

## Interweaving theoretical paths about teaching work at Federal Education Institutes from the perspective of social Gender relations

*Entrelaçando caminhos teóricos acerca do trabalho docente nos Institutos Federais de Educação sob a ótica das relações sociais de Gênero*

*Entrecruzando caminos teóricos sobre el trabajo docente en los Institutos Federales de Educación desde la perspectiva de las relaciones sociales de Género*

Patrícia Gouvêa Nunes<sup>1</sup>

Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia Goiano

Rosenilde Nogueira Paniago<sup>2</sup>

Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia Goiano

Teresa Sarmiento<sup>3</sup>

Universidade do Minho

**Abstract:** This text aims to elucidate theoretical provocations regarding teaching work at Federal Education Institutes (IFs) from the perspective of social gender relations, considering that historically there are differences between being a woman teacher and being a man teacher in these institutions. In the construction of this essay, we first turn to the theoretical contributions to the understanding and interlocution of gender in teaching, followed by the contextualization of the concepts of *habitus* and *Symbolic Power*, and, finally, we establish a dialogue between these concepts and teaching in the IFs, from the perspective of social gender relations. By following theoretical paths, we understand that the teaching action for men and women, historically, occurs in different ways and, therefore, must be understood considering these differences.

**Keywords:** Teaching work; Social Gender relations; Federal Institute of Education.

**Resumo:** Este texto objetiva elucidar provocações teóricas quanto ao trabalho docente nos Institutos Federais de Educação (IFs), sob a perspectiva das relações sociais de gênero, considerando que, historicamente, há diferenças entre ser professora e ser professor, nestas instituições. Na construção deste ensaio, recorre-se, inicialmente, aos contributos teóricos para compreensão e interlocução de gênero na docência, seguidos da contextualização dos conceitos de *habitus* e *Poder Simbólico*, e, ao final, estabelecemos um diálogo entre tais conceitos à docência nos IF, sob a ótica das relações sociais de gênero. Ao trilhar caminhos teóricos, compreendemos que a ação docente para o homem e para a mulher, historicamente, se dão de modos distintos e, portanto, devem ser compreendidos considerando-se tais diferenças.

**Palavras-chave:** Trabalho docente; Relações sociais de Gênero; Instituto Federal de Educação.

<sup>1</sup>Doutorado em Ciências da Educação pela Universidade do Minho (UMinho) Braga, Portugal. E-mail: [patricia.nunes@ifgoiano.edu.br](mailto:patricia.nunes@ifgoiano.edu.br); Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/3417906132084628>; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7418-0583>.

<sup>2</sup>Doutorado em Ciências da educação pela Universidade do Minho (UMinho) Braga, Portugal. E-mail: [rosenilde.paniago@ifgoiano.edu.br](mailto:rosenilde.paniago@ifgoiano.edu.br); Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/8530013371818091>; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1178-8166>.

<sup>3</sup> Doutorado em Estudos da criança pela Universidade do Minho (UMinho) Braga, Portugal. E-mail: [tsarmiento@ie.uminho.pt](mailto:tsarmiento@ie.uminho.pt); Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/8057703107235668>; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2371-399X>.

**Resumen:** Este texto tiene como objetivo elucidar provocaciones teóricas sobre el trabajo docente en los Institutos Federales de Educación (IFs) desde la perspectiva de las relaciones sociales de género, considerando que históricamente han existido diferencias entre ser maestro y ser profesor en estas instituciones. Este ensayo se basa inicialmente en los aportes teóricos para la comprensión y discusión del género en la enseñanza, seguido de una contextualización de los conceptos de habitus y poder simbólico, para finalmente establecer un diálogo entre estos conceptos y la enseñanza en los IFs, desde la perspectiva de las relaciones sociales de género. Siguiendo estos caminos teóricos, nos damos cuenta de que la acción docente de hombres y mujeres se ha desarrollado históricamente de formas diferentes y, por lo tanto, debe entenderse teniendo en cuenta estas diferencias.

**Palabras clave:** Trabajo docente; Relaciones sociales de Género; Instituto Federal de Educación.

---

**Received on:** October 11, 2024

**Accepted on:** November 1, 2024

---

## Introduction

The work of educators is imperative in investigations into the professional practice of teaching, especially since significant changes have occurred in the social, political and economic world organization experienced by the profession in the 20th century (Saviani, 2020; Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2021; Antunes, 2023). In this sense, it is important to propose investigations that seek to problematize the actors that permeate effective teaching action, such as the policies that govern educational institutions, the *locus of* teaching work, as well as the social relations of gender in teaching.

This text is part of the research, duly registered in Plataforma Brazil, according to opinion nº 4.767.059, which has as its object of study the teaching work in the Federal Institutes of Education, Science and Technology (IFs), Brazil, from the perspective of the verticalized teaching proposed in the Law of Implantation and Expansion of the Federal Institutes - Law nº 11.892/2008.

