

From identity constructions to school culture: reflections on the pedagogical practices of a teacher

ARTICLE

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Abstract

The article analyzes pedagogical practices aimed at promoting citizenship developed in an elementary school institution of the State Education Network of Rio Grande do Sul, located in the city of Montenegro, RS. The specific objective is to understand the impact of a teacher's performance, between 1968 and 1997, on the educational conceptions of that institution that contributed to these practices. Therefore, as an investigative procedure, it is based on semi-structured interviews were used, methodologically guided by Oral History. As a result, the present study contributes to the deepening of the discussion about school culture, thought based on collective transformations in interface with individual identity processes and also to the knowledge of democratic and inclusive pedagogical proposals that can be considered innovative in the context in which they occurred.

Keywords: Citizenship. School Institution. Pedagogical Practices. Identity Processes.

Das construções identitárias à cultura escolar: reflexões sobre as concepções pedagógicas de uma professora

Resumo

O artigo analisa práticas pedagógicas voltadas à promoção da cidadania desenvolvidas em uma instituição escolar de ensino fundamental da Rede Estadual de Ensino do Rio Grande do Sul, situada na cidade de Montenegro, RS. O objetivo específico é compreender o impacto da atuação de uma professora, entre os anos de 1968 e 1997, nas concepções educacionais dessa instituição que contribuíram para que estas práticas ocorressem. Para tanto, como procedimento investigativo, foram utilizadas entrevistas semiestruturadas, orientadas metodologicamente pela História Oral. Como resultados, o presente estudo contribui para o aprofundamento da discussão sobre cultura escolar, pensada com base nas transformações coletivas em interface com os processos identitários individuais, e também para o conhecimento de propostas pedagógicas democráticas e inclusivas que podem ser consideradas inovadoras no contexto em que ocorreram.

Palavras-chave: Cidadania. Instituição Escolar. Práticas Pedagógicas, Processos Identitários.

1 Introduction

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This article is an excerpt from a broader investigation that resulted in a master's thesis¹. This research sought to analyze, through the narratives of teachers and former students, a project to value Afro-Brazilian history and culture that took place in an elementary school of the Rio Grande do Sul State Education System, located in the city of Montenegro, RS. Based on the interviews, new study perspectives were produced, including the observation and analysis of pedagogical practices aimed at promoting citizenship developed at this institution and which can be considered innovative, especially if we look at the context in which they were carried out, an issue to be addressed in this text. More specifically, we will try to analyze the impact of a teacher's work on the educational conceptions of this institution, between 1968 and 1997, based on the following research problem: In what way were the pedagogical intentions of a teacher able to contribute to the production of the school culture of the institution in which she worked between 1968 and 1997?

We believe that the importance of this research lies in the possibility of broadening reflections on the production of school culture and how teaching practice can influence this development. In this sense, this production, which is part of the field of the History of Education, puts a strain not only on how a school institution's way of operating and producing its culture can be forged, but also on the teaching professional's subjective understanding of education and how this can be produced and transformed historically in their different identity processes.

Thus, in line with other studies of the trajectories of black educators, we observed that the empowerment experienced through education unfolds in new forms of action that break with stereotypes and also generate new forms of activism. As an example, we can mention the studies on the biographies of Maria Zelma de Araújo Madeira (Fialho and

¹ Entitled *KIZOMBA - black awareness festival: A school project influenced by the Black Movement (Montenegro/RS from 1988 to 2002)*, defended at the Postgraduate Program in Education, University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos (Unisinos), in 2022.

Hernández, 2020) and Zuleide Fernandes Queiroz (Fialho, Freire and Souza, 2022). In their case, the analyses point to the overcoming of enormous difficulties that led them, contrary to the path of other poor and black girls, not only to complete basic education, but to become university professors. The first at the State University of Ceará and the second at the Regional University of Cariri. Their educational trajectories, marked by a lack of financial resources, were given new meaning through their active participation in the struggle for civil rights and citizenship for poor women, especially black women.

In the case of Maria Izabél Vargas da Silva, the teacher studied in this text, we see some similarities and also some differences with the protagonists of the studies mentioned above. The first difference is the fact that Maria Izabél worked throughout her career in primary education and at no time reported any major financial or geographical difficulties in completing her studies. The daughter of a working-class father and a housewife mother, she found teaching to be both an honorable form of female work and a chance to broaden her social and professional insertion. In common with the teachers in the previous studies, we can mention the fact that for Maria Izabél Vargas, teaching also became part of her activism for the visibility and appreciation of black culture in a society marked by discrimination and racism.

