2006, p. 91 - 92) highlights that:

The socially institutionalized belief that there is only one legitimate way of experiencing masculinities and femininities and one single 'healthy and normal' way of expressing oneself sexually - the heterosexual - has caused individuals who do not fit into this representation to be placed and feel marginalized, as 'deviants', 'aberrations', 'against nature'.

There are many challenges for these professionals in their integration within the scope educational, and therefore there is a need to research related topics. The gender and sexuality studies seek to explain how issues related to constitution of identities align with historical, cultural and social perspectives, seeking emphasize the process of constructing these identities by questioning binary naturalization and regulations regarding these representations.

Guacira Lopes Louro (2007, p. 204) when discussing the topic emphasizes:

I know that society treats these individuals unequally and values these practices differently. I know that all of this is permeated by and constituted by processes of classification, hierarchization, and the attribution of values of legitimacy and illegitimacy, with individuals being welcomed or despised depending on the positions they occupy or dare to experience. I know that all of this is undoubtedly intertwined with questions of power. And here I find justification not only for reflection, but also for experimenting with strategies that might, in some way, disrupt or alter the 'intolerable.'

I share the author's point of view, placing ourselves as a researcher and reflecting on the need to not only explore and understand the topic, but also seek ways to minimize intolerance, aiming at respect for different identities, with special attention to those who do not fit within the "normality" imposed by society.

The school being considered a place that embraces (or should embrace) all people needs to be and always be open to dialogue. To do so, it needs to encourage reflection about existing social realities, promoting critical thinking among its members.



There is a need for debate about all forms of prejudice so that people who are part of the school environment feel welcomed in their differences. Prevent debate about a topic like LGBTphobia in schools is to legitimize prejudice, regardless of the perception or existence of explicit cases within institutions, silencing these discussions contributes to strengthening ignorance, making identities invisible and preserve prejudice. Regarding this, Louro (1997, p. 67) states:

By not talking about them, perhaps the intention is to eliminate them, or at least to prevent 'normal' students from knowing them and desiring them. Here, silencing—the absence of speech—appears as a kind of guarantee of the 'norm'.

In this sense, this work is based on an existing silence about the theme of sexual diversity in schools, which is often intertwined with a model predominant school culture. We believe that the assumption of the affective-sexual identities of subjects outside the cisheteropatriarchal<sup>3</sup> norm can motivate the dissemination of the respect for the various existing identities and combat these hate speeches that permeate the reality of many schools.

## PREJUDICE IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

In our society, cases of disrespect for differences and minorities and when it comes to situations related to people's sexuality, the enemies are intensified exacerbatedly. LGBTphobia is persistent mainly within school institutions. When we talk about prejudice, we refer to judgments made about our values before even knowing, that is, concepts prior to the knowledge of realities. It is also clear that this type of intolerance often occurs in the school environment is still masked, as you can often hear some speeches from people who say they are empathetic, but who in fact prefer not to speak out in favor of differences and yet, backs, spread aversion against the LGBTQIAPN+ community. For researcher Roger Raupp Prejudice and discrimination are related terms that are used interchangeably.

Prejudice refers to negative mental perceptions of socially inferior individuals and groups, as well as the social representations associated with such perceptions. Discrimination, on the other hand, refers to the concrete manifestation of arbitrary, commissive, or omissive attitudes related to prejudice, which violate the rights of individuals and groups. The first term is widely used in academic studies, primarily in psychology and often in the social sciences; the second, more

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<sup>3</sup> cisheteropatriarchal is a term that emphasizes the discrimination exerted on both women and LGBTQIAPN+ people



widespread in legal vocabulary (RIOS, 2009, p. 54).

It is well known that this type of prejudice/discrimination, LGBTphobia, occurs within school, but above all, it also spreads within homes and in society as a whole. We usually see children who, in their first years of school, show intolerant of anything that isn't what their parents consider "normal," such as a boy dressed in pink, or a girl wearing blue sneakers. Knowing that there are exceptions and believing in education as a transformative tool and builder of citizens ethically committed to life, we understand that meticulous work needs to be carried out so that, each day, more and more changes occur in discriminatory attitudes, mainly within schools.

