

**CUERPO, GÉNERO Y
SEXUALIDAD**



Body, Gender, and Sexuality: The pedagogical turn that resists at School¹

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Abstract

This article analyzes the mechanisms that, from the colony until modernity, have modeled both the body and the conception of gender in school population in Colombia. Through an archeology of moral, civil, urban and hygiene discourses, it shows how a pedagogical and biopolitical device has been built to adapt and maintain gender roles, stereotypes, and sexuality, based on compulsory heterosexuality. This ends up generating exclusion and discrimination against non-normative expressions in society and school. We conclude by mentioning how, in the last few years, pedagogical practices have emerged to resist hegemonic powers and discourses by introducing the classroom and the school environment to a concept of corporeality, by applying gender perspective in the curriculum, by implementing transversal projects, but also by motivating sorority dynamics, new masculinities and comprehensive sexual education focused on rights and gender equity. This is representing a pedagogical turn in the way we address gender, body, and sexuality at school.

Keywords: body, corporeality, gender, diversity, pedagogical turn, corporeal turn, sexuality.

Introduction

Historically, body and sexuality in Colombian schools has been determined by three main social-historical components: the moral body, the tame civilized body and the body of urbanity, hygiene and pedagogization. These have been the foundation for educational and upbringing practices that have subjected children and young people to mechanisms of discipline and control that deny their own corporeality and that perpetuate exclusion and the denial of rights in school socialization.

Consequently, in what follows, we adopt a genealogical and archeological perspective to present a historical path of inquiry into the moral, religious, civilizatory, medical and pedagogical discourses that have constructed the visions of body and sexuality. At the same time, we will present the mechanisms that created and reinforced gender roles and stereotypes and established compulsory heterosexuality as an idealized behavioral parameter and an excluding category for other counter-normative expressions. These discourses and mechanisms have infused society, and therefore, school socialization.

Finally, we show how the IDEP program “Maestros y Maestras que Inspiran”, following the Gender and Diversity line of action, has produced a pedagogical and corporeal turn. We see this through the application of new emergent pedagogical practices presented as a counterweight to the hegemonical powers

and discourses on body, sexuality and gender roles that have historically fell on the school population. These teachers are a clear example of a tendency towards pedagogical innovation: through their own practice they have developed an outlook towards corporeality, a group-differentiated approach in pedagogical practice, curricular integration and transversality, new masculinities, rights-based sex education, pleasure, empowerment, and sorority.

The Moral body

The Spanish arrival in the American territory not only meant the control of wealth and resources from the New World; it also set in motion a process of imposition of moral codes that started to reconfigure the colonized bodies. First, Catholicism’s self-proclaimed title of lighthouse of civility justified the use of violence to tame anyone who would be considered, from the European standpoint, as barbarian, impious, pagan or heretic.

The invasion construed the indigenous person as a subaltern “other”, whose body could be used as a work force for the extraction of gold, pearls and gemstones, or as a sexual prize at the service of the white Spaniard male, who would capture the female body as a reward for his conquest of new territory and the “pacification” of the savages.

The first Spaniards that disembarked with Columbus came from the lower classes and had no nobility

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titles in Europe. In the New World, however, they established themselves at the top of the new social order, and they imposed white chivalrous masculinity as a referent by covering it with nobility through evangelization and military victories in the name of the two top patriarchal powers of the West: God and the king.

Because of this, a sort of alterity begins surrounding the indigenous body, relating it to barbarity, bestiality, and idolatry, but above all, to sin. From the Spanish perspective, native sexual practices were filled with adultery, fornication, and sodomy. Specially this latter sin, considered as unmentionable and heinous, constituted a main justification for the alleged indigenous moral inferiority and for the deployment of a whole army of subordination through violence and evangelization.

Francisco López de Gómara, for instance, maintained that, as long as the indigenous population refused to abandon their inhumanity, cruelty, sodomy and idolatry, it was legitimate to wage war on them and, in that context, to “kill, capture and steal from them”. On the other hand, Sarmiento de Gamboa also maintained the legitimacy of war in order to punish the *contra natura* sins. For the Spanish chronicler this was a sufficient cause to subdue by force the American indigenous people. (Molina, 2010, p. 6).

