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ADVANCES AND CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ANTI-RACIST EDUCATION IN BRAZIL¹

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ABSTRACT: Considering the context of the 20th anniversary of Act 10.639/2003 and 15th of Act 11.645/2008, the present article analyzes the advances and challenges in the implementation of Anti-racist Education in Brazil. In the first section, we discuss racism as a complex structural and multidimensional phenomenon, whose approach in the educational context requires teachers equipped with specific theoretical and methodological tools, as well as racial literacy. The second section examines recent publications that have mapped the main difficulties in implementing anti-racist education at schools, whilst pointing to an important gap regarding racial issues in teacher education. In the third section, focusing on the perspective of future teachers, we zoom in on the perception of undergraduate students at the University of Brasília regarding the subject 'Education of ethnoracial Relations' as a curricular component in basic teacher training. The triangulated examination of these three analytical dimensions points to a mutually reinforcing relationship between shortcomings in basic teacher training and the difficulties in teaching African, Afro-Brazilian and indigenous histories and cultures in elementary education. The absence and/or irregular or non-mandatory provision of curricular components aimed at training future teachers remains an obstacle to implementing anti-racist approaches to Brazilian cultural diversity in the country's education system.

Keywords: ethnoracial relations, racism, anti-racist education, teacher education.

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INTRODUCTION

The 1988 Constitution recognized Brazil as a multiethno and multicultural country, guaranteeing the recognition and appreciation of cultures and the right to be different of the various groups that participated in the national civilizing process. However, it was only at the beginning of the 21st century, with the enactment of Act 10.639 of January 9, 2003, 11.645 of March 10, 2008, and Act 12.796 of April 4, 2013 that consideration of ethnoracial diversity gained the status of educational principle. These acts amended the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB - Act 9.394 of December 20, 1996), determining the mandatory teaching of African, Afro-Brazilian and indigenous histories and cultures in Basic Education, in addition to the inclusion of diversity consideration as a principle of education. As such, they represent a milestone in the anti-racist struggle in education.

The approval of this legal framework and other achievements like affirmative action in universities – is the result of historical struggles for rights and expresses a change in the perception of society and the State regarding the racial dimension of social inequalities. This change involves recognizing the pedagogical role that social movements have played, especially since the 1980s, as educational agents in society responsible for demanding and fostering broad racial literacy and the development of a collective consciousness regarding the structural dimension of racism (Almeida, S., 2018). In the midst of the struggle for this awareness, still in process, social mobilizations have taken place that, in the last 20 years, have made it possible to construct legal devices and public policies aimed at directly confronting racism and its harmful effects on the experience of racialized groups (Nilma, 2011; 2017; Munduruku, 2012).

On the other hand, despite the importance and progress that these achievements represent, recent research has shown that the implementation of legal frameworks in schools still faces many barriers and challenges. Formal achievements, such as laws, have not yet translated into a consistent anti-racist school culture. Among the main difficulties in this regard are: low adherence of municipal education departments to anti-racist education efforts, which is observed in the disregard of legal parameters in municipal education plans and in schools' political projects; a lack of financial and teaching resources; the absence of qualified professionals designated to implement the laws; and the predominance of old pedagogical practices aimed at cultural diversity, which are sporadic in nature, theoretically inconsistent, uncritical and restricted to commemorative dates (Benedito; Carneiro; Portella, 2023).

In this article, we address one of the practical challenges to the implementation of anti-racist education, i.e. teacher training. In addition to reflecting theoretically on the interconnection between racism, anti-racism and education, we seek to contribute to the empirical work of assessing 1) the importance of adequate teacher training in implementing anti-racist education, and 2) the difficulties encountered within higher education institutions in promoting such training.

The first section analyzes racism as a structural and multidimensional phenomenon, highlighting the importance of racial literacy among teachers and of training (initial and ongoing) that provides these professionals with theoretical and methodological skills to confront racism in schools, as well as a qualified and positive approach to African, Afro-Brazilian and indigenous historical and cultural references. The second section focuses on recent publications that take stock of the 20 years since Act 10.639/2003 and the 15 years since Act 11.645/2008. We seek to identify the barriers to the implementation of this legal framework in schools, particularly with regard to teacher training. The third

section discusses teacher training from the perspective of undergraduate students at the University of Brasília, highlighting their perceptions about the subject 'Education of ethnoracial Relations' (ERE) as a curricular component in the initial training of future teachers.

RACISM AS FOUNDATIONAL, STRUCTURAL AND MULTIDIMENSIONAL VIOLENCE: A DECOLONIAL APPROACH

The history of racism in Brazil is part of the complex history of colonization, dispossession and slavery, which dehumanized African and indigenous peoples, alienating them from their territories, histories and cultures. In order to deepen this understanding, we have summarized broad scientific discussions about racism in contemporary times. Here, the so-called decolonial perspective stands out, which approaches racism as the colonality of power/being/knowledge, highlighting the relevant role of education and knowledge as instruments for the reproduction or struggle against racism.

Our objective in this section is, above all, to emphasize the complexity of the phenomenon of racism. Hence, there is a need for consistent training and social engagement for professionals who deal with race relations, racism and cultural diversity at schools. It is understood that without sociological and pedagogical training on the complex nature of racism, an anti-racist culture at schools cannot be consolidated. There is a risk of reinforcing racist practices and representations, given that the consolidation of this culture involves complex professional tasks and demanding psychological challenges, such as: 1) self-criticism of education professionals, based on an awareness of how racism tends to guide our actions without us even realizing it; 2) confronting and discussing the different ways and instances in which racism may manifest itself in and outside schools; and 3) recognizing and positively teaching cultures, knowledge and histories that racism has sought to exclude from schools, ranging from the field of knowledge to society itself, as is the case with the African, Afro-Brazilian and indigenous historical and cultural universe.