For this research, we conducted semi-structured interviews, based on oral history methodology. For Alessandro Portelli (2016), oral history can be understood as the art of listening. Regarding its effects, the author writes: "oral history concerns the historical significance of personal experience, on the one hand, and the personal impact of historical issues, on the other" (2016, p. 16). Portelli also states that:

Oral history, then, is the history of events, the history of memory and the history of the interpretation of events through memory. Memory, in fact, is not a mere deposit of information, but a continuous process of elaboration and reconstruction of meaning (Portelli, 2016, p. 18).

As mentioned above, the research presented here is an excerpt from a master's dissertation that conducted interviews with teachers and former pupils of the school in question. The interview we chose for this article was with teacher Maria Izabél Vargas da

Silva. It should be noted that conversations with this teacher began in 2020. First, phone calls, text messages and audios were made via WhatsApp, since we were facing the coronavirus pandemic and needed to maintain social distancing.

Before the interview, the participants were given an informed consent form. By signing this document, they agreed to the use of the narratives produced. The face-to-face interview with teacher Maria Izabél took place on July 10, 2021, at her home, for 3 hours and 21 minutes, and was then transcribed, textualized and validated by her in August of the same year. We tried to keep the transcription literal so that the analysis would take into account the most sensitive aspects that can be captured by colloquial speech and emotions.

As for the interviewee referred to in this essay, Teacher Maria Izabél Vargas da Silva, her work at the school studied spanned more than three decades and contributed significantly to the adoption of educational practices that can still be considered innovative and inclusive today. She graduated from the Normal Course in 1965, with a degree in Pedagogy in 1977 and worked at the school in question from 1968 to 1997, teaching as a literacy teacher, librarian, pedagogical supervisor and, finally, as principal².

Throughout her career, this teacher devised and helped implement various educational projects. The first, which began in 1981, consisted of encouraging stamp collecting and exploring the pedagogical possibilities of working with philately. The teacher reported that the project took a step forward, as the practice went beyond the school walls and enabled students and their families to have a more cosmopolitan vision from the study of stamps. Thus, even without traveling anywhere far from the school, they accessed other countries and built up new knowledge and cultural notions about them.

The second project, which began in 1988, mobilized the institution and the school community to reflect on the appreciation of black culture. The school then developed a plan of activities to celebrate blackness and problematize aspects of racism in our country. In her account, the teacher stresses the importance of the school having presented the black

² For ethical reasons, we will not give the name of the school.

population beyond the prism of slavery and also having addressed the relations between Brazil and the African continent. In the 1990s, the project also began to include the study of Brazilian indigenous cultures.

These two projects, which began in the 1980s, go back to the historical context of the end of the civil-military regime in Brazil and point to the school's performance in terms of the socio-political tone of that period. In her accounts, the teacher explained the school's aspirations to promote citizenship. However, in addition to the contemporary context in which they were carried out, the characteristics of the municipality and the school where these projects were developed must also be taken into account.

The city of Montenegro is located in the Vale do Rio Caí, in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre/RS, approximately 62 km from the capital, and was given its name because of the set of dark vegetation hills that surround the municipality. In terms of population characteristics, the first inhabitants of the region were the indigenous people of the Ibiraiaras group, who had lived there since at least the 17th century. The first European inhabitants were the Portuguese, who settled on the right bank of the River Caí between 1730 and 1740. German immigrants arrived in 1824, a group of French in 1832 and Italian immigrants settled in the municipality in 1857. Like the Germans, the Italians concentrated their activities on agriculture and pig farming, while the French, who came in smaller numbers, mainly developed handicrafts (Montenegro, 2021).

As far as the presence of Afro-descendants is concerned, there is no mention of them in most of the books that tell the story of Montenegro. However, some relevant information about this population can be found in the documentary "O Negro no Vale do Rio Caí" (1997). This production reports that, from 1750 onwards, Afro-descendants began to move to the region, using the River Caí, which runs along the city's coast, as an escape route from slavery. Furthermore, according to the same documentary, the family of German descent that founded the town of Pareci Novo, a district of Montenegro, had more than 400 enslaved people.

