

# The LGBT movement and the gender and sexual diversity education policies: losses, gains and challenges<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This article explores the relation between the State and social movements in the production of public education policies focused on gender and sexual diversity. This reflection takes as its main sources two recent investigations dedicated to understanding the introduction of gender and sexual diversity into public education policies in Brazil during the Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva government: one *livre-docência* thesis (VIANNA, 2011) and another work that investigated how the curriculum policies were understood, appropriated and implemented by public school teachers in the state of São Paulo (VIANNA, 2012). The purpose of this article is to look at the production of these policies from the viewpoint of the tensions present in the dialogue between the Lula government and the social demands made by the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) movement to reduce inequality and to construct social rights. By discussing gains, losses and future challenges, the text highlights the contradictions found in the processes of interlocution between the government and the LGBT movement. When the government introduces gender and sexual diversity demands in education, it seems to be willing to give value to the theme without considering the power relations that determine the traditional parameters supporting gender relations and teaching identities in daily school life.

I- A first version of this article was presented as a work commissioned by the Workgroup on Social Movements, Subjects and Education Processes for the 35th Annual Meeting of *Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e pesquisa em Educação* (ANPED- National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Education), to whom the author wishes to express her gratitude. She also acknowledges the support of CNPq and the invaluable collaboration of the undergraduate student Natália da Cruz and of the MA student Liane Rizzato, as well as the careful reading of the text made by Maria Cristina Cavaleiro and Elisabete Oliveira.

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## Keywords

Education – Public policies – Gender – Sexual diversity – LGBT movement.

# ***O movimento LGBT e as políticas de educação de gênero e diversidade sexual: perdas, ganhos e desafios***

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## **Resumo**

*Este artigo explora a relação entre Estado e movimentos sociais na produção de políticas públicas de educação voltadas para o gênero e para a diversidade sexual. Esta reflexão toma como fontes principais duas investigações mais recentes voltadas para a compreensão da introdução do gênero e da diversidade sexual nas políticas públicas de educação no Brasil, no governo de Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva: uma Tese de Livre Docência (VIANNA, 2011) e outro trabalho que verificou como as políticas voltadas para o currículo foram compreendidas, apropriadas e implementadas por professoras e professores de escolas públicas do estado de São Paulo (VIANNA, 2012). A intenção deste artigo foi olhar a produção dessas políticas a partir das tensões presentes na interlocução do governo Lula com demandas sociais por diminuição da desigualdade e construção de direitos sociais advindas do movimento LGBT (Lésbicas, Gays, Bissexuais, Transexuais e Transgêneros). Ao discutir ganhos, perdas e desafios futuros, o texto destaca as contradições presentes no processo de interlocução entre governo e movimento LGBT. Quando o governo introduz demandas de gênero e diversidade sexual na educação, parece querer valorizar o tema sem considerar as relações de poder que determinam os parâmetros tradicionais que sustentam as relações de gênero e as identidades docentes no cotidiano escolar.*

## **Palavras-chave**

*Educação – Políticas públicas – Gênero – Diversidade sexual – Movimento LGBT.*

**I-** Uma primeira versão deste artigo foi apresentada como trabalho encomendado pelo GT Movimentos Sociais, Sujeitos e Processos Educativos para a 35ª Reunião Anual da Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Educação (ANPEd), a quem agradeço o debate. Agradeço pelo apoio do CNPq e a imprescindível colaboração da bolsista Natália da Cruz e da mestranda Liane Rizatto, bem como a leitura atenta e cuidadosa de Maria Cristina Cavaleiro e Elisabete Oliveira.

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## The concepts and the angle of analysis

The reflection presented here explores some of the questions to which I have been seeking answers during two decades of investigations about the relation between State and social movements in the production of public policies for education through the prism of gender relations and sexual diversity. These are observations constructed year after year, and today there is still the feeling that much remains to be done. The results described here are modest, and take as their main source two recent investigations focused on understanding the introduction of gender issues in public policies for education in Brazil during the Lula government. The first of them contains results published in my *Livre Docência* thesis (VIANNA, 2011) and examines the academic production about the introduction of gender and sexuality in education policies, noticing the emphasis these policies have on curriculum and teacher education. The second investigation observed how policies focused on curriculum – as proposed by the State – were understood, appropriated and implemented by teachers from the public schools of the state of São Paulo (VIANNA, 2012).