The notion of colonality formulated by Quijano (2005) corresponds to a power device that emerged from the Conquest of the Americas, the essence of which is racism. Based on a racist imaginary that already existed in medieval Europe and gained increasing importance in the organization and justification of practical dominion over unexplored territories, an ontological division of the world between zones of greater or lesser humanity was established in Western thought. This division was embedded in the mentality of the colonizers and in the writings of their intellectuals as a natural fact, proven initially by theology, and later by science, notably biology and anthropology. In it, Western Europe, the origin of the colonizer, was identified as the center or evolutionary apex of humanity, whereas the conquered peoples and territories were classified as beings and spaces that were less human or, simply, non-human. In the 19th century, the scientific concept of race emerged as a rationalizer of this hierarchy. From it, the colonizers granted themselves the right and duty to classify different peoples into superior or inferior races of human beings, to study their differences and to develop the most appropriate strategies for their interaction.

Racism thus became part of the foundations of philosophy, law, and moral and cultural values disseminated by bourgeois revolutions and colonial conquests. Humanist philosophy, the basis of the fundamental principle of equality and freedom of modern constitutionalism, was never fully extended to non-European peoples, nor was it designed to do so (Mbembe, 2013; Gilroy, 2001, p. 101-156; Andrade, 2017). To cite a particularly illustrative example, the French minister and educator Jules Ferry,

in the context of the division of Africa and Asia by colonial empires in 1885, claimed: “It must be said openly that the superior races have a right over the inferior races”, the Declaration of the Rights of Man“ was not written for the blacks of equatorial Africa [...]. I repeat that the superior races have a right, which springs from the duty to civilize inferior races” (Mbembe, 2013, p. 116).

This racial hierarchy provided the legal basis for the use (slavery) and elimination (genocide) of non-white people during colonial enterprises from the 16th to the 20th centuries, as well as the seizure of their territories. Since they were non-human, semi-human, backward or barbarian, the dominated beings did not have full rights to life, liberty, and property. Therefore, the taking of their life, liberty or territory did not constitute a criminal infraction. This legal/theological rule encouraged everyday practices, which in turn were transformed into legislation.

The aforementioned way of interpreting differences between peoples provided the basis for the civilizational model that emerged from the conquest in all dimensions, including the epistemic and psychological dimensions. It articulates, under the same “liberal” system of social organization and knowledge production, contradictory principles like domination/slavery/colonization and freedom/human emancipation/equality. By the same logic, the value of science and knowledge developed by colonizing Europe coexists with – and justifies – the erasure of the histories, knowledge, cultures and mental elaborations of all those who are identified as colonial subjects (blacks, indigenous people, peripheral people). In the colonial mentality, the imperial self (Europeans, Westerners, white people) is projected as the sole producer and holder of rights, history, culture and knowledge. Race, therefore, is the notion through which the colonizers invented themselves (the white, Christian, cis, heterosexual man) as a model of historical progress and human normality. At the same time, Africans and Amerindians were henceforth confined to the homogenizing categories of Indian, black and mixed-race, that is, inferior beings (Reis da Silva, 2022).

Between the 19th and 20th centuries, an important process of modernity/coloniality was consolidated, and racism was incorporated into the legal and social order of formally independent national units. The end of slavery and the processes of decolonization, despite their emancipatory importance, are also those in which colonial racism began to “regulate the distribution of physical, cultural and epistemic death and enable the murderous functions of the respective States” (Mbembe, 2018, p. 18). The dominant among the former colonies were historically linked to economic/political interests and the metropolitan episteme. Under the principle of national sovereignty, they reorganized prior racist apparatuses of control, knowledge and violence. The management of life and death in colonial empires was transformed into the management of racial and social “health” within nations, which translated into economic, symbolic and legal barriers. There were everyday practices of discrimination, control and violence – institutionalized at schools, universities, detentions and other State apparatuses, and validated as customary in the social fabric.

Examples of this process include racial lynchings in the southern United States and Brazil in the early 20th century, as well as other secular and more contemporary forms of violence, such as police violence against black, poor and indigenous populations, discrimination against cultural and religious practices of African and indigenous origins, the erasure of non-Western knowledge and the silencing of discussions about racism at schools and universities (Butler, 2014; Monsma, 2016; D’Ávila, 2003; Quijano, 2005). The recent reaction of conservatives in the United States against the teaching of critical race theory and Brazilian initiatives for “schools without parties” are some of the more grotesque examples

of how coloniality – as a structured set of practices and representations that ensure the permanence of colonial violence – and racism – as the essence of coloniality – still manifest themselves in the contemporary field of education and knowledge.

Coloniality, therefore, does not exclusively refer to the violence of the colonial conquest, but corresponds with the pattern of global power that emerged from it. These structures remained in place after the formal end of colonialism, impacting the contemporary world (Restrepo; Rojas, 2010). From a decolonial perspective, understanding how this long term power structure has affected the historical, subjective, and epistemic experiences of the peoples subjected to it is key to elucidating racism, not only in its physical/material aspect, but also in its cultural and mental dimension. That is, in addition to organs and territories, racism has also affected and shaped minds and collective memories. Maldonado-Torres refers to this when theorizing about colonial ontological negation: “Others do not think, therefore they are not. Not thinking becomes a sign of not being in modernity” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 145, our translation).

As such, there is a need, within the scope of an anti-racist practice (thought-action), to critically analyze the prevalence of North/Eurocentric references and mental elaborations in Latin American societies. This is of particular importance at schools and universities, considering the ways in which North-centric orientations act as a factor of exclusion and inferiorization for indigenous, Afrocentric and peripheral peoples. Interpretations of the manifestation of racism in Brazil corroborate the prevalence of a double racialization – non-being and non-knowledge – as a way of dehumanizing bodies and emptying the agency of black, brown and indigenous people.

According to Munanga (2003, p. 8), racism manifests itself as a “belief in the existence of natural hierarchy of races through the intrinsic relationship between the physical and the moral, the physical and the intellect, and the physical and the cultural”. The naturalized association between physical traits, moral dispositions and mental capacities corresponds, in effect, with the manifestation of racism both as an imaginary ideology and as a social phenomenon.

I insist on the fact that racism arises when biological characteristics are used as a justification for this or that behavior. It is precisely the establishment of the intrinsic relationship between biological characteristics and moral, psychological, intellectual and cultural qualities that leads to the hierarchization of so-called races into superior and inferior (Munanga, 2003, p. 9).

