

# International Journal of Human Sciences Research

## **ACTION RESEARCH AS A THEORETICAL FIELD FOR DISCUSSION OF SEXUAL DIVERSITY IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT**

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**Abstract:** This work seeks to present notes on the possibilities, challenges and contributions of action research to the discussion of sexual diversity in the school space. To this end, some important aspects for data analysis were presented, namely: sexual diversity and education, action research and how this debate can contribute to teacher preparation in the school environment. The general objective of this research is to understand how the subject of sexual diversity is worked with teachers in basic education. Through the National Curricular Parameters, the school was included as a place to promote child and adolescent health and the introduction of sexual diversity in the form of a transversal theme. To better understand this topic, bibliographical research was used, highlighting the following authors: Louro, Candau, Barbier, Thiollent, PCN's, (National Curriculum Parameters), it was possible to conclude that the discussion on sexual diversity can be worked on in a better way, from continued training with teachers for better preparation for such an approach.

**Keywords:** Education, Sexual diversity, Action research

## INTRODUCTION

Through the social environment, sexuality<sup>1</sup> is marked by norms that will dictate what is acceptable and unacceptable, based on the dominant interests of each historical and social context of Mariuzzo (2003) recalls the meanings related to this topic:

sexuality, as a socio-historically constructed human product, is a very delicate and strategic point for dominant interests to deal

1. **Sexuality:** Youth sexuality is an issue that requires discussion about the social context in which young people from different social classes are inserted, through facts, moral and ethical values, cultural practices, local and global worldviews, groups 13 of belonging and construction of personalities that may come to identify "man" and "woman" around the guarantee of their own sexual life, which is diverse, namely: hetero, homo, bi or transsexual (SILVA, 2013, p.22).

2. **Sexual Identity:** Sexual identities are constituted through the ways in which we live our sexuality, and refers to two different issues: 1) it is the way in which the person perceives themselves in terms of sexual orientation; 2) it is the way in which she makes public (or not) this perception of herself in certain environments or situations. That is, it corresponds to the positioning (not always permanent) of the person as homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual, and the contexts in which this orientation can be assumed by the person and/or recognized in their surroundings. (CÉSAR, 2010 p. 11)

with, because by creating beliefs, religious dogmas, individuals remain alienated from their own bodies, and these become They will become easy victims, with a great possibility of being docile, not being able to understand the contradictions and injustices that exist in their reality (p. 28).

Thus, sexual diversity comes together, being a term that encompasses the plurality of identities<sup>2</sup> and genders, thus involving factors related to the human body, behavior and mentality. We can point out the individual's discovery phase, and all the changes that pertain to them during adolescence.

Therefore, it is essential that the topic of sexual diversity is present in teacher training to<sup>3</sup> that teachers are prepared and qualified to address this topic with a scientific basis and respecting Human Rights. Therefore, differences can be debated, seeking to value the individual in their particularity according to their sexual identity, as the teacher has the social role of discussing prejudice, without fear and without offending those who commit crimes of intolerance. (SILVA, 2013).

As Louro (1999) states, the school is a social instance that exercises the pedagogy of sexuality and gender by putting into action various government technologies. The National Education Guidelines and Bases Law (LDB, Law nº 9,394/96) meets these actions, ensuring the rights of all people, without discriminating negatively singularities or specific characteristics of individuals or human groups. From this perspective, the research problem presents itself, raising the following question: is the teacher prepared in his training to deal with sexual diversity? How

important is this knowledge for the school environment?

To answer the guiding questions, the general objective of this work is to understand how the subject of sexual diversity is worked with teachers in basic education, investigate the importance of teaching knowledge about sexual diversity and how action research can help in the search for this knowledge.

When we raise these guiding questions, we will answer them through bibliographical research, elucidating the debate on sexual diversity, education and action research, as an active tool to assist in this teaching-learning process in the school community.

The relevance of this work is focused on the social importance of learning and raising awareness about sexual diversity, as in the educational institution there are problems related to the exclusion and discrimination of students, which can have negative consequences on their life trajectory, it is also important to combine educational policies and pedagogical practices that work on differences and human rights, thus forming critical and reflective subjects.

