

THE LENS OF INTERSECTIONALITY IN PROMOTING SCHOOL INCLUSION: AN ANALYSIS OF MULTIPLE IDENTITIES AND OPPRESSION STRUCTURES IN DAILY TEACHING PRACTICE

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Abstract

This article analyzes intersectionality as an analytical and pedagogical tool applied to the Brazilian school context, aiming to understand how multiple social markers — race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, and regionality — combine to produce singular experiences of exclusion that traditional educational models are unable to capture. Drawing on Kimberlé Crenshaw's seminal work and its development in the Brazilian context, particularly by Carla Akotirene, the article problematizes the insufficiency of pedagogical policies based on single identity axes, which tend to erase the specificities of doubly or multiply marginalized groups. Through qualitative bibliographic review and analysis of school trajectories documented in specialized national literature — highlighting the experiences of trans students and students with disabilities at the intersection of class and race markers — the article proposes concrete strategies for intersectional inclusion, articulating teaching practices, use of cultural media, and intersectoral policies. It concludes that incorporating intersectional sensitivity into teacher training and practice is a fundamental condition for Brazilian schools to fulfill their social function of fully welcoming all subjects.

Keywords: Intersectionality, Inclusive education, Racial literacy, Social markers, Teacher training.

INTRODUCTION

The Brazilian public school is, par excellence, a space of multiplicity. Within it converge subjects traversed by histories, bodies, affections, and belongings that exceed any simplifying framework. Each student who enters a classroom is not merely a student: they are simultaneously a racialized being, gendered, situated in a social class, with or without a disability, originating from a specific region of the country, and constituted by a sexuality that the surrounding world frequently judges, hierarchizes, and punishes. Ignoring this complexity is not a neutral posture — it is a political choice that perpetuates inequalities, as Akotirene (2019) reminds us when denouncing the effects of invisibilization upon bodies crossed by multiple oppressions.

Despite legal advances, inclusive education, as advocated by Brazilian legislation and international organizations, still coexists with a structural problem that is difficult to resolve: educational policies and hegemonic pedagogical practices tend to operate with isolated identity categories, treating issues of race, gender, disability, or social class separately. This analytical fragmentation, already criticized by Crenshaw (1989) in the field of U.S. anti-discrimination law, finds its pedagogical equivalent in educational policies that treat each axis of oppression as if it were self-contained. The result is policies that become blind to the experiences of students who inhabit multiple margins at the same time.

A poor Black girl living in a peripheral community does not experience racism in the same way as a middle-class Black man, nor does she experience sexism in the same way as a wealthy white woman. The overlap of these categories does not constitute a mere sum of disadvantages, but rather generates specific and qualitatively distinct forms of exclusion. If the problem has no name, it cannot be confronted — and what cannot be confronted tends to be reproduced. It is precisely this conceptual and political gap that Lélia Gonzalez (1984) had already denounced by showing how the silence surrounding the place of the Black woman in Brazilian society perpetuated structures of domination — and that intersectionality, as an analytical tool, comes to fill.

The present article aims to analyze how intersectionality, understood as an analytical sensitivity and political tool, can equip teachers and school administrators to promote truly transformative inclusion, capable of combating the fragmentation of pedagogical policies and recognizing the singularity of students' trajectories. To this end, the theoretical grounding of the concept is articulated with its practical application in everyday school life, culminating in the proposal of concrete pedagogical strategies. Methodologically, the study is based on a systematic qualitative literature review, combined with the analysis of school trajectories documented in specialized national literature.

The justification for this research rests on the social urgency of overcoming the “universal gaze” that erases the specificities of doubly disadvantaged groups. It is this urgency that leads us to examine, further on, the particular experiences of trans students and students with disabilities — groups in which

the collision of multiple oppressions becomes more evident. When the school is unaware of or ignores these experiences, it not only fails to include them: it actively contributes to their exclusion, reproducing what Patto (1999) called the institutional production of school failure. Intersectionality therefore offers the theoretical tools necessary to make these trajectories visible and susceptible to transformative pedagogical intervention.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF INTERSECTIONALITY

The concept of intersectionality was systematized by the North American jurist and activist Kimberlé Crenshaw in her seminal text “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex,” published in the University of Chicago Legal Forum in 1989. Crenshaw started from a concrete problem: U.S. anti-discrimination law, by treating race and gender as separate and mutually exclusive categories, became incapable of protecting Black women, whose experiences of discrimination did not fit the model of racism experienced by Black men or the sexism experienced by white women.

