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Feminist pedagogical praxis: experiences and perspectives of young amazonian women teachers

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Abstract: This study analyzes the pedagogical practices of young Amazonian women teachers that incorporate feminist principles into their teaching actions in high schools in Belém, Pará. Grounded in a reconstructive qualitative approach, the research seeks to understand how these educators shape a feminist praxis, contributing to the development of a critical, emancipatory education committed to gender equity. Through narrative interviews with four teachers, interpreted using the Documentary Method, it was possible to reconstruct the meanings and significance attributed to their experiences and daily practices. The results indicate that feminism, when integrated into teaching, works as a tool for social transformation and resistance to the patriarchal structures embedded in the school environment. The practices analyzed reveal that feminist-oriented teaching strategies serve as forms of resistance and deconstruction of gender inequalities, fostering students' critical awareness and contributing to an emancipatory educational process. Furthermore, the narratives show that these teachers face institutional and cultural challenges and perceive the school space as a site of political struggle and critical formation, aiming to break with traditional teaching models, promoting reflections on equity, diversity, and social justice. By embracing feminism as a necessary principle, these educators challenge patriarchal structures and highlight the importance of pedagogical practices committed to dismantling gender hierarchies and promoting a more just, plural, and democratic school environment.

Keywords: feminism; feminist pedagogical praxis; educational practices.

1 Introduction

The study of feminist educational practices and gender dynamics in school life has followed various different perspectives. However, challenges still persist, especially given the current rise of anti-gender rhetoric (Junqueira, 2018). This kind of debate in the educational research area becomes relevant as it can contribute to the construction of a society that is guided by gender equity, and that is committed to overcoming inequalities and the historical repression of women. With that in mind, this article presents the results found by research focused on understanding how feminist pedagogical praxis is outlined in the work of young female teachers and how feminist principles are incorporated into their teaching practices in the schools of Belém, a city in the state of Pará, Brazil.



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This study's main question was shaped around the wish to understand the way the teaching practices of young, Amazonian female high school teachers who associate with feminist ideas, help face the challenges of high school life and promote critical, transformative and emancipatory education. It also questions how these teaching practices challenge both the patriarchy and traditional education given the high school context, while outlining a feminist pedagogical praxis, and how it presents itself as a tool for social transformation and for the deconstruction of gender inequalities in the school environment.

Thus, the relationship between feminism and teaching practices sits at the core of this research, especially as we analyze the way feminist principles constitute and guide these practices in high school environments. This is a teaching level made for teenagers who live in a Brazilian, Amazonian scenario which is permeated by the rise of conservative speech. We expand the discussion to the scope of feminist studies, highlighting the role of teachers and of women who take feminism as a guiding principle to their practices, and who oppose patriarchal structures, thus breaking from historically consolidated subjugation and oppression mechanisms. It is understood that these pedagogical practices contribute to the critical literacy of high school students, especially when it comes to the construction of awareness towards equity in gender dynamics. In this context, the importance of discussing the role of young female teachers who develop a feminist pedagogical praxis in the classroom stands out, given that these actions constitute strategies for resistance and for deconstruction of a teaching environment which is still marked by the perpetuation and support of conservative values.

The study of gender roles constitutes a fundamental axis of the feminist stance, which opposes the limited conception of being women and being men being limited to the biology of sexes. Under this perspective, Scott's (1996, p. 75) statement that "[...] the term 'gender' is also used to describe social relationships between the sexes" has as a baseline the rejection of the approach of biological aspects as reasoning "[...] for many forms of female subordination, on the fact that women have the ability to give birth and that men have superior muscular strength" (Scott, 1996 p. 75).

The understanding of gender as something anchored in biological constitutions converges towards a conservative point of view that is found in daily school life,

perpetuates sexist modes of education and propagates symbolical and material violence against young women from their early education years. In other words, "[...] it is a male dominated society, focused on the male gender, which causes the predominance of asymmetrical and hierarchical relationships between the sexes" (Sardenberg, 2011, p. 17).

Thus, it becomes essential to reflect about the development of an education committed to deconstructing gender inequalities. According to Scott (1996, p. 75) "[...] the term gender becomes a way to indicate social constructions - the entirely social creation of ideas about the adequate roles of men and women". As such, the author contributes to understanding gender as a social construction unassociated with the subjects' biology, which contrasts with the conceptions traditionally diffused in educational environment that, by relying on biological bases, sustain sexist and bigoted practices.

Furthermore, as Scott (1996, p. 76) accentuates, "[...] the usage of the term gender emphasizes a whole system of relations that may include sex, but that is not directly determined by it, nor does it directly determine sexuality". As such, the concept of gender takes on a relational and dynamic character which transcends the biological dimension to encompass cultural, symbolic and historical processes that shape the identities and the social rules.

Therefore, it becomes essential to recognize that the school environment may "[...] produce stereotypes and prejudices, but also resistance, new values and new attitudes" (Vianna; Ridenti, 1998, p. 103), meaning it can denounce the isolation that originates from prejudice and from bigoted pedagogical practices, and promote egalitarian education. Both in school and in educational practices some tension is found between fitting into social expectations of female roles and the resistance dedicated to "[...] questioning and resisting these incumbencies, aiming to affirm their agency as education professionals, and not just extensions of maternal roles" (Costa; Ribeiro, 2011, p. 487).

Be that as it may, we can agree with Bassalo (2010, p. 150) when she says that "[...] school is perpassed by gender [...] keeps sexism running" and "must be a place that ensures equality, recognizes differences and does not turn it into social injustice". This excerpt shows the inherent tension of school as an institution: on the

one hand, school propagates gender inequality and sustains sexist practices, since it is not a neutral environment; on the other hand, it also has the potential to be a socially transformative environment, capable of promoting equality, valuing differences and contributing to the development of fairer and more inclusive relationships.

