

# WHERE IS THE CURRICULUM THAT WAS HERE? HAS CONSERVATISM EATEN IT UP? THE CURRICULAR TENSIONS INVOLVING GENDER AND SEXUALITY THAT SURROUND THE NEW HIGH SCHOOL IN BAHIA

¿DÓNDE ESTÁ EL PLAN DE ESTUDIOS QUE HABÍA AQUÍ? ¿SE LO COMIÓ EL CONSERVADURISMO? LAS TENSIONES CURRICULARES DE GÉNERO Y SEXUALIDAD EN TORNO A LA NUEVA ESCUELA SECUNDARIA DE BAHÍA

CADÊ O CURRÍCULO QUE ESTAVA AQUI? O CONSERVADORISMO COMEU? AS TENSÕES CURRICULARES SOBRE GÊNERO E SEXUALIDADE NO NOVO ENSINO MÉDIO DA BAHIA

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Manuscript received: May 5, 2024. Approved: June 20, 2024. Published: October 10, 2024.

#### Abstract

This paper aims to discuss the space given to issues of gender and sexuality in curriculum documents that are articulated in the construction of the Ensino Médio "High School" in Bahia. To do so, we analyze three curriculum documents, namely: BNCC; Guidance Document for the Implementation of the New High School in the Public Education Network in Bahia and DCRB – Ensino Médio "High School Stage". The results indicate that the BNCC generates an erasure of gender and sexuality issues and uses the term diversity as a way to generalize discussions about differences. However, the curriculum documents of Bahia explicitly bring issues about body, gender and sexuality in their propositions, emphasizing the importance of these discussions being present in high school, including highlighting the debate on feminicide and LGBTTQIA+phobia. However, these documents are still vague in the presentation of methodological proposals to help operationalize these issues in everyday school life.

Keywords: High school. Curriculum documents. Sexual and gender diversity.

#### Resumen

Este trabajo tiene como objetivo discutir el espacio asignado a las cuestiones de género y sexualidad en los documentos curriculares que se articulan en la construcción de la Nueva Escuela Secundaria en Bahia. Para ello, analizamos tres documentos curriculares: BNCC;

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Documento Guía para la Implantación de la Nueva Escuela Secundaria en la Red Pública de Enseñanza en Bahía y DCRB - Etapa de la Escuela Secundaria. Los resultados indican que el BNCC genera un borramiento de las cuestiones de género y sexualidad y utiliza el término diversidad como forma de generalizar las discusiones sobre las diferencias. Sin embargo, los documentos curriculares de Bahia traen explícitamente las cuestiones de cuerpo, género y sexualidad en sus proposiciones, enfatizando la importancia de que estas discusiones estén presentes en la enseñanza media, incluso destacando el debate sobre feminicidio y LGBTTQIA+fobia. Sin embargo, estos documentos aún son vagos en la presentación de propuestas metodológicas que ayuden a la operacionalización de estos temas en el cotidiano escolar.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza media. Documentos curriculares. Género y diversidad sexual.

#### Resumo

Este trabalho objetiva discutir o espaço destinado às questões de gênero e sexualidade nos documentos curriculares que se articulam na construção do Novo Ensino Médio, na Bahia. Para tanto, analisamos três documentos curriculares, quais sejam: BNCC, Documento Orientador de Implementação do Novo Ensino Médio na Rede Pública de Ensino na Bahia e DCRB - Etapa do Ensino Médio. Os resultados indicam que a BNCC gera um apagamento das questões de gênero e sexualidade e usa o termo diversidade como forma de generalizar as discussões sobre as diferenças. No entanto, os documentos curriculares da Bahia trazem as questões sobre corpo, gênero e sexualidade em suas proposições, ressaltando a importância de que essas discussões estejam presentes no Ensino Médio, destacando inclusive o debate sobre feminicídio e LGBTTQIA+fobia. No entanto, esses documentos ainda são vagos na apresentação de proposições metodológicas que auxiliem a operacionalização dessas questões no cotidiano escolar.

Palavras-chave: Ensino médio. Documentos curriculares. Diversidade sexual e de gênero.

#### A curriculum to call my own: some introductory notes

The title of this article is a paraphrase of a well-known nursery rhyme: "Where's the bacon that was here? The cat ate it. Where's the cat? It ran off into the woods. Where's the bush? The fire burned it. Where's the fire? The water went out. Where's the water? The ox drank. Where's the ox? He went to knead the wheat. Where's the wheat? The hen scattered it. Where's the hen? It went to lay an egg. Where's the egg? The priest ate it. Where's the priest? Did he go to say mass? And where are the people who were at mass? They left" <sup>3</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Nursery rhyme "Cadê o toucinho que estava aqui". Available at: https://www2.bauru.sp.gov.br/arquivos/arquivos\_site/sec\_educacao/atividades\_pedagogica\_distancia/1; Infantil/34;EMEII%20Leila%20Berriel%20Aidar/19;PROF.%C2%AA%20SAMARA/INFANTIL%20IV-%20A%20MANH%C3%83%20PROF%C2%AA%20SAMARA%2026%20a%2030%20DE%20JULHO.pdf. Acesso em: 20 maio 2023.



The use of this expression from Brazilian culture in the title of this article raises important questions in this study, because in the parlenda, the bacon that was left behindby someone and eaten by the cat generates an investigative process to find the clues thatlead to the whereabouts of the cat and, subsequently, the bush, fire, water, ox and other secondary characters that are brought to light, but, in the end, the whole search is aimed at finding the bacon that was stolen. This is also the case with the curriculum, or rather curricula, that we make operate in the various educational institutions and beyond. When a curriculum reform such as that proposed by the New Secondary Education (NEM) is proposed, there is a curriculum that disappears, disappears, becomes obsolete, but what are the marks generated by this transition process?

Who owns the curriculum? Who defines what should be taught and learned in our schools? What happens when the documents and curricula that we make operate in our daily classrooms come into play? Questions like these are commonly debated in the field of education and curriculum studies, but how do these questions move when we add other contemporary elements? The first element is a so-called curriculum base that sets out to homogenize the knowledge learned in basic education, and then we add a curriculum reform for secondary education that aligns this base with diversified and regional knowledge. To get to the point, we've added documents that aim to guide curricula at state level, but we mustn't forget to add discussions about the body, gender and sexuality in a political context marked by "gender ideologies" that leave society in turmoil. What will be the result of our potion? We hope to discuss this in the course ofthis work.