The author used the metaphor of a **traffic intersection** to illustrate her thesis: a Black woman who suffers discrimination is positioned at a crossroads where traffic flows simultaneously from multiple directions. If she is struck, the harm cannot be attributed to only one vehicle; it results from the confluence of forces operating at the same time. In the same way, the oppression she suffers cannot be adequately understood if analyzed exclusively through the prism of racism or sexism, but only through their simultaneous articulation. This critique of the “single-axis model,” so powerful in the U.S. legal context, finds fertile ground in Brazil — where, as Lélia Gonzalez (1984) and Carla Akotirene (2019) will show, social hierarchies are equally complex and deeply marked by the colonial legacy.

This epistemological rupture proposed by Crenshaw revealed how the traditional model operated on the basis of standard subjects: the subject of racism was the Black man; the subject of sexism was the white woman. Black women, because they did not fit either of these archetypes, were systematically

rendered invisible both in legal frameworks and in liberation movements. Intersectionality quickly migrated from the legal field to the social sciences and education, consolidating itself as an essential lens for reading reality in a multidimensional way. It does not propose a simple list of overlapping oppressions, but rather the understanding that social categories are constitutive of one another: race does not exist independently of class, gender does not operate outside a context of racialization — a perspective that Akotirene (2019) synthesizes by pointing out that colonialism is the structure organizing all these relations in contemporary Brazil.

SOCIAL MARKERS OF DIFFERENCE: CATEGORIES IN INTERSECTION

In the context of Brazilian education, the social markers of difference that most frequently intersect to produce processes of exclusion and school marginalization are: race/ethnicity, social class, gender and sexuality, disability, and territoriality. Munanga (1999) and Gonzalez (1984) analyze the racial dimension; Patto (1999) investigates the institutional production of class-based exclusion; Louro (1997) articulates gender, sexuality, and pedagogy; Mantoan (2003) problematizes the limits of including people with disabilities in regular schools; and Arroyo (2011) highlights the territorial dimensions of educational inequalities. However, the intersectional perspective allows us to understand that their combination is not merely cumulative, but constitutive of new political and subjective realities. These markers are not “things” or fixed attributes, but social relations that are produced and reproduced in the everyday life of educational institutions.

Race, in Brazil, operates in a particularly complex way because of a historical process of forced miscegenation and an ideology of racial democracy that, for decades, denied the existence of structural racism. As Lélia Gonzalez (1984) argues, this ideology acted as a powerful mechanism of silencing, making it difficult to name racism and, consequently, to confront it, by creating an illusory harmony that conceals the subordinate place reserved for Black bodies. Kabengele Munanga (1999) deepens this analysis by showing how the myth of racial democracy instrumentalized the idea of *mestiçagem* to

disguise the racial hierarchies constitutive of Brazilian society. Akotirene (2019), in turn, articulates these readings with the intersectional perspective, denouncing how the colonial legacy simultaneously structures oppressions of race, class, and gender — which makes this articulation indispensable in the analysis of everyday school life. In this scenario, Black and Indigenous students face objective barriers — less access to quality schools, underrepresentation in curricula, and symbolic violence in everyday interactions — which intensify dramatically when combined with poverty, belonging to peripheral territories, or dissident gender identities.

Gender and sexuality constitute another critical knot of school intersections. Joan W. Scott (1995) offers the essential theoretical foundation by arguing that gender is a category of analysis that articulates power relations and cannot be understood outside the social and historical contexts that produce it. It is upon this foundation that Guacira Lopes Louro (1997) builds her analysis of the school environment as one of the principal spaces for constructing and monitoring gender and sexuality norms, operating as a device that seeks to frame bodies within a heterosexual and binary matrix. This pedagogical structure often pathologizes, invisibilizes, or punishes identities that deviate from the norm. Consequently, LGBTQIA+ students — and, even more drastically, trans students — experience forms of violence that intensify when combined with markers of race and class. The contrast is pedagogically revealing: a white middle-class gay young man, although facing prejudice, possesses protection networks and symbolic capital that are denied to a Black travesty youth from the periphery, whose very presence in school is often read as an affront to institutional order.