The method chosen in this research is based on a qualitative reconstructive approach (Bohnsack, 2020), taking social phenomenology into account. The data construction used the Narrative Interview technique (Weller; Zardo, 2013). The analysis and interpretation of the young feminist teachers' narratives was based on the Documentary Method (Weller; Otte, 2014). This method utilizes transcription codes¹ that preserve the speech tone and ensure methodological precision, transparency and rigidity. As such, it allows that nuances of speech – pauses, intonations, hesitations - be registered and analyzed as integral part of the meaning produced by the participants.

Four high school teachers participated on this study, referred to, here, as Af, Bf, Cf and Df. Teacher Af, 28 years old, works at a private school and teaches Portuguese, while teacher Bf, 27 years old, also linked to a private institution, works as a head teacher. Teacher Cf, 26 years old, teaches mathematics at a private school. Finally, teacher Df, 29 years old, works at a public school, and teaches Portuguese.

These volunteers bring different experiences and perspectives to the education field, which enriches the proposed analysis. Their narratives contribute to the understanding of the many dimensions of teaching practices and of the meanings these teachers attribute to their experiences.

The interviews were conducted in places previously chosen and agreed upon by the teachers, two of them being face to face, and two via online meeting platforms, according to each teacher's availability. All interviews were recorded and transcribed, allowing the interpretation of data from the narratives of these young high school teachers.

The study was conducted in accordance to the ethical principles delimited by Resolution CNS nº 466/2012 and Resolution nº 510/2016 of the Brazilian National Health Council [Conselho Nacional de Saúde]. The participants signed the Explicit

¹ According to Weller (2006), emphasized words must be underlined, words spoken out loud must be boldened, and (.) must be used to indicate pauses. The author also presents other codes of transcription.

Informed Consent Form (ICF), voluntarily adhering to the research while made fully aware of the objectives, procedures, reasoning and guaranteed anonymity.

The choice for a qualitative and reconstructive approach is reasoned by the subjective character of the research's theme, as the narrated experiences reflect individual and collective meanings attributed by the participants. The collected data was interpreted with the described experiences in mind, aiming to understand the way each teacher builds and reframes their teaching practices under specific social contexts. As pointed by Flick (2009, p. 37), "[...] qualitative research directs itself at the analysis of concrete cases and their temporal peculiarities, with the expressions and actions of people in their local environments at its roots". As such, a qualitative approach allows us to appreciate the social and historical character of human actions, considering the context in which the subjects produce their meanings and establish relationships.

Social phenomenology, according to Schütz (1979), offers a way to understand the attributed meanings found in daily interactions and in lived experiences. From that perspective, we may think, structure and develop the act of investigating, having as our compass the social relationships established on the realm of daily life. According to Schütz, this realm "[...] will mean that the intersubjective realm which existed long before our birth, lived and interpreted by others, our predecessors, as an organized world." (Schütz, 1979, p. 72).

This perspective understands human actions as being molded and interpreted from the social contexts in which the individuals find themselves, making so that reality is continuously constructed in the intersubjectivity. Therefore, each subject attributes meaning to their experiences based on the relationships they establish with the social world. As such, "[...] since phenomenology is the science of phenomena, then the world may only be understood by one's experiences of the world" (Bassalo *et al.*, 2019, p. 224).

The narrative interview technique was chosen as the main instrument for data production because it allows us to understand the framings and meanings attributed by the teachers to their own experiences and their trajectory as teachers. This method is defined by the reconstruction of experiences and events having the participants' memories as a baseline. This allows us to analyze their individual and collective actions

from their own perspectives. As Weller and Zardo (2013, p. 133) claim, "[...] the act of remembering and the sequenced narration of lived experiences allows us to, spontaneously, access to the particular perspectives of the subjects".

Additionally, Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2002, p. 93) highlight that the narrative interview aims to "[...] rebuild social events from the perspective of the narrators as directly as possible". The dynamic between social phenomenology and the narrative interview made it possible to have a deep understanding of the experiences and the given meanings that arise of the pedagogical practices of these young feminist teachers, respecting the particularities of their trajectories and the complexity of the social cultural environments where they work.

This study adopts the Documentary Method as the procedure for the interpretation of data. This method aims to understand the meanings found in oral records via a deep analysis of the social reality lived by the participants. The information extracted from the young teachers' accounts reveal social constructions based on the cultural practices, rules and values corresponding to the contexts in which these experiences were developed.

According to Bohnsack (2020), scientifically, ordinary constructions are of the first order. For that reason, the social scientist must reconstruct the implicitly existing methods. Thus, the Documentary Method aims to reconstruct the meanings and the interpretations found in the subjects' actions, which follow behavior patterns established ordinarily in daily life.

The author also highlights that "[...] the reconstructive method aims to retrace the creative process" Bohnsack, 2020, p. 45). In other words, it is a reformulation of the analyzed expressions and narratives whereas the subjects' world views are formed by symbolic structures that are rooted in the context where they were developed, each ruled by their own dynamics. As such, it is the social scientist's task to reconstruct the interpretative route while starting from different levels of meaning. Within that process "[...] we may differentiate four levels or stages of reconstruction: formulating interpretation, reflecting interpretation, organization of discourse and typification" (Bohnsack, 2020, p. 45). This analytical pathway allows us understanding of the attributed meanings and significations involved in the narratives and the practices of the teachers.

In summary, the process of interpreting the narratives is started by the formulated interpretation, a stage where the researcher must do the initial reading and the first arrangement of the collected material. The second step involves the reflected interpretation; the moment when the information goes through a deeper reconstruction process, which, according to Weller (2005, p. 276), "[...] denotes an observation of the second order, in which the researcher carries out their interpretations with the possibility of resorting to knowledge of the researched environment". After that, there is a comparative analysis - the third step of the method which, as explained by Weller (2005, p. 278), "[...] has as its goal the reconstruction of equivalent aspects between different cases being studied (e.g., between two different interviews)".

As such, documentary analysis associated with the narrative interview technique is concerned not only with the linguistic aspect of the accounts, but especially with the invisible meanings found in the actions and the discourse of the subject. In other words, "[...] it must, above all else, reconstruct the implied, underlying meaning found in the account of the interviewee" (Weller; Otte, 2014, p. 328). From interpretation arose the Feminist Pedagogical Praxis orientation model, which reveals the way female teachers think and act on their daily lives.