Based on information obtained from these two investigations, the purpose of this article is to look at the production of public policies for education focused on gender and sexual diversity, through the tensions present in the dialogue between the Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva government in his two terms in office and the demands for the reduction of inequality and construction of social rights.

In this sense, public policies were understood here as the State in action. In other words, the government assumes for a given time the functions of State through programs and plans that involve different public bodies, organisms and instances of society related to the policy implemented (HÖFLING, 2001). I have considered, alongside Antônio Cunha

(2002), that the examination of the process of creating educational policies must start from the identification of the respective groups that make claims to the State about concrete interests of a material or symbolic nature. More than just a logical analysis, public policies for education require a sociological analysis of the social fields that vie each other and/or articulate themselves around sometimes-contradictory interests. In this arena of conflicting relations, the search for understanding those policies meant examining them as responses materialized as documents, plans, programs and actions (VIEIRA, 2007).

Focused on a single government and its two terms in office, I gave priority to a critique of the monolithic conception of State, emphasizing the understanding of its dynamic and heterogeneous character, which simultaneously produces and suffers the consequences of the struggle to materialize democratic ideals, and is put into action by different governments, which are the main responsible for fulfilling these demands (O'DONNELL, 1980, 1981; POULANTZAS, 1980).

This study draws from the work by Debbie Epstein and Richard Johnson (2000) on the gendered character of the State and of its national and local policies that confront and regulate several conceptions of family, reproduction, and education, interconnected with the construction of gender relations and sexual diversity. In their investigations, these authors demonstrate the relation between nationality and sexuality present in the regulation of social identities, with the school as one of the main institutions in the selection, dissemination, and recognition or denial of rights.

In this case, the empirical focus of the approach proposed here was directed towards the demands for education made to the Lula government by just one social movement, namely the one representing Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transsexuals and Transgender people (LGBT)<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, it is *not a stricto*

**1** - There are many representations involved, apart from the several changes in the acronym representing this movement in Brazil. The most common

*sensu* theoretical reflection about the relation between the State and social movements, or about State, governments and public policies for education. Neither have I attempted a careful analysis of the role played by the LGBT movement within the Lula government in general, or of the tensions among its activists.

The considerations proposed in this article derived from a given empirical phenomenon that relates to collective actions and struggles. Nevertheless, within my theoretical framework I have employed the analytical concept of social movement in order to reflect about the possibility of apprehension and acceptance by the State – particularly by the Lula government – of the demands put forward by the LGBT movement, and about the possible results issuing from the inclusion of these demands into the public agenda for education.

To the Italian sociologist and psychologist Alberto Melucci, the social movement is born out of the conflict created by the absence of recognition of a given collective identity within a social, political and economic context. In the case of the relation between representatives of the LGBT movement and members of the Ministry for Education (MEC), among other ministries, the search for fulfilment of an overlooked need through the claim for rights gave more visibility to a collective public identity that, although being manifold, dynamic and fragmented, had a common element at that moment. The movement made visible a facet of its collective identity produced by many individuals and characterized by the interaction, the negotiation and the necessary tension intrinsic to this process.

Still inspired by Melucci (2000, 2001), I considered that the LGBT identity went

GLS (Gays, Lesbians and Sympathizers) was replaced by GLBT (with the inclusion of Bisexuals and Transgender and exclusion of the Sympathizers). The acronym adopted here, LGBT (Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transvestites, Transsexuals and Transgender), follows a deliberation of the First LGBT National Conference carried out in 2008. There are controversies as to the nomination of all Ts, as to the inclusion of a Q (for queers), of an A (for asexual) and of an I (for intersex), but there is consensus around the search for including the more varied dimensions of the construction of inequalities bringing to the fore sexual and gender belonging.

beyond rational choices, revealing itself to be open, reflective, manifold, differentiated and tensioned by continuous disputes between expectations and frustrations, faced with the possibility of guaranteeing the implementation of their claims. Although being aware of the fact that this collective identity refers to a continuous process of formulation and reformulation, I searched for the demand of this organized social movement and for the new challenges to the creation of educational public policies.

The interlocution with these authors and the continuous dialogue with gender studies contributed to think about gender and sexual diversity as aspects of the social organization marked by the differences contained in the struggle for the expansion of rights. I defend, based on Judith Butler (2009), the work with wide coalitions, that is to say, I believe that it is possible to articulate reflections about sexual diversity and feminist thinking with gender relations. Along this path, the understanding of a social right as a historically situated achievement of social segments that strived to transform their needs into socially recognized rights allowed its articulation with the concept of gender as socially perceived and constructed sexual difference.