Law No. 11.892 of December 29, 2008 established the Federal Institutes of Education, Science and Technology (IFs). On that date, the implementation of the Brazilian Federal Network of Professional, Scientific and Technological Education (RFEPCT) began, which aimed, among other things, to democratize, internalize, expand and offer public education at different levels and in different teaching modalities, in a single federal institution. The Federal Institutes, according to Law No. 11.892/2008, were defined as institutions that should offer basic, professional and higher education, characterizing them as multicurricular and distributed in multicampi spaces, specialized in offering professional and technological education in the different teaching modalities.

It is important to highlight the contradictions from the point of view of the aspect that, although since 2008 - the year of implementation of the law implementing and expanding the IFs - voices have been raised in defense of the importance of teacher training to work in Professional and Technological Education (EPT), they are not clearly evident, incisive and continuous public policies for teacher training in order to qualify teachers to work in the verticalized teaching of the Federal Network for Professional, Scientific and Technological Education (RFEPCT), and especially with regard to the complexity of teaching work in view of this specificity attributed to it, and perhaps to the social relations of gender in teaching in the IFs.

According to Pacheco (2015), the IFs that make up the RFEPCT are institutions that are the result of a long historical process of professional education in Brazil. The history of these institutions comes from the so-called Agricultural Schools and the Federal Center for Technological Education (CEFET), which mainly offered technical courses in the agricultural and industrial areas, where there was a greater predominance of men, both as professors and as students.

With these aspects in mind, we asked ourselves: In the quest to understand teaching work in the RFEPCT, what theoretical aspects from the point of view of social gender relations in teaching in the IFs can be articulated? Faced with this question, the aim of this textual discussion was to elucidate theoretical provocations regarding teaching work in the Federal Institutes of Education (IFs), from the perspective of social gender relations, considering that, historically, there are differences between being a woman professor and being a man professor in these institutions. To this end, in order to produce this essay, we developed a qualitative, exploratory research approach, by searching for theoretical references on the subject (Lüdke and André, 2018).

At first, it was imperative to find and select sources and, in them, theoretical contributions to support the investigation. Therefore, considering the objective of this essay, in order to conduct such an articulation, we rely theoretically on the authors: Scott (1995), Louro (2004, 2014), Hirata (2002, 2007, 2014, 2015, 2018) and Bourdieu (2011). Bourdieu's (2011) concepts of *habitus* and *symbolic power* are mobilized in this discussion, as they are aligned with the search for a theoretical support articulated with the theoretical paths adopted in the investigation that culminated in this text.

In order to organize the text, we first present theoretical contributions to the understanding and interlocution of gender in teaching, followed by a contextualization of the concepts of *habitus* and *Symbolic Power*, and, finally, we establish a dialogue between these concepts and teaching in the IFs, from the perspective of social gender relations, since we

understand that teaching action for men and women historically takes place in different ways and, therefore, must be understood considering these differences.

Bourdieu's (2011) concepts also contributed when we set out, in this essay, to (re)think teaching work in the IFs also from the point of view of social and gender relations, since we understand that teaching has historically taken place differently for men and women. The sexual division of labor is therefore a historical phenomenon, as it changes according to the social conditions postulated by the neoliberal logic of society. In this sense, it was inevitable for this investigation to consider gender, as Nogueira and Catani (2004) elucidate as constitutive of the social relations between men and women in teaching work in the IFs, because it is understood that these relations, in any social or professional configuration, are based on the sexual division of labor.

The text is therefore divided into three parts. Firstly, we present theoretical paths for linking teaching in the EPT to social gender relations, followed by a contextualization of the concepts of habitus and symbolic power and, finally, we establish a conceptual dialogue linked to teaching in the IFs.

### **Theoretical Paths of Teaching in the EPT from the Perspective of Social Gender Relations**

When we searched Brazil's public Catalog of Theses and Dissertations - Capes - we found that, since the creation of the RFEPCT in 2008, there have been few studies specifically on the subject of relating teaching in the EPT to social gender relations. Among the theses available in the aforementioned catalog, Santos (2013), in her thesis, reveals that, in Brazil, the presence of women in RFEPCT courses, whose professions are associated with jobs attributed to men, has been growing. Although Santos' thesis (2013) focuses on RFEPCT students, the author brings relevant elements to the reflection on social gender relations in the IFs, regarding the idea that new professional configurations are emerging because women are pursuing careers that were once considered masculine and, in particular for this discussion, in an institution that comes from institutions historically composed mostly of male teachers and students.

Souza and Lima Neto (2019) presented a bibliographical survey that aimed to outline some epistemological considerations about gender issues in the context of EPT scientific production, by mapping the number of postgraduate works available in the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations, whose objects touched on the subject, from 2008 to 2019. The authors identified only thirteen manuscripts on the subject available in the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations, indicating the scarcity of studies that effectively

articulate social gender relations in EPT. This fact, as pointed out by the authors, indicates that although the descriptors point to the advance of productions in this area, they are not directly linked to the effective epistemological discussion of gender and EPT, but they do bring the articulation of teaching to the concept of textual genre.

