

## Unveiling race relations in pedagogical practices: a decolonial reading of everyday school life



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### Abstract

This article brings an excerpt from the master's thesis defended in 2023 and sought to understand the place of anti-racist education and the decolonial perspective in the pedagogical practices of teachers in the area of Human Sciences (Geography, History and Philosophy). The research, of a qualitative nature, aimed to highlight the reflection of ethnic-racial diversity in a public space of education, through meetings with teachers and the production of pedagogical letters. The “decolonial doing” (Ocaña; López, 2019) was used as another way to think about the methodology based on decolonial principles. The analysis revealed that the spaces used by teachers to include ethnic-racial issues in pedagogical practices, in most cases, involve spontaneous situations in the relationship between students in the daily life of classes, but need to be intentionally included in the curriculum as guided by Law no. 10.639/2003, which calls into question the urgency of critical, anti-racist and decolonial teacher training, promoting denaturalization and confronting racism.

### Keywords

ethnic-racial relations; anti-racist education; decoloniality; curriculum; teacher training.

### Desvelando as relações raciais nas práticas pedagógicas: uma leitura decolonial do cotidiano escolar

### Resumo

Este artigo traz um recorte da dissertação de mestrado defendida em 2023 e buscou compreender o lugar da educação antirracista e da perspectiva decolonial nas práticas pedagógicas dos/as professores/as da área de Ciências Humanas (Geografia, História e Filosofia). A pesquisa, de natureza qualitativa, visou evidenciar a reflexão da diversidade étnico-racial em espaço público de educação, através de encontros com os/as professores/as e produção de cartas pedagógicas. Utilizou-se o “fazer decolonial” (Ocaña; López, 2019) como outra maneira para pensar a metodologia baseada em princípios decoloniais. A análise revelou que os espaços utilizados pelos/as professores/as para incluir as questões étnico-raciais nas práticas pedagógicas, na maioria das vezes, envolve situações espontâneas no relacionamento entre os estudantes no cotidiano das aulas, mas precisam ser incluídas intencionalmente no currículo conforme orienta a Lei nº 10.639/2003, o que faz questionar a urgência de formação docente crítica, antirracista e decolonial, promovendo a desnaturalização e o enfrentamento do racismo.

### Palavras-chave

relações étnico-raciais; educação antirracista; decolonialidade; currículo; formação docente.

**Develando las relaciones raciales en las prácticas pedagógicas:  
una lectura decolonial de la vida escolar cotidiana****Resumen**

Este artículo presenta un extracto de la disertación de maestría defendida en 2023 y que buscó comprender el lugar de la educación antirracista y la perspectiva decolonial en las prácticas pedagógicas de los docentes del área de Ciencias Humanas (Geografía, História y Filosofía). La investigación, de carácter cualitativo, tuvo como objetivo evidenciar el reflejo de la diversidad ethico-racial en los espacios públicos de educación, a través de encuentros con profesores y la producción de cartas pedagógicas. Como otra forma de pensar la metodología basada en principios decoloniales, se utilizó el “hacer decolonial” (Ocaña; López, 2019). El análisis reveló que los espacios utilizados por los profesores para incluir cuestiones étnico-raciales en las prácticas pedagógicas involucran, en la mayoría de los casos, situaciones espontáneas en las relaciones entre los estudiantes en el cotidiano del aula, pero necesitan ser incluidas intencionalmente en el currículo conforme a lo orientado por la Ley nº 10.639/2003, lo que plantea interrogantes sobre la urgencia de una formación docente crítica, antirracista y decolonial, promoviendo la desnaturalización y el enfrentamiento del racismo.

**Palabras clave**

ethnic-racial relations; educación antirracista;; decolonialidad; plan de estudios; formación docente

**1 Introduction**

This article is an excerpt from a master's thesis defended in 2023 at the Graduate Program in Education (PPGE) of the State University of Southwest Bahia (UESB) and aimed to understand the place of anti-racist education and the decolonial perspective in the pedagogical practices of teachers in the area of Human Sciences (Geography, History and Philosophy) in the context of a municipal public school in the final years of elementary school. Thus, the research discussed anti-racist education in a school context, from a decolonial perspective<sup>1</sup>.

To deal with this theme and understand it, it is necessary to reflect on racism and the social/educational effects it generates, as well as the need to break this logic. In this sense, the school, as a formal space for education, has immense potential for such discussion. However, instead of combating prejudices, this space often tends to reinforce stereotypes and reproduce racism. This is because, notably in school spaces, there is still the appreciation of hegemonic knowledge that disregards other knowledge, thus

<sup>1</sup>In this research, “[...] decoloniality refers to the struggle against the logic of coloniality and its material, epistemic and symbolic effects” (Maldonado-Torres, 2020, p. 36).

expressing a uniform character and loaded by a Eurocentric vision that reproduces ideas and thoughts, pointing to a history of winners and losers, exposing models of admittedly scientific knowledge, such as those that must be learned, that deserve space.

