

CHAPTER 9

MATHEMATICS EDUCATION: FOR WHOM?

Mônica Mesquita
University of Lisbon

To rethink about our role as researchers of the mathematics education process could be a way to think about the relation between for what and why mathematics education exists. Some thoughts, that grew from my inner dialogues as a researcher, teacher, student, and mother that I am, were developed within practices inside multiple systems in which I was engaged, bringing some questions that became a paper from the necessity for sharing them in the Discussion Group 3 of the ICME environment.

RESEARCHERS AND EDUCATION: OUR SITUCIONALIDADE

The relation between researchers and education is much more than a simple professional connection. The praxis of researcher in the educational process goes beyond research practices—we have other roles in the world as educators: the roles of parents, of teachers, and as students in our own researcher's practices. I take as my task to focus on the role of the mathematics education process in relation to our multiple identities, questioning ourselves, mainly searching to realize the strong relations that exist between mathematical education and school:

In my case, the appearance of contradictory feelings about my role as a teacher, and the awareness of school's role in a hegemonic society. The fact that I was not making any change as a teacher, although I had the will to do so and was developing some activities in my school, with that purpose. I simply felt that all those enterprises were suppressed by a school structure that has other purposes for education visible in mechanisms like the high-stakes tests and selection role taking care by school; the culture of individualism that students felt, and the appeal to be competitive; the central mathematical curriculum. The contradictions arose when I started to criticize, in an academic field, the same practices I developed as a teacher: I continue to propose lots of routine exercises, preparing kids for exams, reproving children, conveying the idea that mathematics is just for some, taking an authoritarian role as a teacher, controlling students, etc. I felt the need of understanding the role of school in our society. (Pais, 2008)

In my case, I am reacting to the appearance of feelings about my roles as teacher but still as researcher and mother, and the awareness of the role of school in society at large, planting and cultivating the hegemony in the actual societies. I could feel some changes as teacher, researcher, and mother in the relation between school and me but these changes are at a level to contribute different strategies to maintain the order that exists in our hegemonic society. The lack of connection between the school and the process of knowledge, as a collective work, that I could feel as teacher, researcher, and mother gave me support to ask myself about my active role as a critic of the system that I am constructing and that constructs me. Do I want it? What does education mean? Do I agree with this order of the power of corporification and of the ethic of identification maintained by the school institution?

RESEARCHERS AND SCHOOL: A PATHWAY TO CORPORIFICATION AND IDENTIFICATION

School, as a modern institution, has the purpose of governing. Governance refers to the principles of classifications that differentiate and order who we are, should become, and those who are not "capable." In school we learn to be governed. Which behaviours are right, which things can and can't be said? This is how school appears in modernity, as an apparatus to govern population by fabricating the kinds of subjects that hegemonic society stipulate as normal, by the dissemination of norms that work as calibration/standardization devices.

Corporification acts by means of power, mechanisms, techniques, norms, rules, discourses that position us in order to become knowledgeable and capable of being administered. Universal and compulsory schooling catches

up the lives of all young children into a pedagogic machine that operates not only to impact knowledge but also to instruct in conduct and to supervise, evaluate, and rectify pathologies.

Intrinsic in this process of corporification is the simultaneous process of identification with the other, in the multiple systems in which human beings are engaged, reinforced by the schooling process, which promotes better things in their lives. These identifications are sustained by the ethic of schooling. One strong focus of the school is to maintain the elitist ethic, although some activities have been developed to bring the voice of the other trying to resist the hegemony. The rules exist in the schooling process to support the “normal” . . . normalizing societies.

RESEARCHERS AND MATHEMATICAL KNOWLEDGE: OUR FOCUS

Except for the name of the discipline and the words of disciplinary knowledge, school subjects have little relation to the intellectual fields that bears their names in schooling (Popkewitz, 2002). In the corporification and identification sense, mathematical knowledge is only an alibi to the learning of rules and norms, through mechanisms and techniques like the type of activities proposed in a mathematics class by the discourse that embodies mathematical knowledge, the exams, etc. The education of mathematics is only recognized in a schooling sense.

The power and the ethic of mathematical knowledge in the schooling process bring not only the necessity of students, teachers, researchers, and parents to have success but also the necessity to be happy as a part of it. The mechanisms and the rules construct and are constructed in the scholar body by means of obligation and desire. Intrinsic in this body, the relations of power and ethic appear linked with the process of pleasure and submission, and with the political correctness where, respectively, the duty becomes pleasure and the pleasure becomes duty.

To view mathematical knowledge as a closed system, as a divine thing that we need to obey, breaks with its possibility of exchanging energy in interaction with others, with the non-schooling mathematical knowledge; breaks with the way of maintaining it as an opening tool of systems through voices that come from all the identities that we have inside us as researchers.

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Totally inserted inside this obligation and desire “game” some thoughts came to me as, for example, *for whom are we playing this game?* My feeling is

that I am being cynical, because I know the ideology that is inside my roles as mother, teacher, student and researcher . . . I criticise it, but I continue living it, planting and cultivating the hegemonic scholar system.

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