Still through this search, we also identified that most of the research that seeks to effectively articulate social gender relations and EPT was developed in Master's Programs in Professional and Technological Education, showing how continuing education focused on EPT has been growing in Brazil since the implementation of the RFEPCT.

During the assessment of the research carried out that indicates articulations more linked to the effective discussion of teaching in the RFEPCT and social gender relations, we highlight the research conducted by Lima Neto et al. (2020) in the Graduate Program in Professional Education of the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Rio Grande do Norte, located within the scope of EFA studies, gender relations, body and sexuality, and which sought to broaden the understanding of EPT as an epistemic field under construction and consolidation, by promoting a research involving the IFs, Brazilian universities and French institutions. This research investigated devices for disciplining the body and creating stereotypes linked to professions in terms of feminization and masculinization in the EPT, which, according to the authors, does not have a consolidated tradition of studies of this kind, although they are growing, while these issues are concrete and have an impact on educational institutions and on the dynamics of production and scientific-technological development, associated with the sexual division of labour.

Araújo and Oliveira (2022), on the other hand, carried out a bibliographical review that aimed to identify the trajectory of women in the history of EPT, showing that, in this context, there are gender asymmetries that have been historically constituted, with places “destined” for women in the vocational training courses offered in Brazilian EPT institutions. The authors found, through a bibliographical study, the persistence of historical patterns of sexual differentiation in school and professional careers and the delimitation, albeit symbolic, of male spaces to the detriment of female spaces.

In this context, Hirata (2002, 2007) states in her studies that teaching in Brazil is a profession in which women predominate, but the author warns against the small number of female professors working, for example, in engineering courses, because it can be interpreted that, in this area of knowledge, there are complexities in gender relations linked to teaching, which stem from training, because, according to the author, engineering courses are predominantly made up of male professors. The author points out that this reflects the context

of the IFs, since the institution predominantly offers courses in the fields of engineering, agriculture and industry.

Frigotto, Ciavatta and Ramos (2005) start from the premise that, initially, it is necessary to understand that men and women are socio-historical beings who act in the concrete world to satisfy their subjective and social needs. It is a fact that gender issues are determining factors in the career choices of men and women, and education, as a process of socialization of individuals, is an element that can contribute to the reproduction of this division. Therefore, we infer that the gender category should be considered in discussions about teaching in the EPT, since these subjects work and/or will work as professors in educational institutions geared towards the world of work. It is a fact that gender issues are determining factors in the career choices of men and women, and education, as a process of socialization of individuals, is an element that can contribute to the reproduction of this division. Therefore, we infer that the gender category should be considered in discussions about teaching in the EPT, since these subjects work and/or will work as professors in educational institutions geared towards the world of work.

Therefore, we defend the discussion of social gender relations in the institutions that offer EPT, such as the RFEPCT, beyond teaching, but by corroborating that social gender relations are present in the institutions as a whole and permeate all their subjects, from the courses offered in them.

Based on Bourdieu (2011), we understand that the gender representations that exist in society are reflected in the professor's identity, which is constituted throughout the initial professional training process for teaching, as well as in the space where they work and, therefore, are produced and structured in the midst of power relations present both in the educational institutions where they work and in the IES that offer teacher education, because, according to Bourdieu (2011, p.7), “symbolic power is that invisible power which can only be exercised with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or that they exercise it”. ), “symbolic power is, in effect, that invisible power which can only be exercised with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they exercise it”.

The social division of labour, the process by which the activities of production and social reproduction are differentiated, specialized and carried out by different people, can occur, according to Nogueira and Catani (2004), by separating the activities of producing goods and services according to the sex of the people who carry them out, understood as the sexual division of labour. The emergence of the concept of gender, according to Scott (1995), in the search to explain relations between men and women, has made it possible to see that



male and female roles are social constructions in which power relations and hierarchies are present. The sexual division of labor is no longer seen as a natural process, but as an expression of the asymmetry of relations between men and women. on of labour.

Therefore, according to Scott (1995, p. 86), we understand gender as “a constitutive element of social relations based on perceived differences between the sexes and [...] a primary way of giving meaning to power relations”. In this way, Scott (1995) helps us to understand that gender and power are reciprocal constructions. Therefore, social changes and crises, which are part of the dynamics of political and social transformation in different times and places, arise in unequal contexts, in the face of social gender relations, articulated with power relations.

In this way, social behavior is linked to power relations that are incorporated as *habitus*, consolidating male and female *habitus*, based on a social and sexual division of labor, understood by Bourdieu (2011) as *symbolic power*.

Thus, historically constituted, *habitus* will imply, on the one hand, the power of men over women and, on the other, women hierarchically subjected to men, since, according to Bourdieu (2011, p. 16), “symbolic power is exercised with the tacit complicity of those who suffer it and, often, of those who exercise it, to the extent that both are unconscious of exercising or suffering it”.