Thus, the construal of the indigenous man as a sodomite further reinforced his condition of a subdued masculinity, comparable to femininity. This was at odds with the bellicose masculinity imposed by the figure of the Spanish conqueror. As Molina (2011) remarks, this process highlighted the belief that courage, bravery and military prowess were inher-

ent qualities of the Spanish male. In current times, these attributes are a fundamental part of the hegemonic construction of masculinity, where manhood is still a synonym of violence.

Moreover, to conceive the Spanish man as the opposite of the sodomite implied an aggrandizement of sexual-possession-centered masculinity. In consequence, during the so-called Spanish conquest, there was an implicit appropriation of the female body as spoils of war and as political-sexual good that could be exchanged. Although in Spain bigamy and adultery were clearly condemned as a sin, in the New World, to possess numerous lands and women for domestic and sexual service was construed as a symbol of power and status, at least for the military and the conquistadores.

Through all of this, a particular body-type started to model itself around racial differentiation, “natural” sexuality (that is, mandatory heterosexuality), patriarchal power and the use of violence. With this, the inferior position of women and other masculinities was established, in front of the privileged white man.

Nevertheless, the remoteness of the conquered territory created two main concerns for the Church and the Spanish crown. First, they realized that the newly acquired power of soldiers and conquistadores was diminishing their loyalty towards the State. And second, as the hostile, wild, luxurious, and lustful nature of the American territory had infected Europeans with “vice” and blinded by their passions, they were quickly losing their notion of civility. Because of this, there was a need to impose greater political control over the continent and reinforce the symbolic control over bodies.

In this manner, between the mid XVIth century and early XVIIIth century, during what Borja (2011) calls the Baroque Colonial period, a series of mechanisms were deployed to moralize the human body; first, as a way to generate an ideological homogeneity and a common identity, and second, as dispositive to regulate individual and sexual behaviors in favor of catholic principles and values.

This period introduced the society of New Granada to new boundaries of behavior and body dispositions that aimed at the construction of docile and ascetic subjects, whose bodies could reflect inner sanctity and spiritualization. In order to do this, the Catholic Church took pictorial and biographical depictions of the saints' exemplary lives as behavioral models that had to be followed to lead a truly pious existence (Borja, 2011). Thus, references to the martyred and penitent body of the saint, its struggles against temptation and the devil and the saints exemplary demise, were intended to model the body according to its purification.

This is how the body's sense experience, that is, the use of senses and pleasures, was considered a potential source of sin that had to be repressed, particularly in women. Due to the original sin, women were prone to fall into temptation as much as to provoke it in others, precisely because of their alleged weak and dangerous nature.

This explains why much of the effort was focused on modeling women's body and behavior on three iconic figures of Christian femininity: Eve, the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalen. Through the first one, the subordinated place of the women is reinforced, conceiving her as the cause of humanity's expulsion from paradise, the root of God's wrath and the

reason for the posterior damnation of humanity to a life of pain and suffering. Through the second, women are taught their main mission in society as wives and mothers, whose main qualities must be abnegation, sacrifice and devotion to the patriarchal power. And through the third, we remember the figure of the sinful and adulterous women who, after showing repent, is pardoned by Jesus to finally prostrate at his service.

Of course, the constant evocation of the Virgin Mary and other saint women has the purpose of strengthening the idea of purity and virginity as moral and social behavior ideals. Joining this with the continuous reminding of the Sacred Family, meant that women's sexuality was strictly limited to their reproductive function. Thus, virginity, nuclear family and institutional marriage became the dispositives to regulate the feminine body and sexuality.

As it has been pointed out, the Church accepted sexuality as a reproductive end only. A very detailed catalogue of rules regulated the matter. For instance, the missionary position was considered the most natural and in accordance with the husband's dominant position. For the women to mount the male was considered a grave sin given that it inverted all reasons and values. Caresses, mutual masturbation, interrupted coitus, and oral and anal sex were qualified as severe sins (Rodríguez, 2011, p.127).

Nevertheless, these social and sexual norms applied, almost exclusively, to women from the dominant classes. Men had a certain amount of freedom and condescendence to liberate their passions with *mulatas*, black women and *mestizas*. In fact, sexual assault in rivers and wastelands happened relatively frequently against women that, for different rea-

sons, were not the property of a male, that is, women who had no father or husband.