The invisibility of the indigenous and Afro-Brazilian presence, both in memorial production and in official data about the city, is of interest to this article because it helps to

understand the importance of school projects such as those developed by the school under study. In this sense, reference is made to one of the projects adopted by the institution that proposed addressing the ethnic-racial theme with a focus on discussions about blackness and, later, on the indigenous theme, in a period prior to the sanction of Law 10.639 of 2003. This legislation amended the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law, making it compulsory to teach Afro-Brazilian history and culture, as well as Law 11.645 of 2008, which made it compulsory to teach the history and cultures of indigenous peoples in basic education in Brazil.

The institution in question began its activities in 1966 and was then defined as an Integrated School. According to the Triennial Education Plan (1963-1965)³, the Integrated Schools were to be used for primary education, with a limit on the number of pupils. According to the Plan, the first objective for primary education was the "Construction of Integrated Schools in the proportion of one unit for each group of 200 children not in school or in school in conditions of extreme handicap". (Brazil, 1963, p. 19).

According to the teacher interviewed, the philosophy of the Integrated Schools was integration between home, school and community. According to her account, the interpretation given to the integration between community and school even extended to the fact that the school provided space for baptisms, birthday parties and weddings. The teacher also points out that in its early years, the school had no walls and this condition seemed to mean that the space was actually made for the community.

In order to understand the relationship between the notion of citizenship, integration and schooling, which marked the school's operation during the period in question, we used the notion of school culture, based on the definition proposed by Antonio Viñao Frago (2007). For him, elements such as the philosophy of the institution, tradition, rituals, objects, the daily practices of teachers, the ways of being of the subjects who are part of it, as well as the forms of school administration, imply the definition of school culture. In the author's words:

³ Approved, therefore, before the coup d'état that established the civil-military dictatorship in the country from 1964 to 1985

School culture is made up of a set of theories, ideas, principles, norms, guidelines, rituals, inertia, habits and practices (ways of doing and thinking, mentalities and behaviors) that have been sedimented over time in the form of traditions, regularities and unquestioned rules of the game, and shared by its actors within educational institutions (Viñao-Frago, 2007, p. 73).

7 As mentioned, the narratives analyzed in this article were produced using oral history procedures. To this end, three interviews were conducted with Professor Maria Izabél between August 2020 and July 2021. Below, we present and analyse these narratives, organizing them into two topics. In the first section, we look at aspects of her personal and professional career that help us understand her engagement in the pedagogical projects for citizenship developed at the school. In the second section, we go into more detail about teaching practices and their relationship with society and other social movements in the city.

The personal and professional trajectory of a committed teacher: Maria Izabél's memories and identity constructions

Maria Izabél is from Montenegro and belongs to a family of eleven children. Her father was a railroad worker and her mother a housewife. As mentioned, she graduated from the Curso Normal in 1965 from the Colégio São José in Montenegro. She then studied for a degree in Pedagogy, graduating in 1977 from the Federação de Estabelecimentos de Ensino Superior in Novo Hamburgo, Rio Grande do Sul.

According to her account, her family provided a framework for her conceptions, as her parents had very clear political positions. Thus, she followed her father's activism, as he was affiliated to the Brazilian Labor Party before the 1964 civil-military coup and, from 1979 onwards, to the Democratic Labor Party. Her mother, although she had no party affiliation, was also politically active and had an influence on her upbringing. Her father's

mobilizations with the Railway Workers' Circle of Rio Grande do Sul⁴ added to the ideas of social justice that, according to the teacher, she learned at a very young age.

The construction of Maria Izabél's identity was strongly influenced by the political tone of her family and also crossed by the complexities of her recognition as black. Born to a white mother and a father of black origin, her process of becoming black was marked by denial and silencing. Although her father had progressive views and related to black people, his ethnic affirmation was never uttered. Maria Izabél explains how she perceived her father: "[...] *my father [...] couldn't consider himself black. Not because he said he wasn't black, it just didn't cross his mind that he was black*" (Maria Izabél Vargas da Silva, Visit to the interviewee's home).

