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TOWARDS A MORE INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY IN CUBAN EDUCATION: STRATEGIES FOR A CHANGE HACIA UNA PEDAGOGÍA MÁS INCLUSIVA EN LA EDUCACIÓN CUBANA: ESTRATEGIAS PARA EL CAMBIO

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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes the application of gender studies to Cuban pedagogy and education, based on an increasingly inclusive pedagogy, called feminist pedagogy in recent search. It explains the concept of gender and its application to Cuban educational sciences and education through: a) the visibility that women and men occupies in society and the roles they play in educational institutions; as well as the power

relations that are established in the classrooms and the hidden curricula of the androcentric tradition; b) the identification of pedagogical strategies in schools and classrooms as theoretical-methodological tools enabling the agents of the educational process to promote equality of opportunities to acquire the necessary competences in the construction of equitable, violence-free relations for a full participation in social life.

Keywords: gender; pedagogy; education; strategies; equality of opportunities

RESUMEN

Este artículo propone la aplicación de los estudios de género en la pedagogía y la educación cubanas, basada en una pedagogía cada vez más inclusiva, denominada en investigaciones recientes Pedagogía feminista. Esto explica el concepto de género y su aplicación en las ciencias de la educación y la educación cubanas a través de: a) la visibilidad de la posición que mujeres y hombres ocupan en la sociedad y el papel que desempeñan en las instituciones educativas; así como de las relaciones de poder que se establecen en aulas y currículos ocultos de la tradición androcéntrica; b) la identificación de estrategias pedagógicas en escuelas y aulas como herramientas teórico-metodológicas que permitan a los actores del proceso educativo promover la igualdad de oportunidades para adquirir las competencias necesarias en la

construcción de relaciones equitativas, libres de violencia para una plena participación en la vida social.

Palabras clave: educación; estrategias; género; pedagogía; pedagogía feminista

INTRODUCTION

Up to now Gender Studies have proposed a critique of western epistemology with an androcentric tradition. Hence, its main trends have reached almost all fields and knowledge management.

In Cuba, it is becoming increasingly essential to attain a creative society that makes social, cultural, political and economic inclusion and equity more than ideals and projects in permanent construction. The Cuban school is constantly exposed to necessary transformations, including, of course, teaching from an inclusive education that promotes equality of opportunities and gender equity both inside and outside the teaching field.

The experience of one of the authors of this paper in the field of Gender Studies —with a total of eight books

and about twenty articles published—, along with its decade-long teaching career, made possible to socialize this research results, in which the role corresponding to the educational institutions; as well as the power relations that are established in the classrooms and hidden curricula of the androcentric tradition are shown. Furthermore, there are identified the pedagogical strategies used in schools and classrooms as well as theoretical-methodological tools that allow the agents of the educational process to promote equal opportunities and acquire the necessary competencies in the construction of equitable, violence-free relationships with full participation in social life.

Necessity and relevance of Gender Studies in Cuban Education Pedagogy and Educational Sciences

The process of social and cultural inclusion advocated by Gender Studies implies the permanent construction of a gender epistemology, as well as a greater female insertion in the field of

scientific knowledge; which requires a change in the design of educational policies in order to assure equal opportunities for women and men.

To look at education and pedagogy through such studies means to carry out substantial transformations in the way of understanding the history of education, theories, educational systems and educational practices, for which the elaboration of a strategy is required. This includes, in the first place, the main trends of the gender perspective in the curricular framework of teacher education and its extracurricular activities.

Although, important achievements have been obtained in Cuba in terms of access and educational coverage in the school environment, there are still differentiated educational experiences according to the students' sex and hidden teaching practices of the teaching staff, which reproduce sexist and androcentric models, as well as the traditional order of gender through the influence of a collective imaginary that determines the characteristics and

performances for each sex within society.

Currently, it is no longer possible to ignore the role of teachers in the recreation of gender order through the application, for example, of a hidden curriculum of gender expressed in plans and syllabi, study texts and pedagogical practices that reproduce traditional messages and stereotypes that reinforce the predominant behaviors in both sexes that influence a future life project. Life projects that in the case of women lead to the private world and in the case of men to the public space (Flores, 2005).