Disability, in turn, is often treated in educational studies in isolation, as if the student's experience were homogeneous and independent of their racial, class, or gender position. Although the Brazilian Inclusion Law (LBI, 2015) establishes the right to inclusive education at all levels, Mantoan (2003) had already warned, even before this legislation, that inclusion is not achieved merely through the student's physical presence in regular school: it requires deep transformations in pedagogical conceptions, curricular structures, and teaching practices. This critique is deepened in the intersectional perspective:

the approach that is “blind” to intersections disregards the fact that disability is experienced in radically different ways by a young Black woman using a wheelchair in an under-equipped public school in the countryside of the Northeast and by a white young man with the same diagnosis in an elite private school in São Paulo. The intersection of these categories is therefore decisive for the real possibilities of access, permanence, and success in learning, revealing that inclusion without social equity is an incomplete project.

Territory and regionality emerge as particularly relevant markers in the Brazilian context, given the magnitude of interregional inequalities and the diversity of living conditions between countryside and city, between the urban center and the periphery. As Arroyo (2011) demonstrates, the curriculum and school organization are territories in dispute, permeated by tensions that reflect broader social hierarchies. Students from quilombola communities, Indigenous territories, rural settlements, or metropolitan peripheries carry territorial marks that, combined with other markers, configure specific educational experiences that are frequently rendered invisible by universalizing educational policies.

INTERSECTIONALITY IN THE BRAZILIAN CONTEXT: CONTRIBUTIONS AND SPECIFICITIES

Although the concept originated in the United States, its reception and re-elaboration in Brazil produced original theoretical contributions that are indispensable to understanding the phenomenon. Carla Akotirene (2019), in her work *Intersectionality*, recovers and updates the intellectual legacy of Lélia Gonzalez (1984), who as early as the 1980s was already articulating race, gender, and class in her forceful analysis of the “place of the Black person” and of the Black woman in Brazilian society. Akotirene highlights how Gonzalez, by proposing the concept of *Amefricanity*, offered an essential key for reading the experiences of the diaspora, anticipating the intersectional debate by denouncing how colonial structures operate simultaneously. Thus, intersectionality in Brazil, through the lens of these authors, is understood not only as an academic tool, but as a political instrument of resistance and of naming the violences that structure the everyday life of marginalized populations.

Akotirene (2019) argues that, to understand intersectionality in Brazil, it is essential to consider the slaveholding legacy as the founding structure of contemporary inequalities. Slavery is not merely a closed historical fact; it produced a social architecture that persists in class relations, racial hierarchies, the territorial organization of cities, and institutional dynamics — including school dynamics. To ignore this historical dimension is to treat the symptoms without recognizing the disease. In this perspective, Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2006) contributes by proposing that understanding inequalities in the Global South requires a rupture with Eurocentric epistemologies — a task that intersectionality of the Afro-diasporic matrix, as proposed by Akotirene (2019) and Gonzalez (1984), effectively performs by placing historically silenced experiences at the center of analysis.

Brazilian regional inequalities constitute another specificity that any intersectional analysis of the national educational system must incorporate. Brazil is a country of brutal geographic contrasts: indicators of schooling, school infrastructure, access to qualified teachers, and school violence vary dramatically between the states of the Southeast and the North and Northeast regions, between capitals and inland municipalities, between urban and rural areas. This territorial dimension, deepened by Arroyo (2011) in his analysis of the curriculum as territory in dispute, needs to be integrated into intersectional analysis so that it can produce faithful diagnoses of Brazilian educational reality.

Alê Lopes's (2019) contribution on the distinctions and connections between intersectionality, intersectorality, and transversality deepens the discussion initiated by Akotirene (2019): it is not enough for the school to recognize intersections at the theoretical level; it is imperative that health, housing, transport, social assistance, and education policies operate in an articulated manner to respond to the full range of subjects' needs. Real inclusion is therefore necessarily intersectoral. This perspective will be taken up later, when we discuss pedagogical and management strategies that connect the school with other facilities in the territory, ensuring that support for the student is not fragmented, but systemic.

THE SCHOOL AS A FIELD OF INTERSECTIONS AND VIOLENCES

THE “COLLISION” OF STRUCTURES IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

The school environment is not an island isolated from broader social structures. It reproduces them, refracts them, and, in many cases, intensifies them. If, as we saw with Crenshaw (1989), oppressions collide upon the bodies of Black women at a crossroads, in everyday school life this “collision” manifests continuously, shaping trajectories unequally. Institutional racism, structural machismo, LGBTphobia, and ableism do not remain outside when students and teachers pass through the gates; they penetrate the institution, infiltrated into curricular practices, hallway interactions, disciplinary norms, and, more insidiously, into the differentiated expectations that teachers construct regarding the potential of each group of students — what Tomaz Tadeu da Silva (1999) would call pedagogies of identity, that is, the ways in which the curriculum produces and hierarchizes subjects.

