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ABSTRACT

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TITLE

Constructing and re-constructing gender "identities": The case of a small primary school

The present study looks into constant constructing and re-constructing of boys' and girls' gender "identities" by searching issues of heterosexuality, homophobia and misogyny in the context of a small primary school.

The present study, based on Judith Butler's (1990) theory on gender performance, looks at gender "identities" as exceptionally fluid and constantly forming, re-forming and trans-forming through procedures of dispute and negotiation.

The sense of "normativity" that the discourse on the heterosexual facts, as well as the discourse on homophobia state, are key points of boys' and girls' efforts to construct dominant forms of masculinities and femininities and, as a result, the school territory is viewed as an arena of strong heterosexuality (Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Kehily, 2002), in which the gender identification procedure of male and female pupils and teachers too, are actively disputed, negotiated and re-defined. In this way, a constant poetic (Herzfeld, 1985) –the Greek word is used etymologically- of multiple masculinities and femininities takes place in the school context (Connell, 1989; 1995; Mac An Ghail, 1994).

The study uses qualitative field research methods, as the collection of information is locally and part-oriented. The techniques of semi-structured interviews has been used to collect the corpus giving the subjects (male and female pupils and teaching staff) the opportunity to express their own view, through their experience and practice (Oakley, 1981), whereas critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2001) has been used to analyze the interviews.

The need for the study above lies in the social and educational reasons which call for promoting an educational policy symmetrical to the gender, for a full development and improvement of male and female pupils' potential aiming at the much-talked-about elimination of gender asymmetry.

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