Thinking about this perspective can point to the marks that racism has produced in Brazilian society and the interpretation of what being black represents in this racist social structure. Neusa Santos Souza (1983) proposes that we should understand that the denial of black subjects may be a strategy to shield them from the perversities of racism. According to Souza (1983), one way for black people to establish themselves as social actors who educate themselves, politicize themselves and rise from marginality is to distance themselves from their ethnic origin. By embracing the ideal of whitening, even though they are black in skin tone, these people become accepted in society. For the author,

Often fighting against the tide of domination, black people gradually conquered spaces that integrated them into the social order and allowed them to be classified in the current system of social classes. Ascension thus appeared as a project whose realization would bring with it the indisputable proof of this insertion. It meant an undertaking that, in itself, dignified those who undertook it. What's more, by removing them from the social marginalization in which they had always been trapped, social ascension was ideologically represented to black people as an instrument of economic, social and political redemption, capable of making them respectable citizens, worthy of participating in the national community (Souza, 1983, p. 21).

⁴ The Railway Workers' Circle was an extension of the Workers' Circles. Created and maintained by the Catholic Church since 1930, they initially proposed surveillance of labour organizations in order to prevent political conspiracies of a communist nature (Souza, 2002).

Her father's silent denial was reflected in some of the situations she experienced. In the unconscious logic of denying her blackness, the teacher reported that, for example, when she was young, she did her hair like an old lady. This was because she had hair that wasn't straight. When she did buns and used hairspray, her appearance was a source of internal conflict. She commented on this: "[...] *that was the best thing at the time for hair like mine that 'couldn't be left loose' because it wasn't pretty, it didn't correspond to a standard of presentation for a girl*" (Maria Izabél Vargas da Silva, Visit to the interviewee's home).

We believe that this observation by the interviewee can be seen in the study by Nilma Lino Gomes (2003). According to the author, hair is an element that has become culturalized along with ethnic bodies and therefore carries ancestry as well as the history of a people. The social judgment an individual suffers is not due to whether they wear their hair up or down, but rather to the ethnic identity it reveals. When thinking of Maria Izabél's hair as a black trait, one can see an attempt to subtract this characteristic to the detriment of a culture that is understood to be dominant: the Eurocentric one. Gomes goes on to explain that:

The body is located in a conflictive social terrain, since it is touched by the sphere of subjectivity. Throughout history, the body has become an ethnic emblem and its manipulation has become a defining cultural characteristic for different peoples. It is a symbol exploited in relations of power and domination to classify and hierarchize different groups. The body is a language and culture has chosen some of its parts as the main vehicles of communication. Hair is one of them. Hair is one of the most visible and prominent elements of the body. It is treated and manipulated in every ethnic group, but its symbolism differs from culture to culture. This universal and particular character of hair attests to its importance as an identity symbol (Gomes, 2003, p. 174).

Maria Izabél's ethnic features, as well as her hair, caused a certain amount of strangeness among the Portuguese population when she was there in 1981. The experience of being in another country and being seen as different from the locals, especially because of her skin tone, was significant. According to the teacher: "[...] *there I had this experience of being in a population that was mostly white, and I was of a different*

color. *I came to be involved with these things in a very strong way*" (Maria Izabél Vargas da Silva, Visit to the interviewee's home).

These concerns observed by the teacher became more complex when she realized that she didn't feel she belonged as a black woman because her skin tone wasn't dark, but she also didn't see herself as white. This issue, experienced by many people in Brazil, was analyzed by Kabengele Munanga (1999). For him, *mestizaje* was conceived as a bridge to whitening. For this reason, the self-affirmation of the black subject as a miscegenated person is a border zone in which the definition of being black or not is influenced by the conceptions that Brazilian slave society established about black people. The author points out that:

This disagreement over their 'self-definition', observed between the Afros politically mobilized through the black movements on the one hand, and the black bases constituting the unmobilized majority, on the other, is the crux of the problem in the formation of the black collective identity. How can an identity be formed around the color and blackness not assumed by the majority whose future was projected in the dream of whitening? How can an identity be formed around a culture that has been expropriated to a certain extent and is not always assumed with pride by the majority of blacks and mestizos? (Munanga, 1999, p. 124).

It was over time that Maria Izabél realized that her blackness could go beyond the color of her skin. According to the teacher, this definition, which includes a cultural identity and is based on ancestry, came to be seen by her as a desire to expose the oppression she had already experienced.