For Bourdieu (2011, p. 157), “men are also prisoners and insidiously victims of the dominant representation, even if it is perfectly in line with their interests”, and it is necessary to know the condition of men and women in contemporary society. Male domination, as the author rightly states, is one of the various forms of manifestation of symbolic violence, which is a “soft, insensitive violence, invisible to its own victims, which is essentially exercised by the purely symbolic means of communication and knowledge, or, more precisely, of development, recognition or, ultimately, sentiment” (Bourdieu, 2011, p. 7-8).

This symbolic violence that Bourdieu (2011) explains is not only exercised on the dominated. In order for domination to be perpetuated and not perceived by the oppressed, not only the identities of the dominated, but also those of the dominant, must be constructed in accordance with the model of behavior in which the dominated and the dominant do not have the slightest transgression and the slightest deviation from the norm. In this way, social and gender relations in patriarchal society can be understood, for the most part, as symbolic violence that guarantees the reproduction of structures of domination.

According to Louro (2014), the author's statements contribute to reflecting on the social roles of men and women, highlighting the need to demonstrate that it is not sexual characteristics, but the way in which these characteristics are represented or valued, what is

said or thought about them, that will effectively construct what is feminine or masculine in a given society and at a given historical moment. In order to understand the place and relations of men and women in a society, it is important to observe not exactly their sexes, but everything that has been socially constructed about the sexes.

In this sense, supported by Louro (2014), by focusing on understanding teaching work in an institution that came from agricultural institutions, which were historically composed mostly of male professors, it is possible to unveil and problematize the gender relations that are consolidated in the context of teaching in this institution.

### **Brief Approaches to Understanding and Interlocution of Gender in Teaching**

The social division of labor, according to Scott (1995), refers to the process by which the activities of production and social reproduction are differentiated, specialized, and performed by different individuals. This division determines which activities related to the production of goods and services are designated for men and/or women, a designation understood as the sexual division of labor.

Considering gender, as grounded in Scott (1995), as constitutive of the social relations between men and women, it is necessary to examine the historical foundations of the sexual division of labor to understand these relations in any social or professional setting. This perspective enables an understanding of how such dynamics permeate teaching and influence male and female educators alike.

Since the mid-19th century, there has been significant scholarly effort dedicated to exploring the intersection of gender and teaching. To support the discussions proposed in this chapter, we draw upon theorists such as Scott (1995), Louro (2004, 2014), Hirata (2002, 2007, 2014, 2015, 2018), and Bourdieu (2011), who argue that teaching, from a gendered perspective, has historically unfolded differently for male and female educators.

Louro's studies (2004, p. 96-97) indicate that, historically, teaching performed by women in Brazil was structured based on the sexual division of labor, which occurred around the "[...] 19th century, in a process of feminization, as teaching needed to borrow attributes traditionally associated with women, such as love, sensitivity, and care, in order to be recognized as an admissible or convenient profession."

Louro (2004) clarifies to us that the sexual division of labor in the 19th century reflects the development of a capitalist/patriarchal system, solidifying the material and symbolic foundations of such divisions. From the 1970s onward, feminism critically analyzed this



division, questioning the concept of labor, which had previously been confined to productive work, particularly in economics and social sciences.

According to Scott (1995), around the end of the 19th century, the association of women with undervalued labor became more pronounced, as, frequently, throughout the history of class-based societies, women were assigned specific spaces, characterized by hierarchical inferiority, by activities adapted to their so-called "innate" capacities. Activities requiring delicacy, patience, and perseverance were offered to women, while activities requiring physical strength, speed, and skill were assigned to men.

In Scott's view (1995), patriarchy permeates the sexual division of labor, enabling the assignment of women to jobs with precarious occupations. The "precarization" of work, however, is not restricted only to women, allowing the conjecture that women's labor represents a viability test for this model for the entire working class, as "women were pioneers in occupying precarious jobs, which were to come for both sexes in the context of productive restructuring" (Scott, 1995, p. 173).

The precarization of work, according to Antunes (2009), is the most critical portrait of the working class in the 21st century, determined by the absence or partial existence of legal guarantees, in flexible, temporary, or part-time work, infused with the daily insecurity of structural unemployment and the uncertainties of the economic developments of global capitalism. This portrait can become more pronounced when it involves work developed by women, as "in this context, capital, on a global scale, has been redesigning new and old forms of work – precarious work – with the aim of recovering the economic, political, and ideological forms of bourgeois domination" (Antunes, 2009, p. 233).

Louro (2014) contributes by reporting that work activities have presented a practically constant element: the persistence of gender inequalities, which also refers to wage earnings. In this way, the feminization of a professional activity may be accompanied by a process of wage reduction and devaluation of the activity, and if gender is the fundamental element for this situation to occur, it is necessary to understand how this category of analysis is constituted in labor relations.