To think about curricula is to think about the curriculum and with the curriculum.We want to think about it in its various facets and nuances, reflecting on the tangle of relationships produced and managed in the curricular sphere. Undertaking this task of reflecting on curricula and their developments sets in motion the interests of various groups that are involved in the dispute over the construction of the curriculum, because this process is also about the investments we make as a society in the people we want to train. Silva (2017) says that curricula are identity documents which, by



selecting some knowledge to the detriment of others, give indications of which subjects are desirable for a given profile of society, which aspects we wish to emphasize and which others we intend to silence.

We agree with Paraíso (2010) when he says that the curriculum is often a space loaded with pretensions of ordering, organizing, sequencing, structuring and framing the bodies, schedules, people and experiences that are experienced in school environments. However, beyond what is intended, there are escapes and leaks that run through the curricular proposals. It is therefore not possible to precisely delimit the effects of educational policies on school life, because if, on the one hand, curricular documents want to do (and do) something with us, we, on the other hand, also do (or fail to do) many things with them.

Regarding the imprecision that surrounds curricula, we are not bothered by the fact that it is difficult (not to say impossible) to determine their consequences in our training processes. On the contrary, we are delighted by this characteristic because, based on the post-critical theoretical-methodological lens assumed in our studies, we assume the multiplicity of views and perspectives that cross curricular construction. In this sense, reflections on curricula become an extremely rich field of possibilities, as Lopes and Macedo (2011, p. 19-20) points out:

[...] it is not possible to answer "what is curriculum" by pointing to something that is intrinsically characteristic of it, but only to agreements of meanings of such a term, which are always partial and historically located. Each "new definition" isnot just a new way of describing the curriculum object, but part of a broader argument in which the definition is inserted.

We know that curricula are a terrain of disputes and relations of knowledge/power that transcend the state or university field, since teachers, students and social movements are part of this field, among others. So, in an attempt, we can say that the curriculum is what exudes from all this and is never just one thing. It is thought of in the documentary sphere, but it becomes alive in the social relationships that surround it, so to talk about curriculum is to talk about life in [trans]formation, forged identities and investments, often intentional, in maintaining some identities and erasing others.



Taking on board the post-critical perspectives of the curriculum<sup>4</sup>, we realize the importance of looking at curriculum production by considering, in addition to social class, other categories that make up social relations, such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity/race, regionality, generation, disability, religiosity and others. In this way, these theories recognize the cultural plurality that produces multiple possibilities for identities. Power relations are also central to these perspectives (Silva, 2017). Based on a Foucauldian perspective, we understand that power works in networks and that there is only a power relationship when there is resistance, because if there is no resistance, there is a relationship of domination (Foucault, 1989).

From this perspective, it is possible to think of curricula as an instrument and institution permeated by power relations and which is often used to erase certain knowledge and groups in educational processes, especially those that have been marginalized such as black people, indigenous peoples, women and the LGBTTQIAPN+ community<sup>5</sup>. In this sense, it is necessary to think about a curriculum that challenges the perspectives that advocate the death of differences and of those named as different and marginal, and to destabilize the cultural capital built into traditional curricula, taking the cultures of those who are different as knowledge to be recognized and worked on in the classroom (Corazza, 2002).

Focusing on the post-structuralist perspective, in addition to contesting the centrality of social class in understanding social relations, the idea of a truth about the world is also called into question, investing in understanding regimes of truth and contesting the search for generalist metanarratives, i.e. answers that are applicable to any context, but we must be careful not to fall into the trap of only thinking about micro-narratives. From this perspective, the subject is also considered to be a product of language, understanding that it is within a linguistic network that hierarchies and stigmatizations are constituted. It is also in the field of language that we are all formed, signified and often concealed, with the aim of being silenced (Louro, 2007; Lopes. 2013).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> As Lopes (2013) discusses, these are studies based on post-structural, post-colonial, post-modern, post-foundational and post-Marxist perspectives.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transvestite, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, pansexual, non-binary and other groups that recognize themselves as gender and sexual minorities.



Taking on the questioning tone typical of post-critical curriculum theories, we bring into play some of the contemporary changes going on in Brazilian education. Among the main changes, we highlight the construction and institution of the National Common Curriculum Base (BNCC), approved by the National Education Council in 2017 and 2018, respectively, for primary and secondary education. The BNCC document states that it aims to promote teaching equity in all schools in the federation, ensuring that all studentshave access to a common knowledge and skills base (Brasil, 2018).

Law No. 13,415/2017 also established changes to the structure of secondary education, becoming known as the "New Secondary Education" (NEM). Based on these legal frameworks, the curriculum organization is now made up of two parts: the common compulsory part, referring to the knowledge determined by the BNCC, and the second, optional part, relating to the flexible part, arranged in curricular units (Brasil, 2017).

In addition, the federal states have produced other documents to define the implementation of NEM. In Bahia, in 2020, the Bahia State Department of Education produced a summary document known as the Guiding Document for the Implementation of the New High School in the Public Education Network in Bahia, and later, in 2022, the Bahia Referential Curriculum Document (DCRB) - High School Stage was published (Bahia, 2020a; Bahia, 2022).

Bearing in mind that the construction of these curricular documents is entangled with power relations, in this study we aim to discuss how gender and sexuality issues are presented and dialogued with the perspectives that run through the curricular documents of the New High School in Bahia.

To this end, we have invested in several directions in this article. In the first section, we take a panoramic look at the contemporary context in which these discussions are situated and the impasses generated by conservative movements. In the second part of the text, we use a documentary analysis to show how these discussions are situated in the BNCC, NEM, the Guiding Document for the Implementation of the NewSecondary Education in the Public Education Network in Bahia and the DCRB. In this field, we also reflect on how the current scenario has impacted on the construction of these documents. In the final section, we present some considerations on the subject following the analysis.