The LGBT movement has a long history – with greater or smaller visibility in different periods –, and there is a vast bibliography on this process. It is not feasible, within the limits of this text, to cover such production, but I believe we can call it a social movement, because it carries a strong construct of collective *identification*<sup>2</sup> capable of generating collective demands for social rights in the negotiation with different spheres of public power. It is this process of negotiation that I search for. It would not have this capacity if it were completely diffuse, without maintaining any kind of identification that binds together its members.

**2-** The term refers to the use of the concept of *identificazione* by Alberto Melucci when referring to the investigation of the permanent construction of multiple and shifting forms of definition of collective identities.

The LGBT movement resorts to a huge network of different protagonists and distinct political positions, bringing together their demands and claims. Despite not being the focus of this work, we must register here the role of feminism and of its interlocution with the LGBT movement, in addition to its influence with the Ministry for Education – MEC, materialized in many items of the agenda of the Secretariat of Policies for Women. I would go further and say that the tense and contradictory relation between this social movement and segments of the government responsible for education policies introduced (we might say imposed) new concepts and learnings.

This is the case of the debate around homophobia at school, of transvestism, of homophobic bullying, among others (FERRARI, 2004). Apart from that, the teacher education that attempted to deconstruct gender identities and to disseminate the main concepts of this area had as its chief protagonists non-governmental organizations and members of the LGBT movement through public notices from MEC and the Brazil Without Homophobia Program. By organizing courses and meetings, they developed direct actions and created a field of conflicts sometimes conducive of the production of new learnings. It is a rather specific field, since I am aware that in other articulations between social movement and government the same did not happen.

Even with the focus on the two government terms mentioned above, it is worth mentioning, with respect to the inclusion of the optics of gender and sexual diversity in public policies for education, the importance of the changes occurred since the 1990s, and even more clearly since the mid-2000s. The context in which these changes took place reaffirmed a

tense process of negotiation that determined the suppression and/or materializing of reforms, plans, projects, programs and actions implemented, either separately or jointly, by the State and by

social movements and collective actions that pushed for new public policies. (VIANNA, 2011, p. 209).

It was within this context that occurred the growth of education policies in this area, more “instigated by the attempts to correct inequalities”, as recalled by Miguel Gonzalez Arroyo (2010, p. 1381).

The continuous interlocution with gender studies allowed the adoption of gender as an analytical category capable of producing knowledge about the social and historically determined process of control of bodies through means explicit or sometimes not perceived in the production of policies and relations established in daily school life. To that trajectory was added the critical reflection, already in the field of sexual diversity, about what Judith Butler (1990, 2009) calls heterosexual matrix, that is, imposition of heterosexuality as the standard.

The difference as a possible criterion for the defense of interests against discrimination became an important focus in the attempt to understand the production of inequalities in education, whose wider determinations were related to this specific sphere.

However, in the documents and discourses that constituted the policies analyzed, the notion of inequality was often subsumed under the term diversity. The discourse of the need for recognition and respect to cultural diversity had its beginnings at the end of the Second World War, when discussions about race, racism, discrimination, and ethnocentrism suffered a significant turn.

The use of the idea of diversity has in UNESCO one of its main disseminators. One of the examples is found in the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 2002), which highlights the respect to diversity as a means to overcome conflicts:

In our increasingly diverse societies, it is essential to ensure harmonious interaction among people and groups with plural,

varied and dynamic cultural identities as well as their willingness to live together. Policies for the inclusion and participation of all citizens are guarantees of social cohesion, the vitality of civil society and peace. Thus defined, cultural pluralism gives policy expression to the reality of cultural diversity. (UNESCO, 2002, p. 3).

The usefulness of the concept of sexual diversity refers, therefore, to the legitimacy of multiple forms of expression of identities and practices of sexual orientation and expressions of gender identities. But it comes marked by the preservation of a term that conceals social inequality. The funding of projects that discuss gender and sexual diversity by the World Bank is inscribed in the same context of the production of proposals on diversity by UNESCO.

The word diversity has, therefore, many meanings, politically constructed and targeted at very different, sometimes even contradictory, problems of discrimination. Whilst it is true that the use of the term diversity allows us to gain support in political discussion (from, for example, businessmen to implement specific employment policies), it loses specificity and precision in the construction of the demands for rights and political agendas.