In the same direction, Scott (1995) signals that it is essential to articulate the sexual division of labor and gender social relations to teaching action as a work activity historically carried out predominantly by women. For this purpose, it is important, within a historical framework of feminist studies, to understand how the social differences, which were evident from the sexual division of labor, were not dependent on 'sex' as a biological issue, but were defined by 'gender' and, therefore, linked to culture. In the same way, Bourdieu (2011, p. 100) helps us when he clarifies that the differences

between sex and gender are the product of "a long collective work of socialization of the biological and biologization of the social," exercised upon the bodies and minds, a historical work of de-historicization," which reverses "the relationship between causes and effects and [makes] one see a naturalized social construction (genders as sexed habitus), as the in natura foundation of the arbitrary division that is at the beginning not only of reality but also of the representation of reality" (Bourdieu, 2011, p. 9-10).

The emergence highlighted by the aforementioned authors in considering gender to explain social relations between men and women allowed for the understanding that masculine and feminine social roles are social and cultural constructions, in which power relations and hierarchies are present.

In this perspective, we understand gender as "a constitutive element of social relations based on the perceived differences between the sexes and [...] a primary way of giving meaning to power relations" (Scott, 1995, p. 86). We then work with Scott's (1995) understanding, which, in developing his ideas, leads us to infer that gender and power are reciprocal constructions. In this context, the social changes and crises arising from unequal contexts that are part of the dynamics of political and social transformation, in different times and places, suggest that men and women, seen as masculine and feminine, are tied to power relations.

That way, Carvalho (1998, p. 26) asserts that power relations between men and women are constituted as factors that favor their distinction "on a basis, from which it would be possible to identify the place of men and women in the psychological, cultural, social, and economic aspects of human life, in a transcultural manner." Carvalho's observations (1998) contribute, according to Louro (2014, p. 25), to reflecting on the social roles of men and women, highlighting the need to "demonstrate that it is not exactly the sexual characteristics, but how these characteristics are represented or valued [...]" it is important to observe not exactly their sexes, but everything that has been socially constructed about the sexes."

Expanding on the meanings and argumentation of Louro (2014), thinking about gender means considering the possibility of understanding how gender relations consolidate in society and how they establish the sexual division of the social spaces that men and women occupy, since society incorporated this division since "when urbanization and industrialization caused profound changes in the forms of organizing social life [...]" (Carvalho, 1998, p. 27).

We emphasize, as Carvalho (1998) points out, that the social and sexual division of labor is used here to understand how teaching activity has been historically attributed to women as an extension of the work activities socially assigned to them, confined to the sphere "of domestic reproduction and personal life" and excluded "from the social production of the

State," considering the latter as the dominant sphere, identified with men (Carvalho, 1998, p. 26). In such a way, according to Bourdieu (2011), symbolic power is the power to construct social reality granted to men and women. This power holds the means to assert the immediate meaning of the world, establishing values, classifications (hierarchy), and concepts that are presented to subjects as spontaneous, natural, and disinterested:

[...] the established order, with its relations of domination, its rights and immunities, its privileges and injustices, except for a few historical accidents, perpetuates itself despite everything so easily, and the most intolerable living conditions may permanently be seen as acceptable or even natural" (Bourdieu, 2011, p. 10).

Expanding the ideas and arguments of Louro (2014), thinking about gender involves understanding how gender relations are consolidated in society and how they establish the sexual division of the social spaces occupied by men and women, since this division has been ingrained in society from "when urbanization and industrialization brought about profound changes in the forms of social life organization [...]" (Carvalho, 1998, p. 27).

We emphasize, as Carvalho (1998), that the social and sexual division of labor is used here to understand how teaching activities have historically been attributed to women as an extension of the socially designated tasks confined to the sphere of "domestic reproduction and personal life" and excluded from "the social production of the State," which is considered the dominant sphere, associated with men (Carvalho, 1998, p. 26).

In this context, according to Bourdieu (2011), symbolic power is the power to construct social reality, attributed to men and women. This power holds the means to assert the immediate meaning of the world, instituting values, classifications (hierarchies), and concepts that appear to individuals as spontaneous, natural, and disinterested:

[...] the established order, with its relations of domination, its rights and immunities, its privileges and injustices, except for a few historical accidents, perpetuates itself so effortlessly, and conditions of existence that are most intolerable can permanently be seen as acceptable or even as natural (Bourdieu, 2011, p. 10).

Certainly, discussing the division of social functions between men and women also brings us to the concept of "hegemonic masculinity," elucidated by Connell and Messerschmidt (2016). This concept seeks to explain how certain practices become legitimate in the social sphere, stating that, "Hegemonic masculinity is the configuration of gender practices that embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, the dominant position of men, and the subordination of women" (Connell, 1995, p. 192).