As early as the 1970s, Abdias Nascimento (2016) drew attention to the unique intersection of the physical, cultural and psychological dimensions of Brazilian racism. Racism permeates the whole social fabric, including the economy, politics, social spaces and culture. However, it is denied and masked by Brazilians and by the country's official history. The white Brazilian is portrayed in this story as a kind friend to the black, and Brazilian culture appears to be the fruit of racial and cultural mingling. At the same time, the ideal of whiteness reinforces this culture and history. The white occupies center stage, either as “pure” white or as a matrix to which the production and actions of indigenous and African people are attached as peripheral contributions. These therefore undergo a process of erasure through assimilation, acculturation and miscegenation, processes that Abdias Nascimento understands as part of the “genocide” of black and indigenous people in Brazil.

Silvio Almeida (2018) pointed out this Brazilian particularity (which is now being exported to the United States) when summarizing what is currently understood as structural racism. Racism in Brazil is present in the social structure, naturalized and normalized in society, customs, culture and in the

popular psyche. Nevertheless, it is systematically denied an identified as an anomaly, a deviation from the rule. This view is corroborated by Petrônio Domingues' (2005) historical analysis.

Campos (2017) has highlighted three dimensions of racism, which are generally addressed separately by sociological studies: 1) racism as an imaginary ideology that postulates the natural inferiority of human groups of specific origin and characteristics; 2) a practice, a set of unreflective attitudes and gestures that reproduce racial discrimination; and 3) a power structure that intrinsically reproduces hierarchies and exclusions in the dynamics and functioning of institutions. The author argued that a complex examination of racism requires this three-dimensional approach, observing how these dimensions are articulated, manifested and mutually reinforced. It is precisely this examination carried out by decolonial theory, anti-racist sociology and historiography that was applied in the present section.

Understanding racism as a sociological phenomenon which manifests itself in different ways and with varying dynamics is what allows us to identify it as an explicit practice of discrimination and, at the same time, as subjective discrimination. Racism denies the ontological existence of certain subjects, whilst normalizing segregation and precarious work and living situations (Guimarães, 1999).

In her studies on Education, Sueli Carneiro (2005) highlighted the multidimensionality of racism. She stressed that epistemic racism and epistemicide have profound dimensions, not always declared and perceptible, of the otherization and absolute denial of humanity and agency of Afro-Brazilian and indigenous peoples. The author also analyzed the ways in which this racism is reproduced and engendered through institutional exclusion. Moreover, there is a predominance of a Eurocentric and monocultural perspective of knowledge that determines which knowledge is valid and which subjects are considered its legitimate producers:

Epistemicide is, in addition to the nullification and disqualification of the knowledge of subjugated peoples, a persistent process of producing cultural indigence: through the denial of access to education, especially quality education; through the production of intellectual inferiority; through the different mechanisms of delegitimization of black people as bearers and producers of knowledge, lowering their cognitive capacity due to material deprivation and/or the compromise of self-esteem resulting from discrimination in the educational process. It is impossible to disregard the forms of knowledge of dominated peoples without also disqualifying them, individually and collectively, as knowing subjects. Doing so deprives them of reason, the condition for achieving "legitimate" or legitimized knowledge. For this reason, epistemicide mortally affects or hijacks the rationality of the subjugated and reduces their capacity to learn, among others (Carneiro, 2005, p. 97).

As the author demonstrated, schools and universities have played a leading role in the reproduction of European culture, values and knowledge, while simultaneously propagating of a stereotypical and racist view of the histories, knowledge and cultural references of African, Afro-Brazilian and indigenous peoples. The same Eurocentric perspective that forged a unilinear and universal history of human progress continues to dominate the official spaces of production, validation and circulation of knowledge.

In another direction, the vigorous notion of decolonial ecology, formulated by Malcom Ferdinand (2022), allows us to observe how racism and epistemic racism are deeply intertwined with environmental racism, i.e. land grabbing and degradation of the living conditions of colonized peoples:

The enslavement of men and women, the exploitation of nature, the conquest of lands and indigenous peoples, on the one hand, and deforestation, the exploitation of mineral resources and soils, on the other, were not two distinct realities, but rather constitutive elements of the

same colonial project. The colonization of the Americas is just another name for the imposition of a singular, violent and destructive way of inhabiting the land (Ferdinand, 2022, p. 56).

Achille Mbembe (2019, p. 3-4) also recognized “[...] an explicit kinship between modern slavery, colonial predation and contemporary forms of resource appropriation and extraction”. From the experience of indigenous peoples, quilombolas, Afro-indigenous peoples and traditional peasants, the colonality of power takes on the form of neo-extractivism that takes the objectification and exploitation of nature to the extreme. This logic engenders ontological conflicts, since the worldviews of indigenous peoples and their relational ontologies are dramatically opposed to the Western dualism of culture/nature. Indigenous peoples, on the contrary, recognize nature as agents, non-human subjects with whom they coexist and together constitute the world (Escobar, 2014; Almeida, M., 2013).

The multiple approaches we have reviewed allow us to affirm the complexity, depth and multidimensionality of racism. It is clear, given these findings, that an anti-racist education project will be ineffective if the professionals involved do not have a sufficient understanding of the dynamics of this phenomenon, notably the ways in which racism – in its physical, social, psychological, ideological, epistemic, historical, and environmental dimensions – engenders deterritorialization, ecological injustice, social inequality, extermination and epistemicide (Munanga, 2003; Krenak, 1999; Lima; Reis da Silva, 2022).

At the same time, the studies referred to above have made it clear that there can be no effective fight against racism without education. Gomes and Munanga, in particular, reminded us that education is a fundamental path to deconstructing myths and promoting social and cultural transformation:

[...] Education is capable of giving both young people and adults the possibility of questioning and deconstructing the myths of superiority and inferiority among human groups that have been socialized. [...] The transformation of our minds as teachers is a very important preliminary task. This transformation will make us true educators, capable of contributing to the process of constructing the historical and cultural individualities of the populations that form the diverse matrix of Brazilian society (Gomes; Munanga, 2006, p. 13).