Discrimination is a social practice that characterizes everyday school life. It disqualifies others and can lead to serious personal and social harm. Discriminatory practices are understood as the valorization of differences in a way that promotes inequalities or harm to the disqualified parties. Education is an emancipatory political tool that must overcome socially established discriminatory processes in order to transform reality by reaffirming democratic ethics. In this sense, schools are spaces for the socialization of diversity (LIONÇO; DINIZ, 2009, p. 9).

Every school needs to be a space for socialization for diversity and all agents of education need to be tuned in to the same frequency in combating discrimination and LGBTphobia. Today we know that this does not happen (and/or that there is resistance to effective work that fights against LGBTphobia) and as an example of this we saw testimonies previously presented, where the highest authority of an institution chose not to hire a teacher because he was a person who was comfortable with his sexuality.

Another proven fact is the prejudice related to binary stereotypes, such as For example, if the girl has short hair, she wears clothes that may be considered more male, will probably be considered a lesbian. Or the fact that the boy can't play with a doll, wearing pink clothes or having long hair, restricting it to specific experiences of what is considered masculine. I then see that from early childhood education to higher education, some stereotypes are repeated that standardize behaviors, where some stereotypes are made explicit and used as determinants of gender and sexuality considered "normal" and accepted in society.

Resistance is only possible when we encourage the appreciation of all diversity present in the school environment, emphasizing notions of respect and effective education that truly understand the social function of the school.

School is a space full of diversity represented by the body marks of



all the subjects that are there, experienced and constructed in a real context. Therefore, it is in its corridors, courtyards and classrooms that children, young people and adults have the opportunity to live with the multiplicity of social identities that exist in society and, from this coexistence, put into practice the social mechanisms of acceptance or rejection learned and taught by the cultural systems in which we are inserted (FRANCO, 2009, p. 127).

It is urgent and necessary to work so that the school is placed as a space diversified where differences are respected. Until this happens, the school will continue being an environment for producing distressing situations for the public that most needs support, who suffers prejudice and exclusion for being different.

### “OUT OF THE CLOSET” TEACHER

I know that the challenges of being a teacher are countless and when you are a homosexual teacher these challenges expand considerably, as prejudice still exists in our society. It is clear that many teachers prefer to maintain their sexual identity veiled and remain in what we know as inside the closet.

Recognizing oneself in this identity is both a personal and political matter. The dilemma between 'coming out' or 'remaining closeted' (in the closet) becomes considered a fundamental dividing line and an indispensable element for community. In the construction of identity, the community functions as a place of welcome and support—a kind of home. Therefore, there would be only one acceptable answer to this dilemma (to repeat a phrase from Spargo, *to come home, of course, you first had to 'come out'*): to be part of the homosexual community, it would be essential, first of all, for the individual to 'come out,' that is, to reveal their 'secret,' making their condition public (LOURO, 2001, p. 543).

Analyzing the researcher's words we can see that this recognition is individual and within the community becomes indispensable. However, in the school environment this situation ends up being analyzed in another way, because the level of acceptance is different and to avoid some kind of 'problem' the teacher often prefers to stay in the closet.

Sexuality is seen as a problem, highlighting the need to act in sense of correcting and/or silencing issues that may cause problems for the naive peace established in the school environment. The term problem seems to highlight that the debate on the sexuality in general is something outside of what is considered normal by society. Everything is outside this normality is considered forbidden. Foucault (1988) proposed analyses about the sexualities in different theoretical productions.

[...] in his studies, [Foucault] did not propose to do the historical sociology of prohibition, but the political history of the production of "truths." He said that we live in a society that produces discourses considered to be truths. This production of "true discourses" results in the formation of specific powers. Thus, he argues that the "truths" produced in relation to sexuality have become a problem in the West, since they have led to sexual repression. (RIBEIRO, 1999, p. 359).