It is important to stress that, according to this method - and unlike other methods - the result of the empiric data is not submitted to the previously established theory. The chosen method allows the meanings to be reconstructed from their own narrative, which avoids the risk of being subject to external categories during in the process of analysis. This way, it becomes possible to develop theoretical comprehensions that arise directly from the subjects' accounts, which are presented as atheoretical.

Furthermore, the Documentary Method values the participants' individual experiences. This recognition comes from the understanding that the meanings attributed to the situations blossom in the social, historical and cultural realm. As such, this analysis not only respects the particularities of the narratives, but also shows the context in which they develop.

With these initial indications, this text is organized into three connected parts that explore the link between feminism, education and pedagogical praxis, both from a theoretical point of view and from an empiric point of view. The first part of the text

presents the concepts that connect feminism and education. The second part discusses teaching practices that involve feminist perspectives and contribute to a pedagogical praxis committed to gender equality. Finally, the third part presents the interpretation of the narratives, reconstructing the meaning radiating from the accounts.

2 Feminism and education: paths to an emancipatory praxis

Reflecting about education in Brazil - especially the education developed in the Amazonian region on the Brazilian north - from the perspective of the connection between feminism and pedagogical practices allows us to outline a complex course of conflicts experienced by young female feminist teachers in the face of conservative views in education. It is important to stress that the conservative movement is recognized both as a model of thinking that directs one's actions, and as a product of a conservative alliance that directly influences educational policies and practices (Apple, 2003, 2022). Said influence affects the teaching praxis on a daily basis; young high school teachers, amazonian women, face the challenges imposed by educational structures that are marked by both discourses and practices of oppression.

When it comes to formal education, conservatism is expressed through oppressive practices and discourses which are propagated socially as mechanisms that sustain the patriarchal and sexist order. Despite the historical disputes in formal education institutions that show attempts to break apart from conservatism, it is still possible to identify the presence of these practices in such institutions. They reverberate into the narratives, trajectories and experiences of the teachers, limiting the possibility of social transformation in the school environment.

It is important to rekindle the dream, even if it seems utopic, that one day school classes all over the world may free themselves from the essentially conservative character that, for so long, has sustained its base in oppression and violence. That structure intensely and negatively affects the trajectories of all learners. To dream is to imagine an education system that moves away from the patriarchy; that changes enough for the teachers to employ teaching practices that agree with feminist ideals.

As Marcia Tiburi (2018, p. 14) says, "[...] feminism frees everyone from the coercions of patriarchy," allowing an emancipatory way of thinking where everyone

may freely express their choices in favor of a welcoming, fairer and better environment. A prospect of future called feminist Pedagogy, as a feminist pedagogy has as its goal to promote social changes, and has as a key point the development of gender awareness in order to deconstruct inequalities linked to patriarchal sexism (Silva; Mourad, 2022).

A possible upcoming horizon is outlined from feminist pedagogy - a plan for the future that is tasked with social change. This approach has at its core the development of critical consciousness as a tool to dismantle historically constructed gender inequalities that support sexist systems. Thus, by recognizing oppression structures existing in school life, it becomes possible to propose practices that break free from the perpetuation of these inequalities and allow for a fairer, more critical and emancipatory education. Silva and Mourad (2022) argue that feminist pedagogy has been occupying an important place by generating questions towards the standardized world in formal and informal contexts.

By combining feminist principles with progressive pedagogical approaches, this method aims to turn the school environment into a place for empowerment, critical thought and respect for diversity. To think of an education guided by a feminist perspective is to rebuild a social environment that is fairer to all individuals within it, and where everyone may fully exercise their freedom of choice. Thus, "[...] its main goal is to jump-start a process of personal liberation through the development of critical awareness, and have that as the essential first step that will result in collective and transformative actions" (Sardenberg, 2011, p. 14).

According to Sardenberg (2016), at the core of feminist pedagogy is the goal of dismantling ideologies informed by gender roles which are based on the biological determinism that restricts women to being domestic. Through the development of critical thinking, we expect individuals to be capable of observing their own realities and, thus, fight to change subordination practices. For that reason, it is urgent for education to recognize the structural inequalities of various levels of precariousness that permeate society and that deeply and negatively affect the formative experiences of girls, women and other gender identities.

According to Sardenberg (2011, p. 25) feminist pedagogy is the one devoted to "[...] the teaching/learning interaction based on feminist values and principles, with

the objective of demolishing sexism, discrimination sexual exploitation and oppression; summarily, the gendered order". Feminist pedagogy highlights the importance of establishing meaningful connections between teachers and students, with the objective of promoting an environment built on mutual respect, cooperation and the valuing of both groups' lived experiences. This demands pedagogical practices which prioritize dialog, encourage the shared construction of knowledge and foster sensible listening, as opposed to traditional models based on authority and hierarchy.

When we reflect about the introduction of feminist pedagogy to school environments we contribute not only to the development of critical and conscious individuals, but also to the projection of a future engaged with the construction of a society that is more equal, more inclusive and, consequently, fairer, for the future generations. By facing gender roles supported by patriarchal structures - with emancipation for all people as a principle - feminist pedagogy works as a powerful tool in the search for social change and in the construction of a world based in equity, empowerment and mutual respect.

3 From teaching to feminist praxis: thoughts on transformative pedagogical action

Taking as a starting point the theoretical framework and the questions that arise from the dynamics of educational environments, it is clear that, in daily school life, there are multiple interpretations that guide the processes and trajectories of the acts developed inside education institutions. As such, it becomes essential to recognize and distinguish the different forms and conceptions by which the educational, pedagogical and teaching practices manifest themselves in the classroom considering that, although they are linked, each practice possesses their own focus and their own purpose that contribute in particular ways to the development and betterment of the teaching environment, especially when said practices carry feminist perspectives and a pedagogical praxis that is committed to gender equality.

