

Diversity, culture and ethnic-racial relations: articulations for the teaching process

ARTICLE

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Abstract

This study aims to discuss the relationship between teaching, diversity, and culture, focusing on ethnic-racial relations, based on the principles of Didactics. To this end, a bibliographic survey was conducted, using as parameters works that address the themes of ethnic-racial relations, diversity, and culture, with an emphasis on the connections that can be made in the field of Didactics. The topic demonstrates a conceptual unfolding, with discussions on culture as an object of school knowledge encompassing different strands, with the line defending multiculturalism being the one that defends and incorporates the theme of ethnic-racial relations into the curriculum. We conclude that the discussion at hand is broad; however, it is crucial that teaching-learning processes include their actors and their stories to strengthen the subject-education-training relationships and that cultures converge and interconnect.

Keywords: Culture. Multiculturalism. Education for diversity. Education in ethnic-racial relations.

Diversidade, cultura e relações étnico-raciais: articulações para o processo didático

Resumo

Este estudo tem como objetivo discutir a relação ensino, diversidade e cultura, com enfoque nas relações étnico-raciais, a partir dos pressupostos da Didática. Para tanto, empregou-se de uma pesquisa bibliográfica, tendo como parâmetros produções que tratam sobre os temas relações étnico-raciais, diversidade e cultura com ênfase às articulações que podem ser tecidas no campo da Didática. O tema demonstra um desencadeamento conceitual, encontrando-se nas discussões sobre cultura na qualidade de objeto de conhecimento escolar de diferentes vertentes, sendo a linha defensora do multiculturalismo aquela que legitima e insere o tema relações étnico-raciais no currículo. Concluímos que a discussão em tela é ampla, entretanto é crucial que os processos de ensino-aprendizagem incluam seus atores e histórias para o fortalecimento das relações sujeito-educação-formação e que as culturas se aproximem e se interconectem.

Palavras-chave: Cultura. Multiculturalismo. Educação para a Diversidade. Educação nas Relações Étnico-raciais.

1 Introduction

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Attendance at school, which is compulsory, encompasses a significant period in each individual's life. According to Tardif (2010), over the course of at least 12 years in the classroom, more than just acquiring knowledge, we share spaces, share cultures, incorporate *habitus*, overcome *doxa*, and (re)signify social practices.

Attending school requires one crucial element: motivation. Thus, it is worth reflecting on the following question: what are the reasons that enable someone, regardless of age, social class, and location, to desire not only to be present (as an obligation), but to do so of their own free will? This question leads us to think about school: if it is a space that institutes oppression, classification and only imposes cultures and knowledge, the subject will attend it unmotivated or due to external pressure. The theory of self-determination (Boruchovith; Bzunek, 2009), which supports this idea, emphasizes that in order for there to be motivation, that is, a reason to act, the subject may even start out unmotivated or for external (and even regulatory) reasons. However, the intention is to achieve a level of internal motivation, that is, for him to find (influenced by external factors) the will to independently pursue, in this case, studying and attending school, in order to become a critical citizen in this society.

To this end, in addition to motivation to learn, the fundamentals of school teaching practice are explained, which is the subject of study of Didactics. According to Veiga (2014), teaching is understood as a process, which the author refers to as a didactic process, consisting of three interconnected elements: teacher, student, and knowledge, which establish relationships with teaching, learning, researching, and evaluating.

This process, however, is not neutral. Candau (1983) clarifies the multiple dimensions that influence it, categorized by the author as human, technical, and political-social. Based on this principle, and taking into account contemporary society, which yearns for a more inclusive education, and, to this end, seeking to understand the relationships established, considering diversity and culture, as well as their ramifications for ethnic-racial relations, the objective of this text is to discuss the relationship between

teaching, diversity, and culture, with a focus on ethnic-racial relations, using the assumptions of Didactics.

To this end, this text is organized into four sections, centered on the following areas of analysis: the first section covers the concepts that permeate diversity and the classroom; the second discusses culture and teaching; the third bringing into question ethnic-racial relations; and finally, an articulation of these themes in the educational context. The conclusions aim to establish the relationships between the topics, presenting their interconnections, as well as the possibilities for reflection that arise from this discussion.

2 Methodology

This study is characterized as a bibliographic research (Gil, 2008), based on national and international authors who discuss the following topics: culture and teaching; diversity and teaching; and ethnic-racial relations and teaching. Thus, we begin with a review study, which was based on the discussion of the relationship between these assumptions (culture, diversity, and ethnic-racial relations) and the development of teaching, with theoretical input from Didactics.