The discussion of this topic is fundamental, according to the statement by Coelho and Campos (2015):

It is necessary to invest in discussions on these topics in the initial and continuing training of teachers, seeking to construct new meanings and practices that are concerned with unveiling prejudiced meanings about gender and sexual diversity (p.893).

Understanding the theme, its influences and teacher preparation must be present in school discourses and practices, which can bring greater benefits to the role of each educator, so that students can feel welcomed and respected through inclusive methodologies in their school environment.

## **SEXUAL DIVERSITY AND EDUCATION**

Sexuality constitutes the human being as a subject, its forms of expression, pleasure, visibility and sexual practices. It is linked to the social construction of the individual in their interaction contexts, social interactions are processes of recognition between subjects and their institutional forms. (LOURO, 2000).

To embrace the dilemmas of our time, it is necessary to understand that human sexuality manifests itself in various ways, and how it is addressed in school environments, social relationships are reproduced at school, and it is possible to observe the prejudices expressed in that place. The school, as an educational environment, has the responsibility to work on the prejudices produced there, seeking to minimize the suffering generated and so that situations can be overcome.

It is essential that teachers in schools are committed to problematizing social issues, such as sexual and gender prejudice that is part of everyday school life (BORRILLO, 2009; ABRAMOVAY, 2009). Regarding this, Junqueira (2010, p. 216) points out that:

Schools would already provide a great service to human rights and quality education if they began to dedicate themselves to problematizing practices, attitudes, values and norms that invest in segregations, in the naturalization of differences, in the essentialization and fixation of social identities, in reproduction of oppressive hierarchies [...].

In Brazil, education is regulated by the Basic Guidelines Law – LDB (2014) the purpose of child development in education is to develop physical, psychological, intellectual and social aspects, complementing the action of the family and the community, in skills and the formation of attitudes and values.

The training of educators is at the center of the reforms in accordance with the

National Curricular Guidelines for teaching basic education, which was established by Resolution 01/2002 of the National Education Council. These guidelines present the new conception of knowledge and teaching, which include objectives and principles that are within the scope of international trends. (BORGES; TARDIF, 2001).

In the National Curricular Parameters (PCN) (BRASIL, 1997), sexual education is treated in most cases as a duty only for biology teachers, who will present the physiological and biological aspects of the subject (BONFIM, 2009). It appears in the National Curricular Parameters as a transversal theme:

[...] both the conception and the objectives and contents proposed by Sexual Orientation are covered by the different areas of knowledge. This way, the positioning proposed by the Sexual Orientation theme, as with all Transversal Themes, will be permeating all educational practice. Each of the areas will address the theme of sexuality through its own work proposal (BRASIL, 1997, p. 307).

As characterized in the National Curricular Parameters, the discussion of Sexual Orientation content covers several areas of knowledge, as well as other transversal themes, however it will be worked on by the teacher according to their theoretical and practical area of knowledge.

The human body for Silva (2005), as school content has been presented through a biological perspective, in a fragmented way. Disconnected from historical or cultural aspects, it thus brings to the environment an exclusive meaning related to gender, contributing to a (re)production of heterosexism and homophobia.

Education, in turn, according to Bertolini (2008), requires a set of ideas for a democratic, inclusive education that recognizes diversity, “needs to be seen as a social resource for transformation. An instrument, something

essential to enable human development” (p. 686). An education that can address ignored identities.

The school is qualified as a space of citizenship and respect, “a privileged place to promote a culture of recognition of the plurality of identities and behaviors related to differences” (BRASIL, 2007, p. 9).

The educational process is not limited only to school environments, but in all contexts of human socialization there can be learning, according to Brandão (2007) we engage with education whether to teach or to learn, like this:

Education can exist freely and, among all, it can be one of the ways that people create to make common, as common, as knowledge, as an idea, as a belief, that which is communal as a good, as work or as life (p. 10).

This conception does not come to nullify the teaching about sexual diversity in the school environment, but to expand the sources of knowledge for students, educators and families. Because according to Louro (2000), school must be an environment for building new social knowledge that will be shared and learned, school life is a critical experience against discriminatory practices.