The basic and ongoing training of teachers on the topic of ethnoracial relations is key to anti-racist education, and the lack of such training tends to be one of the greatest challenges to such an educational project. It is no coincidence that research on the implementation of Acts 10.639/2003 and 11.645/2008 has pointed to a need for racial literacy among education professionals. This allows them to critically review Brazil’s historical experience and offers a broad repertoire of didactic, methodological and pedagogical resources to deal with racism and positively address ethnoracial and cultural diversity in schools. These issues will be discussed with more detail in the following sections.

TWENTY YEARS OF ANTI-RACIST EDUCATION IN BRAZIL: ADVANCES AND CHALLENGES

Acts 10.639/2003 and 11.645/2008, which amended the LDB law 9.394/1996, require administrative measures that ensure the recognition, appreciation and promotion of the contributions of African, Afro-Brazilian and indigenous peoples and nations in the formation of Brazil. However, the few studies available on the subject have pointed to the limited effectiveness of this legislation. The scarcity and poor organization of official data on their implementation constitute a huge challenge for mapping and evaluating advances in this field, a sign that there is little political will to enforce these laws in the

responsible organs. Against this background, considering the 20th anniversary of Act 10.639/2003, the Black Women's Institute (Geledés) and the Alana Institute conducted a survey with 1,187 municipal education departments (approximately 21% of all Brazilian municipalities, with representation from all regions of the country). The survey was aimed at identifying which changes had been incorporated by institutions responsible for early childhood education and elementary education in order to comply with the legislation (Benedito; Carneiro; Portella, 2023)².

The study indicated that seven out of ten municipal education departments had carried out little or no action aimed at ensuring the teaching of Afro-Brazilian and indigenous histories and cultures. More than half (53%) admitted to not enforcing the law systematically; 18% did not implement any anti-racist educational action; while only 29% reported regular action on the adoption of measures aimed at a consistent implementation of the legal provisions. According to the information provided by the administrators, the research pointed to a predominance of sporadic action (if at all), restricted to commemorative dates. According to the respondents, this superficiality is related to a lack of technical and financial support from the state and the federal government levels to municipalities.

The study thus reveals that there has been little progress, due to a set of weaknesses that make up a worrying scenario of limited enforcement of laws in the municipal education networks:

Only one municipality in four has a specific educational department, team or professionals responsible for teaching African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture, and only one in five municipalities has specific regulations on teaching these topics. Another point of attention is the importance of collaboration between federal entities and other institutions to qualify this policy. Most networks claim not to have received sufficient support for implementing the law, and this lack of support is the main challenge for its implementation, according to the municipalities. In addition to the request for greater support, there are also contradictions between municipalities in the same state regarding the existence of state regulations, which indicates little clarity about standardization. The scenario for implementing the law is still precarious, with a low level of institutionalization and resistance from those implementing public policies. This underpins the importance of developing advocacy strategies that work in both supervisory and proactive ways (Benedito; Carneiro; Portella, 2023, p. 74).

In the face of such disorganization and deficiency, it is understandable that actions to implement the laws are generally sporadic, uncritical and merely “festive”. Notwithstanding, a majority of municipalities (57%) declared that they carry out “actions to support schools and that their teaching units include content regarding Afro-Brazilian, African and indigenous history and culture in their Political Pedagogical Projects” (Benedito; Carneiro; Portella, 2023, p. 48). This contradiction indicates that considering the mandatory nature of the laws in municipal education plans and in schools’ pedagogical projects, in addition to providing for ongoing training for teachers and planning ways to introduce the topic into the curriculum and school practices, do not guarantee the consistent, regular and lasting implementation of anti-racist education. To this end, there needs to be awareness and political will.

The authors of the study concluded that, on a more general level, there seems to be a lack of understanding that “the implementation of an educational policy needs to go beyond the construction of legal frameworks”. Correspondingly, “the measures needed for this implementation should be

² Although the study focuses on Act 10.639/2003, it is understood that its findings can also be applied to the implementation of Act 11.645/2008. Furthermore, taking into account the specificities of African, Afro-Brazilian and indigenous histories and cultures, educating about ethnoracial relations and the fight against racism presupposes a consideration, appreciation and positive visibility of the ethnocultural diversity that constitutes Brazilian society.

encouraged and incorporated by the administrative and pedagogical management of education departments, so that they are reflected in the school environment” (Benedito; Carneiro; Portella, 2023, p. 17). In fact, the study has shown that, 20 years after Act 10.639/2003 and 15 years after Act 11.645/2008, it is still a challenge to build a comprehensive and acute awareness of what these documents represent and the problems they seek to solve. In other words, the public authorities' lack of awareness regarding the importance of valuing Brazilian cultural diversity and combating racism in our society and in school education is still lacking. Therefore, it is fundamental to promote effective and lasting practices, organically incorporated into school culture.

Another aspect that contributes to this reality is the non-inclusion of teacher training in the laws. To date, there is no legal framework that establishes Education on ethnoracial Relations as a mandatory curricular component in undergraduate courses. It is true that Resolution CNE/CP No. 1, of June 17, 2004 (Brazil, 2004), determines that higher education institutions should follow the National Guidelines for Education on ethnoracial Relations and for the Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture. This means that subjects and activities related to these themes are to be incorporated into teacher training. In practice, however, universities do not feel obliged to include these components in their undergraduate courses. This is evident in the fact that many public universities have been urged to offer the subject ethnoracial Relations Education (ERE), due to Terms of Conduct Adjustment (TACs) arising from lawsuits filed by the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office (MPF). The same curricular gap is present in continuous teacher education provided by municipal and state education systems, since it depends largely on the initiative of public agents. As research by the Geledés and Alana Institutes has shown, there is little awareness of the legal framework and what is necessary for its implementation.

A survey conducted by the Todos Pela Educação movement (Apenas Metade, 2023) reinforces this worrying picture. The study was based on the responses of 65,935 school principals, between 2011 and 2021, to a questionnaire administered by the National Basic Assessment System (SAEB). The data indicate that, in 2021, the total number of public schools that had developed projects to combat racism reached its lowest level in the 10 years covered by the study. Only 50.1% of schools registered anti-racist action, a drop of 25.5% compared to the highest level of 75.6% in 2015.