We would emphasize that the documentary analysis we carried out is intended to follow Foucault's thinking in saying that:

> History has changed its position in relation to the document: its primary task is no longer to interpret it, nor to determine whether it tells the truth and what its expressive value is, but to work on it internally and elaborate it; it organizes it, cuts it out, distributes it, orders it, divides it into levels, establishes series, distinguishes what is pertinent from what is not, identifies elements, defines units, describes relationships. Therefore, for history, the document is no longer this inert matter, through which it tries to reconstitute what men did or said, what is past, and of which only the trace remains: it seeks to define, in the documentary fabric itself, units, totalities, series, relationships (Foucault, 2008,p. 7).

Therefore, in the following topics, we put these curricular documents under suspicion, in a genealogical analysis as also proposed by this author when he says that "genealogy (...) is therefore at the point of articulation of the body with history. It must show the body entirely marked by history and history ruining the body" (Foucault, 1989, p. 22). In this sense, we think of these normative documents in relation to the historical, social and cultural contexts that give them the conditions to exist. It's a way of looking at the documents and seeing the discursive marks that run through their writings and that tell of the intentionality of the institutions that produced them.

#### Gender, sexuality and education in the political trenches of curriculum and life

We understand CIS heteronormativity as a regulatory order that organizes our social relations, including institutional practices, through thinking ordered by compulsory cisgendered and heterosexuality, seen as a reference and standard for living in society. Through CIS heteronormativity, cis and heterosexual experiences are read as natural, intrinsic and often divine and all other constructions of differences, in terms of gender and sexuality experiences, are understood as pathological, abnormal, abominable and even liable to be eliminated (Nogueira; Colling, 2015; Vergueiro, 2016).

In conversation circles, our bodies, sexes, loves, experiences, pleasures, sexual positions and partnerships are scrutinized, commented on, questioned, cursed and often cursed. In short, our lives are transformed into discourses and these infiltrate



various spaces, whether they are welcoming or exclusionary. Ambivalence and paradoxes are the hallmarks of these discourses, because if, on the one hand, the speeches are intended to reject, mock or silence people with dissident experiences, on the other hand, by bringing up issues of gender and sexuality, they become increasingly alive, present and powerful.

In other words, not wanting to talk about gender and sexuality is a way of creating spaces for discussion on these issues. In recent years, for example, it has becomemore common to hear religious organizations discussing gender and sexuality than schools. Despite being controversial, discussions on gender have become popular in contemporary times, often because of the voices of people who want to annihilate them. Such is the case with two reactionary movements that have gained strength in recent years and have also infiltrated perceptions of how difference should (not) be discussed atschool: The School Without a Party Movement (MESP) and Gender Ideology (Penna, 2018)<sup>6</sup>.

The MESP is supported by a significant portion of society, which advocates a conservative form of education. Its principles include policing, censorship and control of curricula, as well as the positions of teachers, while at the same time advocating that some knowledge should be restricted to the family. The main aim of this movement is to prevent supposed "political and ideological indoctrination". This movement gave rise to the School Without a Party Program, which has gained prominence in recent years with the proposal of a series of measures to prevent teachers from discussing, in the classroom, topics that this movement considers to be ideological, especially those related to gender and sexuality issues (Santos et al., 2021).

Along the same lines, in recent years we have seen a religious movement that focuses on discussions about gender. Generally, the adherents of this movement refer to these issues as "gender ideology" and use their religious spaces to construct an idea

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> "This term has been used pejoratively to refer to "gender studies" as a field that propagates representations and concepts contrary to moral values, reinforced by the traditional hegemonic family and radical religious groups, through a supposed "world conspiracy"" (Penna, 2018). It should be noted that thisview is not recognized by the field of gender relations, sexuality and education studies.



of what this supposed ideology is and, more than that, call on their adherents to take a vehement stance against any issue related to gender. Although "gender ideology" is a Catholic invention, dating from between 1990 and 2000, neo-Pentecostal Protestant religions are also prominent in the proliferation of this discourse in various spaces whereit is infiltrated (Junqueira, 2019).

The alarmist content is a characteristic of this discourse that is [re]produced by supporters of these issues, contributing to a shared feeling of moral panic, of imminent danger and that something needs to be fought at any cost. In this way, they fear that social changes will occur and generate instability in the "ordered" society that they idealize as preceding the period of change (Miskolci, 2007).

These reactionary strategies promoted by state or religious institutions are part of a dispute for power. The focus of this dispute is what can be said, who can say it, but in the background the question is even deeper, because it says who can exist, what experiences are feasible and possible. The dispute is not just about whether to talk about gender and sexuality, but about the [im]possibility of existing beyond the binary and CIS heterosexist model. We reiterate that lives [and deaths] are at stake. This movement undertaken by these bodies, by inventing gender ideology and movements like the MESP, is close to what Foucault calls biopower and the various strategies that make it operate, as presented below:

The disciplines of the body and the regulation of the population are the two poles around which the organization of power over life has developed. The installation, during the classical era, of this two-sided technology - anatomical and biological - individually and specifying, focused on the performances of the body and facing the processes of life, characterizes a power whose highest function is no longer to kill, but to invest in life, from top to bottom (Foucault, 2012, p. 152).

For Foucault (1989, 2012), in the 19th century, the meanings of life and death were revisited following the socio-economic changes of the time, as the exercise of power ceased to be just about taking life and became a process of controlling and regulating it. Based on an analysis like that carried out by Almeida (2020) in relation to racism, weunderstand that these reactionary movements and discourses are part of



biopower<sup>7</sup> when they determine which lives are important and which do not arouse empathy or sensitivity, because they are "abnormal" and "degenerate".

It is therefore impossible to think about discussions of the body, gender and sexuality at school without considering the investments made by reactionary movements, which have a direct impact on school curricula. The most recent changes to Brazilian education bear the historical marks of our time, especially the unfortunate scars produced after the parliamentary coup of 2016 in which the democratically elected president Dilma Rousseff was removed from office, with a period of significant advance by ultraconservative forces with the entry of Michel Temer and, later, Jair Bolsonaro (Silva, Gonçalves, 2022).