According to Freire (1996, p. 67), educational practices are committed to the transformation of reality, and are directly linked to "[...] the education of critical thinking individuals". He carries the assumption that it is possible to modify the environment in which one finds oneself. On the other hand, pedagogical practice, according to Veiga (1989, p. 16), is conceived "[...] as a social practice guided by goals, purpose and

knowledge, and finds itself within the context of social practice". In the same vein, it is the teachers' responsibility to come up with strategies that allow for the goals to be met. This means teaching practices are seen as the role of the teacher in the execution of the pedagogical methodologies.

Gauthier *et al.* (2006) punctuate that this practice is linked to the theoretical domain, allowing the teacher to think about their daily actions, their guidance and their ethical conduct within the school environment. This perspective gives teaching practices a more individual and specific character, with its focus being daily interactions in the classroom and the plans that guide knowledge construction. Incorporating feminist principles might contribute to expanding the ways to comprehend the roles of the women who work as teachers in the Amazon.

According to Franco (2012), education is established as intent; it is consolidated as a cultural construction, and results in different kinds of knowledge. As such, education contributes to the development of people's identities along with their multiple subjectivities, with their lived experiences as a starting point. Each individual results from their personal trajectories and the collective processes in which they are involved. Approaching feminism might favor the appearance of identities that are sensible to the criticism of hierarchies and of sexist violence.

For that reason, we understand education according to Libâneo's (2001, p. 7) definition: "[...] a human practice, a social practice that changes human beings in their physical, mental, spiritual, cultural states; that shapes our individual and shared human existence". The author also argues that education practices are invaluable to the dynamics of society, and that they compose the structural base as well as the modes of organization of society in different contexts. Thus, "There is no society without education practices" (Libâneo, 2001, p. 6), that is, there is no collective life without educational processes that shape the people, be it in school or non-school environments.

According to the author, education practices occupy a fundamental role by offering individuals knowledge and experiences that allow them to act within the social environment and to transform it in accordance to the economic, social and political needs of the collective. To that we add aligning itself to an ethical and political commitment to transform oppressive structures based on gender.

It is understood that education practices are present through the entire path of knowledge construction; knowledge found both in the individual experiences and the collective ones, and in the different education environments, should they be with family, at school, or along the community. The large diversity of cultural experiences, habits, beliefs and values acquired through life directly influences the social actions of the individuals, and guides them in their search for the transformation of reality. Thus, Libâneo (2013) stresses that education practices are part of social interaction processes and of different modes of social organization.

To understand the concept of pedagogical practice, it is necessary to recognize that, although they manifest in many ways, they are also linked since:

[...] pedagogy is the field that analyzes the purposes of education in a given society, as well as the adequate means to educate the individuals in order to prepare them for the demands of social life. Since educative practices mean the process of assimilating knowledge and experiences gathered by humanity's social practice, it is pedagogy's job to guarantee this process with social and political objectives, establishing the methodological and organizational conditions that make it impossible (Libâneo, 2013, p. 23-24).

Educational practices of feminist principles expand the objectives proposed by the author towards criticizing the patriarchy and the gender inequalities found in school life. To supplement this perspective, Franco (2012) says that to study pedagogy means to think, to reorganize, to look for adequacies and to keep constant watch over the intent collectively constructed and the concrete circumstances of reality.

Thus, pedagogical practices articulate theory and practice considering the historical, social, economical, cultural and political processes that involve it. Franco (2012, p. 154) argues that on "[...] the concept of pedagogical practices, I consider them practices that organize themselves intentionally to attend to specific educational expectations that are requested by a given social community". As such, pedagogical practices must "[...] consider educating the students to have their autonomy, to be capable of intervene in reality and to live ethical and societal values" (Libâneo, 2001, p. 47). The teacher, therefore, must take on the role of mediator and enabler of learning, encouraging students to think critically about their reality.

Another fundamental aspect of pedagogical practices is the teacher's competence to deal with the differences between students, and to adjust their teaching so that every one may appreciate the learning process. As Nóvoa (1992, p. 25) argues,

"[...] to (re)encounter places of interaction between the personal and professional dimensions, allowing teachers to appropriate their own learning processes and to give them meaning in the picture of their life story". This shows that a teacher's education must be continuous, and must consider the pedagogical and social requirements of each environment since "[...] these practices are developed to reorganize certain expectations of a social group" (Franco, 2012, p. 158). When it comes to the Amazon region, where both the violence against and the exploitation of women is frequent and manifold, practices that value social differences are dear to the construction of gender equality, especially as it is argued for here, having both women and girls in mind.

We agree with the idea that pedagogical practices are defined as processes developed within school culture, and that they bleed into social culture and go through continuous change. These practices involve collective dynamics that might include subscription, negotiation or imposition, and express interests that may be either explicit or veiled. Furthermore, they reveal the quality of educational processes within a society by interfering with spontaneous actions. At the same time, they condition and construct the teachers' modes of action (Franco, 2012).

Thus, pedagogical practices are not limited to a fixed collection of method and teaching techniques; it consists of a flexible process, able to adapt to the demands of the classroom and to the individual and collective needs of the students. It requires the teacher to adopt a thoughtful stance committed to the integral development of the students and, above all else, to the encouragement of empathy and gender equality. For pedagogical practices to be effective, it is essential for teachers to be prepared to identify the needs of the students and to develop or re-develop practices that wholly encompass them so as to favor the education of critical, socially active citizens.

Being seen here as a core activity to the work of teaching, teaching practices go further than simply transmitting information. They involve a structured collection of intentional pedagogical actions. As told by Franco (2012, p. 160), "[...] teaching practices are pedagogical practices when they fit into the intentionality expected of their actions", highlighting that these practices require collective commitment and social accountability since teachers who are aware of their role believe their work "[...] means something to their students lives" (Franco, 2012, p. 160). Thus, teaching emerges as an activity that articulates planning, execution, analysis and continuous

re-evaluation of pedagogical practices. It can, from a feminist perspective, effectively contribute to the construction of solidarity and of social justice.