In this context, when recovering Foucaultian productions, Ribeiro (1999) reflects on the ways in which issues related to sexuality foster notions of normality and, therefore, the constitution of a certain “repressive hypothesis”. In education, this process consolidates in the constitution of discourses that establish erasures, censorship and barriers that forge and direct non-normative identities into the closet.

Coming out of the closet isn't always easy. Over time, this situation has become more serious. changed, even if still slowly, allowing people some freedom to choose whether they want to be allocated in this plot or in its interstices.

Of course, whether a society is more or less open to homosexuality will strongly influence individuals' decisions to "come out of the closet," which will entail greater or lesser conflicts in the face of the greater or lesser homophobia that exists within it. Given the growing desire and need for visibility, there seems to be an increasing number of homosexuals in our society who are no longer hiding. This is a consequence of a set of social transformations that have created the conditions for gay men and lesbian women, especially in large cities, to no longer bow to homophobic pressures from their surroundings, especially because these pressures are increasingly diminished, given the greater liberalization of customs, especially after the decrease in the influence of religious values and the secularization of the State. (MELLO; GROSSI; UZIEL. 2009, p. 166).

Although we may read/see/hear different stories, we can reflect that there are positive and negative aspects to teachers being "in or out of the closet." It's a fact. that fear appears as a negative point in some reports, because preference for omitting sexuality to avoid possible problems with some guardians causes confrontation related to prejudice against homophobia, regardless of the situation, becomes weakened. Also the lack of security related to support and the fear of possibly losing their job, makes them teachers maintain discretion regarding their sexuality.

## SEXUALITY EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING

Quickly researching education in Brazil, I could see that it started with the arrival of the Jesuits in our country. Since then, religion and education have walked hand in hand for a long time, if they don't even walk together today. Although it is a very broad and that permeates many approaches, it is worth reflecting that this history may be the responsible for many of the barriers that we, homosexuals, still face today, given that some assumptions defended by religious currents follow in the direction of invisibilization of identities that do not fit into binary and heteronormative logic (NUNES; SILVA, 2000). When deciphered as something unacceptable, by a large part of the





society, homosexuality ends up being unacceptable in the school environment. And historically, being considered an example to be followed, the teacher could never relate your professional life to issues related to your sexuality, especially dissident sexuality.

The teacher—and the Jesuit is the most perfect example—is carefully prepared to exercise his office. He becomes a "childhood specialist," mastering the knowledge and teaching techniques, the tools for conquering children's souls and for their supervision. He knows how to tailor his teachings, stimulate the will, train character, and correct with gentleness—he is the one immediately and most visibly responsible for the formation of individuals (LOURO, 1997, p. 92).

Noting that if this teacher needs to be the "perfect" example, not having freedom to bring to your students themes related mainly to sexuality (outside the norm), he ends up not debating topics and considering those students who are in the process of understanding their identities and sexualities. Children, adolescents, young people, Students of all ages find themselves immersed in the loneliness of being homosexual and not being able to talk about your life at school, which is the environment where most of the social aspects of their lives. If only textbooks raised topics related to the topic, but what is found in these teaching instruments refers to prejudices related to patriarchal and heteronormative societies, such as machismo, for example. When teaching materials present another bias, valuing diversity, in general, has been restricted to a few schools and/or removed from the agenda by conservative movements that has invaded educational spaces with beliefs and values that ignore diversity and differences.

Sexual diversity appears in schools and pedagogical instruments in different ways. It tends to be invisible, rarely addressed as didactic/pedagogical content, and homophobia's harmful effects on children and adolescents are often underestimated. Initially, it's unclear who is homosexual and who isn't. Many adolescents who begin to recognize same-sex desire feel embarrassed by the common devaluation of homosexuality and tend to hide their condition, finding no place in school or in their teacher to share their doubts about sexuality (LIONÇO; DINIZ, 2009, p. 11).

Many teachers who prefer to hide their sexuality in order to avoid problems with family members, or even fear of losing their jobs, are actually failing to contemplate and be, in some way, a type of foundation for those students who are in full cognitive development and who are harmed by not know how to deal with these issues that cross them.