This study showed the reflection of ethnic-racial diversity in pedagogical practices in public spaces of education, a fundamental exercise to (re)think about the relationships and attitudes that permeate this environment. Cavalleiro (2001, p. 150) points out that: “[...] in everyday school life, anti-racist education<sup>2</sup> aims at the eradication of prejudice, discrimination and differentiated treatments”, therefore, dealing with an education that calls itself anti-racist is to start a path that leads to reflection with a view to transforming thoughts that reverberate in changing actions and extirpating discriminatory attitudes that lead to the persistence of the logic of inequality at school and consequently in the social spaces where these subjects live together.

The theoretical-methodological approach used was based on decolonial theory, principles of anti-racist education and critical interculturality. It established a dialogue with public education, sought to enhance in the participating subjects a decolonizing thinking about their pedagogical practices. In this sense, he questioned the bases of Eurocentric education that reflects the reality of structural racism in Brazilian society. For the construction of information, decolonizing meetings and the production of pedagogical letters were carried out from the approach of autobiographical narratives.

In view of the moments with the research participants, it was possible to perceive that the insertion of the racial theme in their pedagogical practices in many situations was not directly linked to the program content, but was motivated by daily events, based on speeches observed among the students themselves, which demonstrates an urgent need for actions in the school in order to make the implementation of Law no. 10.639/2003 an effective reality in daily life. Therefore, we will bring in this article a discussion of how racial relations in the pedagogical practices of teachers tension the reading of school daily life in various circumstances.

This article is organized first in this Introduction, in which we present and contextualize the theme that moved the study. Next, we bring the methodological path

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<sup>2</sup>The spelling of the word meets the original written by the author; throughout the text, we meet the spelling according to the Orthographic Agreement of the Portuguese Language of 1990.

that helped us in the construction of a decolonial doing of research. Soon after, it follows the presentation of the results and discussions undertaken in order to stress “The movement to include racial issues in classes”, “The influence of Law no. 10.639/03 on pedagogical practices” and the “Effects of the ethnic-racial issue in the classroom space”. We conclude by bringing some considerations that emerged from the discussions proposed in this study.

## 2 Decolonialize: deconstruct to build together

Considering the implication of this research with decoloniality, when thinking about the methodology that would support it, it was necessary to unveil some questions, namely: “How to make the voices of the participants visible? How can we not just represent them in the texts? How to create spaces and ways for these voices to be heard? Of narratives being constructed?” (Silva; Moura; Santos, 2021, p. 152). These questions served as a basis for thinking about the spaces for the construction of information<sup>3</sup>.

Thus, we find in Ocaña and López (2019) the rationale to support the way of conducting research following decolonial principles, which does not represent a new methodology, but another option to do research bringing the importance of making participants visible and placing the researcher as a learner in the construction process, that is, as a “decolonial mediator” (Ocaña; López, 2019, p. 159, our translation).

Thus, when thinking about the process of building information, considering the decolonial character of this work, it was challenging to find a path that would allow the researcher to work with the participants in order to collaborate with the reflections of these subjects, providing a direct contribution in the field of research. Thus, the production of autobiographical narrative writing was used to construct the research information. This choice was not random, but emerged after many searches that led to realize the potential of this approach within research that proposes to *decolonize*. This choice was made because the autobiographical approach “[...] is, therefore, about

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<sup>3</sup>We used the same perspective as Santos (2020) in the research, assuming that, in decolonial research, we do not collect data, but build information.

endorsing the human capacity for reflexivity, via the movement of autobiographical writing and the learning that results from this reflection” (Silva, 2014, p. 19).

We considered a way to build information with the participants and that these moments could offer the subjects involved a feedback in reflection that would contribute to their training, given that, when talking and reflecting on their experiences in relation to the development of pedagogical practices, teachers had the opportunity to (re)think about their routes in everyday school life.

From the perspective of “decolonial doing” (Ocaña; López, 2019), the researcher positions himself/herself not as a researcher collecting data, but as a decolonial mediator, the one who proposes himself/herself as “[...] an actor, a facilitator of liberating processes” (Ocaña; López, 2019, p. 159, our translation). And it is the actions taken that provide the basis for mediation. Thus, the authors argue that this mediation occurs considering the “[...] communal contemplation, alterative conversation and configurative reflection” (Ocaña; López, 2019, p. 159, our translation). It was these three actions that contributed to the construction of information in the countryside, where everyone could perceive themselves as participants and whose reflection was built together.