This understanding of teaching practices necessarily requires that we recognize the education of the teachers as a complex and ongoing process. Garcia (1999) defines education as a process of personal structurization that involves "internal maturing" and the possibility of learning and experiencing. In that vein, their initial and continuous learning composes formative itineraries that integrate knowledge produced in different environments – scholar, social and collegiate, that contribute to the construction of a professional profile.

Tardif (2014, p. 36) deepens the discussion by arguing that the teachers' knowledge form "[...] a roughly coherent amalgamate" composed by disciplinary, curricular, experiential and formal knowledge. These learnings, however, are not aggregated mechanically; they articulate themselves empirically and change as the teacher acts and thinks about their action. For that reason, Bentes and Silva (2014, p. 152) reiterate that all knowledge is simultaneously "[...] theoretical-practical and/or practical-theoretical" since theory guides action, and practice feeds theory, a dynamic that is also expressed in the construction of sensible teaching actions towards women and girls' issues and gender inequalities.

It is with that understanding that Franco (2012) highlights the need for continuous reflection, through which the teachers should critically analyze their own methods, goals and intentions, and reorganize them to respond to real learning demands. This reflexive posture is close to the concept of praxis, understood in the work of Freire and Gramsci as the dialectic unity between action and reflection, capable of transforming reality.

Freire (1999) reasons that praxis is built within the subjects' critically reflected actions towards the world, and it is always guided towards its transformation. Gramsci (1999, p. 10), on the other hand, highlights that "[...] words as human expression not only represent things, but also transform them", showing that praxis is a core element to the development of critical awareness and to the construction of paths to overcome oppression, including gender oppression.

Praxis, to Freire (1999, p. 8), "[...] is born and tuned dialectic within" the human constitution, through the experiences, contradictions and struggles of the individuals.

To Gramsci (1999), the philosophy of praxis articulates the common sense of the great masses about intellectual knowledge. He argues that intellectual work must be in constant contact with "the simple" (Gramsci, 1999, p. 100). The author proposes to elevate popular knowledge to more elaborate levels, aiming to "[...] forge an intellectual-moral block [...] [that allows the] intellectual development of the masses" (Gramsci, 1999, p. 103). As such, according to them both, praxis is a political and pedagogical instrument for emancipation. Committed to gender equality and our positioning, it offers a basis for praxis.

The debate outlined so far allows us to see feminist pedagogy as an educational practice that positions itself critically against the patriarchy and its multiple forms of oppression. Sardenberg (2011, p. 19) defines it as a collection of practices that aim to "[...] make individuals, both men and women, aware of the existing patriarchal order", offering them tools to overcome it and to build equal relationships. This pedagogy aims to dismantle sexist norms which are normalized in daily school life, and to promote emancipatory practices. Sardenberg (2011, p. 25) argues that feminist pedagogies have as their goal to end "[...] sexism, discrimination, exploitation and sexual oppression". This goes to show its transformative character and its core place in the fight to overcome gender inequalities.

Understanding gender as a social construct is fundamental for this educational praxis. By analyzing the narratives of young women who engage in feminist movements in the city of Belém, Bassalo, Dantas and Pantoja (2024) explain that, by adopting feminist and embracing its political flags, one's understanding of how gender inequalities are socially produced is expanded, and their perception of the space they occupy in society becomes critical. hooks (2022, p. 25) stresses that feminist awareness requires learning about the patriarchy "[...] as a domination system, how it is institutionalized and how it is disseminated". Thus, feminist pedagogy has the potential to construct empowering processes and critical awareness capable of transforming gender dynamics within the school and social environment, as well as promoting gender equality as a cornerstone principle of education.

Thus, Arango (2023) stresses that feminist pedagogy must surpass the limits of academia. It must position itself as a criticism to purely theoretical feminism and propose practices that reach school, familial and community environments. As the

author argues, "[...] feminist pedagogy occupies something of an 'in-between' to different social spheres, making it a path to reorganize thought and produce change" (Arango, 2023, p. 103).

In this context of advancements and disputes, the Brazilian Law of nº 14.986/2024 represents an important step by adding to the normative standard mandatory teachings based on female experience and perspectives for middle school and high school. The law also introduces the Women History Week [Semana de Valorização de Mulheres que Fizeram História], which promotes recognition of female contributions in fields such as science, politics, art and culture (Brazil, 2024). This measure fuels the encouragement of gender equality in school and reaffirms the role of women in social and educational history in Brazil.

Thus, feminist pedagogical praxis is consolidated as a theoretical-practical proposal that engages action, critical thinking and commitment to emancipation. Based on Freire, Gramsci and feminist studies, it aims to transform patriarchal structures found in schools and to allow girls and women to access real equality. At the same time, it encourages boys and men to move away from privileged positions towards fairer and more human practices. As political and pedagogical horizon, this praxis announces the possibility of a transformative education capable of breaking from historical inequalities and of reconstructing social relationships that aim for equity and gender equality.

4 The construction of feminist pedagogical praxis in daily teaching

Feminist practices in education are not restricted to talking about women or about their rights; it manifests as a way of organizing the space, as the relationships with learners and peers and as the choice of curriculum and methods that promote autonomy, empathy and social justice. As such, the act of reflecting about teaching and feminist practices means recognizing that teaching is, above all else, acting towards a more equal society, where knowledge is developed critically, inclusively and in transformative ways. In the process of interpreting the narratives, it accentuates the "reflection" about the understanding of how much teaching practices work as feminist practices. The young teacher referred to as Df² says that:

² Interview conceded in the 25th of August of 2024 in the city of Belém, Brazil.

teaching practices, they're feminist practices when we:: bring:: actions to the classroom (.) That:: make them [students] reflect (.) Uh:: (4) let me think (1) That make them reflect on the structure of our society; right(.) So (.) I think that:: our teaching practices (.) they're only feminist practices when we raise (.) Uh:: questions towards the=the structure of our society (.) when it comes to (.) for example (.) the spaces occupied by men and the places that we (.) women (.) still don't occupy, or not much (.) (Teacher Df)

Critical reflection takes on a central position in this excerpt of the narrative since teaching practices are presented as a feminist practice when the teacher promotes thoughtful action in the classroom. Through the classes, students may be capable of reflecting about societal structures, questioning social arrangements when it comes to, for example, spaces occupied by men compared to spaces still not reachable by women, or where their occupation is minor.