#### Where are gender and sexuality issues in the curriculum documents?

Who is served by a Basis that sets out to present a curriculum profile that is common to all parts of a country of continental dimensions? What are the second (third, fourth, etc.) intentions that run through the production of contemporary curricular changes? What discourses and interdicts run through these processes? Questions like these have been moving the field of educational studies since the BNCC was promulgated.

The Common National Curriculum Base is a document that sets out the common curriculum, which is normative in nature, for all stages of basic education. In this sense, this document defines a series of skills and competencies that are considered "essential" for all students to develop during their time in Basic Education (BRASIL, 2018). We can't say that a common curriculum proposal for the whole country is something that has been thought of so recently, as it is mentioned in the 1988 constitution and reinforced by the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law (LDB) in 1996, but only in 2014 was it built asa goal by the PNE (Brasil, 1988, 1996, 2014).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> It is about the power that is exercised over life with the intention of administering and managing it, also determining which lives are important and which do not arouse empathy or sensitivity, because they are "abnormal" and "degenerate" (Foucault, 1989). (Foucault, 1989).



#### e-ISSN: 2595-4881

However, with the changes in governmental profiles that Brazil has undergone in the last decade, the way this foundation was formulated has been directly impacted. In this sense, the final version of the base that was approved reflects the interests of the political group that took over the presidency and a significant part of parliament in 2017 and 2018, when the Early Childhood Education/Elementary Education and Secondary Education versions were approved respectively. In the same direction was the reform of secondary education, known as the "New Secondary Education", which introduced the BNCC into everyday school life.

Understanding that every curriculum policy is built around certain interests and perspectives on education, subjects and society, the Reform of Secondary Education and the BNCC were no different. As Lopes (2004, p. 111) says, "every curriculum policy is a cultural policy, because the curriculum is the result of a selection of culture and is a conflicting field of culture production, of clashes between subjects, conceptions of knowledge, ways of understanding and constructing the world".

Based on the understanding that the High School Reform and the BNCC defend the interests of privileged social and economic groups, it is possible to challenge several of its principles. Among other criticisms are: lack of democratic participation in its construction; disregard for the knowledge historically produced in the educational field; based on market and capitalist principles in a technicist approach to the detriment of socio-cultural issues; direct relationship with large-scale assessments and contribution to curricular standardization/reductionism (Macedo, 2014; Frigotto, 2016; Ramos; Frigotto, 2017). Therefore, it is at the center of this discursive dispute that the New High School is being implemented throughout the country.

Ramos and Frigotto (2017), when reflecting on these issues, paraphrase Fernando Pessoa and say that "resisting is necessary, doing is not", encouraging educators to resist the changes instituted by the New High School, seeking strategies of a propositional nature that circumvents the aspects. Pursuing these trails, we are interested in discussing, in a special way, which spaces were directed to issues of the body, gender and sexuality and, following this propositional approach, reflecting on the possibilities for discussing this theme.



We began this investigative process with the BNCC. As we were interested in the discussions on secondary education, we analyzed the initial pages introducing the document and the section on this stage of education. The excerpts analyzed were from pages 1 to 34 and from 461 to 576. The selected excerpts were read in full in search of key words and/or expressions that signaled the presence of a discussion on the body, gender and sexuality. The excerpts found were categorized and analyzed based on the post- critical and post-structuralist references that theoretically support this research.

- The traces of body, gender and sexuality issues

The expression "sexual orientation" is not mentioned at any point in the document, unlike sexuality, which appears in a timid way in the section entitled "Curricula: BNCC and itineraries", in which the strategies for diversifying the curriculum are presented, by means of training itineraries, including the study centers. According to the document:

Study centers: develop studies and research, promote discussion forums on a particular topic of interest and disseminate knowledge through events - seminars, lectures, meetings, colloquia - publications, campaigns, etc. (youth, diversity, **sexuality**, women, youth and work, etc.) (BRASIL, 2018, p. 472, emphasis added).

According to the BNCC, the nucleus of study is understood as one of these possible curricular arrangements that enables collaborative work and articulation between areas of knowledge in the diversified field of the curriculum. We would point out that sexuality is presented as one of the possible topics of interest that can be addressed by the study centers, in addition to the issue of women. For us, this is a loophole in the BNCC. Despite being a one-off moment, it opens possibilities for these issues to be debated if the school community so wishes.

When searching for genres, at first it seems that the discussion is more present inthe document, however, when analyzing it, the mentions deal with discursive, literary, textual or musical genres and only one mention, on page 547, in the introduction to the



section "The area of Applied Human and Social Sciences" deals with gender from the social perspective that we discuss in this work. Here is the excerpt from the document:

In elementary school, the BNCC focuses on the process of becoming aware of the Self, the Other and the We, of the differences in relation to the Other and of the various forms of organization of the family and society in different spaces and historical periods. These relationships are guided by the notions of the individual and society, categories that are tributary to the notion of *philia*, friendship, cooperation, knowledge of oneself and the Other with a view to knowing how to act together and ethically. In addition, by exploring a variety of problems specific to Geography and History, it provides for students to explore avariety of knowledge specific to the Human Sciences: notions of temporality, spatiality and diversity (**of gender**, religion, ethnic traditions, etc.); knowledge about ways of organizing society and about relations of production, work and power, without neglecting the process of transformation of each individual, the school, the community and the world (BRASIL, 2018, p. 547, emphasis added).

When stating the purposes of the area, a parallel is made with primary education, signaling the possibility of working with knowledge related to diversity and bringing up gender, religious and ethnic issues as examples. However, when talking about secondary education, this issue is not emphasized, as if it were no longer a discussion objective for this stage of basic education. We don't know for sure if it was something that went unnoticed by conservative and anti-gender eyes or if, because it was specific and comprehensive, it remained unchallenged. In any case, even though gender is included in a limited space in the document, we can find a possibility to explore these issues, going beyond binary and dichotomous perspectives, even if the document does not outline how to approach gender diversity.

In a similar study, Araújo (2022) found that the first and second versions of the BNCC addressed gender and sexuality issues more forcefully. However, in the fourth and final version, these terms are reduced to a specific mention, prioritizing diversity and difference instead.