Institutional resistance to an anti-racist and multicultural culture in education systems is felt by professionals charged with enforcing the law in daily school routines. This was also demonstrated by a recent ethnographic study carried out at an Early Childhood Education Center in the Federal District. According to the study, the Center has been developing an anti-racist project since 2013, which encompasses a series of regular activities throughout the year, in collaboration with local anti-racist movements. Among its activities are teacher training courses on topics related to ethnoracial relations, racism and anti-racism; group discussions with intellectuals and leaders of the black and indigenous movements; and cultural programs and events with community participation, aiming to value African, Afro-Brazilian and indigenous history and culture. Despite being innovative, consistent and long-term, getting the entire school community involved remains a challenge, given that activities largely depend on the activism and engagement of a small group of teachers³ (Almeida, B., 2023).

Although the project has many merits and has received national awards, the study points to a persistence among professionals and students at the Center of practices (gestures and words) that

³ The teaching staff of this Early Childhood Education Center is 100% female. Therefore, in the references we make to this study, we will not apply the gender inflection adopted in the article.

naturalize racism and reproduce negative stereotyped imaginaries about the Afro-Brazilian and indigenous populations. However, such continuity is understandable, as a 10-year effort is not capable of radically transforming a five century legacy where racism was disseminated and normalized, embedded in the unconscious, in our relationships and daily practices, in the most diverse spaces of socialization, in and beyond school walls. Therefore, anti-racist culture requires a constant effort.

Bárbara Almeida (2023) identified gaps in the training and theoretical and methodological knowledge of part of the Center's teaching staff on the subject. This has generated discrepancies in terms of quality and depth in the approach of different teachers in the classroom, limiting the project's solidity and coherence. Moreover, some teachers did not demonstrate any openness to a more effective commitment to anti-racist education. The lack of preparation and mastery of the content, as well as the lack of knowledge of teaching resources and appropriate methodologies – weaknesses related to academic training – certainly contribute to keeping these teachers from taking on this commitment. Furthermore, the aforementioned gap reinforces prejudice and insecurities among professionals, who feel embarrassed because they are not prepared to address certain topics.

In accordance with the surveys discussed at the beginning of this section, Bárbara Almeida's research (2023) identified teacher training as one of the main weaknesses and a priority issue that needs to be addressed if we want to advance in the consolidation of quality anti-racist education. All evidence points to the worrying fact that our education professionals have little understanding of what racism is, or how and why we need to combat it. They are unfamiliar with Afro-Brazilian, African and indigenous culture and history, nor do they access methodologies and resources to address these topics with their students. It is worth remembering that such lack of knowledge on the part of teachers tends to reinforce the normalization of racist, prejudiced and stereotypical images in the school environment (Baniwa, 2016; Gomes, 2017; Munduruku, 2012; Oliveira; Candau, 2010).

As we have tried to highlight in this section, despite the legal progress, combating racism requires a collective engagement, starting with government at the federal, state and municipal level and public administrators. Their role is key to guaranteeing and maintaining financial and educational resources, promoting public policies, offering technical support and monitoring. Furthermore, they can formulate and implement a robust policy that ensures racial literacy for teachers in both basic and continuous education. In this context, several studies have highlighted the need to make Education on ethnoracial Relations a mandatory curricular component in all undergraduate courses (Santos; Pinto; Chirinéa, 2018).

Understanding these responsibilities is essential to counter a persistent pedagogical imaginary that attributes the task of addressing racial issues to black and indigenous teachers, thus reproducing the harmful idea that racism is a problem of racialized people rather than society as a whole. Reducing racism and epistemicide to a problem that only concerns its victims exempts the rest of society and the State from their responsibilities, both in reproducing and countering this violence. Given this misconception, the topic of anti-racist education in schools often ends up being reduced, as we saw in the aforementioned research, to a matter of activism, i.e. a commitment expected of racial minorities (Gomes, 2011).

This scenario brings us to another relevant point. After two decades of legislation regarding anti-racist education, it is worrying to note that racism continues to be denied and silenced at schools. The aforementioned research conducted by the Geledés and Alana Institutes found that, in the anti-racist

actions developed by the municipal schools that participated in the study, there was a tendency to prioritize topics that are considered peaceful or that do not generate tensions and conflicts:

[...] the topics considered important to be addressed, like diversity, food culture and clothing, concern relevant discussions, but can be identified as more comfortable, to the detriment of topics such as the hierarchy of peoples and knowledge, power dynamics and decision-making. In other words, the choice is still to reflect on education for ethnoracial relations without reviewing the construction and maintenance of privileges. Choices that may reveal a broader framework for reflection on the perception of low support and engagement for the law's implementation (Benedito; Carneiro; Portella, 2023, p. 75).

This trend was also observed by Bárbara Almeida (2023) at the Early Childhood Education Center in the Federal District, particularly with regard to religions of African origin and religious racism. For most teachers, this topic should not be addressed in the school's anti-racist project. However, children are encouraged to practice Christian prayers and rituals on a daily basis, even though not all of them are Catholic or Evangelical. According to the researcher, during the pedagogical coordination sessions, moments of great tension and heated dialogues on this topic were observed. Some teachers, especially those who participate in tEREiro communities, recognize the importance of combating religious racism and seek to assess the effects of Christian rituals being imposed at schools. However, their narratives are silenced, and the pain caused by religious racism is normalized, both by school management and teachers, especially those of Evangelical denominations.

In addition to the avoidance of sensitive topics, as the study mentioned above pointed out, anti-racist action remains predominantly centered around commemorative dates. According to Gomes (2017) and Munduruku (2012), the appreciation of cultural diversity and respect for differences cannot be episodic. Instead, they should be constant educational principles, as stated in the law. The exclusive use of commemorative dates to talk about marginalized “others” is not only insufficient to combat prejudice, but can also reinforce the imaginary of exoticism, folklore or subculture associated with them.

Structural racism in Brazil constitutes, as we sought to demonstrate in the first section of this article, a long-term multifaceted form of violence. In Brazil, one of its main weapons is the myth of racial democracy, which sustains our mask of a peaceful society, free from racial conflicts. This particularity reinforces the importance of our legal framework, which, albeit not mandatory, proposes to break this silence. However, we believe that the scope should be expanded. The enactment of anti-racist legal frameworks, such as the established laws and the desired mandatory teaching of ERE in the initial and continuous education of teaching professionals, marks an extremely important historical inflection. With these gestures, the Brazilian State has publicly acknowledged the persistence of structural racism and established education as a strategic tool for confronting it.