Based on the information gathered from the authors, this text presents a discussion of four main themes, organized into sections: diversity in the classroom, the role of culture in learning, ethnic-racial relations in education, and finally, it systematizes the discussion between education and diversity.

3 Diversity in the classroom

Addressing diversity in the classroom is a topic that encompasses multiple experiences, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, and the unique characteristics of students. Thus, it is necessary to recognize each student's cultural capital, as well as their life experiences, as a way of adding to the teaching-learning process, through the value of multiple perceptions. Without this, it is not possible to promote

an inclusive and welcoming environment where students recognize themselves as an integral part of the group. In this regard, Mantoan (2006) discusses the importance of everyone feeling integrated and belonging to the school, rather than being seen as just another student.

Thus, diversity in the classroom manifests itself in the coexistence of differences, ranging from cultural aspects, as explained by Freire (1974, 1983, 1996), to linguistic issues, as addressed by Cagliari (1989), ethnic issues, as discussed by Arroyo (2012), and unique learning styles, as described by Mantoan (2006). The classroom is composed of all this heterogeneity which, with the teacher's mediation, can become a rich social experience, enabling students to learn from each other.

Candau (2008) explains that education from a multicultural perspective, capable of valuing cultural and ethnic diversity and different learning conditions, promotes equity and social justice, enriching students' school experience and preparing them for a diverse society.

Broadening one's worldview on social reality is a topic of discussion for Freire (1974). The author advocates liberating education, which respects and recognizes the experiences and backgrounds of each student. To achieve this, according to the author, dialogue must be the foundation, valuing students' voices and including their concerns or issues from their reality in teaching practices, so that the curriculum dialogues with their expectations, needs, and interests.

In summary, it is understood that when teaching practices adhere to the principles of diversity, they also enable the promotion of social justice, since teaching is designed to drive the learning and development of all students. An inclusive environment is conducive to learning, as it addresses not only cognitive aspects, but also social aspects, in terms of interrelationships, as explained by Vygotsky (1991), and affective aspects, which are also essential for the learning and development of children and adolescents, as explained by Wallon (*apud* Galvão, 1995).

4 The role of culture in learning

Sacristán (2002) explains that culture is related to the attribution of meanings. These meanings are developed from cultural appropriation, which gives meaning to our surroundings and affects us; it is in this that we feel included alongside others. Thus, Freire (2004) explains that cultural experiences impact the way we understand the world and, therefore, the way we interact with school content. According to the author, culture is cultivated and created in relationships with the world and with other individuals. Thus, it is essential that pedagogical practice establishes a democratic relationship, with the aim of respecting and expanding conceptions about it.

However, it is important to clarify that the relationship between culture and education has different perspectives, as explained by Faria (2015) and Pimenta (2023). Authors of the critical line of Didactics argue that, through the appropriation of culture, new meanings about natural and social phenomena must be opened up, which enables the expansion of worldview. Thus, school becomes an important place for accessing the culture produced by humanity. One example is the social critique of content, which advocates education to promote mastery of systematic knowledge, whose leading proponent is Antônio Carlos Libâneo, and the historical critique of Dermeval Saviani, who explains culture as an expression of the contradictions and struggles of society. Thus, the commitment of school culture is to social transformation through access to knowledge.

Post-critical authors discuss the silencing of cultures in the curriculum, which reinforces social exclusion. Points of discussion along these lines include the fact that, despite the importance of recognizing culture for learning, some cultures are silenced, which reinforces the social exclusion of many children and adolescents. One example is the work of José Oder dos Santos, who considers social practice to be a principle; therefore, theory is an expression of practice.

Thus, still within the post-critical perspective, some issues of postmodernity that reverberate in Didactics are discussed (Pimenta, 2023). In this vein, Candau (2008) highlights the relationship between multiculturalism and teaching, which expresses an

attitude towards cultural plurality that requires intentions, objectives for specific social spaces, policies regarding the recognition of cultural plurality, and a theoretical body of knowledge about cultural reality.

Silva and Gomes (2011) discuss the close relationship between multiculturalism, education and the curriculum. They explain that multiculturalism began as a movement by minorities to demand recognition by schools of their cultures, which were absent from the curriculum. Thus, the authors analyze how the discussion about culture in the school environment is related to power struggles.