Since then, the body has been on the receiving end of at least three discourses or narratives. First, compulsory heterosexuality; second, the subordination of women to the patriarchal power; and third, the control of body and sexuality as a behavioral and social order parameter.

The docile civilized body

The rise of the House of Bourbon to the Spanish throne at the start of the XVIIIth century meant the beginning of a state modernization process inspired in the ideas of the Enlightenment. A series of government practices were unfolded to organize science, economics, politics, territory, and society, founded on the use of reason and trust in science. Enlightened despotism was seeking to reconcile the monarchy's absolute power with a reforming drive to overcome ignorance and superstition.

This process implied a new outlook on the body, not exclusively as a space dedicated to sacrality or spiritual virtue, but as a part of an economic and productive structure whose importance lies in its organic functionality. This had the goal of exerting control over the life of the population through the execution of demographic, sanitary and medical measures that widen its utility for the state. Foucault (2011) named this biopolitics, the process through which *governmentality* was ensured.

Thus, Bourbon reforms in XVIIIth century New Granada sought the construction of healthy and useful individuals, but above all, of obedient and tame ones. With this goal the idea of *civilization* was

adopted as a project to transform all manners, gestures, and uses of the body that prevented progress, in modern terms. In the Bourbon ideal, aspects and behaviors like nudity, public physiological excretions, leisure, idleness, and drunkenness were contrary to the social order and public morality.

This set of norms aimed at regulating daily life and social relations and establishing a clear frontier between the public and the private. Particularly, Norbert Elias (1989) holds that the Modernity project implied a process of individualization of the intimate sphere and self-regulation of behaviors regarded as rough, savage, indecent or immoral, by using courtier and aristocratic codes of conduct as a model.

In this way, as the moral control of the body was founded in spiritualization (that is, the body as a reflection of the soul) during the early Baroque Colonial period, in the civilizatory process of the Bourbon reforms the body was conceived as life itself, as *bios*. Its disciplining and moralization were for the benefit of the state and the sovereign power.

Therefore, one of the practices that were displayed to carry out the government of life was to link the body to a larger "living" structure, such as the city. From the perspective of enlightened despotism, the urban space, beyond constituting the commercial, political and military core, was also the scenario for the control of the population and their social relations.

The urban space, often linked to the presence of civilization, was hoped to be also a civilizatory instrument. In the city it was aimed to discipline society and modify daily actions of the population through the establishment of rules and specific and different models of behavior. It is clear that the city is one of

the most important metaphors for the body, but also that urban institutions and life conditions were supposed to model and compose the inhabitants' bodies (Alzate, 2011, p. 256).

In this manner, police practices emerge as the regulating mechanism to watch over body habits, looks, clothing, decency and, more generally, to modify the behavior of barbaric bodies. In this perspective, the police were in charge of keeping order and public discipline, of identifying potentially dangerous people and populations, such as beggars, bums, orphans, indigenous people outside of their *cabildo* and free or escaped black people, and of ensuring the respect of aesthetic and moral norms. Here, authorities particularly emphasized the regulation of sexuality's uses and manners, like lust and promiscuity, considered to be public scandals that lead to the fellow's moral ruin, which justified a timely intervention from civil authorities in the city.

Thus, one of the biggest offensives displayed in favor of this moral and civilizatory ideal was the persecution of *chicherías*³. These places fostered disorder, laziness and concubinage, but more importantly, they represented a threat to three main pillars of the desired social order since the Bourbon reforms: productive work, the Christian role of the women in society and the institution of marriage.

On the one hand, as Torres (2021) points out, these institutions were managed mostly by women who were not united or were not under the control of a man. The clandestine sale of the popular drink was a source of sustenance and economical independence

for these women. But this meant a transgression of the passive role they were supposed to occupy, and they became an object of condemnation and persecution. And on the other hand, *chicherías* were places favorable to sexual encounters, whether occasional or money-based, and to establish unions or concubinage arrangements.

Poor single indigenous women, who were frequently mothers as well, would attend *chicherías*, more and more common in the XVIIIth century as places for marginal and peasant sociability, where people would drink, play, and seduce. Clients were mostly indigenous people, mestizos, free black people and *mulatos*, but also poor Spaniards and soldiers. In such context, indigenous women sought their survival through some concubine who would take care of them (Sixirei, 2013, p 32).