Teacher Df accounts clearly and objectively that teaching practices are considered feminist practices when they allow students to think critically. She highlights and raises her tone when she says that she can make her students raise questions about the structure of society, like the spaces occupied by men and by women. At that moment, the teacher expresses satisfaction, highlighting that it is then, when there is reflection about gender equality, that a feminist teaching practice has occurred. Thus, it is understood that feminist teaching practices promote reflection and questioning of oppressive practices and violence to which the most varied individuals are subjected.

In the context of feminism and the classroom environment, accounts that approach the existence of sexist situations in the school or schools where they work are put on the spotlight, as well as the way these situations are resolved. In the process of interpreting, three stances were outlined towards this subject: "omission", "naturalization" and "awareness". Let us look at this excerpt from teacher Af³'s narrative:

I've worked at a school where:: I worked the same job as a male teacher (.) in the same field:: same everything and; he was paid more than me (1) And I saw teachers who were not as qualified as me and who were paid more(.), So I saw situations where:: teachers need- uh:: I- literally asked me to leave the room because they didn't feel comfortable talking about what they wanted with a woman present (.) I (.) saw teachers who hit the:: table and spoke louder to me in order to silence me (.); because I didn't agree with what they were saying (.) and he created like a quarrel to make the other teachers see how I was so bad (.) because I disagreed with him (.) but you see, innumerable=innumerable sexist behaviours from the male students towards the female students (.) uh:: from the male teachers towards the female students (2) Unfortunately that is treated with omission (.) It's muffled (.) it's not what

³ Interview conceded in the 15th of June of 2024, 2020, in the city of Belém, Brazil.

you're thinking (.) it's not (.) it wasn't the way you said it was These situations they still happen very frequently (.) And we still need to deal with not just the teachers (.) not just the staff but also:: the school council and the principal (.) so that effective measures are taken when situations of=of misogyny (.) of harassment (.) of- many situations happen in school (teacher Af)

This excerpt shows omission in the face of sexism in the school environment, revealed through the account of a female teacher who experienced income disparities, excluding practices and suffered sexist violence. The teacher recalls moments of being silenced by male peers and being put at the receiving end of aggressive and defamatory behavior after expressing her disagreement. Furthermore, she observes sexist behavior from male teachers and students towards female students, marked by silencing and invalidation of female speech.

When she accounts her experience, the teacher expresses anxiety and frustration in the face of institutional omission towards this kind of violence, and points out the urgent need to educate the whole school community and to develop effective means of resistance. This account shows the persistence of an oppressing structure that makes women invisible and submissive, and that, at times, blames women in school environments.

Another stance, "naturalization", is outlined and presented in the accounts of teacher Bf⁴. See here:

The:: sexist situations uh present in=in the schools where I worked and that, I work they:: uh:: happen ordinarily in daily life (.) And they're treated like it's natural (.) like it's normal, right (.) :: people who think differently and critically and know that:: it's an Oppressive (1) relationship (.), Even if in the subtext no one notices (.) people who don't have this=this way of thinking this point of view it's:: very:: () right(.) And:: treated by teachers (.) by learners (.) by technical staff (.) like something natural (.) And:: and then it's reinforced the situations. They are sorry (.) They are reinforced. As:: OK (.) accepted practices (Teacher Bf)

In this part of her account, teacher Bf states that sexist situations in school are part of daily life and are treated as something natural. She says that only the people without a patriarchal point of view know that it is a relationship based on gender oppression even if others do not perceive it, since it usually manifests in between the lines. She says among people without feminist points of view, sexism in schools is

⁴ Interview conceded in the 10th of June of 2024 in the city of Belém, Brazil.

treated as something natural; it is reinforced as ordinary, common practices that are, thus, accepted.

She highlights clearly, but with dissatisfaction expressed by prolonging the vowels, that school is a place where sexism is alive and being naturalized. She argues that only people with a more critical positioning can perceive the oppressive relationships and situations. Furthermore, the teacher's indignation is noticeable when she narrates that the teachers themselves, along with other agents, both male and female, act indifferently towards sexist practices and that, at times, are themselves responsible for propagating it in the classroom.

Still within the context of the classroom, the interviewed teachers account their understanding of how feminism contributes to the education of both female and male students. From their narratives, three stances arise: "awareness", "dismantling" and "self-esteem". The first, "awareness", is seen in the narrative brought by teacher Af. She presents an understanding of feminism as a developer of the critical conscience and awareness in individuals. She highlights⁵:

If we're talking about female students (.) it will teach them basically to survive (.) Because:: it shows her she can say no (.) it shows that she can report things (.) it shows that she has rights (.) Many times we have high school students who don't know they have rights (.) because they go from their father's authority to the authority of their husband (.) their boyfriend (.) their fiancé (.) So (.) it's so important (.) because it teaches these girls that they can be more than what they; believed (.) Sometimes these girls are raised to understand (1) they can only go so far (.) And so feminism it comes to show them that this place it's just (.) the first step (.) that they have a who::le way (.) a staircase to climb (.) And they can (.) Feminism shows these girls that:: their destiny is on their hands (.) They can do much more than what they were taught they could; (.) And so she-, and so we wil have (.) on the other hand (.) a lot more courage too to report (.) to escape violences (.) and to react And for the boys (.) right (.) for the male students (.) it shows them (.) it teaches them things that often are not taught at home (.) like respect (.) li::ke::: uh::: understanding women's rights (.) understanding; that they're not the center of the universe (.) understand that there are some things that they can't do and they need to undestand that early on (.), and it can (.) I pray (.) stop uh violent men (.); men who would commit felonies (.) men who::: sometimes witness some violence and don't talk (Teacher Af)

Teacher Af argues that feminism teaches female students, primarily, to survive. It teaches about the right to say no, to report and to recognize their own rights. She observes that many High School students are not informed about their rights, since

⁵ Interview conceded in the 15th of June of 2024 in the city of Belém, Brazil.

they have been restricted being passed from their fathers to their husbands or boyfriends. Teacher Af emphasizes the importance of feminism because it shows these girls that they are capable of much more than what they have imagined. Limits are usually imposed to women since childhood; however, according to her, feminism reveals these limits to be nothing more than steps on a long staircase that can be climbed - a staircase that belongs to them. Thus, the feminist perspective shows that women's destinies are on their own hands, and that they may reach much further than what is taught to them. It offers them courage to report and denounce oppression, to react in the face of violence and to confront unfair situations.