Arroyo (2017) agrees with this argument, warning that popular collectives have a harsh history of oppression and domination, which sought to make them subordinate. This perspective, according to the author, was further reinforced by schools adopting pedagogical models that were destructive to culture. Gomes (2008) argues that, in a multicultural society such as Brazil's, one cannot think of citizenship and democracy without considering diversity and the unequal treatment historically imposed on different ethnic-racial groups.

Gomes (2008), in defending this position, explains that in a multicultural society such as Brazil's, it is impossible to build democracy and citizenship without considering the unequal treatment of social and ethnic-racial groups. Based on this second approach, which considers the relationship between multiculturalism and teaching, there has been ample discussion involving the curriculum. Among these discussions, this text highlights the context of the inclusion of ethnic-racial relations, a topic addressed in the next section.

5 Ethnic-racial relations in education

Brazilian education has strong biases when dealing with ethnic-racial relations, tending to reinforce inequalities and discrimination.

Gomes (2008) highlights that structural racism has permeated and continues to permeate educational institutions, which has negatively affected the academic performance and emotional well-being of black and indigenous students.

In studying the educational trajectories of black students, Passos (2006) analyzes the impacts of inequalities on opportunities for access and retention, identifying that the highest rates of failure and dropout are among black students.

Silva (2008) highlights the importance of educational policies that promote equity and racial justice, ensuring equal access to quality education for all students.

Santos (2021) presents a survey of public policies for diversity in education. The author explains that the topic of diversity only gained notoriety at the end of the 1990s. The marks for this process arise from multiple biases, including the massification and compulsory nature of education, coupled with the struggles of social movements. Compulsory schooling for all opens up the discussion beyond access, incorporating issues such as school retention and success – issues that affected the most marginalized.

In addition to these efforts, there is also greater appreciation for human rights, which came about with the political reopening of Brazil at the end of the 1980s and the new democratic constitutional principles, which had an impact on education. The Law of Guidelines and Bases for Education (LDB) No. 9,394/1996 presents as one of the principles of Brazilian education equal conditions of access and permanence, as well as appreciation for tolerance and consideration for ethnic diversity.

Published the following year, in 1997, the National Curriculum Parameters introduced an approach to organizing the curriculum in different areas of knowledge, incorporating six axes called cross-cutting themes, which would be addressed across the curriculum. Among the themes, cultural plurality becomes a central theme, recognizing and valuing cultural diversity. Furthermore, they foresee the consolidation of knowledge, respect, and plurality of elements that permeate the subjects and coexist in the school context.

Another important milestone, according to Santos (2021), is Law No. 10,639/2003, which includes two articles in the LDB, making the teaching of Afro-Brazilian history and culture compulsory in the elementary and high school curriculum. In 2008, Law No. 11,645 amended Article 26-A of the LDB to include the study of indigenous history and culture.

Despite the progress made, much remains to be achieved; but this requires a collective commitment to promoting social justice, demanding inclusive educational policies and teacher training that promotes dialogue on racial issues in Brazil. Such principles can support a more just and egalitarian society.

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6 Education and diversity

Despite the fact that the knowledge proposed in curriculum policies has, in most cases, been defined externally to teachers and students, it generally carries or values the dominant culture. Teachers, imbued with their cultural, experiential, and formative elements, involved in the proposed teaching situations, can:

- act as a government official by merely repeating proposals devised by others and, without proper contextual adaptation, contributing to the dominant culture; or
- act as an intellectual and independent professional, considering the local context and culture, and overcome reproductive proposals, planning differentiated situations that value the exchange of knowledge and practices.

It should be noted that, in the first item previously mentioned, there is the possibility of excluding students and even excluding oneself as a subject of the process, since the situation is external to the school culture. Depending on the proposal, both teachers and, especially, students may be part of the process only by force of law, by the right to education, but without reasons for being there, increasing demotivation and encouraging the exclusion of an individual or group and their stories.

In defending a critical perspective on teacher training for Didactics in undergraduate courses, we consider that training and action intentions are constantly permeated by reflection before, during, and after the action (Schön, 2000). This approach goes beyond the traditional view of teaching, which sees the curriculum as something imposed and neutral. It also considers that human relationships must be consolidated so

that everyone feels like they are subjects who possess, exchange, and build knowledge together.