In agreement with Connell and Messerschmidt (2016), we observe that models of masculinity are constantly changing throughout history. The way of being a man depends on the historical and cultural context in which one lives. That is, for each society, there are models of masculinity that are also subject to changes, and the way men navigate spaces traditionally labeled as feminine or masculine is influenced by the social context in which they live.

We understand masculinity(ies), according to Connell (1995, p. 188), as "the configuration of practice around the position of men in the structure of gender relations." To discuss the teaching activities of male and female professors in the Federal Institutes (IFs), it is crucial to "always remember the power relations involved" (Connell, 1995, p. 188). These relations are constructed as social practices, sometimes preserving traditions that dictate tasks as masculine or feminine, and other times creating new forms of sexual division of labor.

This is particularly relevant because these institutions historically inherit their origins from the former Agricultural Schools and CEFETs. As such, they may present distinctions in the teaching activities performed by male and female professors, considering that the IFs, due to their history, have been perceived as traditionally masculine spaces. According to Louro (2014, p. 52)

There is a 'conventional narrative' about the way masculinities are constructed, which assumes, through this narrative, that 'every culture has a definition of appropriate conduct and feelings for men'. Boys and young men – for the most part – would learn such conduct and feelings and thus distance themselves from women's behavior. But this would be only one of the possible stories. In other words, what we have here is a representation of being a man that is more visible.

Thus, it is necessary to understand gender relations as historically, culturally, and socially constructed, permeated by power relations, considering both what is already socially established and how men and women experience, internalize, and give meaning to their experiences within their social context. Similarly, it is essential to consider the production of subjectivities based on the actions of humanity duly historicized, analyzing and relating them to systems of power. According to Scott (1995, p. 88), "gender is a primary field within or through which power is articulated. Gender is not the only field, but it seems to have a persistent and recurring way of enabling the signification of power in the West."

The differences in the social and work practices of men and women do not stem from biological differences but are primarily social and cultural constructions with material, political, and ideological foundations. In other words, the sexual division of labor that assigns activities to men and women is culturally and historically shaped by power relations, which define what is understood as masculine or feminine.

In this context, supported by Bourdieu (2011), we understand that behaviors are incorporated through habitus, forming masculine and feminine habitus based on a social and sexual division of labor permeated by power relations. Thus, historically constituted habitus imply, on one side, the power of men over women, and on the other, women hierarchically subjected to men. In this sense, it becomes necessary to better understand a mechanism presented by Bourdieu (2011) that legitimizes the habitus in gender social relations: symbolic power. Therefore, we proceed to a brief theoretical discussion of Bourdieu's concepts that help us to problematize teaching in the Federal Institutes (IFs) from the perspective of gender social relations.

### **Habitus and Symbolic Power: contextualizing concepts**

For Bourdieu (2007), it is necessary to understand the structuring forms of actions that lie in the external field of subjects and how the appropriation and internalization of these actions occur, creating structured dispositions that shape social practices. The author necessarily proposes his theoretical construction with a dialectical character, relating the objective and subjective spheres with the factors that interact to construct social practices. This theoretical approach establishes the development of the concept of habitus, which Bourdieu (2007a, p. 191) defines as “a system of socially constituted dispositions that, as structured and structuring structures, constitute the generative and unifying principle of the set of practices and ideologies characteristic of a group of agents.”

According to Bourdieu (2011), habitus is a set of values, customs, and forms of dominant perceptions of thought schemes incorporated by the subject that enable them to perceive and interpret the social world and, thus, guide and regulate their social practices. As a thought scheme, generally unconscious, maintained according to the author by relations of domination, it acts as a generative principle of cultural strategies that allows the individual to face unpredictable situations or regulated improvisations in society.

In this sense, the concept of habitus is determined by social class condition and is seen as a definition that allows us to reconcile the apparent opposition between external reality and the individual realities of individuals in society. In other words, it helps us think about the relationship, the mediation between external social conditioning and the subjectivity of individuals (Bourdieu, 2011). In line with the author, actions, behaviors, choices, or individual aspirations do not stem from calculations or planning; rather, they are products of the relationship between a habitus and the pressures and stimuli of a social situation in the field where it is embedded.

Habitus, according to the author, can then be understood as a conceptual tool that allows us to reflect on social and cultural relations, that is, the mediation between external social conditioning and the subjectivity of individuals. Viewed from this perspective, habitus can be considered as a path, a mediation between the past and the present, a history being built or the expression of a social identity in constitution.

In this direction, the social functions attributed to women and men are maintained “because it is present, in an objectified state, in the social world and, in an incorporated state, in the habitus, where it functions as a universal principle of vision and division, as a system of categories of perception, thought, and action [...]” (Bourdieu, 2011, p. 137). Thus, social functions are taken almost imperceptibly, in relations of domination through a “system of perception, thought, and action” in the different fields of capitalist and patriarchal society. Therefore, according to Bourdieu (2011), we can ascertain that there is an interdependence between the concept of habitus and field, as habitus is maintained according to the field in which it is situated.