Inequality and discrimination are learned and apprehended from home and school. Therefore, even today it is impossible to deny the role of the sexual condition at all educational levels. This affects the academic expectations of the teaching staff and students, the treatment they receive, the punishments and other punitive action methods, the academic performance by knowledge fields, the demands that are formulated, the disciplinary behavior, the discursive credibility that is obtained, the choice

of majors or educational institutions, among others. (Subirats and Brullet, 1992, Delgado, 1993a, Delgado, 1993b, Levinson, 1999, Arcos, Del Rio, Guerra, Larrañaga, Molina, Szmulewicz et al., 2006, Palacios, 2007).

Therefore, the design and implementation of Gender Policies for the Cuban educational system are imminent; through which a less centralized and more participatory education can be built and a pedagogy formed by men and women with an epistemology of knowledge and socio-cultural actions increasingly tending towards equity.

The strategies presented in this paper are intended to contribute to a future implementation of this Gender Policies.

Gender concept

First of all, the concept of gender concerns women and men. It is not a unique problem of women or feminists. The concept of gender constitutes a category of central analysis that goes through the main trends sciences, disciplines and scientific, academic, teaching and

cultural development sustain, by addressing the practices, knowledge and discourses of subjects and their identities mediated by power relations. This is because the social and scientific reality are being transformed by the demands of other ways of viewing and interpreting reality and, at the same time, producing paradigmatic changes. Starting from this approach, reality can be understood from multiple perspectives and subjectivities; and for sciences, as tools of interpretation and not as universal, immovable truths.

Beyond sexual characteristics and biological marks, gender indicates social characteristics and the gender role learned individually. This role is defined, essentially, by the social, cultural and economic organization of a society, as well as by the legal, religious and ethical standards and values in force.¹ The role of socially

¹The allocation of this role can greatly vary between the different societies. Even within the same society, the role difference can differ considerably depending on the age, marital status, economic situation, membership of a certain ethnic group or religion.

determined gender and the spaces for action of men and women that this entails are variable and dynamic. However, sex and gender are coordinates marked by the social. The female sex, composed of women, determines their identities, their ways of acting, their ideas, their “must-be”. Hence, it speaks, then, of the relationship between sexual characteristics and gender as a system, since both are constructed throughout life in a parallel way but at the same time they include, deny-affirm, or project the other.

Now, why is it necessary to address the problems and differences between genders from the tradition?

The relations between genders have been historically constructed as power relations, identified from the differentiation between the sexes, that is, the biological differentiation, determinant during centuries, of the identity construction of men and women. There have been designed, through the tradition and the permanence of the patriarchal ideology of the western culture that we have inherited, certain

characteristics assigned to the genders taking into account behavioral models, mental schemas and stereotyped representations, mythical according to the differences for each sex.

In this arbitrary assignment of attributes and possibilities, the masculine was valued as superior - and paradigm of the human-; and the feminine, inferior. Biological, cultural and economic differences became social inequalities, discrimination and inequity.

Women were placed, then, in conditions of dependence, subordination, exclusion and discrimination to intervene in the social and political development; men were recognized as builders of culture, of laws, of power. For millennia, women's personal, social, political and economic inequality was inherited in relation to men, which was justified as an obvious result of sexual difference.

To the same extent these differences are "naturalized" for each or another gender, power relations are also constructed. And in the network that

establishes power and differences, knowledge intervenes, so that, according to the French sociologist Michel Foucault, (1980) there is no knowledge on the fact that it does not presuppose relations of power. Of course, in the knowledge, the educational processes and pedagogical discourses, are considered —in the Foucauldian way— as regimes of truth.

Methods

Two research methods were used: the historical-logical and the analytical-synthetic. The first one to introduce contents related to the history of feminist movements and their link with Gender Studies, train the faculty staff and teach the corresponding subjects. The second allowed the analysis of documentary sources, the study of bibliographical information, the main trends of content on gender in disciplines and subjects; as well as the projection, investigation and study of the hidden curricula from the concept of gender, the analysis of power relationships within the school and academic environment.