We would point out that the absence of the words gender and sexuality in theBNCC does not necessarily mean the absence of these discussions in this document, because based on the perception of gender as "a constitutive element of social relations based on the perceived differences between the sexes" (Scott, 1995, p. 73), when thinking about issues related to the anatomy and physiology of the human



body, investments in gender and sexuality profiles are also present, albeit in a veiled, naturalized way and still based on a normative perspective.

Other authors point to the erasure of gender and sexuality issues in the BNCC, such as Leite, de Castro and Ferrari (2021) who, when carrying out a specific analysis of the area of Natural Sciences, highlight the absence of these themes in the areas of Science and Biology which, historically, have been privileged curricular spaces for approaches to discussions of gender and sexuality.

Despite the biologizing and medical aspects that often surround these discussions when they take place within these curricular components, it is undeniable that discussions on sexuality and sexual health have gained an important place in Science and Biology classes. The authors also relate this silencing to the organized persecution of conservative sectors in previous versions of the document. Monteiro and Ribeiro (2020, p. 11) corroborate this view, saying that:

The section that defended respect for each person's sexual orientation was deleted, one of the examples of the fact that the drafting and approval of the National Common Curriculum Base passed through the cultural sieve [...], being at the mercy of fundamentalist, conservative and moralizing religious influences that, to the detriment of science, eliminated all content associated with Gender from its final text.

In addition to the lack of visibility of gender and sexuality issues, we were struck by the discreet presence of the term diversity at some points in the document and, at times, it was an idea of diversity that could perhaps be used to discuss gender and sexuality.

For example, the following expressions are present in the text: "diversity of knowledge and cultural experiences"; "human diversity"; "diversity of individuals and social groups"; "living with and learning from differences and diversity"; "non-prejudice and non-discrimination and respect for differences and diversity". Perhaps, at first glance, this finding makes us look at the BNCC in a hopeful way, because although it hijacks gender and sexuality, it does, to a certain extent, make room for diversity.

We continue to carry out the countermovement and see how problematic this process is, because when talking about diversity or diversities, pluralizing the concept,



#### e-ISSN: 2595-4881

there is also an erasure of what this expression is about when used in such a document. What human diversity is being addressed? What markers of difference are included in the construction of this concept when it is used in this way in the document? Ethnic, sexual, gender, regional, religious, age, body? It's not possible to think about or even establish what it's about, speaking from such a generalist perspective which, at the same time, becomes epistemologically empty. Is this a strategy of resistance to make sense of whatis between the lines of the document or just an abrupt way of looking for subterfuges to avoid talking about gender and sexuality?

Issues like these were also noticed by Silva and Gonçalves (2022), who discuss the erasure of the teacher subject in the construction of the BNCC, as well as the formation of the image of a "student-subject" devoid of gender, sexuality or race, which is self- referenced and disconnected from contemporary political and social crossings.

According to Miskolci (2015), the diversity perspective seeks to circumvent conflict without generating changes in the power relations that subordinate certain groups, as "a political strand built from the perspective of those who hold power, already have access to rights and propose to extend them to others without changing the institutional structure on which they are based" (Miskolci, 2015, n.p.).

We don't mean to imply that the term diversity shouldn't be used, or that it is empty in itself. In fact, we understand diversity as the socio-cultural and historical constructions of differences that go beyond what is considered biological or what can simply be seen, because these differences are constructed by humanity in its social processes and intertwined with power relations (Gomes, 2007). However, when we confront the context of the silencing of gender and sexuality issues in the BNCC with the presence of the expression diversity, it seems to us that the term moves away from the meaning that we have gauged, or vaguely conveys what these issues of differences are. Diversity is reduced to an expression that gives indications, but does not speak. More than that, it becomes a danger, because its use can even mislead and be used as a way of defending this document with the argument that it is welcoming of the various manifestations of sexuality and gender, something that is not present in the regulations.



Thus, we are emphatic in saying that the use of the term diversity does not replace the use of gender, sexuality, gender diversity, among others. These discussions should be explicit at various points in the document, especially given that one of the BNCC's focuses investment in what it says is a "life project", but how can we think of a life project that detached from our sexuality and the gender relations we establish with our peers?

As we mentioned earlier, Corazza (2002) encourages us to think about a postcurriculum that recognizes differences and does not accept the production of a curriculum that violates or is silent about the discriminatory processes committed against those who are different. In view of this, she points out that "[...] a postcurriculum listens to what different people have to say and incorporates differences into its *corpus*" (p. 106). So, we ask ourselves, were those seen as different listened to? Were they called upon to think, together with the public authorities, about the production of a curriculum document that was read as common for the whole of Brazil?

Authors such as Silva (2007), Miskolci (2012) and Vecanto (2014) question the liberal use of the term diversity because they believe it brings with it the idea of tolerance or coexistence and does not problematize the power relations that run through these socio- cultural issues. It's a way of reaffirming the distinction of the other, without being directly impacted or questioning their own positions, which are most often understood as normal and taken as a reference, thus maintaining a hierarchically superior position.

This logic is the same used in the vote on the PNE, since the movement of ultraconservative sectors culminated in 2014 with the amendment to Law No. 13.005/2014, in its article 2, item III, with the suppression of the terms gender and sexual orientation for a general expression that seems to cover all possibilities, but which has exclusion and stigmatization as its backdrop in its production process. Thus, before the amendment voted by parliament, the text read: "to promote the overcoming of educational inequalities, with emphasis on the promotion of racial, regional, gender and sexual orientation equality". However, after the crusade generated by conservative institutions, the new version became "overcoming educational inequalities, with an emphasis on promoting citizenship and eradicating all forms of discrimination" (Brasil, 2014, p. 43).



#### e-ISSN: 2595-4881

In this sense, the BNCC gives in to conservatism, becoming a document that does not keep up with the advances of its time, in which production on gender and sexuality are growing exponentially. Unlike the National Curriculum Parameters(PCN) which, for primary education, had a specific section on the subject of "sexual orientation" (Brasil, 1998), the BNCC does not explicitly take up this debate. However, beyond this, it is important to look in this document for openings, gaps, cracks and possibilities that can be unfolded so that discussions about the body, gender and sexuality can take place in the school space. Perhaps it is in the moments when the document talks about diversity and even with all the criticism, we can establish cracks to justify the approach to gender and sexuality in schools, even because the document does not prohibit talking about these issues in school institutions.