In this process, the researcher's action as a mediator guarantees the decolonial process, so the application of communal contemplation enables a moment of rapprochement between the subjects, in which both can express their emotions without embarrassment. The alterative conversation reflects the moment of exchange of experiences, in which everyone can feel free to talk about the proposed theme expressing their experiences, including the researcher. The configurative reflection composes the analysis of previous processes, based on reflection and openness to the realities of the participants, welcoming them without determining judgments. The whole process represents a change in the researcher's way of acting, which involves a decolonial way of feeling in the research, also involving herself as a participant.

In this sense, the methodology of this work involved the holding of four decolonizing meetings with the participants, teachers in the area of Human Sciences who work in Cycle 4, Phases I and II (6th and 7th grade classes), and who are part of the effective staff of teachers of the school unit field of research. The area of knowledge in which the participants work comprises the curricular components: History, Geography

and Philosophy. The choice of this area was primarily due to the proximity of the researcher, a teacher in the same area in the school unit who realizes the relevance of a reflection on ethnic-racial issues. We consider that, in relation to the curricular components of this area of knowledge, Laws Nos. 10.639/2003 and 11.645/2008 place greater emphasis on the approach of the curricular component History, but, at the same time, they guide that the themes be included throughout the curriculum, which denotes the relevance of reflecting on this issue with the teachers who work in the other curricular components of the area.

The meetings were driven by “reflective questions” that were the basis for dialogue and that motivated the writing of pedagogical letters. Thus, this research presented an autobiographical approach for treating and valuing the stories about the professional life of teachers, taking into account that the pedagogical narratives are “[...] the sayings and writings of teachers and school professionals” (Prado, 2013, p. 150).

We emphasize that the analyzes carried out were based on decolonial references and principles of anti-racist education and coping with the faces of racism, that is, markers of coloniality<sup>4</sup> and decoloniality were used in the analysis, but also readings from authors with whom we dialogue in the research that outline the panorama of racism/anti-racism present in the experiences of the participants. We brought to the analysis the perspective of operationalization of the methodological matrix suggested by Martins and Benzaquen (2017), which tensions the concepts of coloniality of power, knowledge and being that can create movements of interpretation of social phenomena, and education is one of them. Thus, the analysis of the information constructed was based on the observation/identification of colonial and decolonial markers present in the narratives of the participants and the presence of racism and anti-racism in their experiences, based on oral narratives, through decolonizing encounters, and written, through pedagogical letters. Below, we describe the results of the reflections of the participating teachers in relation to the inclusion of ethnic-racial issues in their pedagogical practices.

### 3 The movement to include racial issues in classes

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<sup>4</sup>Coloniality “[...] can be understood as a global logic of dehumanization [...]” (Maldonado-Torres, 2020, p. 36). It involves the spheres of power, knowledge and being.

I was only seven years old, / Only seven years old, / What seven years! / It wasn't even five! Suddenly voices in the street shouted at me: Black! - Black! Black! Black! Black! Black! / 'Am I black?' – He told me 'YES'! / 'What's it like to be black?' [...] (Excerpt from the poem “*Me gritaram negra*”, by Victoria Santa Cruz).

The excerpt from the poem with which we opened this section was the contribution of one of the research participants, Professor Maria Felipa<sup>5</sup>, who, involved in the discussions of the meetings, decided to take to the classroom a text, the poem “*Me gritaram negra*”, by Victoria Santa Cruz, in order to discuss racial belonging with the students:

*I asked a question on one occasion. Who considered himself black! It was a reason for laughter, to point out the other. I took a poem to work in the classroom: 'They call me black' and, at the time of the presentation, I would have had to have a protagonist to recite the poem, when they pointed out a black girl. And I said it could be anyone. Although we are occupying space that we did not see before, as in the most diverse professions, in TV commercials, in product commercials, in the main roles in soap operas in prime time, still, before some, our capacity, or importance, is not yet recognized (Professor Maria Felipa, Pedagogical Letter 4, 2022).*

The pedagogical experience lived by the teacher with her students provided a joint reflection on how the black presence is perceived in the spaces and also the importance of racial appreciation and belonging, revealing how much the classroom is immersed in the consequences of the coloniality of being, which has been acting for centuries reinforcing the inferiority of certain social groups, especially the black population, making children and adolescents not feel comfortable or proud in assuming black identity or wanting to include or compare themselves, on the contrary, they seek means of “defense” so that they are not recognized as such, as if, implicitly, echoing a voice that says: “I do not want to be recognized as *black*, but as *white*” (Fanon, 2008, p. 69). This is very common in Brazilian society, many may be black, but I am not. I am dark, light-skinned, my hair is not “bad”, my nose is not “boring”, I am not black, so “[...] shame reigns. Shame and contempt of self” (Fanon, 2008, p. 109). Therefore, the need to decolonize minds, which are immersed in the coloniality of being and at all times send