The theoretical framework underpinning this discussion encompasses legal, theoretical and methodological support. The legal assumptions involve not only the right to access education (Brasil, 1988, 1996) for every Brazilian individual, but also specific laws, such as 10.639/2003, which emphasizes that the teaching of history must encompass Afro-Brazilian and African culture (Brasil, 2003). More than just in the teaching of history, we believe it is valid to revive the interdisciplinary perspective of the National Curriculum Parameters (Brasil, 1997) that cultural plurality should be understood as a cross-cutting theme, the subject of all areas, for example, in textual production, analysis of graphs and tables, and cultural heritage.

Jacques Delors (2003) highlights the need to learn to be, to know, to live together, and to do. Along the same lines, author Saviani (2012) explains that, in order to learn how to be and live together, it is necessary to consider and exchange experiences, given the socializing aspect of school. Therefore, regardless of who the subject is, their origin and culture, social practices and relationships become richer and more diverse, heterogeneous.

The legal and theoretical pillars support and contribute to the methodological development that will guide a mediating teaching practice, which will be influenced by the social context, seeking *praxis* (Pimenta, 2012). Some methodological possibilities are linked to differentiated pedagogy, the promotion of interdisciplinarity, and education for all (Perrenoud, 2000). Do we have consolidated possibilities related to diversity, cultures, and ethnic-racial relations in teaching methods and specific disciplinary practices? Yes. For example, in Portuguese language classes, we can discuss various linguistic and literary genres, such as legends and *cordel* literature. In mathematics, since 1980, Ubiratan D'Ambrosio has confirmed that ethnomathematics facilitates learning because it portrays the contexts and cultures of that population/community in mathematical situations and problems. Geography and history can study humans in geographical space and historical space and time, considering location/daily life, cultural heritage, and social exclusion. Physical education can promote sports from different cultures, so that students learn about

other sports beyond the conventional ones. Art can highlight artistic practices of indigenous peoples that go unnoticed despite being part of everyday social life. In Natural Sciences, biological diversity can contribute to scientific literacy through the analysis of non-native biodiversity and damage to natural flora and fauna.

7 Conclusions

Seeking to align the discussion of the sections presented, we begin by revisiting the principles of Didactics, whose object of study is teaching, with a view to developing learning (Veiga, 2006). Teaching methods have been and continue to be influenced by everything from instrumental approaches, which viewed teaching as a technique, to critiques and post-critiques, which bring into discussion the multiple dimensions that interfere with the intentionality of pedagogical practice (Candau, 1983).

Based on this study, we can reflect on important issues surrounding teaching and learning, with a focus on diversity and culture. It was possible to understand that diversity encompasses the differences that are present in all classrooms, which may or may not be cultural. Thus, teachers need to be attentive to specificities in order to understand who their students are and, with that, establish relationships with knowledge.

When discussing culture and school, we sought to bring into discussion its approach as knowledge and how it is treated by Didactics from a critical and post-critical perspective. This discussion has different biases, but its central idea is that, through access to structured knowledge in the curriculum, it may be possible to build social relationships that enable social transformation, on the one hand through access to systematized knowledge, according to the critical line, and on the other hand through the valorization of multiculturalism, as advocated by the post-critical lines.

This second aspect, which defends minority cultures as subjects of knowledge taught in schools, brings up one of the issues discussed here: the inclusion of ethnic-racial relations in the curriculum and, therefore, as knowledge.

The discussion sought to clarify that the topic of ethnic-racial relations stems from embracing diversity and also from a stance toward culture treated by schools as an object of knowledge. However, it is worth considering that the topics of diversity and culture are overly broad, as they encompass recognition of the peculiarities that affect teaching and learning methods. Furthermore, it is also necessary to understand and make theoretical choices about culture and school knowledge, which will directly affect teaching practices.

We emphasize that the discussion carried out from a bibliographic perspective confirms that we lack affirmative policies that not only value diversity but also emphasize mass culture, in a multicultural curriculum with interdisciplinary practices that return to the essence of knowledge as a whole that can be perceived from different perspectives.

Returning to the initial ideas related to motivation, it is in the context defended that we seek, through critical thinking, to educate people who will not only “pass through” school, but who are motivated because they are considered as individuals, whose reality, history, experiences, cultures, and knowledge are valued. Because they are active participants rather than passive observers in the teaching-learning process. Because they construct knowledge rather than merely repeating information. And because they are internally motivated to continue studying, acting in society, and freeing themselves from oppressive pedagogy.

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