Brazilian educational research has exhaustively documented how these structures operate in an articulated way in everyday school life. As Maria Helena Souza Patto (1999) demonstrated in her analysis of the production of school failure, exclusion mechanisms are subtle and operate through differentiated expectations that reproduce class and race hierarchies: Black and poor students are disproportionately labeled or referred to disciplinary processes for behaviors that, in white students, would be tolerated. With regard to gender, the contributions of Guacira Lopes Louro (1997), grounded in Scott’s (1995) theoretical perspective on gender as a relation of power, reveal how the school acts in the fabrication of bodies and sexualities: girls are systematically discouraged from pursuing careers in the exact sciences, while boys are pressured to suppress expressions of fragility. This scenario of exclusion is completed by the situation of students with disabilities who — as Mantoan (2003) already warned — often occupy the school’s physical space without there being any real insertion into pedagogical practices, evidencing a purely formal inclusion.

The problem becomes more complex when these structures collide upon the same body. A Black student with visual impairment does not face only racism added to ableism: she faces a specific form of

exclusion that emerges from the intersection of these two systems, and which would not be adequately addressed by policies focused exclusively on race or exclusively on disability. Inclusion policies that do not operate with this level of analytical complexity are structurally destined to produce partial and exclusionary forms of inclusion.

INVISIBLE CASE STUDIES: TRAJECTORIES AT THE MARGIN OF MARGINS

Trans students and transvestites: The school as a hostile space

The school experience of trans students and transvestites represents one of the most acute cases of intersectional exclusion in contemporary Brazil. These students face barriers that operate on multiple levels simultaneously: the non-recognition of their social name by teachers and by school bureaucracy, the prohibition of or embarrassment in using bathrooms corresponding to their gender identity, harassment and violence by classmates often tolerated or rendered invisible by school management, and the almost total absence of representation of their existences in curricular content.

These obstacles, already enormous for any trans student, take on even more severe dimensions when combined with other markers of vulnerability. A poor Black transvestite in a public school on the periphery faces conditions radically different from those of a white middle-class trans woman in a private school. The intersection between dissident gender identity, Blackness, and poverty produces a field of hostilities that frequently makes staying in school impossible — and school dropout, an almost inevitable consequence.

National data corroborate this analysis. The National Survey on the Educational Environment in Brazil, conducted by ABGLT (2016), indicates that school dropout among LGBT+ students is significantly higher than the national average, with even more serious rates among trans students — a figure strongly correlated with experiences of violence in the school environment. This dropout is not an individual choice: it is the result of a school structure that, by failing to guarantee basic conditions of dignity, symbolically expels these subjects even before formalizing their departure.

Felipe Daniel Ezebio (2020), in his work on intersectionality in classrooms, draws attention to the need for teachers to understand that the violence suffered by trans students is not an isolated or individual phenomenon, but an expression of broader social structures that the school has the power — and the obligation — to contest. This argument echoes and deepens Louro's (1997) analysis, according to which the school is not a neutral space, but a device for the fabrication of gender norms — and, therefore, a space that can either reproduce or contest transphobic violence. Teacher silence in the face of these violences is not neutral: it is a form of structural complicity with exclusion.

The intersection between disability and other markers: The invisibility of data

One of the most persistent problems in the agenda of intersectional inclusion is the scarcity of disaggregated data that would allow us to understand how disability articulates with other social markers in producing specific educational trajectories. Brazilian educational censuses, although progressively advancing in the collection of data on race and disability, rarely cross-reference this information systematically, making it difficult to measure the magnitude of the exclusions operating at the intersections.

What the available literature allows us to affirm is that disability is not a homogeneous experience. The sexuality of people with disabilities is often infantilized or denied — a phenomenon that the specialized literature calls “desexualization” and that operates with varying intensity according to the type of disability, gender, and race of the subject. Black women with physical or intellectual disabilities are among the people most vulnerable to sexual violence in Brazil, and this vulnerability is, to a great extent, the product of an intersection of invisibilities: the ableism that denies sexuality, the racism that leaves Black bodies unprotected, and the machismo that objectifies them.