Still in dialogue with Munanga (1999), it can be seen that the mobilization to strengthen the construction of black identity was one of the fronts undertaken by the Black Movement from the 1970s onwards. Through this interest, they sought to re-signify that being black was not just about having black skin, but a social and political definition that was completely appropriate for mestizos and brown people. In this respect, the author explains:

The contemporary Brazilian black movements, born in the 1970s, have taken up the banner of struggle of the previous movements represented by the Black Front,

replacing universalist anti-racism with differentialist anti-racism. Under the influence of the American black movements, they tried to redefine black and the content of blackness in order to include not only phenotypically black people, but also and above all mestizos of black descent, even those whom the ideology of whitening had already stolen away (Munanga, 1999, p. 124).

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For Maria Izabél, the 1980s were an intense decade in terms of the reading she was doing on blackness, and this was reflected in her work as a school supervisor. Around 1982, when she noticed a drop in the number of black students at the school, a fact she had been observing over the years, she decided to carry out a survey with the teachers in order to check the possible failure rate of these students by the end of that school year. The survey proved what she had already suspected: in the group of those who were likely to fail, the majority would be black students.

This analysis made the teacher uncomfortable because, as she says, the low self-esteem revealed in black children has also been felt by her at other times in her life and often for the same reasons. This survey was carried out at a time when the school was about to change its regulations and form of assessment. According to Maria Izabél's findings, the analysis of the results showed the need for a system of education and assessment that was fair to the students. We'll come back to this in the next topic.

In the process of understanding herself as black, the teacher took part in an extension course on folklore in 1983, where she realized the power of African ancestry and recognized the lack of appreciation for black people in the school environment. A few years later, in the context of commemorating the centenary of the abolition of slavery in the country, Maria Izabél became interested in working on this event at school, in order to recognize black protagonism. To this end, she proposed that, that year, the theme of blackness be studied through activities and reflections on that first century of the free condition of black Brazilians. This school project was called Kizomba - Festa da Consciência Negra and was repeated until 2002.

In that context, in May 1988, teacher Maria Izabél took part in the 1st International Black Camp, promoted by organizations linked to the Black Movement, in the city of Osório, Rio Grande do Sul. Due to the issues raised at the meeting - such as the condition of black

Brazilians in the first hundred years of post-abolition, the need to value Afro-Brazilian culture and the understanding that Brazil is a country markedly made up of African descendants - Professor Maria Izabél emotionally revealed her perception, which meant a lot to her identity: "*We are all black!*" (Maria Izabél Vargas da Silva, Visit to the interviewee's home).

By presenting Maria Izabél's personal and professional trajectory in this topic, it is possible to recognize that the ethnic crossings that were present in these journeys helped to constitute a subjectivation of identity belonging that can reverberate in her teaching profession. In this respect, the next section of the text seeks to present the way in which the conceptions of education for citizenship were put into practice through the actions devised by the teacher.

From personal trajectory to pedagogical proposals: actions in a school in transformation

According to the interviewee's narrative, with the intention of becoming increasingly attentive so that all students enrolled were welcomed, regardless of any condition, the school maintained an idea of social integration. Thus, the school's community prestige came from the way it welcomed its students. In this sense, she recounts how the institution positioned itself:

"[...] Enrollment really was open to everyone, without failing to accept any family that came to the school for enrollment and, above all, during the year, the issue of taking in those who were expelled from other schools and receiving students from other zoning areas who had been turned away by schools that did practice discrimination. [...] And that's what made the school so prestigious. It was sought out for its welcome and care for students who had behavioral or learning difficulties, whatever they might be" (Maria Izabél Vargas da Silva, Visit to the interviewee's home).

The teacher's statements about the way in which the institution welcomed its students reflect the culture of the institution. Considering that the school was concerned about its students, it increasingly became a popular institution, which also increased access

for students from families living on the margins of the social system. This could be seen in the small number of students from families with higher purchasing power in the neighborhood who, according to the teacher, usually enrolled their children in other schools. Thus, the institution studied received mostly low-income children from that neighborhood and others in the surrounding area.