I could see, while observing, that there is a concern in working on the theme



in the training of students, but above all, there is an understanding on the part of professionals that this work is not only the teacher's, but also the family's, perhaps even firstly, but they understand that many families base their values on perspectives that are not very inclusive and do not recognize diversity. Thinking this way, we can I'd venture to say that the work is harder than you might think. Working against LGBTphobia with families is a function that involves society in general, all other sectors social and perhaps we are quite far from achieving effective change, but it is something that cannot be left aside, although it is evident that even for many teachers this debate is still considered taboo. It is also evident the difficulty of treat the topic of sexualities in general, not just those of dissident sexualities. As long as schools and society do not overcome barriers related to these prohibitions on debates about sexuality, talking about LGBTphobia still will continue to be an explicit difficulty.

Furthermore, so that work can be carried out more effectively within institutions of education, more solid training is needed so that teachers can have more security when discussing a subject 'considered' so delicate, but which crosses the experience of any subject, that is, bringing qualified people to give lectures, courses, because we are in the 21st century and the subject has evolved a lot. It is clear that these teachers realize the need for debate and improvement as mediators of these issues. Even though there is, on a small scale in some places, development of actions to combat homophobia, this becomes insufficient since the effects of homophobia are spread socially.

[...] it is necessary to consider that, although commendable, isolated actions will tend to produce limited effects while the themes of sexual diversity are absent from the initial and continuing training of education professionals and do not appear in a clear and well-articulated manner in the guidelines for education systems (JUNQUEIRA, 2009, p. 164).

In fact, there is a great battle and examples of attempts to implementation of policies to combat and prevent LGBTphobia (unfortunately without effectiveness, due to political discontinuities), as is the case of the Brazil without Homophobia program: program to combat violence and discrimination against LGBT people and promote citizenship homosexual, an important political instrument for the visibility of specific actions of confronting homophobia. However, through conversation, I realize that these effective actions have not yet managed to reach all of Brazilian education, as the teachers in question are crying out for help. It is important to emphasize that these programs were practically





extinguished in the current government and this dismantling began before that. But, it is accentuated with actions and policies, in many aspects restricting these debates, established by representations in the current scenario. Already in its implementation, proposals such as a Brazil without homophobia were the target of criticism and censorship.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The discussion about gender and sexuality within the context is quite complex. educational. This complexity becomes evident from the moment we come across these teachers who bring the fear of facing possible problems and above all a possible dismissal, for bringing up such an important debate about gender and sexuality linked to the fear of, because of being homosexual, being labeled as a “bad influence” for students.

I was able to observe from classroom analyses that these agents, when exercising their profession of teachers do not dissociate themselves from the marks of sexuality and gender inscribed on their bodies, even if they do not raise an explicit flag for the cause. Returning to our question The main point of research is to think about what are the symbolic, cultural, historical and linguistic factors interfere in the constitution of the identities of these LGBT subjects and embodied in teaching practice and daily school life? The main interference is not in constitution of identities, but in the fact of letting fear (real and/or imaginary) stand out the possibility of interventions in the field of gender and sexuality discussions, responding to the social function of promoting an egalitarian, critical and humane education, sensitive to the causes related to diversity.

Evidently, prejudice against the LGBTQIAPN+ public exists, but research that we carry out confirms that within educational institutions this happens and being the school a place that would need to be a space for welcoming differences, for the formation of opinions and citizens aware of the existing problems, this should not happen.

It is at school, but also with the support of family and society, that work is done on respect for diversity must happen, providing the understanding that sexuality, in its different dimensions, does not modify or interfere in the constitution of people's character.

It is important to highlight that the research highlights positive points and this is highlighted when we contemplate the reception of schools in a satisfactory way for teachers, making that they feel supported and have the enthusiasm to continue in their professions. I conclude with the reflection that, although we have a long way to go,

outlined, against all types of prejudice, there are constant advances in the process of transformation of the human being and that each day more differences have been respected and will come the time when we will all be equally valued and respected.

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