She also highlights the value of feminism to boys, as it helps in teaching them about respect, in making them understand women's rights, and in making them realize they are not the center of the universe, so to speak. She argues that this must be taught early, since it may avoid the development of violent men, or men who are conniving with violence.

As such, feminism presents itself as an act of resistance in the face of the social and historical conditions that perpetuate violence against women. The narrative by teacher Af shows that her lived experiences and her feminist consciousness are part of a formative process that transformed her own experiences. Today, as a teacher, she recognizes the importance of including feminism in school environments through feminist pedagogy that emerges from concrete daily experiences.

On the same vein, and highlighting the "dismantling" aspect, teacher Bf⁶ says:

Yeah:: feminism (.) it's for everyone (.) so for men as well as women (.) and:: when I:: have this feminist education it contributes to the literacy development of the individual so they propagate this ideal of equi- of equity in sometimes of equality right (.) So:: I understand feminism as (.) uh::: a tool for (1) The ascension of women and for making men understand that this fight is necessary, right (.) So:: uh::: I believe that feminism can contribute uh::: actually it is indispensable in the students' education (.) because they're learning and:: will have the adults will be (.) Uh::: the ones who will govern society so we need to start working that from school right (.) (Teacher Bf)

In this excerpt, Bf informs that feminism helps with educating learners by dismantling sexism, promoting gender equality and attributing value to female references. In her understanding, feminism is for everyone; as such, when we have feminist teaching, it contributes to the education of individuals who are capable of

⁶ Interview conceded in the 10th of June of 2024 in the city of Belém, Brazil.

propagating equity ideals within gender dynamics. For that reason, she sees feminism as a tool of ascension for women; a tool that makes men understand the need to fight in favor of women's achievements.

She expresses easily and with conviction that feminism is a movement that must be understood and lived by all, both men and women. In her understanding, when there is truly feminist education in the school environment, it does not stay limited to the school walls, but rather it is noticeable that it projects itself into other living environments and on people's identities. She highlights that feminism is like a tool that allows for change, especially when it comes to equality in gender dynamics.

As such, Teacher Bf expresses her feeling of hope, as she thinks that feminism allows the ascension of women while also inviting men to take a stand and to comprehend the importance of this fight and of taking responsibility for the construction of a fairer social environment to all people. This shows that feminism is not just a social movement, but a project of universal social transformation.

Another highlighted element is "self-esteem", which is found in Teacher Cf⁷'s narrative. Thus:

so when we show them some things. It's like if they're opening their eyes (.) when we mention:: uh:: I don't know some female reference; something like that, uh:: or something they just don't know about (.) they get kind of star-eyed (.) and I realize it affects especially:: their self-esteem (.) especially the girls like (.) Seeing themselves like:: (.) for example like I mentioned right (.) before (.) seeing themselves in those scientists in those mathematicians is good for them, for them on the sense of the self-esteem you know (.) and I think it contributes as a whole not just for the girls but also for the boys (.) uh:: to ask these=these questions related to:: uh:: to what ends up main- having this propagation of:: of:: (1) stereotypes:: of=of of inequality as a whole; of violences (.) (Teacher Cf)

According to this teacher, the students' self-esteem increases when they see themselves represented in female scientists and mathematicians. She highlights that, by presenting new knowledge to the learners, the feeling of opening their eyes to a novelty emerges. When it comes to feminist references or previously unknown things, they seem starstruck. She thinks that directly affects their self-esteem, especially for the girls as they see themselves in the scientists/mathematicians. This contributes to

⁷ Interview conceded in the 17th of August of 2024 in the city of Belém, Brazil.

the process of questioning social issues that promote stereotypes, inequalities and violence.

The teacher carries in her narrative a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction as she sees the power of feminism as an educational tool. To her, as she brings female references to her class - and it is important to note that her higher education was in the field of mathematics, a field socially perceived as male - with feminist themes or female historical figures who have historically been made invisible, the students react with surprise and even a level of amazement. She highlights that it is as if, by being in contact with this knowledge, their eyes were opened to a reality that, until that moment, had been distant.

The teacher accounts that, by bringing forth these references of female scientists and mathematicians, they disrupt the false idea that mathematics is a male science. This is very significant since, historically, women are erased from science history, and for that reason when these references arise, students can see themselves as possible scientists, teachers, researchers, and occupying the legitimacy of a space from which they were erased.

There is power in these considerations as they allow us to view feminist teaching practices as something that enables transformation even in fields historically thought of as male, such as mathematics, through the development of spaces for resistance, the recognition of women as part of great discoveries, and especially through social transformation. In regards to the role of feminism in the classroom, we highlight teachers Af's and Bf's narratives, which demonstrate from different angles how this relationship is seen. Bf⁸ says:

As a teacher (.) I use feminism as a tool uh:: to work many (.) dynamics (2) Especially gender dynamics (.) And feminism doesn't even talk about that right (.) About (.) uh:: Women being more important than men, that's not it (.) so when I work that (1) In:: uh:: my teaching practices (1) I (.) raise (.) and this dynamic (.) needs to be; dismantled (.) and dynamics uh:: (.), of:: when:: women need to be homely (.) women need:: uh:: to be supporting characters (.) instead of the main actress in her life (.) (Teacher Bf)

Bf accounts that, as a teacher, she uses feminism as a tool to discuss many relationships, as feminism does not debate whether men or women are the most important. As such, when added to teaching practices, it contributes to the dismantling

⁸ Interview conceded in the 10th of June of 2024 in the city of Belém, Brazil.

of sexist perceptions that see women as necessarily domestic or as a supporting character instead of as protagonists of their own lives.