Along the same lines of change is the New High School, advocated by Law No. 13,415/2017, which modifies the LDB and establishes significant changes to the structureof high school. These include increasing the minimum time students spend in school from 800 to 1,000 hours a year, and progressively up to 1,400 hours; and making only Portuguese language and mathematics compulsory in the three years of high school; encouraging the Policy to Promote the Implementation of Full-Time High Schools, and thechange in curricular organization, which is also a way of implementing the BNCC in high school, since this law establishes that the new curricular organization will be made up of the BNCC and the training itineraries that make up the flexible part of the curriculum (Brasil, 2017).

The law in question signals that the diversified part must be harmonized with the BNCC, and linked to the cultural, social, economic and environmental context. It is worth noting that this is the only point that mentions sociocultural issues, albeit timidly and briefly. In this sense, the legislation signed by former president Michel Temer doesn't seem to care or make any effort to emphasize or guarantee that difference or, indeed, diversity (as signaled by the BNCC) are also included in the text of this law.

On the other hand, with the intention of guiding the implementation of this curricular reform, the federal states have constructed documents that point to possible paths that can be considered in this endeavor and we ask ourselves: how has the state



of Bahia dealt with gender and sexuality issues in these documents? Did Bahia follow the profile previously described, silencing and erasing issues of sexuality and gender, or did it build strategies of resistance in the construction of its own documents? Are the BNCC and the High School Reform final constraints or is it possible to circumvent their intentions and [re]invent new possibilities?

To reflect on these issues, we looked at the documents produced by Bahia on the implementation of NEM. The Bahia State Department of Education released two documents with this objective. The first was a 28-page introductory document, the final version of which was released in 2020, called "Documento orientador de implementação do Novo Ensino Médio na Rede pública de ensino" and the second was the Bahia Referential Curriculum Document for Secondary Education - DCRB, published in 2022, although the implementation of NEM began in Bahia in some institutions considered pilot schools in 2019.

Following our analysis exercise, we initially looked at the guiding document and, in the first few pages, our attention was drawn to section 4.1, which deals with the guiding principles of the Curriculum, which, according to the text itself, "constitute the general foundations that should underpin the preparation of curricular proposals for all School Units in the State of Bahia" (Bahia, 2020a, p. 5). The first guiding principle of the Curriculum is called "Human Rights - as a guiding principle" and its description states the importance of respecting the diversity and multiculturalism present in the school.

Unlike the BNCC, this document signals that the school, as a space for building knowledge, cannot legitimize exclusion, racism, prejudice or discrimination of any kind and emphasizes: "gender, sexual orientation, religious, generational, economic, cultural, racial or ethnic and disability conditions" (Bahia, 2020a, p. 5). In the next section, entitled "Theoretical Foundations", the fundamental intentions of the organization of the curriculum are considered to be the cultural content and they use a quote from Demerval Saviani, who says that it is important for the lower classes to master cultural content in order to have their interests considered and, in a way, break away from the process of submission to which they are often placed.

Among the premises presented, the following stand out:



"[1<sup>a</sup>] there is no neutrality in the production of knowledge, considering that the subjects involved are guided by their motivation and their history [...] [2] Although high school students in Bahia follow different educational paths, they need to have the same learning opportunities, respecting inequalities, regardless of their social origin, their color, their gender, where they live, where their school is located or other possible markers of differences that are explicit in each young person" (BAHIA, 2020a, p. 8).

The first premise is opposed to what is advocated by the School Without a Party Movement, because it signals the direct contact of the subjects with the production of knowledge, so there is no room for the neutrality that MESP so desperately seeks. It also breaks with the perspective of contamination of results, as supported by modern, positivist science, which also contributes to the discourse supported by the conservative movement.

The second premise reaffirms the importance of issues of difference and diversity in this document, as it calls for the curriculum to consider the social markers of difference that students carry with them. It is a process of investing in a curriculum based on difference. This same mark is also seen elsewhere in the document, such as on the page that talks about the flexible part of the curriculum, considering it to be the most challenging, and in the curricular units that also point to the study nuclei which, despite having a definition similar to that of the BNCC, add gender and racism as possible themes to be worked on, terms that do not appear in this field of the BNCC. Finally, they present the possibility of school units creating elective subjects and give as an example some cross-cutting themes that should permeate the entire curriculum, but which can use the space of electives for more in-depth studies, such as "Diversity, Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous History and Culture" and "Human Rights".

We would point out that despite being a synthetic document, there is a clear commitment to ensuring that issues of difference and diversity and gender and sexuality are present in the Bahian curriculum. There is a reiteration at various points in the document that points to a conception of curriculum that is not limited to a list of contents to be worked on, but that understands it as a social construct that is directly linked to relations of knowledge and power, which can and should be used to promote



social transformation. This perspective is close to the idea of curriculum supported by Elizabeth Macedo (2006), who understands that the process of producing and experiencing curricula is daily and is established in the sociocultural and language field, being intertwined with power relations. In this sense, the curriculum also takes on the role of negotiation between the subjects who are part of this field of dispute.

Following the trails and clues that the construction of Bahia's curriculum documentsallows us to follow, the DCRB - High School is our next starting point for some more reflections. As we mentioned earlier, this document was published in 2022 by the Bahia State Department of Education and is not prescriptive in nature, but rather guides pedagogical actions in schools located in the state of Bahia. This state regulation aims to guide the state's Basic Education Systems, Networks and Teaching Institutions in the preparation of their curricular references and/or school curricular organization, through their Pedagogical Political Projects (PPP), and is based on the BNCC guidelines (Bahia, 2022).

Volume 1 focuses on Early Childhood Education and Primary Education, while volume 2 is aimed at Secondary Education. This document went through a number of stages, including a survey of students in the school network, as well as versions that weremade available for public consultation and analysis by the Bahia State Education Council. By analyzing this document, we can say that once again Bahia is carrying out a process that we can call transgressive by defending the inclusion of gender and sexuality issues in the school curriculum, making a counterpoint to the BNCC itself and to the conservative and fundamentalist movements that want to restrict this debate to the family sphere.