Within the school sphere, students with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities frequently experience forms of exclusion that go far beyond the inadequacy of physical structures. Teachers' low academic expectations regarding these students, when combined with markers of race and class, can

produce trajectories of under-schooling that become self-fulfilling: by expecting little from a Black student with an intellectual disability, the school system frequently obtains exactly what it expected — a dynamic that Patto (1999) identified as constitutive of the very mechanism producing school failure in Brazil.

THE TEACHER AS AN ACTIVE WITNESS: THE TEACHING ROLE IN RECOGNIZING INVISIBLE VIOLENCES

In everyday school life, the teacher occupies a unique position: they are the adult who spends the most time with students, who observes their interactions, who notices changes in their behavior, and who has privileged access to their difficulties. This position confers upon teachers a responsibility that transcends the teaching of curricular content: the responsibility to be an active witness to the violences that do not make headlines, the exclusions that happen in silence, the sufferings that remain unnamed because the school does not possess the conceptual categories necessary to name them. As Crenshaw (1989) and Akotirene (2019) remind us, naming oppressions is the first step toward making them visible and, therefore, contestable.

Being an active witness does not mean merely observing passively, but intervening. It means recognizing, when a student begins systematically missing classes, that this behavior may be the symptom of violence suffered in the school environment — something Patto (1999) already identified as an expression of the subtle ways in which the school institution produces and naturalizes exclusion. It means perceiving, when a poor Black female student begins to isolate herself, that this isolation may be a response to forms of discrimination operating simultaneously along multiple axes. Above all, it means having the conceptual tools to name these experiences and the pedagogical tools to confront them.

Intersectionality offers the teacher exactly this conceptual repertoire. By understanding that their students are subjects traversed by multiple social markers — as Crenshaw (1989), Akotirene (2019), and Louro (1997) demonstrate from complementary perspectives — teachers acquire the capacity to

formulate more precise diagnoses of the exclusion situations they observe and to propose more effective interventions. It is not a matter of teachers becoming specialists in sociology or law, but of developing an analytical sensitivity that allows them to see what single and isolated categories render invisible.

PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES FOR INTERSECTIONAL INCLUSION

ACTIVE METHODOLOGIES AND THE USE OF CULTURAL MEDIA

One of the most effective strategies for introducing the debate on intersectionality into the classroom without resorting to academic jargon is the use of cultural productions that materialize, in an accessible and emotionally resonant way, the experiences of subjects who inhabit multiple margins. Music, cinema, literature, and social media constitute privileged channels for bringing theoretical debate closer to the reality lived by students.

In the field of contemporary Brazilian music, artists such as Liniker, a Black trans woman who sings about love, the body, and resistance, and Emicida, a Black rapper whose work articulates race, class, and hope, offer rich material for discussions that simultaneously address multiple identity markers. The use of these productions in the classroom is not a mere motivational resource: it is an epistemological choice that — as Tomaz Tadeu da Silva (1999) argues when discussing identity policies in the curriculum — recognizes that knowledge is always produced from a specific social position, and that silencing this position is also a way of exercising power. Recognizing students as cultural subjects capable of producing knowledge from their own experiences is, therefore, a pedagogical and political act.

Social media, often treated as threats to the educational process, can be re-signified as spaces for the production and circulation of intersectional narratives. Profiles of Black activists with disabilities, collectives of trans mothers, and quilombola communities documenting their struggles for quality education are sources of living knowledge that the school can integrate into the curriculum in a critical and systematic way. This integration, in addition to broadening students' analytical repertoire, communicates that the school recognizes the legitimacy of their existences and of their struggles.

Active methodologies — such as problem-based learning, structured discussion groups, and collaborative projects — are especially suitable for working with intersectionality because they allow students themselves to bring their experiences to the center of the pedagogical process. When a teacher proposes that the class discuss how different students experience access to public transportation in order to get to school, they are creating the conditions for markers of race, class, disability, and territory to emerge organically and on the basis of lived experience.

EVERYDAY WELCOMING PRACTICES: SMALL GESTURES, MAJOR IMPACTS

Intersectional inclusion is not achieved only through major curricular reforms or elaborate pedagogical projects. It is built day by day in everyday practices of welcoming that communicate to students that their full presence is recognized and valued. Among these practices, some deserve special emphasis because of their capacity to positively impact students who inhabit multiple vulnerabilities.