All this enabled the realization of strategies as theoretical-methodological tools that allowed the agents of the educational process to promote equality of opportunities and strengthen the necessary competencies in order to build equitable relationships, free of violence for a full participation in social life.

The first level of the investigation included a diagnostic study of Spanish-Literature students whose graduation took place in the 2017-2018 academic year and which, at the time of diagnosis, was in the first year.

The diagnosis showed that the 21 students enrolled were unaware of the Gender Studies and that, although they would like to learn how to be better people able to perform relationships free from inequities and violence, they did not show any knowledge on the subject and how to specify that aspiration.

After the diagnosis, extracurricular activities were carried out, from which the students could prepare themselves on gender issues,

identities, alternative models of gender identity. Likewise, they were offered the possibility of taking an optional subject in all the years that contributed to the gender agenda. In addition to the theoretical-methodological preparation at the same time as the teachers' staff that would teach their lessons in all the years, it was possible to guide knowledge and knowledge related to gender in all the disciplines and subjects. At the same time and always being consistent with the peculiarities of each syllabus and its contents, several strategies were employed by the faculty involved in the year class.

Developing

The process of social and cultural inclusion advocated by Gender Studies implies the permanent construction of a gender epistemology, as well as a greater female insertion in the field of scientific knowledge; which requires a change in the design of educational policies in order to guarantee equal opportunities for women and men.

To look at education and pedagogy through such studies means to carry out substantial transformations in the way of understanding the history of education, theories, educational systems and educational practices; for which the elaboration of a policy that contemplates, in the first place, the main trends of the gender perspective in the curricular framework of teaching activities and its extra teaching activities are required.

Gender Studies and feminisms, associated with pedagogy, imply overcoming an education understood as transmission and reproduction of inequalities. Blanco (2006) relates education and culture so that both respond to the growth of people and their socialization. The authors, citing María Zambrano, affirm that education

Will first of all guide the person in their responsible growth through time. Educating him will awaken him or help him wake up in such a way that the reality does not submerge his being,

that which is his own, nor oppress him, nor collapse on him. (cited in Blanco, 2006, p. 162).

Feminist pedagogy, in this sense, assumes education as preparation for autonomy and empowerment. Achieving such objectives requires linking pedagogy with actions aimed at emancipation and social criticism, diversity and cultural respect; which, paraphrasing Freire (1979, consists in proposing a way of combining thought and experience, knowledge and knowledge, to look with different eyes at the sense of knowledge in education and the indispensable role that educators have in it.

Therefore, feminist pedagogy and education are a set of processes that are the backbone of human growth, from relationships of authority (not authoritarianism), where otherness is recognized and respected:

By opting for a feminist pedagogical practice we recognize that it is necessary to break the androcentric and colonial barriers and narratives, where a unique way (white and masculine) of knowing and

legitimizing a unique form of valuable knowledge prevails. On the contrary, recognizing the existence of a diversity of knowledge that includes the subaltern implies taking into account the existence of multiple experiential subjects, whether women or men, white or black "... without hierarchizing or dichotomizing their knowledge" (Martínez Martín, 2016, p. 141).

The concept of gender applied to Pedagogical Sciences and Educational Sciences

If pedagogy is the discipline or process through which knowledge is produced, education includes educational institutions and the relationships between learners where knowledge is not only reproduced, but generated, modeled in a relevant, effective, hegemonic and biased way. The way it is taught determines what is taught and how it is done; it also influences the way in which knowledge is assimilated and learned. Pedagogy assumes that teaching practices and their corresponding social visions coexist and over determine, since it is the latter which

determines what, how and for what to teach.

Education, on the other hand, includes school practices and their institutions; it constitutes a regulating universe of knowledge, of what is taught, through a hierarchical, hegemonic and exercising authority of power from its corresponding capital built by pedagogy.

Both education pedagogy and educational sciences require the institutionalized knowledge that materializes in discourses, which, in turn, enables the production and (re) distribution of ideologies.