For this reason, the police persecuted these immoral offenses: first, because it was no secret that high-ranked men and royal officials attended these places, but mainly because they contradicted the principle of marriage and family as an institution for social regulation at the economic core of society. Still, women always had it worse, since the penalties and punishments were harsher and more humiliating for them than for their male accomplices.

For instance, if the crime was committed by a productive married man, then authorities would simply order him to return to his marriage and ensure its regeneration. Whereas women were secluded in the so-called *divorce jail*, a penitentiary institution aimed at confining women who committed the

³ Chicherías were informal places to sell Chicha a traditional prehispanic alcoholic drink made of maize.

crime of concubinage, adultery or prostitution, or that simply represented a threat to morality and social order (Avendaño, 2018).

In general, the civilizatory and modernizing process carried out through the Bourbon reforms widen discourses around the body in order to individualize, hygienize and correct. This joined the gender roles, already reinforced by the catholic canon based on family, hierarchical and unequal gender relations, marriage and reproductive sexuality. These would remain in force and continue to guide individual and sexual behaviors. During the republican period they would even be strengthened by education, where the child comes to be a fundamental part of the civilizatory desire. Because of this, it becomes necessary to enforce mechanisms for the control of the body, where child sexuality becomes an object of medical, pedagogical, and moral regulation.

The body of urbanity, hygiene and pedagogization

From the start of the Republic, the creole elite that occupied the place of privilege left by the Spaniards had to face two major obstacles. First, the strong attachment that a big part of the population felt towards colonial political and cultural institutions; this was perceived as a threat to the weak and newly formed state order. And second, the need to build a new citizenship bound by the rule of law, that could reflect a civilized mass, in the image of bourgeois and republican European societies.

Thus, the first thing to strengthen as an essential part of the national mindset was the common past from the Spanish and catholic heritage. Similarly, al-

though all social classes (peasants, indigenous people, black people) were instrumental in the constitution of armies during the Independence War, the political enlightened elite sustained differentiation discourses based on race, climate and geography. Consequently, bodies and racial groups that lived in warm weathers, forests and field were conceived as disadvantaged and they were still being attributed characteristics as barbary, laziness, and immorality. These aspects hindered the new republic's way towards progress and had to be modified urgently.

In this context, it became imperative to display control technics for the body to become the receiver of the new national identity. Furthermore, it was necessary to develop forms of discipline that reproduced values, feelings, gestures, and ways of being that were in accordance with a homogenous ideal of morality and civilization that could overcome racial and geographical disadvantages. To do this, nuclear patriarchal family and school became the two main institutions for body education that allowed the modeling of the child's body and sexuality as a new and fundamental part of the project of Modernity in Colombia.

Thus, as it was happening in Europe, the family nucleus became particularly important as a space for society's reproduction; a space in which the first form of government is ensured through the figure of the father: that is, women, children and servants are subjects under male custody and authority. This situation determined specific functions for each member of the family. For instance, the male must ensure the physical and material safety of the family, as well as its economy and businesses, the exercise of its freedom and the management of its public interests.

The women, on the other hand, was placed in a position of submission and subordination in front of the man. She was confined to the private sphere of the home and was kept in charge of maternity, the defense of morality and the education of children. Thus, the wife-mother becomes a tool for the government of the domestic, useful to the patriarchal system, and in charge of reproducing civilized habits at home. For this reason, during the XIXth century and the beginning of the XXth century, discourses on childcare and urbanity soared, aimed at giving women knowledge for upbringing and education (Pedraza, 2011c). With the former, the creation of useful healthy children was sought; and with the latter, the formation of moral bodies was sought, in a way that was in line with catholic principles as a source for common identity and that showed their tameness in the face of adult authority.

In this manner, the child was educated and characterized as subaltern, heteronomous and incapable of reason. It was necessary to educate him in the context of the family to build a useful “man” for society: “*Educate the child and you will not have to punish the man*”, was one of the premises that guided upbringing practices. Even though since Rousseau (2000) childhood was conceived as a particular stage of human life with its own characteristics, in Latin America it was construed mainly as a moment to induce Christian conducts and values and as a preparatory stage for adulthood and work.