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<sup>5</sup>To identify the teachers participating in the research, the names of black and indigenous characters with invisible importance in the history of Bahia were used as a means of giving them notoriety.

messages of devaluation, contempt and repulsion to the body. This reality denotes a reality where black students “[...] live with exclusion, contempt and violence, being denied the right to their identity, ancestry, pride and appreciation of being who they are” (Ribeiro; Squilante, 2022, p. 14). The following narratives are other examples of how the racial issue was shown in pedagogical practice beyond school content:

*In my pedagogical practice, within the contents covered during the school year, I try to open spaces for discussions about prejudice and racism, in order to allow students to expose their feelings, which often resembled my daughter's feelings. Sometimes, I noticed the reproduction of speeches that come from their family environment or living in the places of residence, even prejudiced expressions. I try to show the reasons that are implicit in the speeches, in the offensive expressions, so that feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem are not reproduced (Professor Nivalda Tupinambá, Pedagogical Letter 1, 2022).*

*In my practice, it is a parameter to work on these issues, especially with everyday facts, which is a constant today. These are very difficult topics to work on. Racial issues are something colonial and cultural – why not say a process also linked to home education? Concepts are created by the relationships that students establish with their own, another factor that hinders the teacher's work. The school, I believe, has to see itself in the role of demystifying all these prejudices, concepts, that have been installed for generations [...]. In the classroom, in addition to discussing the facts of reality, I also work with situations that happen inside the classroom [...]. Fortunately, I make my classes the place for debate, recognition related to the lack of respect for human beings (Professor Maria Felipa, Pedagogical Letter 2, 2022).*

In the first narrative, Professor Nivalda Tupinambá states that she opens spaces before the contents with discussions that involve the racial debate in relation to overcoming prejudices, as a means of overcoming denial and silencing, which have consequences for the constitution of the students' being. Oliveira (2020) reflects on the importance that should be given to the prejudiced views that are observed in everyday school life, considering that neglect and silencing can cause serious problems for subjects, including reaching their physical and mental well-being.

In these two narratives, a common point of view appears, since the two teachers affirm that the actions of racial prejudice emitted in the classroom originate in the family, that is, in their view, the home would be the place where such visions are created and strengthened and, in the school, they are reproduced. Cavalleiro (2001) reflects on the family's relationship with the racial issue, showing that this reinforcement can indeed happen, as well as silencing. However, the author makes a very pertinent approach in this context, as she concludes that, in most cases, prejudice perceived at school is

considered as the fault of family relationships, with teachers having difficulty in recognizing that the school can indeed be the place where the problem is born or reinforced, and teachers are usually pointed out as “part of the solution” (Cavalleiro, 2001, p. 68), placing racism as a problem that the school needs to deal with, but that would have no responsibility for its origin. Almeida (2020, p. 41) addresses this discussion by showing that institutions have a racist character:

[...] dominance occurs with the establishment of discriminatory parameters based on race, which serve to maintain the hegemony of the racial group in power. This makes the culture, aesthetic standards and power practices of a given group become the civilizing horizon of society as a whole.

Even with evidence of this reality, teachers seem to be afraid to understand the school as crossed by institutional racism. In view of the narratives, it is clear that, for the teacher to include the racial theme in his/her practice, in a certain way, he/she needs to transgress in his/her pedagogical practice, opening spaces, in the midst of the contents, for discussions, from the perception of reality. Therefore, recognizing racism as a theme related to pedagogical practices is essential. Thus, although Law No. 10.639/2003 makes the teaching of Afro-Brazilian History and Culture mandatory, it is still difficult for the teacher to understand how this should be included in their practice; when it is, in a way, it is recognized as a separate work, due to the needs that some identify, either in the relationship between the students or in the situations of society that they feel the need to address.

It is essential to think about the treatment of ethnic-racial issues beyond this bias. Countering/confronting racism is one of the possibilities, but it is necessary to rethink, for example, the inclusion of themes/authors/worldviews that are excluded in school education, the ways of conceiving and explaining reality, thinking from the wisdom of black and indigenous peoples, which is a fundamental point to consider, breaking the strong influence of the coloniality of knowledge. For Gomes (2020, p. 224):

Resuming black Brazilian and foreign authors, remembering who were the black leaders who participated in the main emancipatory changes in the world, highlighting their productions and getting to know the academic disputes of black men and women in the world of Brazilian knowledge production in the context of Latin American decolonial literature concerns a path of epistemological and political rupture in the sense of decolonizing curricula and the field of knowledge itself.