The concept of gender, being a useful category for the analysis of the socio-cultural characteristics of men and women, and of the relations between both, allows its application in pedagogy and education, implying education in values of respect for dignity and towards the recognition of equal opportunities that enable the deconstruction of power in authority and the competence of students in the exercise of their profession, knowledge and life.

Gender and Pedagogical Sciences

Some authors such as the psychologist Flavio Garlati analyzed power relations in the classroom through Foucault's definitions; and for this reason they consider that classical pedagogy –the most abundant and frequent in contemporary educational systems– is opposed –it must be opposed– to radical pedagogy, in which there are two directives: critical² and radical pedagogy. Within the latter it is the so-called feminist pedagogy,³ from which it is emphasized that the

² Critical pedagogy is characterized by its diversity and by the individual figures that represent it. Thus, authors like Giroux and MacLaren are theoreticians committed to a political vision, focused especially on class differences, differences that education would tend to perpetuate. Consequently, his perspective seeks more the articulation of a pedagogical project than a pedagogical practice.

³ The academic and researcher Sandra Acker summarizes what she considers the three main occidental feminist theoretical frameworks in relation to their educational implications: liberal feminists, who use concepts such as equality of opportunity or discrimination and the fundamental strategies of which they pass to get a modification of socialization practices, using the relevant legislation; the socialist feminists, who analyze the role and function of the school in perpetuating the gender divisions of capitalist society; and the radical feminists, centered, fundamentally, on the male monopolization of knowledge -and, therefore, of culture- and on the sexual politics that takes place in schools.

gender perspective can be applied to all the concepts outlined to criticize the regime of truth that education represents in order to reconstruct and, therefore, disavow the situation of androcentric and patriarchal domination.

Currently in the feminist pedagogy, a greater inclusion of the concepts of equality of opportunities is required, by criticizing the transmission of discriminatory social roles, denouncing the patriarchal monopolization of knowledge, or the use of an unconsciously sexist language that reflects the patterns that have shaped the guiding principle of the school and academic environment dominated by males. Textbooks help maintain stereotypes, as the study carried out by Garreta and Careaga showed in 1987, since they not only fail to present images of female authority in the field of knowledge, but also, when they appear, they do so in attitudes of subordination and domination.

The school has a central, decisive role in the construction of gender identities. It is one of the first

universes in which social relations are forged; so it is not a neutral place. By reproducing schemas, models, patterns and ideological representations, the school is revealed not only as a center of academic education in content, but as a determining factor in the ways of conceiving the world, its identities and its relationships.

Gender, Pedagogical Sciences and Education Sciences. Pedagogical strategies as theoretical-methodological tools enabling the agents of the educational process to promote equality of opportunities

The projection, investigation and study of the hidden curricula of the concept of gender, the analysis of the power relations within the scholastic and academic scope, make possible the concretion of strategies as theoretical-methodological tools enabling the agents of the educational process to promote equality of opportunities to acquire the necessary skills in building equitable, violence-free-relationships for full participation in social life.

Practice has shown that students and teachers fail to overcome and accept their limitations on the subject. On the other hand, Cuban pedagogy and education have the responsibility to forge a society that is increasingly present and future. Based on these two facts and on the analysis of the curricula of majors in pedagogical and medical sciences, some strategies are proposed to promote a feminist or gender pedagogy more attentive to the resolution of identity sociocultural problems and limitations and to the elimination of inequities than the traditional one. They are the following:

- Democratization of the classroom and teaching, by giving voice to students, facilitating participation with equal opportunities, and establishing a relationship of power —with and NO power— over students. In this sense, it is useful to think about the spatial distribution of the classroom, taking into account the proxemics⁴ and the

⁴The term has been used by the anthropologist Edward T. Hall in 1963 to describe the measurable distances between

transformation of the social zone⁵ into personal.⁶ Although, it is also vital the elimination of violent scenarios and ways of acting tending to abuse, harassment psychological violence such as insults, mockery,

people as they interact with each other. The term proxemics refers to the employment and to the perception that the human being makes of his physical space, of his/her personal privacy; how and with whom he/she uses it. According to the studies of Umberto Eco, the kinesics and proxemics codes have given rise to the homonymous disciplines or fields of knowledge. Both the kinetics and the proxemics were born in the anthropological field, but have been systematized as semiotic disciplines, referring to symbolic behavior: gestures, postures, the reciprocal position of bodies in space (as well as architectural spaces that impose or presuppose certain reciprocal positions of human bodies); its become elements of a system of significations that not by chance institutionalizes society to the fullest.