The use of the preferred name and pronoun — regardless of any bureaucratic formality or state regulation — is one of these practices. For a trans student or transvestite, being called by the name with which they identify is not a gesture of concession or tolerance; it is the elementary recognition of their humanity. This simple gesture, which requires neither financial resources nor higher authorization, has the potential to transform that student's relationship with the school and significantly reduce the risk of dropout, as the data from ABGLT (2016) indicate.

The review of teaching materials and of the examples used in the classroom constitutes another high-impact practice. When mathematics exercises always portray white, heterosexual, middle-class families, when literature texts rarely include Black characters in leading roles, or when history examples disregard the contributions of women and Indigenous peoples, the school is communicating, in a subliminal but powerful way, which bodies and histories have value and which do not — reproducing what Silva (1999) calls the curricular politics of identity.

The organization of physical spaces is also a relevant dimension of intersectional pedagogical practice. Schools that ensure accessible bathrooms for people with disabilities, that provide welcoming spaces for students in situations of vulnerability, that arrange furniture so as to allow different modes of social interaction, and that make materials available in accessible formats for students with sensory disabilities are concretely materializing their commitment to intersectional inclusion.

INTERSECTORAL POLICIES AND THE TRANSVERSALITY OF INCLUSION

Intersectional inclusion cannot be the school's sole responsibility. An educational policy that truly intends to guarantee the right to education for all students, regardless of their identity markers, must articulate itself with other sectoral policies in a systematic and planned manner.

The relationship between education and health is particularly critical. Students with mental health issues, trans students who require hormonal follow-up, students with disabilities who need therapeutic support, and students in situations of severe food insecurity cannot have their educational needs dissociated from their health needs. A school that ignores the health dimension of its students is inevitably producing exclusions that no pedagogical methodology, however sophisticated, will be able to compensate for.

School transportation is another critical node of intersectoral policies. In Brazil, difficulty in accessing school due to distance, precarious public transportation, or the inaccessibility of vehicles for people with disabilities constitutes one of the principal factors behind school dropout among students from rural areas, distant peripheries, and among students with motor disabilities. Ensuring that all students can get to school is a logistical precondition for any inclusion policy.

Transversality, as proposed by Alê Lopes (2019) in dialogue with Akotirene's (2019) intersectional perspective, implies that the commitment to inclusion must run through all subjects, all spaces, and all practices of the school — it cannot remain restricted to a specific subject or to a themed week on the school calendar. Education for diversity is not an additional content item to be fitted into an

already overloaded curriculum; it is a perspective that should reconfigure the school's entire pedagogical organization.

DISCUSSION: CHALLENGES OF MANAGEMENT AND TEACHING

DECONSTRUCTING STRUCTURAL PREJUDICE: CONTINUING EDUCATION AS AN IMPERATIVE

The implementation of an intersectional perspective in school first runs up against the prejudices of education professionals themselves. This is not, here, a moral critique of teachers and administrators as individuals: it is a matter of recognizing that all subjects are formed by and within social structures that naturalize certain hierarchies and render others invisible. A teacher who grew up in a racist, sexist, and ableist society is not immune to these prejudices simply because they exercise a profession dedicated to human development — which makes reflection on how these structures translate into differentiated pedagogical expectations especially urgent, as analyzed by Patto (1999).

Continuing education, in this context, is not only desirable, but imperative. It must, however, go beyond occasional trainings on diversity that often limit themselves to transmitting information without fostering the reflective process necessary for changing practice. Effective continuing education for intersectional sensitivity must create spaces for self-analysis, in which teachers can examine their own prejudices and the ways they translate into pedagogical practices that are differentially exclusionary.

It is essential, in this formative process, to deconstruct the narrative that attention to diversity is a form of “help” to disadvantaged groups — as if inclusion were a favor the school does for certain students, to the detriment of educational quality for others. This narrative is not only mistaken, but perversely counterproductive: it positions diversity as a problem and inclusion as a sacrifice, when, in reality, schools that work with the complexity of diversity tend to produce richer, more creative, and more democratic learning environments for all students — something the intersectional perspective of Akotirene (2019) and Lopes (2019) decisively helps to demonstrate.