The problem we are faced with here is that including the defense of diversity does not necessarily encompass the overcoming of the unequal material bases, since we privilege diversity as “artistic, cultural, ludic, behavioral, orderly, cooperative and participative manifestations in the harmonious social life” (ARROYO, 2010, p. 1404), or in the words of Henri Lefebvre, ignoring the radical needs that the differences, when transformed in inequality, express.

Therefore, I employ the word diversity because it is part of the context analyzed, but it is theoretically based on the concept of difference/inequality, focused on the examination of an extremely complex scenario in which the demands from the LGBT movement for public education are articulated

to international movements, with changes in society, with the incentive to the production of knowledge about the theme, connecting the right to education with themes of sexual diversity, race, generation, gender, and with pressures from multilateral agencies and multinational organisms.

### **Public policies for education, gender and sexual diversity**

Various surveys recorded the increased production on education (ARELARO, 2005; SPOSITO, 2009; VIANNA, 2012) and on indicators of the presence of homophobia at school (BRASIL, 2009; CASTRO; ABRAMOWAY; SILVA, 2004; VENTURI; BOKANI, 2011), articulating the right to education with themes of cultural diversity, race, generation and gender. The national reporting offices (among them, education, health, food and rural land, environment, cities and labor) created in 2002 by the DhESCA Brazil Platform<sup>3</sup>, also led independent enquiries about cases of violation of human rights.

The role of multilateral agencies has gained (and is still gaining) prominence. The participation of the Brazilian government and of the various collective agents in the several international conferences during the 1990s maintained close relations with the constitution of a new educational pact focused on introducing sociocultural inequalities issues, and targeting the achievement of goals of universalization of access and increase of schooling, flexibilization of curricula and teacher education, among others.

Several international conferences were carried out during the 1990s, notably the World Conference on Education for All (1990) and the New Delhi Summit Conference (1993). The former was called and financed by the World Bank (WB), United Nations Organization for

**3-** The DhESCA Brazil Platform is a national articulation of 36 movements and organizations of the civil society that develops actions of promotion, defense and reparation of economic, social, cultural and environmental human rights aiming to strengthen citizenship and cultivate democracy (<http://www.dhescabrasil.org.br>).

Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). According to its sponsors, the event concerned the discussion of basic education for all and the quality of education, considering the increase in educational opportunities for the developing nations, apart from resulting in the signing of the World Declaration on Education for All. It is worth recalling that:

[...] the controversial concept of basic education, about which even the four sponsors of the event disagreed, prioritizes primary education, which in the Brazilian case corresponded to fundamental education. (SHIROMA; MORAES; EVANGELISTA, 2002, p. 26).

The 1993 New Delhi World Summit continued the debate about the proposal of education for all started in 1990, this time bringing together the most populated countries in the world, including, therefore, Brazil. In the document of the New Delhi Declaration (1993), the insertion of educational reforms "under the optics of structural adjustments" reinforced the need for a universalization of elementary education (basic education) and for promoting an education that favored universal human values, including the respect to cultural diversity.

Under this perspective, the defense of equity as one of the main points to consolidate the precepts of a just and egalitarian society, open to diversity, gained terrain. Education acquired strategic centrality and was declared by different organisms and governments as the axis of productivity with equity, disseminating the idea of opportunity of access as the path to promote social equity, presupposing equality of opportunities, and the "compensation of differences, and a well-balanced and consistent development of the social body as a whole, which is promoted by conformity to efficacy – goals – and to efficiency – means" (CEPAL; UNESCO, 1995, p. 201).

The proposal was to diversify the forms of teaching through cultural diversity, so as to include local peculiarities such as, for example, the elimination of discriminatory attitudes and the tolerance of differences based on the development of personal values. The problem was that, according to this conception, including diversity would not entail the overcoming of unequal material bases.

In the case of the demands made by the LGBT movement in the context of public policies for education, it is worth noting that they were preceded by a long process of consolidation of the movement, whose dialogues were initially focused on the area of health and of the combat against AIDS which, progressively, were added to feminist agendas and to the struggle against homophobia.

The homosexual movement entered the scene in the late 1960s and early 1970s during the struggle against the military dictatorship (GREEN, 2000) and later in dialogue with the social movements borne out of the process of transition towards democracy in the 1980s. It was also during this decade that the movement faced the AIDS epidemic and concentrated on the search for collective answers to the fight against it, promoting changes in public health policies.