At that time, an important event also marked the school's position. As mentioned above, in 1982, Maria Izabél, then the school's supervisor, based on a survey of potential failures that year, proposed a change in the assessment system. The teacher, who had already studied the skills and competencies assessment method, argued that this would provide all students, regardless of their social conditions, with meaningful forms of learning that were consistent with the reality of the school community. She therefore proposed removing quantitative assessment in order to introduce qualitative assessment, based on students' skills and competencies. According to the teacher's account, acceptance of this change was not immediate. After reluctance from the Rio Grande do Sul Department of Education and Culture, the system was accepted and began to be implemented and understood by the school community. Thus, the evaluation system adopted by the school consisted of drawing up specific objectives for each area of knowledge, grade and subject. By drawing up a list of objectives, students were approved when they managed to achieve them⁵.

Reflecting on the changes in school culture and organization, it can be seen that the proposal to redefine assessment suggested by the teacher is in line with Viñao-Frago's considerations, when the author ponders that through restructuring, the specific products of a school culture are being remoulded. In the case of the institution under study, students, teachers and the school community would undergo a reorganization of the pedagogical process at the institution.

In this context, Viñao-Frago (2007) reflects on the "sedimented practices" seen in school environments and their re-significations. While school institutions cultivate traditions

⁵ It is interesting to note that this discussion anticipated some of the postulates on the evaluative autonomy of school networks, which would be approved in the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law in 1996.

in the sense of valuing history and school culture, they can be attentive to the aspirations and beliefs of the present time. In this sense, the author helps us to think about the changes in a school culture by pointing out that, through these changes, new conformations are engendered.

Culture is a historical product, therefore, it undergoes changes, enjoys relative autonomy to generate its own ways of thinking and doing and, as a consequence, specific products in relation to teaching and learning, including school subjects, ways of organizing space, time and communication in class, assessments and forms of certification (Viñao-Frago, 2007, p. 79).

In agreement with Faria Filho *et al* (2004), it is understood that school culture is practiced by all those who live in the school environment and that it is constituted through intentions that go beyond doctrines or protocols to be followed. It is in this sense that educational practices, understood as elements of school culture, are situated in the production of knowledge and subjectivities forged in everyday pedagogy. According to the authors:

[...] the practitioners of school culture develop their practices from their places, from their positions within a system of asymmetrical forces. These practices, however, are not just aimed at operationalizing these or those prescriptions, but aim to produce places of power/knowledge, intelligibilities and meanings for school pedagogical action with the new generations. These practices are understood in these studies as producing subjects and their respective places within the pedagogical field. [...] In fact, these practices produced by subjects in their day-to-day school life also produce them (Faria Filho *et al*, 2004, p. 154).

With regard to the way in which the school studied tried to show students their role as a social being, the teacher mentioned activities with this objective. For example, she said that at the beginning of every week, students were invited to express themselves in a civic moment. The national anthem was sung and then anyone who wanted to could present a text or even denounce situations. In the teacher's words, this practice was considered "*a pedagogical measure that was not a lesson, but a practice of liberation*" (Maria Izabél Vargas da Silva, Visit to the interviewee's home). Given that during the civil-military dictatorship civic acts and hours became compulsory in schools, one might think

that this practice, originally of an authoritarian nature, was appropriated and re-signified, perhaps based on elements of Freirean pedagogy. The notions of dialogicity and the practice of culture circles, although repressed by the regime, continued to mobilize the engagement of educators who longed for a return to democracy.

In this way, the use of speech, even during a civic hour, can be understood as a practice that enunciates rights. The freedom that everyone had through speech, whether to contest, argue or simply to make themselves understood in front of the group, can be interpreted, based on Paulo Freire (2018), as a possibility of "breaking silences". In the author's words,

The 'culture of silence', which is generated in the oppressive structure, within which and under whose conditioning force they have been realizing their experience of 'quasi-things', necessarily constitutes them in this way. Discovering themselves, therefore, through a form of cultural, dialogical action, which problematizes themselves in their confrontation with the world, means, at first, that they discover themselves as Pedro, Antônio, as Josefa, with all the profound significance that this discovery has. Basically, it implies a different perception of the meaning of signs. The world, people, culture, trees, work and animals take on the true meaning they didn't have. They now recognize themselves as beings who transform reality [...] (Freire, 2018, p. 238).