In this perspective, one of the main moralizing and civilizatory functions that had to be executed both inside the family and at school was to clearly determine body use and the social roles of boys and girls. Urbanity’s discourse as a control device for intimacy and the socially-projected body was then

fundamental to determine the sexual division of labor and to strengthen gender roles. This is shown in the well-known manual of urbanity by the Venezuelan Manuel Antonio Carreño. Although this manual was addressed to both sexes, it had a clear accent on feminine behavior:

Women must be educated in the principles of domestic government and rehearse its practices from the most tender age. Thus, once a young lady has reached the age of reason, far from simply serving her birth mother in house arrangements and the family direction, she will help her effectively in the performance of such important duties (Carreño, 1885, p. 121).

As the historian Zandra Pedraza points out (2011a), the manuals by Carreño, Tulio Ospina and Soledad Acosta de Samper show how urbanity became a prominent tool for body education that propelled Christian moral virtues, the Spanish language, and the Spanish heritage as foundations for a national and Latin-American identity. But specially, they located women as the cornerstone of the whole moral scaffolding of society, by putting them in charge of the formation of future citizens inside the family, supporting the construction of body homogeneity from childhood and instil the strict social ordering based on the masculine-feminine binarism.

Because of this, the upbringing and body education of women was always directed towards a sexual-virtue-based moralization; that is, towards a repeated demonstration of decorum, modesty and a submissive and demure posture that wouldn’t reveal any sort of desire or enjoyment of bodily pleasures. Accordingly, women were trained from the young age to take over the government of the domestic and develop the required moral qualities to be a mother

and wife. For this reason, through the discourses on urbanity, always intertwined with catholic values, women were forced to assume a myriad of aesthetic and behavioral guidelines. For example, they had to always appear well-dressed and suitably attired to express beauty and fragility at all times, as an essential mark of femininity; but additionally, they couldn't laugh loudly, share spaces of entertainment and leisure with men, make prolonged eye-contact with them, receive guests at their door or window in full view of the public or going out without the company of a man from their own family, among other prohibitions.

The attachment to these norms and principles became indicators to classify femininity; the "good woman" is the one whose appearance, beauty and behavior render her worthy to be chosen and be wedded by a man. Consequently, marriage became on the most notorious differentiation parameters between women. Which is why a blanket of doubt is cast over unmarried or unaccompanied women, and their physical and particularly moral qualities are automatically put under suspicion. This practice remains in our current times and is still a source of frustration for many women.

However, moral and disciplinary control over the man's body was not absent either. The patriarchal system demands of men particular behaviors that reinforce their place in the world as masculine subjects. Men are then educated to display strength and courage, whether to use them in the context of work, fulfilling their duty as a provider, or as a tool to defend territory or private property, in which, of course, is included women's bodies. Yet, the biggest demand lies in their capacity to father children — preferably, male—, that will extend their patriarchal

line privileges and build a family they will lead. This is why virility and the taste for the opposite sex (what we now know as compulsory heterosexuality) has been an imperative in masculine behavior.

Besides the latter, the binary masculine-feminine logic implies that the body education of men is directed towards acquiring opposite qualities and conducts to women. For instance, to completely shave one's face or walking with short steps or on the tiptoes were considered as effeminate gestures and habits, brought from countries like England or France. These habits contradicted the Spanish-inspired chivalrous and lordly appearance that Latin-American men had to exhibit (Pedraza, 2011b).

This civilizatory momentum, through urbanity and religion, was used as a government technique that spread among all social layers by using education and the public school system as tools. Thus, school as a topological and symbolic space was fundamental in the reproduction of these habits, values, and gender roles, particularly because it owns and isolates the child body to model and correct it. In this manner, the school schedule is created through which the body is organized relative to space and time. Age and gender classifications are established, and a wide taxonomy is created to distinguish the normal from the abnormal, based on moral qualities. And finally, physical punishment is used as a quick mechanism to regulate and correct the school subject.