This path of inclusion of invisible knowledge in school education is extremely necessary and composes a decolonial exercise because it highlights the protagonism of the inferiorized, leading to the constitution of an anti-racist and decolonial education. Ribeiro and Squilante (2022) corroborate this idea by stating in their study the need to include themes that refer to the history of Africa and Africans, involving the struggles undertaken and their contributions in the most varied social spheres, throughout the development of the school curriculum, and not in a sporadic and discontinued way.

Such an exercise encounters many obstacles, mainly because the logic of colonialities resists through many strategies in maintaining a system that defines a worldview that has no interest in negotiating (Maldonado-Torres, 2020). In order to think from decoloniality, it is necessary to question the Eurocentrism present in school practices, as proposed by Martins and Benzaquen (2017), and it is possible to perceive this when Professor Gregório Luís explains how the ethnic-racial theme permeates his pedagogical practices:

*When I show all the cultural and intellectual wealth of Africans not only in Brazil but also in the world. With education, I try to show how intelligent black people of African descent are and the importance of Africa to the world as the cradle of humanity and how evolved it was and the influence of religion on the unity of its people. The idea of representativeness and belonging to such an intelligent and creative people, who were not let down by being enslaved, since they also revolted and did not accept captivity, thus demonstrating their haughtiness and love for their place of origin (Professor Gregório Luís, Pedagogical Letter 2, 2022).*

The teacher's narrative reveals that in his pedagogical practices he seeks to address a positive view of blacks, their contributions, struggle and resistance. This perspective comprises the exercise of pedagogical practices as a space to show the contributions of black knowledge, and not only the denouncing perspective of racism and the fight against prejudice, providing students with access to knowledge produced by the black population in confrontation with the hegemonic logic of knowledge. Practices with this inclusive character are essential in the construction of an anti-racist education as a decolonial project, because, "[...] if we do not question the unique character of what we consider developed, modern, civilized, true, beautiful, we cannot favor processes in which intercultural dialogue is promoted" (Candau, 2020, p. 681). And if the desire is to build an

education that thinks from decoloniality, it is therefore essential to praise other stories that are constantly suffocated by the coloniality of knowledge. Ribeiro (2019, p. 64-65) points out that:

The importance of studying black authors is not based on an essentialist view, that is, on the belief that they should be read only because they are black. The point is that it is unrealistic that in a society like ours, with a black majority, only one group dominates the formulation of knowledge. Is it possible to believe that black people do not elaborate the world?

There is a call here to change the field of discussion of problems related to prejudice and racism in everyday school life and in situations of social reality to another way of coping also necessary: the construction of the vision of the black population as a participant in the construction of knowledge, demonstrating its importance in the historical constitution of this country. It is important to carry out a critical analysis of the condition of inferiorized groups in pedagogical practices, because “[...] raising the question about the meaning and importance of colonization constitutes a challenge to the usual concept of ‘discovery’, and brings to light the problematic character of land and resource appropriation and its implications to this day” (Maldonado-Torres, 2020, p. 33). Making these historical processes known is to provide an opportunity to transform the way Brazilian history and identity constitution are conceived.

In this sense, “[...] in Brazil, we have to treat together indigenous, Afro-descendants, descendants of Europeans and Asians, without fear of tensions, open to our diversity, without anyone wanting to be the best, the superior” (Silva, 2007, p. 502, our translation). Expanding the knowledge of history is to make visible the various forms of existence that contributed to its formation and can contribute today with different ways of thinking and producing knowledge, that is, breaking the coloniality of knowledge leads to a process that constitutes a true decolonization in minds and bodies.

#### **4 The influence of Law No. 10.639/2003 on pedagogical practices**

Law no. 10.639/2003 was an achievement and a huge advance in the field of education for racial relations, while denoting how much in this country the racial issue is a territory of confrontations. In relation to this law, Professor Nivalda Tupinambá showed

that she has a direct relationship in the context of her pedagogical practices. In his words, he argues:

*In fact, the inclusion of Afro-Brazilian studies in schools only became effective from Law No. 10.639. Since then, teachers have been concerned with deepening their studies and expanding discussions about racism and prejudice in relation to skin color and hair type, especially when they stopped to think about how racist our society is and that racial democracy is in fact a myth, since structural racism is prevalent. [...] In my pedagogical practice, I try to work on ethnic-racial relations during the school year, taking into account compliance with Law No. 10.639, which deals with the mandatory study of Afro-Brazilian history and culture in schools and also realizing the importance that this study has in the school environment, where there is a very great social diversity, as it involves students from different social contexts. Trying to minimize racist and prejudiced initiatives is our role as educators committed to an education that promotes citizenship (Professor Nivalda Tupinambá, Pedagogical Letter 2, 2022).*