Over the years, a number of projects have been developed with the aim of reaching students in other ways. Among those carried out by the institution, which had many editions, two stand out, organized by the then supervisor and teacher interviewed. The first began in 1981 and consisted of encouraging the collection of stamps and all the significance that this presented. The teacher said that this work enabled students to have a cosmopolitan view of stamps. The teachers asked the students to bring stamps they had at home and they also took this material to school. The proposal was to address aspects of history and culture that would be linked to personalities, events and the geographical location depicted on the stamps. The pedagogical activities were the responsibility of the teachers, who were in charge of establishing the direction of the work with their classes. The culmination of the work took place every August 1st, the national stamp day in Brazil, when there was an exhibition of the work that had been done, called the Annual Philately

Exhibition. Regarding the teacher's perceptions of the project, in her narrative she reports that:

[...] "That" was a reflection on value, nowadays it's very different, but back then... A stamp is an object of monetary value, in addition to its historical value, political value, cultural value [...] it has always been the subject of publications on very important subjects, characters and so on. Putting the younger and older students in front of a stamp, a little stamp that had a picture on it, gave them the impression that they were entering that world in a playful way because of the charm of the colorful stamps, as well as the "talks" that made them think about things they had never thought about (Maria Izabél Vargas da Silva, Visit to the interviewee's home).

According to teacher Maria Izabél, this practice mobilized the students, as it aroused interest in topics that they hadn't yet understood, as well as encouraging stamp collecting as something educational from a pedagogical point of view. This school project lasted for a few years and was, for a period of time, carried out concurrently with the second project, which is presented below.

Started in 1988, the second project, which will be presented here, mobilized the institution and the school community to reflect on valuing black culture, going against racism. In a context that preceded the compulsory teaching of Afro-Brazilian history and culture in basic education, the school analyzed proposed an exercise to celebrate blackness and problematize aspects relating to the black population.

In an attempt to develop an action to commemorate the centenary of abolition, promoting the exhibition and appreciation of Afro-Brazilian culture and producing tension over the meaning of the date, teacher Maria Izabél suggested a project she called "Kizomba - The Black Awareness Festival". According to the teacher, this project could also be the result of conflicts over blackness and, above all, self-affirmation. According to the teacher, the afflictions she felt in this regard could be the same as those faced by black and non-white students. So it was not only a celebration, but also a construction of identity. In the words of teacher Maria Izabél, she refers to Kizomba as:

"[...] a manifesto that I, as an educator, felt was necessary not only for education. There's generosity in that, but there's the question of my manifestation. It's a manifesto. A manifestation that black people exist and that non-white people exist and that there is a lot of suffering within that. It's a revelation. A manifestation of the

suffering that exists within this Brazil race" (Maria Izabél Vargas da Silva, Visit to the interviewee's home).

This project, which turned out to be a political act, as proposed by Maria Izabél, took its name from the Unidos de Vila Isabel samba school in Rio de Janeiro. This school won the 1988 carnival with a parade whose samba theme was called "Kizomba - A festa da raça". To better understand the scope of this project in the life of the school community, it is interesting to look at the considerations of Rodrigo Muniz Ferreira Nogueira (2008), who studied carnival with a view to black representation and its effects on this popular festival.

The author explains how this manifestation in Brazil was constituted by the Afro-Brazilian matrix, since initially carnival in the country was inspired by the celebrations of European carnivals and did not allow the presence of blacks. Afro-Brazilian festivals and celebrations, which have existed since the colonial period, have helped to build what is understood as black culture. In this expression, musicality, dance and religious rites were some of the elements that helped build Afro-Brazilian identity.

Allowing this order of things to cross over into a festival of Eurocentric origin was not in line with the intentions of Brazil's imperial government, as well as with the political order of the first decades of the Brazilian Republic. Nogueira (2008), when reflecting on the history of carnival in the country, considers that this popular event, which at first wanted to remove African and Afro-Brazilian influences from its intentions, was conquered and re-signified with the participation of the black population, expanding the possibilities for self-affirmation of blackness in an event that proposed both identity and politics. In this respect, Nogueira mentions that "Carnival became a black territory, conquered through celebrations, struggles and resistance to white hegemonic elements" (Nogueira, 2008, p. 90).