However, as we have seen, these advances face practical, institutional and cultural challenges to be put into practice. Society, public administrators and education professionals should become aware of their roles in effectively combating racism and promoting cultural diversity, and must act together to develop lasting and well-founded action. To this end, investment in the initial and continuous education of teachers is a priority, as is regular monitoring by State agencies of the successes and difficulties in implementing Acts 10.639/2003 and 11.645/2008.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF FUTURE TEACHERS ON ETHNORACIAL RELATIONS EDUCATION (ERE)

Continuing the debate on qualified teacher training as a condition for anti-racist education, in this section we analyze the opinions of higher education students on the importance of the ERE subject as a curricular component of undergraduate courses. The analysis is based on a survey conducted between 2020 and 2022 with 120 students in the Pedagogy course, mostly black and brown women. They took the ERE subject taught by one of the authors of this article at the Faculty of Education of the University of Brasília. Of these, 91 students voluntarily responded to the self-assessment form, created using the Google Forms tool. It included multiple-choice questions about participation in the course and open questions about the content, as well as their perceptions about the course (negative and positive aspects of the course and suggestions for improvement). In this analysis, we focused on some discursive elements that deal with the learning and perceptions about the course. It should be emphasized that what is presented here is only a small part of the collected data, which will be the subject of further analysis in future publications.

Let us begin by presenting the context and conditions under which the ERE course has been offered at the University of Brasília. Since its foundation, UnB has pursued the ideal of a “necessary university”: plural, with free thought and circulation of ideas, forging a truly civic science, inspired by the cultural diversity of the peoples that make up the Brazilian nation. It is aimed at the construction of a democratic, fair, creative and egalitarian society. UnB's leading role in the national debate on racial inequality in education was fundamental in fostering a broad mobilization of various sectors of society around the construction of affirmative action to democratize the access and permanence of racialized groups at universities. In addition, UnB was the first federal higher education institution to adopt social and racial quotas in undergraduate (and recently in graduate) courses, and to implement a specific entrance exam for indigenous people (Bernardino-Costa; Borges, 2021; Carvalho, 2004).

However, this pioneering work has not yet reached other important dimensions of confronting racism and promoting racial equality. One of these dimensions concerns the representation of diversity in the teaching staff, which, at UnB, as in most federal public universities, is still predominantly white. This is testament to the slowness of the public administration in implementing the Quota Law in federal public examinations (Coutinho; Arruda, 2022).

The implementation of the National Curricular Guidelines for Education on ethnoracial Relations in higher education constitutes another matter of concern. As determined by Resolution CNE/CP nº 1/2004 (Brazil, 2004), the National Curricular Guidelines for Education on ethnoracial Relations and for the Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture must be “observed by educational institutions that operate at the levels and modalities of Brazilian Education and, in particular, by institutions that develop initial and continuing teacher training programs” (art. 1). They are responsible for including “in the contents of subjects and curricular activities of the courses they teach, Education on ethnoracial Relations, as well as related issues and themes” (art. 1, § 1).

In Pedagogy, an important undergraduate course, there are no professors who have passed the public exam for this specific curricular component. In the 20 years since Act 10.639/2003 has been in force, the status of ERE has remained optional. It has been taught irregularly, although sometimes not at all, thanks to the engagement of professors who have historically worked in this field. One fact that highlights this reality is the work of the Public Prosecutor's Office with public universities, making

recommendations, including the signing of Conduct Adjustment Terms, so that they adopt measures to ensure the availability of the subject in all undergraduate courses⁴.

It was this worrying reality that motivated the present survey. We wanted to understand whether and how these problems were perceived and interpreted by students; whether there was a mismatch between the way academia has handled the provision of ERE and the aspirations and concerns of these students regarding their education, with a view to their future role as teachers in basic education. That said, let us proceed to the analysis.

The ERE subject, which constitutes the reference for this study, seeks to offer a diverse repertoire of readings, teaching resources, strategies and languages, adopting collaborative methodologies that stimulate dialogue, exchange and mutual learning among students. Among the concerns are ensuring the plurality and representation of voices, emphasizing the productions of black, quilombola and indigenous intellectuals, as well as providing spaces for direct dialogue with these leaders⁵. This dynamic, varied, collective and dialogic proposal was highlighted as a positive point by most of the participating students⁶:

The debates and readings, in addition to the videos and podcasts, were very useful and of immense intellectual and social productivity (student 1, 4th semester, 2020).

I liked that the teaching material was not restricted to texts, including a lot of cool content developed through podcasts, videos, films, music that develop our critical thinking. Moreover, I really enjoyed the valuable contributions of guest speakers (student 2, 4th semester, 2020).

I consider the subject proposal to be very appropriate, the dynamics of reading the texts beforehand to be discussed in class, the reflections during classes, inviting experts on the subject, an recommending documentaries to watch. It was a very enriching class that opened up a field of knowledge I didn't have before (student 3, 4th semester, 2020).

I appreciated the participation of guests and the film "The Last Abolition". They allowed me to reflect on many things beyond the texts. (...) I also really enjoyed the texts that bring the perspective and culture of indigenous peoples, because through them I can get closer to the thinking of these peoples. I enjoyed learning about Acts No. 10.639/03 and No. 11.645/08, and understanding their importance in guaranteeing the teaching of Afro-Brazilian culture and indigenous peoples (student 1, 6th semester, 2021).

I really liked having guests throughout the semester, who contributed a lot to the expansion of thoughts and debate (student 1, 7th semester, 2021).

The exchange of letters⁷ was incredible, it brought a closeness even though we were far away, I really liked the proposal. I really liked the subject, the organization, everything: organization of the activities, resources used (podcast, exchange of letters, diaries and texts). The subject matter is extremely necessary (student 1, 3rd semester, 2022).

⁴ At the time of submission of this article, UnB had not yet responded to a query made by the Transparency Portal about the TACs signed by the university and measures taken to fulfill the commitments made to the Public Prosecutor's Office.