In 1986 the National STD and AIDS Programme was created, structured more effectively after 1988 and during the latter half of 1990 in response to urgent demands created by the AIDS epidemic for studies about sexuality in the field of health (GÓIS, 2003). In the area of actions focused on policies for the prevention of HIV/STD/AIDS, the Ministry of Health created in 1994 the AIDS I Programme with financial resources from the World Bank, bringing as a novelty the participation in the execution of the social policy of segments of society organized into movements and collective actions (PAIVA, 2003). Thus, from the period when the first cases of AIDS appeared until today these segments of society have been the main protagonists of the struggle against this disease (FACCHINI, 2005; GALVÃO, 2000; PAIVA, 2003; PARKER, 1994).

Still in 1994, official organisms such as the Ministry for Education and the Ministry of Health began to stimulate projects of sex education. The Guidelines for an Educational Policy in Sexuality were then published, supported by recommendations from UNESCO and from the World Health Organization. The Guidelines dealt with strategies to “identify non-governmental bodies, national or international” and to “combine material and/or human resources, without interests linked to specific religious, political or economic ideologies” under the “technical-pedagogical responsibility” and coordination of MEC (BRASIL, 1994, p. 34). With an approach centered on the regulation of social practices, and oriented by criteria of safe sex, one of the recommendations of the document referred to the inclusion of the practice of Integral Prevention Education (IPE) in curriculum contents and activities in early childhood education, in fundamental education and in secondary education.

There is a significant growth in the movement with the creation in 1995 of the Brazilian Association of Gays, Lesbians and Transgender (ABGLT) that mobilized the presence of new actors and the propagation of actions at the legislative sphere and in the struggle for the expansion of rights (FACCHINI, 2005; RAMOS; ADÃO; BARROS, 2003).

In 2001, the preparation of the Brazilian delegation to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which took place in Durban, South Africa, involved widespread participation of the organized civil society. At the time, the issue of discrimination based on sexual orientation was one of the main problems raised. The creation of the National Council on LGBT Discrimination (CNCD) in October of the same year constituted one of the first measures adopted by the Brazilian government to implement recommendations coming from the Durban Conference. Representatives of organizations of the civil society and of the LGBT movement integrated CNCD.

Since the mid-1990s and early 2000s there has been a gradual opening of education to the discussion about gender relations within public policies. In the case of demands for sexual diversity in education, I could detect during the two terms of President Lula in office a discourse focused on social inclusion, with the negotiation of many demands in the direction of what Nancy Fraser (2007) calls politics of recognition, that is, policies resulting from pressures exerted by social struggles and collective actions that occupy the political scene, characterized by the search for cultural recognition as a way to overcome some of the social inequalities.

In this process, demands from the LGBT movement were articulated with the academic production on the theme and with the establishment of public policies.

Late in 2003, during the 11<sup>th</sup> Brazilian Meeting of Gays, Lesbians and Transgender (EBLGT), and in response to the pressure from the LGBT movement, the government, through a representative from the Secretariat for Human Rights (SDH), presented a proposal to produce textbooks to educate society about the LGBT population. The movement rejected the proposal energetically and demanded the creation of public policies to deal with the issue (DANILIAUSKAS, 2011). From that moment on, the relation between segments of government and activists became closer. New institutional spaces were created within the specific sphere of the Ministry for Education (MEC). One of them was the Secretariat for Continued Education, Literacy and Diversity (SECAD)<sup>4</sup>, constituted in 2004 with the objective of facing the various dimensions of inequality through the “articulation of programs to combat racial and sexual discrimination with projects to evaluate ethnical diversity” (BRASIL, 2004, p. 1).

With the creation of the Secretariat, themes previously marginalized from the government agenda began to be negotiated in

**4-** After 2011, this secretariat was renamed Secretariat for Continued Education, Literacy, Diversity and Inclusion (SECADI).

the elaboration of some of the public policies for education, since this Secretariat was charged with instituting an agenda focused on the inclusion of diversity, expanding the participation of civil society, bringing together education systems administrators, local authorities, and representatives of movements and social organizations.