Returning to reflections on the 1988 Rio Carnival and relating what Nogueira (2008) pointed out about the expression of this popular manifestation for blackness, one can think that the Unidos de Vila Isabel samba school, in a festive act of congregation, produced a discourse on race and on black influence in the formation of Brazil. A documentary

produced in 2018 in honor of the 30th anniversary of winning the title, entitled "Kizomba - 30 anos de um grito na Sapucaí", defines the term in this way:

Kizomba is a word from Kimbundo, one of the languages of the People's Republic of Angola. The word Kizomba means a gathering of people who identify with each other at a party. The ritual includes singing, dancing, eating and drinking, as well as talks at meetings and lectures aimed at meditating on common problems. (Kizomba - 30 anos de um grito na Sapucaí, 2018).

The samba proposed revered Zumbi, the leader of the Quilombo de Palmares⁶, criticized Brazilian slavery, presented elements of Afro-Brazilian culture, welcomed the new Federal Constitution, which was being written that year; proposed a discussion on the country's ethnic constitution and wished for an end to the segregationist Apartheid regime in South Africa. Written by Rodolpho, Jonas and Luiz Carlos da Vila, this samba-enredo, in the opinion of teacher Maria Izabél, is one of the most emblematic of Brazilian carnivals.

At the school, as part of the Kizomba project, a series of activities were developed to recognize the contribution of African and Afro-Brazilian peoples through history and culture. In this sense, storytelling, workshops on black culture, artistic presentations, interdisciplinary actions that focused on blackness, talks with members of Black Movement groups were some of the project's activities. As mentioned, in the 1990s, the discussion on the contribution of indigenous peoples was also added to the work already carried out by the Kizomba project.

These two projects, which began in the 1980s, go back to the historical context of the end of Brazil's civil-military regime and how the school behaved in relation to the socio-political tone of that period. In her accounts, the teacher explained the school's aspirations to promote citizenship.

"[...] it was a very powerful decade. At school, I would share with the teachers, with the students, everything we could say, Ah, something happened... We'd say. You 'feel' like a constituent, you know? [...] So, you felt empowered, the new Constitution

⁶ Zumbi (1665-1695) led the largest national organization that received escaped slaves: the Palmares quilombo, located in Alagoas. He was captured on November 20, 1695, the date chosen as National Black Awareness Day.

is going to happen, we've already overthrown these guys, they're going to have to be governed by the new Constitution [...] So, all these are very precious discussions, of important details of the political process, of the situation as well" (Maria Izabél Vargas da Silva, Visit to the interviewee's home).

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In this respect, it can be seen that the weakening of the Civil-Military Dictatorship and the process of political re-democratization, especially the election of the National Constituent Assembly for the drafting of the 1988 Federal Constitution, were making their way through the school environment through the dialogues that were being established there, favoring the feeling of citizenship present in these aspirations. Augustín Escolano Benito (2017), when referring to the modalities of school culture from a political perspective, assures that the study of an educational practice, as school culture, must consider the political arrangements that guide the directives, norms, precepts or guidelines by which the practice becomes concrete. In this sense, by recognizing the dialogic practices recalled by the teacher in an attempt to promote a democratic school and society, it can be thought that the school institution analysed accompanied the movement towards the political re-democratization of the country, as well as producing some pedagogical essays that would later be established in the legislation relating to school education.

Conclusions

From what was analyzed, it was possible to see that, since its inception, the school has been guided by the search for inclusion of students and the school community. The narratives of Maria Izabél, a teacher who has followed the school's trajectory from various perspectives - teacher, librarian, supervisor and principal - indicate that, during the period analyzed, the institution's school culture was shaped by educational practices aimed at integrating and favoring students, taking into account their needs.

The study also showed that a school builds its practices on the basis of its philosophy and the way in which teachers and pedagogical management seek to maintain the school's tradition, but also by including other and new proposals. In this respect, there was a movement towards the Integrated School philosophy over the years analyzed. This

did not prevent different approaches from being worked on, quite the contrary. It seems that the definition of Integrated School was a justification for redefining the assessment system, as well as for including a discussion on geographical and cultural diversity in the school's daily routine, through the stamps, and also a project on racial issues and the appreciation of Afro-Brazilian culture. Through the teacher's narratives, it became clear how significant her work at the institution was and how her ways of reading and interpreting society influenced the school culture of the institution studied.

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