Teacher Bf presents feminism as a reflexive action; as a natural and ongoing part of her teaching. She argues that feminism is present in the details of daily school life, such as in a conversation, in a movie, in an eventual guidance. That is exactly where we find the power of her practice: in the ordinary distribution of care, of listening and in the dismantling of oppressive patterns.

She shares that, when faced with sexist situations in the classroom, her reaction is almost second nature - born out of internal feminist awareness. Even if it is not stated out loud that "this is feminism", her actions, her vision, her questions are born out of a feminist view. Her account shows that, more than just a subject, feminism is a way of understanding being and existing in the world, and it informs her conduct and her professional acts.

Teacher Bf's narrative suggests that feminism is not a movement that puts women above men, but rather a movement in favor of equality, of the recognition of inequalities and that aims for change in gender dynamics. She understands that, at school, it is necessary to work along the students to dismantle incorrect views of feminism – especially those propagated by the patriarchy's common sense which associates feminism to female superiority or to the rejection of men.

In practical terms, her pedagogical work proposes that women should no longer be side characters, but instead protagonists of their own lives. By doing this sensibly, following daily school life, she allows her students to see the world through new lenses - minds prepared to recognize inequality and to wish for change.

Teacher Cf⁹ explains her understanding of the role of feminism in the classroom:

feminism belongs in the classroom when we start to change a little:: these traditional practices first (.) so:: understand there:: uh::: (1) that there is a space because there needs to be a space to discuss this right (.) uh::: because of everything that I mentioned right (.) because it will contribute to the girls' self-esteem to the relationship: (.) between the boys and the girls uh::: for the perception:: (.) uh::: of:: female references there in that space, (.) uh::: so we understand how the inequalities work and we end up perpetuating that as teachers as students (.) so it belongs::: because of all these meanings (.) uh all these matters actually (.) and I think it belongs::: (.) when we stand kind of

⁹ Interview conceded in the 17th of August of 2024 in the city of Belém, Brazil.

against:: this teaching traditionalism and stuff (.) and when we:: raise these matters to discussion (.) (Teacher Cf.)

Teacher Cf shows the need to discuss social inequalities and to change traditional practices. She starts her narrative by stressing that is found in the classroom when there are changes to traditional practices. This results from the understanding that, in that place, there is space to discuss the social environment. According to her, the existence of debate and of female representation will contribute to the self-esteem of girls and especially to the understanding of social inequalities.

She demonstrates that feminism has a place in the classroom when the teacher manages to break from traditional pedagogical practices - those that frequently silence the oppression and feed into inequality. In her view, classrooms must be places to intentionally discuss social violence and gender, race, sexuality and class inequalities. Students must be capable of causing social change based on classroom debates, especially in the context of existing social inequalities.

By saying this, Teacher Cf takes on a political stance that recognizes the role of schools in developing subjective matters and in reproducing or transforming social structures. She reiterates with conviction that, by allowing this space for critical thought, we directly contribute to girls' self-esteem.

On the same vein, it shows that the Teachers themselves are, oftentimes, propagators of inequalities inside the school. By recognizing that, she points to the urgent need for education on critical literacy for teachers, committed to social transformation, and keeping in mind that change does not come from the curriculum alone, but also from the teacher's posture before the students' reality.

She stresses in her narrative, with thoughtful pauses, that feminism has a place in school because of all it provokes, all the questions it raises, all the consciences it moves, and all the power structures it challenges. In her opinion, feminism affects the school environment because it breaks apart from a teaching that is only concerned with out of context learnings, and offers instead a teaching that is committed to the students' realities given that their experiences are extremely important to understand the many hardships faced by the students.

5 Final considerations

This article presents the results of our interpretation of the narrative interviews of four young female high school teachers. From these interpretations, we outline the understanding of Feminist Pedagogical Praxis. The results show that, when integrated to teaching, feminism acts as a tool for social change and resistance to the patriarchal structures found in the school environment.

The analyzed practices show that teaching, when guided by feminist principles, becomes a strategy for combating and dismantling gender inequalities. As such, it contributes directly to the development of the students' critical thinking, and to the construction of a truly emancipatory education. The collected narratives also show the institutional and cultural challenges faced by the teachers, who understand the school environment as a space for political dispute and the development of critical literacy. By challenging traditional models of teaching, these teachers bring forth the debate about equality, diversity and social justice. By turning feminism into an educational principle, they challenge patriarchal structures and reaffirm the importance of pedagogical practices that are committed to dismantling gender hierarchies.

The accounted experiences reveal that feminism in connection with teaching practices constitutes a force of change within the school environment. Not only does it fuel the construction of critical awareness, but it also repositions the role of the teachers as mediators of emancipation and autonomy processes. Feminist pedagogical praxis, which is outline throughout this research, is revealed to be an intentional act committed to equity, social justice and the overcoming of the gender inequalities found in education.

By recognizing feminism as a cornerstone of education, these teachers broaden pedagogical horizons; more than simply transmitting information, it involves ethical and political values that enable the education of conscious individuals who are capable of intervening in their reality and questioning oppressive structures. This perspective reaffirms school as a place for dialog, respect and empathy, where girls and boys are invited to think about their social roles, their privileges and the possibility of constructing more equal relationships.

Lastly, the accounted practices show that feminist praxis in education is a continuous process sustained by pedagogical choices that give visibility to the diverse

experiences of women, especially those marked by class, ethnicity and gender. In that vein, feminism surges not only as a theory, but as a daily practice of resistance and human education, as even in the face of "[...] so many regressions, the insubordination to the patriarchy persists, even if as subordination practices are remade" (Bassalo, 2024, p. 145).

The pathway drawn by these teachers show that feminism as an ethic and political horizon is essential to the consolidation of a democratic, inclusive and transformative education. Its presence in schools allows the construction of critical subjectivities and the reinforcement of a culture of respect, solidarity and social justice – indispensable elements for the emergence of a truly equal society.

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