In this context was created in 2004 the Brazil Without Homophobia: Program of Combat to Violence and Discrimination against LGBT and Promotion of Homosexual Citizenship (BSH), whose central point consisted in the combat against homophobia, physical, verbal and symbolic violence, and in defense of gender identities and homosexual citizenship. The creation of BSH was proposed by the social movement, starting off the process of construction of the program. For that, historical demands from the LGBT movement were recovered, apart from partnerships with NGOs and universities in the process of justification, structuring and formatting of the document. Under the responsibility of SDH, it had the support of the Ministry of Health and of the AIDS National Program, the main locus of articulation of the LGBT movement with the mentioned Secretariat.

During the formulation of this document, SDH searched inside the government for ministries and secretariats open to the issue and with existing buildup regarding sexual diversity. This investment included the participation of several ministries – including Education, Culture, Health, Justice, Labor and Employment, and Foreign Affairs – and several secretariats, with a total of sixteen ministries involved in 2007.

The pressures exerted by the feminist movement and by the LGBT segment were added to the still present influence of international organisms, such as the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OEA), organized in Medellin, Colombia in 2008. By initiative of the Brazilian delegation, the event passed a resolution on Human Rights, Sexual Orientation

and Gender Identity. Along this trajectory, it is worth highlighting MEC's objective of building new directions in its educational policies so as to cater for sexual diversity.

It is important to note that the creation of BSH had allies and adversaries, the latter linked to public management itself, in addition to the Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB) and part of evangelical groups organized both in the legislative power and in civil society. As allies within the government, managers and technicians eventually assume their own sexuality in the process of constructing BSH, joining the program and taking part in its elaboration (DANILIAUSKAS, 2011; JUNQUEIRA, 2009; ROSSI, 2010). In its first mandate, the Lula government received strong support from NGOs, and in the second from partnerships with universities.

In the beginning, BSH was more focused on questions of physical violence and murder of homosexuals. Soon after, however, it began to invest in other themes, such as, for example, citizenship, problematizing the issue of the inequality of rights, already identified in the title of BSH, which represented a progress in the treatment of this topic on the part of the government and of the LGBT agenda with a view to social justice.

Already at the moment of its launching, the problem facing the program was the scarcity of the resources dedicated to it. Government and LGBT movement had a fierce argument about the possibility of disseminating such program without a minimally solid budget structure (DANILIAUSKAS, 2011). The government, however, insisted in launching the program, arguing in favor of its symbolic efficacy, since it would give legitimacy to LGBT demands within the struggle for rights and citizenship, now also part of the agenda of the Lula government.

The final form of the text of the program differed from the way it was initially conceived (ROSSI, 2010). However, among tensions and conflicts, the document made clear as the central objectives of the program the change in

mentalities and behaviors through education and, in particular, the commitment of public administrations, placing both the government and the various movements of organized civil society in charge of this process. Thus, item V of the Program of actions, called Right to education: promoting the values of respect to peace and to nondiscrimination by sexual orientation was dedicated to issues of education. SECAD was put in charge of implementing such inclusion policies, articulating sexual diversity and gender relations within the school education with the purpose of guaranteeing respect and full citizenship, and of fighting off homophobia.

One of the recommendations about education in the program emphasized continued teacher education within the theme of gender, sexuality and homophobia. The Ministry for Education (MEC/SECAD) opened in 2005 the call for projects on Professional Formation on Education for Citizenship and Sexual Diversity, focused on selecting and financially supporting projects of continued teacher education in this theme. It opened the possibility for the participation of public and non-profit private institutions from any region of the country. In 2006, after accumulating experience from the previous year, a new call for projects was published to support projects of formation of education professionals.

Both calls for projects had in their texts a defense of the:

[...] importance of promoting systematic actions to offer education professionals conceptual and pedagogical bases that give them better instruments to deal adequately with differences in sexual orientation and gender identity. (BRASIL, 2005, p. 4).

That was a defense that both gender and sexual orientation of the desire were “important categories in the construction of bodies, identities, sexualities, and social and political relations” (BRASIL, 2006, p. 4), and

that educators should be prepared to detect and deal with symbolic or physical acts of violence.

This intention was maintained in the new document launched by SECAD in the following year:

The growing mobilization of various social sectors in favor of the recognition of the legitimacy of their differences has corresponded to an ever more acute perception of the strategic role of education for diversity. The latter is seen as an essential factor to guarantee inclusion, to promote equality of opportunities, and to face all sorts of prejudice, discrimination and violence, especially with respect to issues of gender and sexuality. These questions involve strongly related concepts, such as gender, gender identity, sexuality and sexual orientation, which require the adoption of educational public policies that encompass their articulations without neglecting their specificities (BRASIL, MEC/SECAD, 2007, p. 9).