The teacher highlights how important the implementation of Law no. 10.639/2003 was for racial discussion to gain more space in school, as well as the reflection on the importance of valuing different identities. Likewise, it highlights that, from then on, the theme was recognized to be analyzed critically, revealing racisms and strategies for its functioning and perpetuation. The teacher recognizes the relevance of the implementation of the law and seeks to apply it with initiatives in her pedagogical practices, in the daily life of classes, in order to break racism. It should be noted that:

As advanced as a law may be, it is in the social dynamics, in the political clash and in everyday life that it tends to be legitimized or not. And the social and educational reality on which a law intends to act (as fair as the legal precept may seem to us) is always complex, conflictual, contradictory and marked by the lack of social and racial equity. The laws come from there. Therefore, no law can be considered neutral (Gomes, 2001, p. 89).

As the author reflects, the reason of a law must be in the way it is applied, which includes the real subjects involved in this process and the conditions they receive to implement it. However, the scenario presented is a law implemented more than 20 years ago and still with enormous problems for its effectiveness, because “[...] from the law to the new mentality and effective action, there is much to undo, redo and do” (Silva, 2007, p. 499).

Munanga (2005) states that if, on the one hand, there are no laws that can prove sufficient to eliminate discrimination of any kind, their existence is of paramount importance, especially when it affects the spheres of education, mainly due to their ability

to make subjects question their history and the order of things, so, in this context, the action of teachers is crucial.

From this perspective, it is important to reflect on the way education is understood, whether as an individualized work or an action that is built together, based on discussions, sharing and collective discoveries, after all “[...] complying with the Law is, therefore, the responsibility of everyone and not just the teacher in the classroom. Thus, a solidary commitment of the various links of the Brazilian education system is required” (Brasil, 2004, p. 26). This understanding, if put into practice, could contribute considerably to a transformation in the educational scenario, given that proposing the participation of teachers in this discussion presupposes that they are prepared to question the contexts of implementation of the law and give suggestions on them, which also requires questioning the teacher's training in this sense.

For Cavalleiro (2001, p. 148), “It can be said that racial inequality in school instruction results to some extent from non-investment [*sic*] in a quality public school, in which teachers are prepared and attentive to racial diversity”. It is worth asking: are these people having opportunities to open up to thinking about ethnic-racial issues in their daily lives? That is, thinking about a school that offers quality public education requires not neglecting the inequalities existing within it and seeking to overcome them and the preparation of its professionals is a fundamental action. According to Medeiros and Abreu (2021, p. 103):

Discussing these issues within education, and more specifically in teacher training, becomes a unique need, since colonialism, coloniality and modernity are concepts historically constructed from this context by one (dominant) people over another (dominated) people and that have a strong influence on the various sectors of society, and especially on education.

Providing teachers with a rethinking of their training is to counter the logic of colonialities, an urgent and insurgent action for the construction of a school that is actually anti-racist. Furthermore, the reflections of this investment can be felt in society as a whole, reflecting on the school's extramural relationships. Considering this reality, the National Curriculum Guidelines for the Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations and for the Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture (DCNERER) state:

[...] the need to insist and invest so that teachers, in addition to solid training in the specific area of activity, receive training that enables them not only to understand the importance of issues related to ethnic-racial diversity, but to deal positively with them and above all to create pedagogical strategies that can help to re-educate them (Brasil, 2004, p. 17).

The changes in the real scenario of school education go through a process of rethinking, reorganizing, restructuring, confronting and mainly building movements that transgress from decoloniality, providing the combination of different knowledge so that transformative practices become reality. This path is only possible when education is understood in its entirety, requiring joint investments that lead to training paths, generating changes in the mentality of professionals, who are insistently watered by strategies of the colonized world in maintaining their exclusionary logic.