This implied conceiving the child as lacking any sort of right, as being incapable of guiding his or her own destiny, and as a subject whose body was subdued to the property of the adult, particularly, the teacher. The former was commissioned with a father role in school and was granted authority to watch over

children's conduct and to punish their body in different ways. All of this, despite various discourses from psychology, medicine and the new pedagogy that warned against the use of severe punishments (Herrera, 2013). Physical abuse remained socially entrenched and legitimized as a form of upbringing and education: generation after generation, the child body was severely marked and submitted to the worse insults and humiliations. It was not until the late XXth century that, with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the 1991 Constitution in the case of Colombia, childhood is granted a citizen and legal status that protects children's rights and dignity. This however, even in our current times, is still insufficient to abolish the sense of property that exists over children and to put an end to physical, psychological and sexual violence against children.

In the same way, the moral, religious and civilizational discourses that embodied the figure of urbanity as a government technique in education were joined by the sociobiological discourse of hygiene. This aimed at the integration of medical scientific knowledge with the moralization processes and the correction of the child body inside the school. As Noguera (2002) points out, hygiene became the most influential science in the field of pedagogical knowledge in Colombia at the beginning of the XXth century. Hygiene's perspective on childhood, contrary to Rousseau's, considered that the child was born as immoral, dirty, lazy and uncivilized, product of the customs and habits inherited from their parents and the conditioning imposed by race. It was then considered necessary, for the civilization and progress of the country, to adapt the school system to "correct" this reality.

In order to do this, school hygiene was carried out through three different branches: physical hygiene, intellectual hygiene and moral hygiene. The first two included aspects like nutrition, body posture, exercising to favor breathing and blood circulation, but also the school schedule to optimize intellectual work and avoid exhaustion. Moral hygiene, however, was considered the most important and the one that deserved more dedication from the teacher. It focused on a strict vigilance over the child body to detect any "diabolical" behaviors or vices like masturbation that could "spread" among the rest.

As Thomas Laqueur (1999) points out, with the development of modern medicine, masturbation stopped being an exclusively religious problem to become a medical and health problem to which boys and girls in school were vulnerable to. This explains the entire scientific and moral discursive scaffolding created to detect and eradicate the "solitary vice". In the hygiene and pedagogy manuals that were popular in Colombia and Latin-American, for instance, there were detailed descriptions of physical signs that were supposed to expose this behavior, such as pallor, thinness or sunken eyes. This is why the teacher and adult were urged to pay particular attention:

We can observe the child seeking a frequent loneliness, when he diabolically suffers from masturbation or onanism: the patient of this lonely vice has become sickly converted, which is why he must be thrown out of school, without contemplations nor mercy, to avoid the spread of the heinous vice. (Lanao, as quoted in Noguera, 2002, p. 202.).

Nevertheless, this vigilance over the child's body had to be executed in a discrete way, without draw-

ing too much attention or awakening the boy's curiosity, or worse the girl's. This is why all reference to sexuality or reproduction had to be made indirectly, preventively and using always a hygienist and moral that reminded the prudent distance that had to be taken in front of these subjects. Thus, for instance, it was recommended to separate boys and girls from seven years old on, since there was a fear that mixing genders would lead to an early awakening of sexual tendencies. Similarly, in the case of girls, when coming of age arrived, it was allowed to share with them certain information that reinforced their social function as a woman, explaining the mysteries of maternity and marriage, but above all, warning them of the grave consequences for their purity, decorum and family reputation that would imply getting carried away by passions, appetite and inclinations. (Pedraza, 2011b).

In general, during the XXth century, Colombian childhood would be on the receiving end of a set of juxtaposed moral and expert discourses that modeled upbringing practices, education and the subaltern status of childhood. First, through a clear influence of values and principles from the Catholic Church, as an institution that ensures social cohesion and that represents the primary source of subjectivation and moralization of the body and sexuality; and second, profiting from the space abandoned by religion, medical, psychological and pedagogical positions medicalized boys' and girls' sexuality, silenced their voices and turned them into passive subjects of their own formation and into beings alienated from their own bodies.

Concerning sex education, school was a space that reproduced myths and pseudo-scientific discourses that not only reinforced the already traditional

moral views, but also turned the exercise of sexuality into a source of danger. During the few mentions of the subject there was always an exaggerated emphasis on sexually transmitted diseases to infuse fear and discourage early sexuality outside the legitimacy of marital union. Additionally, school remained the prominent scenario for the reinforcement of gender roles and stereotypes: first, by naming disciplines, areas of knowledge and specific abilities in a differentiated way for men and women; and second, by determining how the male and female body had to appear and occupy the school space. Hence, the primary disciplinary and pedagogical function of the school focused mainly on watching over uniform, hair style, skirt length, make-up, piercings use, tattoos and any other aesthetical or body expression that might contradict moral homogeneity and the social order of gender.