⁵Limits have been established within the zones or bubbles of proxemics. The social zone, closer to the human body than the public but more remote than the personal and intimate, is between 1.23 meters to 3.6 meters.

⁶The personal area is distributed between 46 cm and 1.22 meters away from the human body. Converting the social zone into personal implies a distribution of the chairs and tables in the classroom so that each student feels together, in a U-shape (to avoid hierarchies marked by the angles or sides of the distribution), and they are with the teacher in the frontal zone at a distance of approximately 1,2 meters. This favors a closer approach, and a warmth in relationships, much more equitable and personal.

offensive nicknames, or vulgarisms.

- Respect for the capacity for debate and dissension with institutional ideas. This requires a greater commitment of the faculty with education in values, so that the school is not a mere means of transmitting data but makes use of its capacity to inculcate competence, respect and authority; and, in turn, serves as an instrument to the basic principles of equal living.
- Visualization of the contributions of women both in knowledge and in their practices, so that the canon becomes a space to publicize the authority of "the dominated" in history. This implies that during the classes discussions are promoted the presence or treatment of women, girls and other subordinate subjects in the works, contents, situations and examples of study objects as

well as in others that can be used as a reference.

- Promotion of the use of an inclusive language, sensitive to make visible the presence of the feminine and their signification of what has been named with a sexist approach.
- Reflection and debate about the existence of multiple identities taking into account not the traditional order and the norms of behavior and hegemonic attitudes, but the true human condition and its realities.
- Promotion of inclusive, egalitarian democracy in the classroom and not exclusive, sexist, hierarchical education based on unequal power relations and practices. This can be subject to polemics and educational talks, competitions, morning speeches, cultural activities, events, research and course work. This is the only way to achieve not only a systematization of such matters, but a permanent

inculcation to achieve positive results.

- Achievement of equality of opportunities and gender equality, promoting the fight against gender violence, interpersonal communication, the acceptance of differences, and the autonomy and competence that empowerment brings to the dominated. It would be interesting to address the above in private spaces such as university residences and other spaces tending to the community and more sensitive to its implementation. Likewise, positive results have been seen when promoters are selected, after previous training, preferably in pairs, that can talk about life experiences and motivate the debate from audiovisuals on the subject.
- Identification, analysis and reflection on the unconscious, silent, covert or open sexist forms that are transmitted

through the disciplines of official curricula, among other forms and activities that reinforce the roles and construction of the female and male identity; as well as promotion of the debate on how the school and the faculty have been reproducers of stereotypes, which limit or empower them individually and socially, and identify the type of relationships that they establish and promote. The above, in order to achieve consistency and coherence in its purposes, must be mainstreamed throughout all teaching levels, both in its curricula and in the areas of action of the faculty and its students. For that, the training of those who teach is fundamentally required.

- Promotion of the elimination of social inequalities between sexes through a critical, reflective and constant approach to the cultural and social assumptions that have

impeded equity and the empowerment of students and teachers.

- Provision of the appropriate framework, through the main trends of gender studies in the official and hidden curricula of educational institutions, so that male and female identities are effectively constructed immobilizing and disavowing the effects of domination, control and power relationships. As stated, the curriculum does not exclusively include aspects such as educational objectives, content, assessment, etc., but also implies interpersonal relationships and socio-cultural or environmental conditions that affect the school context and affect the teaching-learning process. (Colom, Sureda & Salinas, 1988, p. 165).
- In the researched context, it became evident that the formation of the teachers' staff in gender issues is practically

nonexistent, this implies the reproduction of dynamics that suppose a risk in terms of equity: promotion of an education that is not very comprehensive, anti-participative and anti-democratic hence, it was highly significant and pertinent to overcome the teaching staff from courses and postgraduate courses such as "Sexism in language and literature", taught by the main author of this paper in the Spanish-Literature department, with abundant experience in teaching undergraduate, fundamentally from the interdisciplinary and heuristic approach that they achieved, between gender theories and their respective subjects, in the classes to the students of the sample.