The educational institution is a social instance. Louro (1999) points out that the school must exercise a pedagogy of sexuality and gender, putting into action various government technologies, determining their ways of being or way of living through their sexuality and gender.

When we understand the school as a space for social and cultural debates, we also understand that a dialogue in the classroom focused on sexual diversity, sexuality and pluriculturality is something that will be guided and mediated by the teacher, through their knowledge on the subject, this way, this dialogic needs to go beyond just viewing science and biology content, for example,

for this discussion and learning to occur, the teacher needs to be scientifically prepared to conduct such discussions. This teacher preparation can happen through continued training offered by the school, or municipal education network.

From what has been described, we understand that orientation to sexual diversity occurs in collective, and not individualized, environments, focusing on the dimensions of the human being as a biopsychosocial.

## **ACTION RESEARCH**

The emergence of action research took place during the Second World War, and was used by Kurt Lewin, developed for an approach in Social Sciences. The methodology of action research presents in its experience the transformation of reality and production of knowledge.

According to Barbier (2002), action research is the understanding and explanation of research from social groups, aiming to improve their practice, with transformative action.

Thiollent (2009) points out the political vision of action research, as social research, related to solving a certain collective problem, and researchers and participants are involved in a cooperative way, and the knowledge acquired through research does not remain solely with the group investigated, but can be expanded to others. This way “research is evaluatively inserted in a policy of transformation” (THIOLLENT, 2009, p. 47).

For El Andalouissi (2004): action research

says that [...] the involvement of the actor in research and the researcher in action necessarily leads to a social reorganization, with redistribution of roles, functions and the feeling of responsibility in the development of education and, therefore (p 139).

According to Thiollent (2009), differences exist between schools or trends in general, they correspond to different cultures, linguistics in different parts of the world, when comparing sexual diversity, it is possible to overcome them. Action research is coordinated in order to provide understanding between researchers and other participants.

Action Research is structured into five phases: diagnosis, planning, execution, evaluation and learning. Action Research will contribute to the construction of new knowledge about sexual diversity in the school environment, with the potential to solve problems in educational practice. This knowledge will be based on ethical principles, as well as the researcher must be scientifically prepared on the topic discussed. through critical reasoning so that there is no negative compromise within the group and institution researched (RABELO; LIMA 2019 p.2 apud ANDRÉ, 2008).

Provide research participants with a space to verbalize their perceptions, weaknesses and desires related to sexual diversity in the school environment. According to Martins (2008), action research is characterized as a cycle of analysis, there is a repetition of this cycle of analysis as a spiral, which can also clarify more complex situations as a resource for understanding the process of construction of perceptions, attitudes and social representations.

Franco (2005) points out action research as a condition for critical diving into the group to be researched, it is possible to perceive the expectations, doubts, which guide the practices, which highlight the collective that can assume a critical character.

The methodological function of action research is to effectively elucidate problems that other traditional methods cannot address, based on detailed control of the techniques applied, listening and active intervention.



[...] in the development of action research, researchers use group methods and techniques to deal with the collective and interactive dimension of the investigation and also techniques for recording, processing and displaying results. (THIOLLENT, 2009, p. 29).

According to Barbier (2002), there is no action research without collective participation, comprising personal involvement in the research trajectory, as an integral part, in emotional, rational, participatory and sensorial integrality, thus creating possibilities in this set of investigation and action for solidary participation.

### **DEBATE ABOUT THE TWO PATHS HOW ACTION RESEARCH CAN CONTRIBUTE TO TEACHER PREPARATION**

In view of what was exposed about sexual diversity, education and action research, we will discuss how this contribution can happen in teacher preparation.

From this perspective of action research in teacher training, it leads to a social reorganization in the environment in which it will be worked, producing information, techniques and the development of education in the locus of research.

When we contextualize the school environment and educational practices in the face of sexual diversity, according to Moreira and Candau (2012) the school has difficulties in dealing with differences, but has a great challenge to be faced when opening space for diversity.