Thus, gender and sexuality come out from between the lines and are presented explicitly and, at times, recovering important concepts that have been produced by this field of study. Thus, expressions such as gender identity, gender roles, gender stereotypes, gender relations, transgender, cisgender, sexuality, sexual orientation, LGBTQIA+ and homosexuals are commonly found in the text.

Once again, these discussions run through this document at various points, from the theoretical and philosophical foundations to the knowledge to be worked on in the curricular components that make up the training itineraries. For example, issues of the



body, gender and sexuality are covered in the "objects of knowledge" of the components: Identities and representations of body culture; Art and contemporaneity; Scientific initiation II; The invisible in health; Thinking empowers!; I am also culture; Integral health; Stories of my ancestors, among others.

In this sense, it is possible to see that, despite the anti-gender policy being pursued in contemporary times, there are strategies of resistance and re-signification. For example, in the text of the DCRB, excerpts from the PNE are used to justify the importance of working with gender and sexuality at school, despite the fact that this document has generated clashes between conservatives and defenders of gender issues and, as we pointed out earlier, had almost all mention of gender excluded from the final version. In this sense, the DCRB points out that, in accordance with the National Education Plan and the State Education Plan (PEE),

[...] it is the responsibility of school education to train people in their rights and duties, for the full development of citizenship, with a view to respecting themselves and their peers. This includes respect for gender identities and sexuality, which are inherent dimensions of the human person, without incurring in discriminatory practices and violations associated with ways of being, existing and enjoying sexuality individually and among peers. These identities are inexorably human dimensions (Bahia, 2022).

The action strongly demarcates the wishes of a section of the population that is moving to prevent these issues from appearing in the school curriculum. We stress that teachers, managers and the school community are free to include discussions on gender and sexuality in the school environment, despite the opposing movements.

Metaphorically, Paraíso (2018) associates the conservative advances against discussions on gender and sexuality at school with a storm. On the other hand, the author realizes that, as much as these setbacks threaten curricula that deal with differences, there are escapes and movements that show signs that "[...] if we have lost a few rounds, there is still a lot to play for, because it is through *creative resistance that* we can face this storm" (Paraíso, 2018, p. 26, emphasis added).

The DCRB sets out to make this creative countermovement and brings various social markers into the curriculum itself, so ethnic-racial issues, regionalism, sexuality and gender often take center stage in the curriculum. As an example of this, in the



DCRBthere is a specific field for talking about gender and sexuality in the integrating themes that are defined as themes that "preserve an approach of social interest, [...] thus fulfilling the important political and pedagogical role in the formal spaces of humanization, promoting discussions and reflections on confronting violations of rights and social ills, highlighting the needs of students" (Bahia, 2022, p. 71).

Among the integrating themes is education for diversity, which is subdivided into two categories: Education for Ethnic-Racial Relations; and Education for Gender Relations Sexuality. The latter includes concepts such as sex, gender and gender identity, and gender stereotypes. In addition, some thoughts and writings by Guacira Lopes Louro are evoked to support the proposed discussion. Data from the Map of Violence and the Women's Call Center are also presented, showing how social markers are configured in anintersectional way to maintain the various forms of violence. In the following excerpts, it is possible to see the investment made in the construction of the document:

Basic education curricula, respecting the appropriate life cycles and with the appropriate adaptations of languages, methodologies and teaching materials, should help the school community to build knowledge and develop skills, values and attitudes to strengthen self-esteem, promote otherness, autonomy, self- care, self-knowledge, personal and peer affection, regardless of the expression of sexual or gender identities; understanding how their own bodies work, respecting their limits and those of others; self-protection and protecting peers from Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and/or unplanned pregnancies; sharing responsibilities in the event of an unplanned pregnancy; understanding parental alienation; pain of knowledge and combating sexual exploitation and various forms of violence against girls and women, especially black girls and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (transvestite and transsexual), queer, intersex, asexual and other categories (LGBTQIA+), including femicide and homicide of the LGBTQIA+ population (Bahia, 2022, p. 78).

In addition, there is an explicit defense for these discussions to be included in the curricula when it says that:



When curricula do not dialogue with the themes of Education for Gender and Sexuality Relations, with and between subjects, the practices of denying "those who are different" are strengthened, since they fail to prepare/empower them for situations inside and outside the school environment, such as abuses and violations of rights expressed in the most diverse forms of moral, psychological, property, physical and/or sexual violence against girls and women, especially black girls and LGBTQIA+ groups (Bahia, 2022, p. 78).

We would also highlight the intersectional approach present in various parts of the DCRB, signaling the understanding that social markers are interconnected and do not act in isolation. In this way, gender and sexuality intersect with other categories such as ethnicity/race, class, religiosity, generation and others. In the fragment above, it is reported that black women experience multiple forms of violence in a striking and uniqueway and, in another excerpt from the same page 78 (BAHIA, 2002), it is stated that the femicide of white women has decreased in recent decades, while that of black women has increased significantly.

In another section, entitled "10.3 Subjects of secondary education in Bahia", the document presents the concept of intersectionality on page 128 (BAHIA, 2022), highlighting, in this case, the importance of the school identifying multiple processes of discrimination that can affect a single person, such as, for example, a black and gay youngperson who experiences racism and homophobia at the same time.

We emphasize that by opting for intersectionality, the document positions itself in relation to differences and non-compliance with the deaths of black, indigenous and LGBTTQIAPN+ people, among others. Operating with intersectionality as a reference means understanding how multiple systems of oppression affect marginalized groups when thinking about intra-group differences. Intersectionality is thought of primarily to understand violence against black women, but then contributes to thinking about other oppressed groups and even the processes of privilege of some groups and their intersections with other markers, such as white privilege. We stress that, in addition to analyzing the confluence of racism, classism, sexism, LGBTTQIAPN+phobia and other forms of violence, working with intersectionality means fighting for social justice (Crenshaw, 2002; Collins, 2017).