The former has perpetuated the belief that a good teacher, over and above his or her expertise and knowledge, is the one that keeps his class well-disciplined; in the same way, the good student is the one that remains tame ("well-behaved", "quiet") and doesn't contradict authority, family, school, society, or work-based morality, as adultcentric institutions for habit correction.

Pedagogical turn, corporeal turn, gender, and diversity

Since the 70's, a set of philosophical and pedagogical perspective emerged in Latin America that started questioning the punitive and authoritative character of school, the punishment and reward-based models, the hierarchical power relations that denied the student its political subject status and the

adultcentric imposition of the teacher as sole source of truth and knowledge, which implied a rejection of the creativity and subaltern knowledge of boys and girls. These tendencies entered the framework of the so-called critical pedagogy. Among its main examples we found Paulo Freire's pedagogy of liberation and of the oppressed and, in the case of Colombia, the critical perspective by Estanislao Zuleta, Marco Raúl Mejía and the whole Pedagogical Movement that gave rise to numerous educational transformations during the 90's.

The former is considered as a pedagogical turn, precisely because of its radical and counter-hegemonic character in the face of the traditional educational order, and because it opened a new field of study to think differently about society, the educational praxis and the school subject. As Cabaluz-Ducasse (2016) remarks, several new social-educational *epistemes* emerged as a way to engage with new issues such as alterity, exclusion, violence, ethnicity, territory, North-South our center-periphery tensions, modern occidental rationality critique and popular education, among others.

However, such new outlooks were not enough to entirely deal with crucial phenomena as the reproduction of patriarchy in school, the vigilance and control over bodies and their aesthetics, gender-based violence, homophobia, gender-identity or homophobia based harassment, and in general, the recognition of abject and counter-normative bodies. Even today, these issues visibly remain in school social relations, in pedagogical practices and in the hidden curriculum. After all, school and family in Colombia are still the main places of violation of children's fundamental rights such as the free development of personality, equality, dignity and

non-discrimination, particularly towards students whose bodies and sexualities go outside hegemonic parameters. A proof of this is the ample jurisprudence that has tried to protect the rights of young people and settle conflicts between minors and their school institutions during the last thirty years.

Considering this, we plead to give a space in school to the corporeal turn, understanding the body beyond its physical, material or biological function or as a corrective device wreathed in the modern mind-body and reason-emotion dichotomies. The goal is to conceive it as corporeality, that is, a much wider dimension that involves emotions, existence and corporeal subjectivity, in which body praxis and the configuration of subjectivation processes are saved (Castro, 2011). In this manner, the student is no longer an exclusively passive knowing entity, but a corporeality that occupies and exists in the school space.

From the perspective of Merleau-Ponty (1993) and Csordas (1999), this situated body experience is understood as embodiment; that is, an epistemological approach in which the body is not exclusively an object of study, but a field of social and cultural production. Bringing this to education means conceiving the classroom and the school space as an embodied reality, where all corporeities that interact there teach and learn from each other. Hence, the importance of overcoming homogenizing views on the body and allowing the expression of subjectivity through corporeal experience at school.

This is a hard task given the huge cultural barriers that have set in the school system for almost two centuries. These prevent conceiving the body beyond the religious-moral, civilizatory, corrective

and adultcentric matrix that has historically modeled the school subject in Colombia. Still, in the framework of “Maestros y Maestras que Inspiran”, a mentoring and collaborative work program between teachers from the Instituto para la Investigación Educativa y el Desarrollo Pedagógico (Institute for Educational Research and Pedagogical Development) IDEP, following the Gender and Development line of action, we were able to notice a pedagogical and corporeal turn. Particularly, new classroom practices emerged as a counterweight to the hegemonic powers and discourses on the body, sexuality and gender roles.