## 5 Effects of ethnic-racial issue on classroom space

During the decolonizing meetings and in the development of the pedagogical charts, the participants demonstrated significant moments with the racial approach in their pedagogical practices and the effects that this generated. Professor Maria Felipa reported how interesting it is to realize that, when other ways of thinking are worked on, the student can surprise, seeing other possibilities to read the world. Some of his reports showed how impressive it is that students are unaware of themes and discussions related to the racial issue, but that, at the same time, he is surprised to see the positive participation of others, including expressing the perception of the unequal treatment they experience in their daily lives, relating this reality to a “color problem”:

*The 6th grade boys did a search for some terms that are considered prejudiced. There was so much: ‘mule’<sup>6</sup>, that I didn’t even know [...]. I put some words that they do not know; the issue of quotas, that they do not know why the quotas. The word ‘recognition’ appeared; they do not know; ‘victimize’; so many words I put; 7th grade and do not know, imagine the 6th (Professor Maria Felipa, Meeting 3, 2022).*

<sup>6</sup>The teacher refers to the connection of the word “mule” with the expression “mulatto”, as many people still use this term loaded with racism to refer to a person of white and black descent.

*They put a lot of things, mainly the question of prejudice, because of color. When they arrive at a store, when they arrive in “Lojas Americanas”<sup>7</sup>, there are many cases that entered together with boys from other schools, and they were looked at more than the others, and they do not know what reaction to take, they are afraid, ashamed and leave quietly. ‘They kept looking at me, teacher. I was embarrassed and left quietly’ (Professor Maria Felipa, Meeting 3, 2022).*

*A 7th grade boy asked: ‘Teacher, have you ever seen a party there on Avenida<sup>8</sup> who receives baculejo? Black who is wearing a cap, has a tattoo; we never see those white guys on the Avenue receiving baculejo [...]’. Another day, a 7th grade boy came: ‘Aunt, I’m proud of my color’ and ran out for the break, but then I didn’t talk to him anymore, why did he come to tell me that (Professor Maria Felipa, Encounter 3, 2022).*

The teacher's narratives show how much she evidences in her pedagogical practices a critical knowledge of the racial reality in which the students are inserted. The discussions open space for students to be able to make readings that would go unnoticed on a daily basis. Moments like these are important to understand how they think and how they act in a society where structural racism is present outlining social relations. It is possible to identify in these reports the strong influence of the colonialities of power and being through the imposition of a white hegemony reflected in the social positions perceived by the students. They feel the reflection of a hierarchical society that imposes models of human beings considered adequate to attend certain spaces, while others are denied the right to be who they are freely.

Discussions like these need to permeate the daily life of pedagogical practices, as they aim to generate transformations in the way adolescents understand relationships in society. Candau (2020, p. 681) states that “[...] denaturalizing the processes of coloniality constitutes a fundamental challenge for the development of critical and decolonial intercultural education”. It is important that this challenge becomes more frequent in pedagogical practices in order to generate changes in the mentalities of students, deconstructing the colonialities that are naturalized in their daily relationships in social webs.

This bias of discussing and facing situations of racism has a reason for being, as stated by Professor Maria Felipa (Pedagogical Letter 2, 2022): “*These are facts that must*

<sup>7</sup>The teacher refers to the establishment “Lojas Americanas” that is located in the center of the city of Ilhéus, Bahia, and is on the path that many of the students of the school travel every day to reach the school unit, which is also located in the center of the city.

<sup>8</sup>“Avenida” is a reference to one of the noblest neighborhoods in the municipality of Ilhéus, Avenida Soares Lopes, located in the city center.

*be studied, debated, reflected by everyone, as it generates psychological, moral, and physical violence".* The teacher's speech affirms the importance of thinking of the school as a space where social relations reverberate the types of relationships that occur outside it, that is, in a society where racism is structural (Almeida, 2020), logically it would not be different within the school, as students are social beings with the marks and effects of their daily experiences and observations. Teacher Nivalda Tupinambá (Pedagogical Letter 2, 2022) contributes to this same sense of ideas:

*Developing didactic actions addressing prejudice and racism in the school space brings discussions that help our students to deconstruct fixed and prejudice-laden ideas that come from their family and social life and that are present in the society in which we live, but that, through knowledge, little by little can re-signify ideas and values and transform students into less racist adult citizens.*

The teachers' narratives raise an important finding, the consequences of racism for the lives of students, who, not knowing how to deal with them, may suffer irreversible damage. The teacher raises what Kilomba (2020) reflects, thinking about the violence of racism and the evils it causes. Given this scenario, this bias must be worked on, certainly "[...] the conflicts themselves can be used as pedagogical resources in confronting racism" (Ribeiro; Squilante, 2022, p. 8), however, the treatment of the ethnic-racial issue cannot be restricted to this approach. Discussing everyday situations is very important, but to decolonize education and create an anti-racist movement, it is also necessary that these students can recognize themselves within the themes and practices at school, have access to black and indigenous knowledge being more approached and valued, because "[...] nothing justifies keeping ourselves alienated from our own history, from our own culture" (Ribeiro; Squilante, 2022, p. 8).