The field of educational institutions – the locus of the investigation that culminated in this essay – is a field composed of social agents holding a quantum of capital of various natures, such as: cultural capital, social capital, political capital, artistic capital, sports capital, and economic capital, which structure and produce a habitus. For Bourdieu (2011), most of the actions of social agents are the product of an encounter between a habitus and a field, since, delimited by values or forms of capital that sustain it, the social dynamics within each field are governed by struggles in which social actors aim to maintain or alter, through relations of force between the fields and the distribution of forms for each specific capital.

Indeed, the cultural capital produced within the field of educational institutions determines divisions for human activity, in which struggles for the possession of symbolic power unfold. This symbolic power produces and confirms the meanings created and reproduced within these spaces. These conflicts consecrate values that become acceptable in these social spaces with symbolic force, which is “a form of power that is exercised over bodies, directly, and, as if by magic, without any physical coercion; but this magic only works with the support of predispositions placed, as driving forces, in the deepest zone of the body” (Bourdieu, 2011, p. 50).

According to Bourdieu (2011), the exercise of this power is primarily carried out through symbolic power, which is expressed in the legitimate imposition through the internalization of the dominant culture via a correlation with existing social inequalities. These inequalities are historically, culturally, and linguistically constructed—always affirmed as a natural, radical, irreducible, and universal difference. The higher and more prestigious



positions in educational institutions tend to be occupied by individuals from socially dominant groups, holders of dominant cultural capital, thus favoring symbolic power in these social spaces. As Bourdieu (2011, p. 137) asserts, “male domination is sufficiently assured that it needs no justification: it can be content to be and to say in practices and discourses that enunciate being as if it were evidence.”

For Bourdieu (2011, p. 157), “men are also prisoners and insidiously victims of the dominant representation, even though it is perfectly aligned with their interests.” Society is structured in male domination, as this author warns, which is one of the various manifestations of symbolic power, which is “soft, insensitive, invisible to its own victims, and is exercised essentially through purely symbolic means of communication and knowledge, or, more precisely, of development, recognition, or, ultimately, feeling” (Bourdieu, 2011, p. 7-8).

As Bourdieu (2011) explains, symbolic power is not only exercised over the dominated, as it occurs through symbolic systems that

[...] are structured and structuring instruments of communication and knowledge that fulfill their political function as instruments of imposition or legitimization of domination, contributing to ensuring the domination of one class over another (symbolic violence), reinforcing its own power through the relations of force that underpin them, thus contributing to the unconscious submission of the dominated” (Bourdieu, 2011, p. 11).

For the dominance to persist and not be perceived by the oppressed, it is necessary that not only the identities of the dominated but also those of the dominants are constructed in accordance with the behavior model in which both the dominated and dominant have no deviation or transgression from the norm. Thus, symbolic power, according to the author, is the process that promotes the maintenance and reproduction of the structures established in historically constructed and (re)constructed gender social relations. In this aspect, symbolic power is exercised through a set of mechanisms that preserve and reproduce the structures of male domination over women, manifested through habitus in different social fields.

### **Some considerations: intertwining conceptual paths**

With the studies conducted on the interaction between teaching work and gender social relations, we emphasize that, although the history of the IFs comes from institutions where the presence of male teachers and students was predominant, we mainly consider that the creation of the RFEPCT (Federal Network of Professional, Scientific, and Technological Education) highlighted the urgency for women's teaching in the IFs to emerge from silence and become a point of discussion in research on teaching work in the IFs. As the authors cited

in this essay suggest, we understand that the relationship between gender and teaching is a social construct permeated by ideologies, values, and power relations that form the social representations of society.

In this proposed theoretical journey, it is important to highlight that we understand the category of gender as an element intertwined with social relations, based on the differences between the sexes, constructed and maintained through symbolic power and the cultural habitus of capitalist and patriarchal society. This perspective helps us problematize the existing relationship between teaching, specifically in Vocational and Technical Education (VET), exercised by both men and women.

Teaching in the IFs, due to their institutional history, was initially designed to be developed by male teachers, as, historically, the institutions preceding the IFs mostly offered courses focused on agricultural and industrial training, fields that have always been strongly associated with male-dominated social spaces. However, with the establishment and expansion of the RFEPCT, this scenario began to change with the expansion of technical, technological, and higher education courses in various areas of knowledge. Consequently, with the widening of academic fields, women began to enter these spaces, both as teachers and students, in a space that, in its history, was predominantly composed of male teachers and students.

Finally, we aim to intertwine the analytical theoretical concepts presented to signal theoretical paths for (re)thinking about teaching work in the IFs, the subject of study in the research that led to this text, from the perspective of gender relations in VET teaching and the RFEPCT, as well as understanding the different stakeholders that may be present in the work activities of male and female teachers who make up the RFEPCT - the IFs.

## References

ANTUNES, R. Os Sentidos do Trabalho: Ensaio sobre a afirmação e a negação do trabalho. 2 ed. Campinas, SP: Boitempo, 2009.