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN BUILDING SAFE SPACES

The school principal and pedagogical coordination occupy a strategic role in implementing an intersectionally sensitive school culture. School management defines the formal and informal norms that structure institutional life: what is tolerated, what is punished, which narratives are legitimized, and which are silenced. School leadership that does not understand intersectionality tends to produce management practices that, even when well-intentioned, replicate the exclusions they intend to combat.

The construction of safe spaces — in the sense of environments in which all students can express themselves without fear of persecution, humiliation, or invisibilization — is a primary responsibility of school management. This implies the creation of clear protocols for handling cases of discrimination and violence, the establishment of accessible and confidential reporting channels, and the guarantee that incidents will be treated seriously and consistently, regardless of the identity of the victim or the aggressor.

School leadership must also be attentive to unnecessary bureaucratic requirements that, often inadvertently, discriminate against students because of their origin or social condition. Forms that assume heterosexual nuclear families, documents requiring proof of residence in contexts of housing instability, enrollment processes that do not offer options for registering non-binary gender identities — these apparently neutral bureaucratic elements are, in practice, mechanisms of exclusion that operate silently upon the most vulnerable bodies.

TENSIONS AND RESISTANCES: THE CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL CONTEXT

It is impossible to discuss the implementation of an intersectional perspective in Brazilian schools without recognizing the adverse political context in which this implementation occurs. In recent years, Brazil has experienced a wave of political and cultural conservatism that has produced systematic attacks on diversity and inclusion agendas within the school environment, under labels such as “gender

ideology,” among others. Teachers who work with these themes have been the target of complaints, institutional pressure, and, in some cases, administrative and legal proceedings.

This context does not invalidate the need for the intersectional perspective — on the contrary, it makes it even more urgent. But it does require that teachers and administrators committed to this perspective act with awareness of the risks involved and with the necessary protection strategies. The building of support networks among professionals, articulation with social movements and civil society organizations, and the grounding of pedagogical practices in solid legal frameworks are important resources for navigating this hostile context without relinquishing the commitment to inclusion.

Brazilian legislation, in this regard, offers robust support for intersectional education. The 1988 Federal Constitution, the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB), the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA), the Brazilian Inclusion Law, and a series of other regulations jointly guarantee the right of all students to an education that respects their dignity, promotes equality, and combats all forms of discrimination. The teacher who works from an intersectional perspective is not violating any norm: they are fulfilling constitutional mandates that the school is obligated to realize.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article began from a simple premise, but one with radical consequences: the students who arrive at Brazilian schools are not abstract and uniform subjects, but concrete beings traversed by multiple social markers that combine in specific ways to produce singular educational trajectories. Ignoring this complexity, however comfortable simplification may be, is not a neutral pedagogical option — it is a political choice that produces and reproduces exclusions.

Intersectionality, as this work has sought to demonstrate, offers an epistemologically rigorous and politically committed response to this complexity. It is not merely an academic theory to be debated at conferences and in specialized publications: it is a concrete tool that can and should transform teachers’ everyday practices, the culture of schools, and the architecture of educational policies. It is, ultimately, a

way of seeing — and of refusing to cease seeing — the subjects whom the school so often renders invisible.

The analysis undertaken in this article showed that the Brazilian school faces concrete and urgent intersectional challenges. The school dropout of trans students and transvestites — documented by ABGLT (2016) — the under-schooling of Black students with disabilities, the silencing of the experiences of LGBTQIA+ youth from peripheral areas are phenomena that educational models based on single identity axes are incapable of adequately diagnosing and, therefore, confronting. The incorporation of the intersectional perspective into teacher education and school management is not a theoretical luxury: it is a practical necessity so that inclusion ceases to be rhetoric and becomes reality.

The pedagogical strategies proposed — the use of active methodologies and cultural productions, everyday welcoming practices, intersectoral articulation, and continuing education — do not exhaust the possibilities for action, but they offer an initial concrete repertoire for teachers and administrators who wish to translate their commitment to diversity into effective school practices. Intersectionality, as Crenshaw (1989), Akotirene (2019), Gonzalez (1984), and the other authors mobilized throughout this work have shown, asks not only that the world be better understood: it asks that it be transformed.

May the Brazilian school progressively become a space in which no student needs to cease being who they are in order to gain access to knowledge. May the “identity avenues” that traverse each student body be recognized not as obstacles to learning, but as the very richness that makes the educational process human, plural, and transformative. This is the horizon that the intersectional perspective invites us to build — and the school is, perhaps, the most powerful place to begin.

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