⁵ The course's syllabus includes the following topics: Historical trajectory of the construction of racism, manifestations of ethnocentrism and their impact on educational institutions, formal and informal educational environments. public policies, as well as specific legislation formulated to promote equal opportunities and social justice in ethnoracial relations through a retrospective, historical approach to the struggles of social movements.

⁶ In order to ensure anonymity, students will be identified by numbers, relating them to the semester in which they were at the time of the survey. Consultations for free and informed consent for the use of responses in reports and possible publications were carried out orally during the course and application of the questionnaires.

⁷ One of the innovations adopted in the subject was epistolary writing as a pedagogical tool. Through the exchange of letters, we sought to provide students with a space for intimate dialogue about their experiences of racism and reflections, exchanges and mutual learning on the topics discussed throughout the course.

(...) I loved the exchange of letters, where we were able to discuss and share experiences with the students. I really liked the subject and the idea of podcasts, we have to use technology in favor of education. In addition, the approaches and texts chosen were excellent, so overall it was great (student 2, 3rd semester, 2022).

In addition to the respondents' appreciation of the methodological variety of the subject, these testimonies attest to the value given to the participation of representatives of subalternized groups (especially indigenous people), as speakers or reference readings. This emphasis is recurrent and points to two facts. Firstly, contact with these subalternized intellectuals is still rare in the education of students, and their inclusion in the course still generates surprise. Secondly, there is a significant interest among students in welcoming and contemplating this intellectual diversity. These are signs that students harbor expectations of epistemic justice much higher than those currently practiced at the university as a whole.

Another element highlighted in the responses cited is the approval of the articulation between theory and practice in the subject's activities on two levels: 1) the thematization of diversity based on the practical incorporation of racial and cultural diversity in the choice of authors read and listened to; and 2) the alliance between reading about race and racism on the one hand, and producing a discourse on race and racism through discussions, exchange of letters, creation of podcasts and additional activities on the other. In fact, if this articulation is necessary for almost every curriculum of a course designed to train teachers, it is even more fundamental when it comes to such a sensitive, masked, taboo subject such as racism. Only practice, in this case, gives us the chance to reevaluate our representations and our naturalized racial gestures. Combining theory and practice ensures, as the students imply, that the training process is in itself an anti-racist experience.

One positive effect of the dialogue-inducing methodology and the constant invitation to self-reflection was the expansion of the students' individual awareness of how the racial issue marked their past experiences and will mark their future experiences in and outside schools. This can be seen in responses like the following:

I made excellent use of the subject, so much so that I completely changed my way of thinking about anti-racist education in the classroom (student 4, 4th semester, 2020).

It was a very important subject for me as a black person in Brazilian society. It brought examples and content that are part of my daily life and debates, visions and proposals that I had never thought of (student 5, 4th semester, 2020).

It is essential that educators include education in ethnoracial relations in their training, not for reasons of taste or affinity, but because of the need to form our own identity, especially because we will become part of areas of pedagogical activity, the development and teaching and learning of countless people. Raising awareness among the population is extremely important for deconstructing erroneous and prejudiced facts about Brazilian history. The course raised this awareness in me, bringing the perspective of the sensitivity and importance of this subject through presenting concepts, speeches, readings, videos and dialogues. It was an enriching experience (student 2, 6th semester, 2021).

The ERE course was an added value to my academic training. The texts were extremely rich, with insights that I had never thought of. The content took me out of my comfort zone, allowing me to see the reality of our country much better, and how it directly affects education (student 1, 5th semester, 2021).

I spent a year planning to apply for this course, as I did not want to leave the university for the classroom without the ability to delve deeper into racial discussions. (...) Therefore, I decided to take the course this semester and it was the best decision I could have made. I left it with an anti-racist awareness and I hope to be able to return it even more over time. It was transformative! Becoming aware of racism is a process of construction. I was able to start this

path with the authors and discussions throughout the semester. I hope, both as a person and as a teacher, to make a difference in the classroom, even if it is in a small way, in the debate on racial relations (student 1, 8th semester, 2022).

I signed up in search of a more critical and attentive approach to the issue of racism, because for me it is essential that we all have courses like this. As educators, having a great influence on students' lives, we have a duty to cooperate to put an end to it. I thought it was very good, because it greatly influenced my academic life and has helped me to adopt a different perspective during my day-to-day life and in my work in the classroom alike (student 2, 8th semester, 2022).

These reports of “expanding consciousness” are evidence that the role of ERE is not merely instrumental. In fact, it trains future education professionals to deal with certain topics in the classroom. Its role is epistemic and psychological in the deepest sense of the word: providing opportunities for an entire dimension of social life that is usually hidden, to come to light. Thus, it can thus be taken into account in the actions and choices of students in all spheres of their experience, be it in the exercise of their profession, citizenship, and in the construction of their identities, sociabilities, and projects.

This finding is supported by another fact, also present in the quotes above. One of the reasons for students' interest in taking the ERE course is the need and epistemic search to uncover the workings of racism. This is clear in the reiteration of the “essential” or “necessary” nature of the course. It should be noted, in this sense, that it is common for students to say that they are taking this course because they are already convinced of the importance of the topic, not because their curriculum imposes it. Such interest seems to be linked, among other things, to previous experiences with racism or other forms of discrimination on the part of the students interviewed in the research, since the vast majority of them were women socially perceived as black or brown⁸.

Bárbara Almeida (2019) noted that in 2018 ERE was not mandatory in 64% of the humanities and in 100% of courses in the exact, health and life sciences. In 2019, it became mandatory in 50% of humanities courses. In Pedagogy, however, the course that receives the highest demand for enrollments for this curricular component, it remains optional⁹.

Since 2020, there has been an effort to ensure the availability of at least two ERE classes per semester. However, this measure does not address the mismatch between demand and supply. This creates waiting lists each enrollment period, since the vacancies offered primarily serve Pedagogy students. In practice, the university has not been able to adapt to the provisions of the National Curricular Guidelines for the Education of ethnoracial Relations and for the Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture. Although the UnB recognized, in its 2018 Institutional Development Plan, the need to advance in meeting this educational and civic demand, effective action is not yet up to par.