Without any intention of exhausting in this article the discussion about the group of factors capable of engendering the above-mentioned situation, it was possible to identify in the particular process of introduction of sexual diversity and gender themes the role of the LGBT movement in advocating the right to education, the recognition of rights related to undervalued sexualities, and of making use of mechanisms, albeit partial, to materialize the political demands made.

This process was fundamentally marked by gains, losses and future challenges. Despite certain level of permeability of the Lula government to women and LGBT movements – especially when dealing with the introduction of demands about sexual diversity in education – the power relations that determined the tradition of parameters supporting gender relations in our society still limit the possibilities of consolidating concepts

such as gender and sexual diversity as defining factors for public policies in education and, in so doing, destabilizing heteronormativity and, above all, homophobia.

### **Losses, gains and future challenges**

One of the obstacles to be faced is the fragility of the use of the concept of diversity, which:

[...] ultimately expresses the disputes internal and external to the government around the definition of educational projects proposing distinct modes of response to the demands of social movements for recognition of their multiple diversities (MOEHLECKE, 2009, p. 484).

To this hindrance must be added the fact that the very inclusion of the theme of homosexuality as a right is necessarily marked by disputes and resistances as to the definition of its agenda and priorities in MEC (MADSEN, 2008; JUNQUEIRA, 2009). In the government's attempt to appropriate the discourse proposed by the movement, this identity was labelled, and homosexuals were treated as if they were all the same. On the other hand, part of this collective *identification* still segregated, both in society and at school, could not actualize all its recognition mechanisms in educational policies.

Another limitation for the production of these themes in public policies for education gestated at the federal level refers to the assumption that an educative product would be massively developed and produced from a center and therefrom transferred to schools. However, programs and plans devised by the government are incorporated into teaching practices in a complex way, since this incorporation involves distinct ideas, experiences, meanings and interpretations. The larger visibility did not guarantee that these questions were approached

in the classroom in a manner regarded as adequate by the government.

Results from a recent study (VIANNA, 2012) with focus on the introduction of gender and sexual diversity in public policies for education focused on formation brought new elements to the analysis of the relation between continued education and some of the reports about the teaching practice that presuppose the necessary tension between acceptance, refusal and revision of values related to gender and sexual diversity.

At a first moment of the investigation, I researched materials at the São Paulo State Secretariat for Education and at the São Paulo Municipal Secretariat for Education and their respective education directorships with the aim of mapping out the education system to be chosen. By the end of 2010, I chose 12 teachers members of a continuing education course of an optional character, focused at the second level of fundamental education and at secondary education in the state public education system of the city of São Paulo. Following agreements with the Secretariat for Education, the Education Directorship of the mid-West region of the state system of the city of São Paulo was responsible for its coordination. Entitled *Living with sexual diversity at school*, the course was offered in 2006 and 2007 by two nonprofit, non-governmental organizations: Citizenship, Pride, Respect, Solidarity and Love (CORSÁ) and ECOS – Communication in Sexuality, both having extensive records in conducting formation projects in the theme of sexual diversity and gender.

Based on the reports of teachers interviewed, I identified among the difficulties to materialize such policies at schools the defense of the private character of sexuality and of its restraint within the school context, supported by the control of students behavior, forbidding dating inside the school, for example. Added to this justification there is conception of a pure and naive childhood in which children have no sexuality, the latter being necessarily found only

within the adult world. Finally, both the (de) sexualization of childhood and its restriction to the private sphere, just as the ensuing control of public space, were conceptions challenged during the course.

In this debate, religion, homophobia and a whole series of prejudices complemented each other in devastating tension, perhaps issuing from the explicit contradiction between the information recently acquired in the course and the values crystallized up to then in a long process of gender socialization. Data gathered by the Reporting Office on Education and Racism: religious intolerance in public schools (CARREIRA, CARNEIRO, 2012) indicate the growth of the space given to religion in public early childhood education and public schools, driven by education professionals who were members of certain conservative Catholic and evangelical groups. That was also the case of some of the teachers interviewed.