Through the analysis carried out, it is possible to say that gender and sexuality are present in the curriculum documents of Bahia and that there are significant advances when compared to the national context of conservative ascension experienced in Brazil in recent years, understanding that the curriculum is also a political territory and that the groups that occupy this space bring their ideals to the documents they are involved with.

We should also point out that since 2006, Bahia has been governed by the Workers' Party (PT), which opposed the conservative group that was in power during the production and publication of the BNCC (Larrat, 2021). It is possible that this context had repercussions on the construction of the premises and knowledge to be worked on in schools and on the investments in the subjects to be trained, as expressed in the DCRB.

Despite all the significant progress made by the DCRB, there are still aspects that could be improved, especially when it comes to putting these discussions into practice in the school environment, because although it addresses the importance of gender and sexuality in the curriculum, there are no methodological guidelines for these issues to be discussed.

This is a worrying aspect, because if on the one hand the cross-curricular nature of a theme is important so that it doesn't get trapped in a specific curricular component, on the other hand, it can allow these discussions to be restricted to the document, without generating effects in everyday school life. We agree with Paraíso (2015) when he says thatthe curriculum needs to have life and be crossed by the lives it wants to transform. It is necessary to generate fertile soil so that surprising encounters are possible, because "when discouragement and sadness invade a curriculum, learning becomes distant" (Paraíso, 2015, p. 52).

Experimenting with the curriculum, reflecting on the possibilities, looking for strategies that consider the contemporary context are strategies that enable continuous processes of creation and re-creation, formation and deformation of the curriculum, which is not watertight, but is produced with and in the movement of the agents who touch it and make it alive. Therefore, pedagogical guidelines such as



suggestions can act as this "start" that does not prescribe but directs the first steps for this discussion to take place in the school environment. The absence of these guidelines can, however, contribute to the discussion ending with the document and not generating transformations in the lives of the members of the school community.

In addition, the linking of these themes to the curricular components of the training itineraries is also weak, because as the school chooses the itineraries it will offer, it is possible that none of the selected itineraries will include these discussions and, consequently, there will be no guarantee of this space in the curriculum.

We also highlight, as an issue to be problematized, the binary mark present in the definition of gender, since in the document, it is conceptualized as "[...] the various possibilities constructed within a specific culture of recognizing ourselves as men or women. It can also be said that it is the set of relationships, attributes, roles, beliefs and attitudes that define what it is to be a man or a woman in social life" (Bahia, 2022, p. 77). At no point in the document are other possibilities mentioned that escape this male-female dyad, such as non-binary and *queer* people.

In this sense, it is important to keep a close eye on curriculum documents and how they unfold in everyday school life, putting their intentions under suspicion and bringing to light the power games and interests that run through the social, cultural and historical constructions of these documents.

At the same time, we understand the importance of thinking of the curriculum as a becoming, something that is not ready and determined, but can be revisited and recreated, even with all the guidelines that guide it. Therefore, we don't want to close it, but understand it as something that is permanently open. If we approach curricula of differences, as Corazza (2002) tells us, it is interesting to see them as curricula that arestill unthinkable, risky, dangerous, but powerful, seductive and subversive.

# What does the Bahia curriculum have? It has body, gender and sexuality, yes! Some final notes



Making a pun with Dorival Caymmi's song, immortalized in the voice of Carmen Miranda, we want to provoke some more reflections on discussions of the body, gender and sexuality in contemporary times and in Bahia. We would like to pointout that this state has stood out as one of the federative units that discusses gender and sexuality issues at school. We can cite as an example the Bahian teacher Idália Lino dos Santos, who in 2021 received the "Girl today, scientist tomorrow" award from the 10th Brazilian Health and Environment Olympics at FIOCRUZ<sup>86</sup>. The teacher was awarded for guiding high school students in the construction of a project on teenage pregnancy, based on a look at gender and sexuality issues.

Another relevant characteristic that runs through the discussion of these issues in the state of Bahia is the search for guarantees through regulations. For example, the State Education Council created CEE Resolution No. 45, of August 24, 2020, which provides for the education of gender relations and sexualities in the State Education System of Bahia. This resolution addresses the importance of these issues being in the school environment and calls on educators to discuss these issues in their classes (Bahia, 2020b).

Thus, in the face of the various setbacks that discussions of gender and sexuality have suffered in recent years on the national stage, the Bahian context is encouraging, as it deals with these issues as important points that should be in the school curriculum, generating a counterpoint to the positions taken in the PNE and the BNCC, in which these themes have been silenced and often camouflaged by terms that assume, in this context, a generalist aspect, as is the case with "diversity". This profile of the DCRB contributes to the perception that the lack of discussion of this issue in national documents does not mean a ban and that it is possible to construct subterfuges and create new strategies to invade the curriculum and implode it from within.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Projects from schools in Bahia win awards at the Brazilian Health and Environment Olympics. Available at: https://www.bahia.fiocruz.br/projetos-de-escolas-da-bahia-recebem-premio-da-olimpiada-de-saude-e-meio- ambiente/. Accessed on May 23, 2023.



In this context, despite the fact that the New High School is directly associated with the market and conservative outlook that runs through the BNCC, it is possible to use the loopholes and gaps that this curricular reform makes possible so that gender and sexuality, from a perspective that recognizes and affirms differences, can be included in the curriculum. Perhaps, with the investment in the diversified part, this presence could become even stronger and more powerful than it was in the previous curricular configuration.

We would point out, however, that the presence of these discussions in the DCRB does not guarantee that gender and sexuality are, in fact, present in the curricula of Bahian schools, as there are various issues that can impact on these processes, especially the lack of teacher training, curricular spaces and the profile of the school community. In addition, this curricular document also has some weaknesses, such as the lack of a methodological framework for thinking about possible ways of working with these issues at school. We also point to the problem of presenting a still binary view when thinking about gender and gender identity, thus disregarding non-binary experiences.

Finally, we returned to the music of Caymmi and Miranda and, after carrying out thiswork, we were able to rehearse a statement: what does Bahia have? It has Body, Gender and Sexuality (in the curriculum documents), yes! In this sense, we leave the provocation for other studies to consider how these issues operate in day-to-day school life and what impact this opening up of gender and sexuality made possible by Bahia's curriculum documents has on the daily life of basic education in this state.

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