By opening the space for diversity, the PCN- (Brazil 1998), which refers to Sexual Orientation as a transversal theme, is in the collective scope, in which there is no individual counseling or even psychotherapy, as long as such a student does not You are going through a personal experience that causes you problems. Therefore:

Only students who, for personal reasons, require individual attention and intervention, must be attended to separately from the group by the teacher or counselor at school, and a possible referral for specialized care may be discussed (p. 300).

The school must not lose its essence when it comes to debating social issues, because according to Louro (1999) the school is a social environment in accordance with the National Curricular Parameters – (Brazil, p. 1997), which propose that “the Sexual Orientation offered by the school addresses with children and young people the repercussions of the messages transmitted by the media, the family and other institutions of society”.

For Barbier (2002), action research does not happen without collective participation:

There is no action research without collective participation. It is necessary to understand the term ‘participation’ here epistemologically in its broadest sense: nothing can be known about what interests us (the affective world) without being an integral part, “actants” in the research, without being truly personally involved in the experience, in the entirety of our emotional, sensorial, imaginative and rational life. It is the recognition of others as a subject of desire, of strategy, of intentionality, of solidarity possibility. (BARBIER, 2002, p. 70 and 71).

The discussion about sexual diversity becomes categorical when we understand that the school is a space for transmitting information, conventional knowledge, preparing the individual for life, but it is also a place for discoveries and social and cultural knowledge, which are capable of fostering respect for identities (PARO, 2007).

In this sense, in the view of Paulo Freire (1987), the educator has the task of acting dialogically, working in an interdisciplinary way, in which the content is not an imposition, but a revolution added to the students, with no prohibited themes in this scenario, since that those who seem to promote the most

controversy or conflicts are precisely those who need to be worked on best, for this dialogue to happen, teacher preparation through continued training, offered by the school or the municipal network, is essential.

Through this continued training, it will be possible to overcome the barriers of discussing sexuality only in science and biology content. Action research can contribute to this continued training of educators through an instrument of social change,

[...] action research is a type of empirically based social research that is conceived and carried out in close association with an action or the resolution of a collective problem and in which researchers and participants representative of the situation or the problem are involved in a cooperative or participatory way (THIOLLENT, 2009, p. 16).

The importance of teacher knowledge about sexual diversity is in line with what the PCN (2011) states about the need for this subject in teacher training. Raising this discussion with students from a professional stance will provide the construction of a guided and aware debate on the subject.

Sexuality is something natural that is part of human life, and it is not possible to “pretend” that such a sphere does not exist. Sexuality is related not only to the biological, but especially to the social and cultural, but it remains seen as a taboo for most people. The recognition of Sexual Diversity<sup>3</sup> could triangulate

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

From the research carried out, it is possible to see that this discussion is little explored, although it is a topic present in this context. Sexuality is still seen as a taboo to be discussed in the school environment.

Given the theoretical context explored in this research, it was possible to note that human behavior towards the environment is shaped according to their experience and social relationships. Sexuality takes on different forms of expression that are related to the social life of human beings, not limited to just the biological. So, with regard to the school context, the debate on sexuality must be growing, expanding beyond the biological context, especially considering its cultural dimension.

Addressing this issue in the school environment is not so simple, as it involves several issues, including the lack of scientific knowledge of the teaching staff, as they come from a traditional and biological background and there can be improvements and growth through continued training for teachers, with professionals in the field who come to clarify your doubts through the exchange of experiences and theoretical foundations.

Action research in education will mediate this learning process of the researched locus, highlighting the importance of all active parts in this process, assisting and mediating the research, being able to bring not only the naturalness of the subject to the school environment, but the promotion of citizenship, since the free expression of sexual orientation is a right for everyone.

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3. “only through the recognition of this diversity existing in an organized whole, is it possible to understand the differences (...) the need arises to allow and enable situations in the subjects that may arise between classes and debates, so, when dealing with students and this theme that will appear in an evident way, with the school context being an opportune place to discuss it. of learning and interaction, so that students develop the social skills necessary to emancipate themselves as subjects, taking into consideration, the diversity in which they are inserted and being able to dialogue and interact with it in a constructive way” (SCHMITT, 2011, p 59)

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