I had the chance to participate in the program as a mentor, and I was able to guide 20 teachers who had developed practices around these subjects, in Bogotá, between 2020 and 2021. This was possible thanks to the experience I had in the Geraldo Paredes IED school, where I lead the execution of *Curricular Integration of Sexual Citizenship, and Differential and Gender-based approach (Integración Curricular de la Ciudadanía Sexual, el Enfoque Diferencial y de Géneros)* (Bermúdez, 2017). The goal was to establish a dialogue among teachers and encourage an exchange of experiences that could strengthen their pedagogical practices⁴.

One of the first challenges we encountered was the atomization and solitary work that teachers were accustomed to. Addressing subjects like the body, gender and sexuality always implied rejection and harassment from other teachers and parents. Hence,

it was necessary to first establish a dialogue to communicate what each teacher was doing in its own educational context, to find common ground and to inspire empathy, solidarity, and collaboration, in a way that enable the construction of a new community of knowledge and practice.

Looking at the points in common between the different experiences, we found that classroom research and empirical evidence collection in the school context was an essential tool to negotiate meanings in school deliberation scenarios (academic councils, assemblies, educational forums, pedagogical working days, etc.). Teachers were able to highlight the pressing issues in their own context from a research and pedagogical approach, beyond speculations, intuitions or general opinions. This allowed the transmission of new discourses and meanings, for instance, around sexual diversity, the approximation of sexuality during childhood or new masculinities.

Furthermore, it was clear that in every project there was intention of colonizing formal, institutional and curricular spaces, to transform these subjects and areas of knowledge into pedagogical innovations. For example, a didactic and curricular proposal was submitted aiming at a gender-based teaching of social sciences. In this proposal, students were asked to question their own constructions of masculinity and femininity through a historical outlook in Colombia. Similarly, we did research on sexual and gender diversity to reform the school community manual and inquired into *machistas* and homopho-

⁴ The systematization of these experiences, carried out in 2020, can be explored in the institutional repository of the IDEP, in the following link: <https://repositorio.idep.edu.co/handle/001/2387?show=full>

bic expressions to advance new communal strategies that would improve the inclusion of the sexually diverse population. Additionally, interest centers were created such as the school radio to discuss gender perspective matters and transversal projects for sex education, to inform students about exercising their sexual and reproductive rights.

Finally, we located the student's body, sexuality, and emotionality at the center of the teaching-learning process by the means of didactics, horizontal methodologies, and classroom dialogues. For instance, we used autobiographical stories with seventh grade girls to inquire into the emotions that the patriarchy usually uses to oppress women, such as fear, anxiety, and melancholic sadness. Also, we used the Reflection, Action, Participation (RAP) methodology to understand how primary school children build their citizenship through empowerment of their body and sexuality.

Generally, these teachers are a clear example of the tendency towards innovation and pedagogical transformation in which new subjects are being increasingly addressed. For instance, we see corporeality (the lived, emotional, and conscious body) engaged from an aesthetic and artistic perspective, or the gender-based approach applied in pedagogical practice and teaching, but also in the school's daily life by inspiring solidarity and sorority among women. Transversality and curricular integration have become main principles to include critical contents and perspectives that are able to question gender roles and asymmetries. And new masculinities

are a means to reflect on the gender-based violence suffered by boys, adolescents, and men, that keeps them from reaching alternative and counter-hegemonic masculinities. Finally, we have rights-based integral sex education, aimed at removing the stigma of pleasure and sexual enjoyment, based on the empowerment of the school subjects, and fostering from a young age the image of the body as a political space to live one's citizenship and to prevent sexual and gender violence.

Despite all this, these sort of pedagogical innovations, that address sensible and controversial subjects, are usually met with harsh resistance in their social and educational contexts, and some of them remain isolated or scattered. This explains that in spite of the international social and political advances around gender, Human Rights and Sexual and Reproductive Rights, in many countries in Latin America their application remains incipient. For this reason, it's essential to create a framework around successful experiences at the pedagogical/epistemological frontiers. After all, transformations in school and influence in public policy are more effective when they are operated through communities of knowledge and practice, since these are based on the experience acquired in the educational contexts themselves. This is why the program *Maestros y Maestras que Inspiran*, from the Gender and diversity line of action, was a wonderful opportunity to encourage collective thinking and pedagogical synergies, but above all, to strengthen, systematize and unify the pedagogical turn that is happening around the subjects of body, gender and sexuality in public schools in Bogotá. ■

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