It can also be proposed that, faced with the fact that the school could change little or nothing, the contents explored in the continued education course turned out to be insufficient to problematizing the gender relations and conceptions of sexuality experienced by youngsters within and without the school. Some of the participants noted that they only expanded their knowledge, but did not change their posture with respect to these questions. To become aware of possible prejudices supporting their conceptions of infantile and juvenile sexuality, about teenage pregnancy and about homosexuality was not enough to guarantee the effective transformation of their educative practice.

In this sense, the actions of the State seem to try to value sexual diversity without taking into account the power relations that heteronormativity endorses.

Nevertheless, the visibility given to the themes of gender and sexual diversity in educational policies through teacher continued education brought to the agenda questions hitherto ignored, mainly for being seen as taboo in the school space. In this respect, we

might say that the formation in gender and sexual diversity gave voice to themes up until then silenced, coming close to what Ball (1989) defines as politics of change, referring to the appropriation of federal policies by the micro-politics of schools. In other words, “change or the possibility of change brings to the surface those subterranean conflicts and differences which are otherwise glossed over or obscured in the daily routines of school life” (BALL, 1989, p. 45).

The conflicts themselves have as consequence the fierce debate of these themes among teachers and other members of school, as well as in society at large. An example of that can be currently found in the veto by the Dilma Rousseff government to the so-called School without Homophobia Kit.

Born out of the School without Homophobia Project and articulated with the Brazil without Homophobia program – in the topic dedicated to support the production of educative materials in the struggle against homophobia – the kit was developed by important NGOs, such as Pathfinder Brasil, ECOS – Communication in Sexuality, Innovative Solutions in Sexual and Reproductive Health (Reprolatina), the Global Alliance for LGBT Education (Gale) and the Brazilian Association of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transvestites and Transsexuals (ABGLT) under the supervision of the Ministry for Education.

It is an educative material that deal in a systematic manner with homophobia, a concept that betrays:

[...] a form of belittlement, a direct consequence of the hierarchy of sexualities, just as it confers to heterosexuality a superior status, situating it at the level of what is natural, of what is evident. (BORRILLO, 2001, p. 15).

The material is composed of a booklet with activities for teachers in the classroom, six bulletins for discussion with pupils and three audiovisuals, each one with a guide, a brochure

and letters of presentation for managers and educators. The agreement established with the MEC for the development of the kit included the training of teachers and education technicians, apart from representatives of the LGBT movement from every state of the country, aimed at the appropriate utilization of the material alongside the school community.

However, after action from the religious pressure groups in the National Congress, president Dilma Rousseff vetoed the material in May 2011, alleging that it was inadequate. According to MEC, the president's veto impinged on the three videos. The rest of the contents will still be distributed to public institutes of education, but there is no timetable for that.

Lastly, the dynamics of the introduction of gender and sexual diversity in public policies for education involved the international and national movements that circulated dialogues and were protagonists in the debates, as well as the contradictions present in the process of negotiation around the demands of the LGBT movement. An example of the contradictions inherent to this process is the fact that the veto to the kit occurred in the same month when the Supreme Federal Court (STF) recognized the stable union of same-sex couples. These are conflicts that were in play in the process of establishing a proposal or educative reform, and should be taken into account in the creation and implementation of plans and programs developed at the federal level.

The demands from the LGBT movement, the achievements in social rights of collective

subjects with a history of segregation, and the growth of these subjects as formulators of public policies imposed new theoretical and practical challenges to the very elaboration of these policies, giving visibility to the sex-related character of the State itself (EPSTEIN; JOHNSON, 2000). But I am not saying here that this could be an easy path.

It is not up to public policy to define "which sexual expressions should be preferred or observed by individuals" (RIOS; SANTOS, 2009, p. 153), but certainly the overcoming of a defining understanding of sex that reduces it to its physical and natural characteristics tied to a biological conception, to the prevention of diseases and to heterosexuality seen as universal and, therefore, ahistorical, is one of the possibilities for the construction of a more egalitarian education. The Brazilian education system carries on ignoring the sexualization of childhood and the existence of youngsters and of LGBT youngsters. These are conflicts that configure the very identity of teachers, as well as gender identities sanctioned by school relations and governmental actions. Therefore, the State action that involves necessarily the social movements in the production of public policies and in the practice of actions that modify teacher identities and the school daily life presupposes an educative process for all of us in a society where segregation and strategies of denying inequalities are historical constants that must be overcome also within the spheres of social gender relations.

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*Submitted on: 25 April 2014*

*Accepted on: 13 August 2014*

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