Regarding the growing student demand for ethnoracial themes, it is important to note that this interest does not arise only from a cold observation of the world as an “object” of knowledge. It is deeply related to the real experience of racism that has affected the trajectories of many students, especially during their school experiences. This is evidenced by the following testimonies:

⁸ The data on students' self-identification are incomplete in the collected material. The observation about the black majority is based on an observation of the teacher responsible for the ERE subject.

⁹ This survey was conducted via the electronic student enrollment system, using terms related to ethnoracial relations. It was found that, in the first semester of 2019, UnB had 26 active courses available for enrollment on this topic. In the second semester of the same year, this number was reduced to 22 courses. The study also found that, of the 26 courses identified in 2019, only 13 were mandatory (Almeida, B., 2019).

I have suffered racism and I see/hear many cases happening around me. I was interested in engaging in ethnoracial themes to turn my pain into a form of struggle and resistance (student 2, 6th semester, 2022).

My expectations regarding the subject were high because I had experienced situations of racism. (...) The subject opened up several possibilities for me to think about the environment and to understand society as a reproducer of racism. It offered me a space to listen and to be heard (student 7, 4th semester, 2022).

I have suffered and I have seen people close to me being attacked by racism. (...) I have been interested in the subject since the first semester, when this research area caught my attention. In addition, I started my dissertation project on ethno-social relations, which further increased my interest in the subject (student 2 of the 5th semester, 2022).

These passages corroborate Gomes (2011, 2017), when he stated that anti-racist education must also address the pain of racism. This presupposes that the educational institution and its agents, especially teachers, need to be prepared to deal with the complexity of this trauma, including considering the positive aspects that involve becoming aware of it, as well as the suffering it produces. In other words, as Bell Hooks (2013) observed in *Teaching to Transgress*, intercultural and anti-racist education needs to be an exercise in healing and self-care. Here, the social and psychological importance of the ERE subject is underscored once more.

Santos (2017) warned about the persistence of a view that attempts to reduce ethnoracial relations to a side issue in academic education, a curricular page filler of sorts. In this section, it has become clear that this concern is still current and deserves attention. Such a view ignores the urgency, also highlighted here, of professional anti-racist training in order to repair “the historical exclusion of the black population in educational institutions” (Santos, 2017, p. 11).

However, we would like to emphasize that merely offering the subject ERE is insufficient to equip teachers with the theoretical and methodological basis needed to develop consistent anti-racist education processes. The subject’s availability must be broad and consistent, reaching all undergraduate courses, especially those that lead to teaching degrees. This involves pedagogical, administrative and political decisions that enshrine ERE in academic curricula and selection procedures for public school teachers.

In addition, the students’ testimonies have demonstrated that the quality of the training is essential. ERE should be organized and structured, in content and form, as an anti-racist and intercultural exercise. It ought to value the link between theory and practice, epistemic pluralism in the choice of literature and other curricular materials, frank and horizontal dialogue, acceptance and healing of pain, self-reflection on our deep-rooted racist behaviors, and encounters between knowledge from in and outside academia. Therefore, future research on the qualitative dimensions of the courses/subjects addressing ethnoracial relations at universities is essential.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article has aimed to analyze the advances and challenges regarding the implementation of Anti-Racist Education in Brazil, considering Acts 10.639/2003 and 11.645/2008. To this end, the analysis was triangulated into three dimensions, which are presented sequentially as follows: 1) discussion of racism as a multidimensional phenomenon, highlighting education as a strategic area where racial literacy is required in both basic and continuous teacher education; 2) mapping the main challenges to

implementing anti-racist practices in children's education and their association with teacher training; and 3) a presentation and analysis of the opinions of future education professionals about the Ethnoracial Relations Education subject offered in undergraduate courses at the University of Brasília.

Throughout this text we have argued that in order to confront racism in education, it is necessary to consolidate an anti-racist practice at schools. This depends on teachers who are theoretically and methodologically prepared to critically recognize racial violence and inequalities, promote racial literacy, and acknowledge the cultural and historical legacies of indigenous, African, and Afro-diasporic peoples. We seek to show that ERE is a strategic space in this confrontation, since it is in this subject that educators themselves go through a racial literacy process and learn practical strategies to deal with racism.

It needs to be emphasized that, despite the importance of recent laws that require the teaching of cultures and histories of subalternized peoples in basic education, these achievements are not enough to establish an anti-racist practice. In addition to the training of teachers, this practice depends on the commitment of administrative and educational spheres, such as education departments, universities and schools. It is their duty to comply with these laws, offer regular training courses, hire qualified personnel and organize ongoing programs to promote racial equality and epistemic justice. However, as the literature has shown, such commitments still fall short of what is necessary.

In this sense, the student output regarding ERE pointed to a recognition, on the part of the UnB student community, of the relevance of anti-racist training, as well as their understanding that this training process requires commitment on the part of the university. Even though ERE offers a critical intercultural theoretical and practical contribution to combating racism and is supported by dynamic, varied and collective theoretical and methodological processes, the subject is not yet widely offered and student demand for it exceeds the number of vacancies. In other words, despite the existence of legislation that require universities to commit to this curricular component, the present study and others have revealed a persistent mismatch between ethnoracial relations and areas of Eurocentric knowledge. The availability of ERE still largely depends on the individual dispositions and commitments of teachers who already have a history of engagement in anti-racist struggles.

Lastly, this article has shown that anti-racist education is important because it addresses the pain of racism that is actually experienced, especially among Afro-Brazilian students. They testified about their challenging, sometimes unspeakable experiences, and about their awareness of what racism was. This process took place through dialogue, acceptance by colleagues and teachers, and the recognition that they are not alone in their experience of racism and the fight against it. Our research among UnB students revealed a significant willingness on the part of students to expand their knowledge and awareness of the phenomenon of racism and ethnoracial relations, as well as to engage in dialogue with intellectuals from racial groups that are still underrepresented in academia. In fact, the students' inclination to build a critical intercultural field of knowledge and anti-racist education, despite certain omissions by university institutions, is a great sign of hope for the future. It is therefore up to educational and public administration organs to provide the conditions for this tendency to be converted into a solid and lasting anti-racist educational culture.

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Author 3 – Literature review, data analysis, text writing and review of the final draft.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

The authors and the author declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding this article.

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