ANTUNES, R. Icebergs à deriva: o trabalho nas plataformas digitais. Coleção: Mundo do trabalho, Boitempo, 2023.

ARAÚJO, E.R.; OLIVEIRA, J.C.P. Educação Profissional e Tecnológica sob uma perspectiva de Gênero: uma breve retrospectiva da trajetória da educação feminina no Brasil.

Revista Brasileira da Educação Profissional e Tecnológica, [S.l.], v. 1, n. 22, p.1-14, 2022.  
BALL, S.J.; MAGUIRE, M.; BRAUN, A. Como as escolas fazem as políticas: atuação em escolas secundárias. Ponta Grossa: Editora UEPG, 2021.

BOURDIEU, P. A dominação masculina. Tradução de Maria Helena Kühner. 10. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 2011.

BOURDIEU, P. Escritos de educação. Edição. 16<sup>a</sup>. ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2015.

BOURDIEU, P. O poder simbólico. Tradução de Fernando Tomaz. 15. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil. 2011.

BRASIL, Lei nº 11.892, de 29 de dezembro de 2008. Institui a Rede Federal de Educação Profissional, Científica e Tecnológica, cria os Institutos Federais de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia, e dá outras providências. Brasília, Planalto, 2008. Disponível em: [www.planalto.gov.br](http://www.planalto.gov.br). Acesso em: 10/09/2024.

CARVALHO, M.P. Gênero e trabalho docente: em busca de um referencial teórico. In: Bruschini, Cristina; Hollanda, Heloisa Buarque de (Orgs.). Horizontes Plurais - novos estudos de Gênero no Brasil. São Paulo: FCC; Ed. 34, 1998.

CONNEL, R. Políticas da masculinidade. Educação e Realidade, Porto Alegre, v. 20, n.2, p. 185- 206, 1995.

CONNELL, R. W; MESSERSCHMIDT, J. W. Masculinidade hegemônica: repensando o conceito. Estudos Feministas, Florianópolis, 21(1): 424, 2016.

FRIGOTTO, G.; CIAVATTA, M.; RAMOS, M. A Política de Educação Profissional no Governo Lula: um percurso histórico controvertido. Educação. Soc.; Campinas, v. 26, n. 92, outubro, 2005.

HIRATA, H.; KERGOAT, D. Novas configurações da divisão sexual do trabalho. Cadernos de Pesquisa, v.37, n.132, p.595-609, 2007.

HIRATA, H. Gênero, patriarcado, trabalho e classe. v. 16. Revista Trabalho Necessário, 2018.

HIRATA, H. Mudanças e permanências nas desigualdades de gênero: divisão sexual do trabalho numa perspectiva comparativa. Friedrich-EbertStiftung, 2015.

HIRATA, H. Nova divisão sexual do trabalho? Um olhar voltado para a empresa e a sociedade. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2002.

LIMA NETO, A. Sexo, sexualidade e gênero na educação profissional no Brasil e na França: estudos exploratórios [recurso eletrônico] / Organizador Avelino de Lima Neto... [et al.]. – Natal: IFRN, 506 p. Avelino de Lima Neto, Ilane Ferreira Cavalcante, Jacques Gleyse e Julie Thomas, 2020.

LOURO, G.L. Gênero, sexualidade e educação: uma perspectiva pós-estruturalista. Ed. 16. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2014.

LOURO, G.L. Mulheres na sala de aula. In: DEL PRIORI, Mary (Org.). História das Mulheres no Brasil. São Paulo: Contexto, p. 443-481, 2004.

LÜDKE, M.; ANDRÉ, M. A Pesquisa em educação: abordagens qualitativas. Rio de Janeiro: E.P.U, 2018.

NOGUEIRA, M.; CATANI, A. Escritos de Educação. Petrópolis. Editora Vozes, 2011.  
 PACHECO, E. Fundamentos político-pedagógicos dos institutos federais: diretrizes para uma educação profissional e tecnológica transformadora. Natal: IFRN, 2015.

SANTOS, E.F. Gênero, Subjetivação e Educação Profissional: Discursos e sentidos no cotidiano do Instituto Federal de Sergipe. 2013. 325 f. Tese (Doutorado em Educação) - Universidade Federal de Sergipe, 2013.

SAVIANI, D. Crise estrutural, conjuntura nacional, coronavírus e educação – o desmonte da educação nacional. Revista Exitus, [S. l.], v. 10, n. 1, agosto, 2020.

SCOTT, J. Gênero: uma categoria útil de análise. Gênero e educação: educação e realidade. Porto Alegre, v. 20, n. 2, p. 71-100, 1995.

SOUZA, L. M.; LIMA NETO, A. A. Fazendo gênero na educação profissional: notas epistemológicas a partir do estado de conhecimento sobre educação profissional e gênero na Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações (2008-2019). Cadernos De Pesquisa, 26(4), 235–250, 2019.