Therefore, it is necessary to seek references in our deeper cultural and historical roots" (Silva, 2019, p. 14). It is important to destabilize the current order that aims to control subjects by establishing the imposition of a unique worldview (Maldonado-Torres, 2020). Professor Conceição Lopes (Encounter 2, *online*, 2022) points to the importance of rescuing the history of blacks in Brazil, telling other versions of a story sometimes known under a single version:

*It is common to demystify in my practice that thing about the black man as a slave, mainly, in fact, because whoever came here, the slave himself, it is*

*because they were enslaved, removed many princes, many were princesses, enemies who kidnapped and sold them as slaves, not that they were slaves and here they were treated as slaves, but that many played the role of royalty there in their country of origin, so I work on this issue a lot.*

The teacher's narrative brings to the field of discussion the deconstruction of the unique vision of black history, associated with the condition of inferiority, as individuals without intelligence, knowledge, that is, without social and intellectual prestige, as she wants to reinforce an education based on colonialities, acting on knowledge and being. Addressing other sides of the story is very important, as it allows students to question the present reality from a more critical analysis of the condition of the black population and other subalternized groups throughout the history of this country. Therefore:

*[...] it is necessary to corrupt the order of school curricula, which insist on presenting Eurocentric cultural production as the only valid scientific knowledge. The rest comes from the contributions of the different groups that constituted this country: whites, blacks and Indians. What cultures, what knowledge and practices were produced from the relationships between the different cultures elaborated by Indians, blacks and whites? (Santos, 2001, p. 106).*

Teacher Nivalda Tupinambá (*Pedagogical Letter 1*, 2022) also highlights the perception of the racial approach in pedagogical practices, not only as a way to denounce realities of racism, but to allow the recognition and change of posture in the face of the social structure:

*I see that it is very important to address this topic in the classroom, because it is to be observed, in general, that the poorest students are blacks and are those who are at risk of suffering discrimination and are also those who have the most learning difficulties. Trying to minimize the consequences of this racist structure present in our society contributes to the improvement of learning, since students can be less withdrawn and more participatory, which favors the exercise of their citizenship, recognizing their rights and values and even more recognizing their place in the society in which they live.*

The teacher's speech reflects how notorious the relationship between racial and educational inequality is, which is easily observed in everyday school life. Carvalho (2004, p. 250) already signaled in his studies that difficulties in learning performance reach the black public in greater proportions, with more reflection on black boys; he noticed that "[...] black male people have greater difficulties in their school trajectory, followed by black women, white men and, in a better situation, white women". As the teacher suggests, such a discussion needs to be within the school space, exposing this

reality so that black subjects can critically think about social relations, identify the racism present and create means of recognizing themselves identity, affirming their rights. In this sense, we see that, when the racial theme is well worked out at school, it can reverberate in the identity recognition of the students and help them to perceive themselves as subjects of law.

## 6 Final considerations

Therefore, we will bring in this article a discussion of how racial relations in the pedagogical practices of teachers tension the reading of school daily life in various circumstances. It was possible to perceive that, in the exercise of their pedagogical practices, teachers have different understandings, but that converge to a common point: the need to include the racial theme in order to reduce the impacts of racism on the lives of subjects. The concern of teachers is noticeable, however, the absence of articulated work in school means that the subject is not detailed and remains in the field of individual initiatives.

The ethical commitment of the professional, added to his/her social experiences, makes him/her understand the need to somehow deal with racial prejudice when it manifests itself, especially with regard to situations that generate relational problems in classes or when prejudice-laden worldviews are exposed by students. These narratives only reaffirm how much “[...] we can say that we are late. Overcoming discrimination is ‘for yesterday’” (Santos, 2001, p. 111). And this movement involves the joint commitment of the school, the implementation of policies, the struggle for training.

The analysis of the narratives allows us to affirm that it is necessary to break the paradigms posed through education, betting on a “[...] dialogical praxis that breaks the silences, unlocks the gags, removes the sales” (Medeiros; Abreu, 2021, p. 116), recognizing that breaking a secular structure that remains strong, segregating, inferiorizing, stigmatizing, requires joint practices, especially at school, where racism is often identified; in order to combat it, it is necessary to seek to question social structures to guarantee the means for the construction of an anti-racist and decolonial education. It is also important to consider that “[...] fighting racism, working to end social and racial

inequality, undertaking the re-education of ethnic-racial relations are not exclusive tasks of the school" (Brasil, 2004, p. 14), but we believe that the school can constitute a space for confrontation, discussion and racial/social problematization, aiming at conducting pedagogical practices that recognize, question and implement means to destabilize the racist structures of/in society.

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