All of the above-mentioned is possible through the implementation of the theme "gender", as a transversal axis in the pedagogical sciences and education. This can be done at different levels, which are mutually

conditional: the structural and institutional level, the personal level, the technical-professional content level and the methodological level.

The structural and institutional level is given, for example, through the need for training and improvement on gender issues for all teachers; which must be attended to and integrated into professional training programs and school improvement programs. Beyond this, it is necessary that teaching concepts and planning are transparent and accessible to other people, for example, parents or tutors.

At the personal level, it is necessary that each one of the collaborators acquires gender competence through specific training, that is, awareness of the hierarchical conditions existing between the sexes; and assume it as a way of life. This can motivate an assumption and a concretion in practice through exemplariness, which implies a growing improvement in the model of the education professional.

The level of professional and methodological content brings

together several areas and is closely linked to the personal level. The objectives and the essential teaching contents are generally established by the curricula. However, it is possible to make considerable changes in content, as well as didactic and methodological changes. For example, an analysis of the school texts related to different protagonists can be made by gender and their behavior in relation to the role, or a reflection and critical discussion of the daily use of the language; as well as the implementation of actions of overcoming and methodological preparation on the subject that are then materialized in the educational praxis through the strategies indicated above.

Results

Although there was a slight decrease, for various reasons and extra teaching activities, in enrollment with respect to the number that began the first year, it was achieved that all 19 graduates involved such tools and strategies in the management of the contents of their teaching during their teaching training period. Likewise,

they had praiseworthy and positive results with the students to whom they taught, mainly in terms of civic behavior, equity and respect before, during and after the Spanish-Literature classes. They also presented papers on their results in student scientific events, which subsequently led to their diploma work.

CONCLUSIONS

In order to understand these issues with precision, it is necessary to bear in mind that education forces us to question the cultural, social and historical constructions that determine the inequality of the masculine and feminine in school processes. This implies changing the logic of action; implement "bottom-up" changes; work in the front line of educational and social issues as part of educational and institutional policy; take individual and collective acts of reflection in pursuit of equal opportunities and gender equity.

The gender perspective is a tool that makes it possible to visualize the different needs of men and women, as well as to promote actions to

achieve the transformation towards a culture of equity. Values such as tolerance and respect for difference, combined with the gender component, foster democratic environments in which people fully develop in the individual and collective, exercising all their human, social and political rights.

Relationships and gender roles are sensitive to the positive influence of education and, therefore, can be transformed through educational processes. An educational policy and pedagogical activities committed to a focus on gender equity and non-discrimination contribute to bring the Cuban society one step closer to achieving the Millennium Development Objectives.

The critical, radical and feminist branches of pedagogy in recent years provide a post-structural vision, increasingly inclusive, of pedagogy; and allow the inclusion and treatment of previously marginalized issues in education, such as the gender perspective and the incorporation of women as full members of the intellectual community. Making the

gender issue transverse throughout the teaching levels and the network of educational institutions, it is synonymous of designing and implementing a feminist pedagogy, with a long inclusive reach; perfecting the professional model in education; giving light to hidden curricula and knowledge which lack institutionalization. Feminist pedagogy, in addition to fostering an increasingly inclusive and democratic education, causes a gradual improvement of the quality of life, of thought and interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the talk is about the educational ideal, the maximum aspiration that a nation like Cuba can reach.

Beyond whether you are a man or a woman, or if you have feminist or masculinist sides, the important thing is to transform reality from education, which, as it is known, is much more than education. Everything that educates, transforms. Everything that transforms has, necessarily, to be better.

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