

DISCURSIVE ARTICULATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL MEANINGS FOR ETHNIC-RACIAL RELATIONS IN BASIC EDUCATION

ARTICULAÇÕES DISCURSIVAS E SENTIDOS DE EDUCAÇÃO PARA AS RELAÇÕES ÉTNICO-RACIAIS NA EDUCAÇÃO BÁSICA

ARTICULACIONES DISCURSIVAS Y SIGNIFICADOS DE EDUCACIÓN PARA LAS RELACIONES ÉTNICO-RACIALES EN LA EDUCACIÓN BÁSICA



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ABSTRACT: Based on Laclau and Mouffe's Theory of Discourse and Ball's Cycle of Policies, this article aims to present an analysis of the education curriculum policy for ethnic-racial relations. The text works with categories from the Poststructuralist and Postfoundationalist perspectives. With this theoretical support, we seek to argue for a discursive theory of curriculum that conceives it as an arena of dispute and interprets curriculum policy as the struggle for its meaning, resulting from articulations of demands that aim to universalize particular meanings. In this sense, we evidenced that the articulations around the production of curricular education policies for ethnic-racial relations, discussed here, involved different political agents, such as the black movement disputing its significance in the perspective of hegemonizing historical demands, materialized by the inclusion of the Teaching of African and Afro-Brazilian History and Cultures in the curriculum, regulated by Laws 10.639/2003 and 11.645/2008.

KEYWORDS: Ethnic-racial relations. Speech. Curriculum.

RESUMO: Este artigo objetiva apresentar, com base na Teoria do discurso de Laclau e Mouffe e do Ciclo de políticas de Ball, a análise da política curricular de educação para as relações étnico-raciais. O texto trabalha com categorias das perspectivas Pós-estruturalista e Pós-fundacionalista. Com esse aporte teórico, buscamos argumentar por uma teoria discursiva de currículo que o concebe como arena de disputa e interpreta a política curricular como a luta por sua significação, resultante de articulações de demandas que visam universalizar sentidos particulares. Evidenciamos que as articulações em torno da produção das Políticas curriculares de educação para as relações étnico-raciais, aqui discutidas, envolveram diferentes agentes políticos, a exemplo do movimento negro disputando sua significação na perspectiva de hegemonizar demandas históricas, materializadas pela inclusão do Ensino da História e das culturas africana e afro-brasileira no currículo, normatizado pelas Leis n.º 10.639/2003 e 11.645/2008.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Relações étnico-raciais. Discurso. Currículo.

RESUMEN: Con base en la Teoría del Discurso de Laclau y Mouffe y el Ciclo de Políticas de Ball, este artículo tiene como objetivo presentar un análisis de la política curricular de educación para las relaciones étnico-raciales. El texto trabaja con categorías desde las perspectivas Postestructuralista y Postfundacionalista. Con este sustento teórico, buscamos argumentar a favor de una teoría discursiva del currículo que lo conciba como una arena de disputa e interprete la política curricular como la lucha por su sentido, resultante de articulaciones de demandas que apuntan a universalizar significados particulares. En este sentido, mostramos que las articulaciones en torno a la producción de políticas curriculares de educación para las relaciones étnico-raciales, discutidas aquí, involucraron a diferentes agentes políticos, como el movimiento negro que se disputa su significación en la perspectiva de demandas históricas hegemónicas, materializadas por la inclusión de la Enseñanza de la Historia y las Culturas Africanas y Afrobrasileñas en el currículo, regulado por las Leyes n.º 10.639/2003 y 11.645/2008.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Relaciones étnico-raciales. Discurso. Currículo.

Introduction

The article presents the results of research on the discourses of education for ethnic-racial relations in the curricular policies for basic education during the period from 2011 to 2016. It is theoretically and methodologically anchored in the discourse analysis of the Discourse Theory (DT) by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. This is a qualitative, documentary-type research, and the corpus consists of documents produced during this period.

The discursive foundations applied are linked to Post-structuralism and Post-foundationalism, which do not aim to combat Postmodernist trends but to subvert and radicalize the boundaries of perspective, pushing thought beyond the limits of a given object.

Applying the propositions of Discourse Theory within the scope of educational and curricular policy allows us to access and acknowledge that the articulations forged in this context converge towards the hegemonization of meanings, woven through discursive relations and resulting from heterogeneous negotiations. These elements, demanded contingently and precariously, sometimes equate, forming chains of equivalence around a signifier, and sometimes antagonize in the face of an undeniable constitutive exterior of the social, which, in turn, operates to bring an end to the chain of signification. Thus, "the relationship between the logic of difference and the logic of equivalence that constitutes the social is what makes democratic claims possible, according to Discourse Theory" (Tomé; Macedo, 2018, p. 319, our translation).

Within the terms of this theoretical conception, we reaffirm the existence of disputes and negotiations for the centrality of discourses that enunciate meanings in the processes of signifying curricular policies of Education for Ethnic-Racial Relations (ERER) in basic education, produced from 2011 to 2016, is natural and healthy. These policies are the result of societal tension and the claims of social movements, particularly segments of the Black Movement (including *quilombolas*), which have been marking spaces of resistance throughout Brazilian history. Thus, the colonizing process and the slavery regime, marked by oppression, abandonment, and the invisibility of the history of Afro-descendant and indigenous blacks, imprint on the main ethnic-racial matrices of the country the marks of these inequalities.

This cruel association is recognized in both national and international documents. For instance, the Durban Programme of Action states, "We recognize that inequality in political, economic, cultural, and social conditions can reproduce and promote racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance, resulting in exacerbated inequality" (ONU, 2001, p. 26, our translation). Similarly, the National Human Rights Program (PNDH)-3

reiterates that "inequalities are compounded by persistent discrimination, which often manifests as violence against historically and structurally vulnerable individuals" (Brasil, 2010, p. 52, our translation).

It is possible and common to identify in the political discourses of social movements and governments, especially those with a progressive bent, the use of the inequality/racial discrimination relationship over the past decades to justify and advocate for the implementation of policies in this area in Brazil.

Our analytical focus is on the processes of signification that resulted in the Curricular Policies for ERER, developed during Dilma Rousseff's government. These measures have significantly influenced the basic education curriculum over the past decade, impacting teaching and learning processes and shaping ethnic and racial relations in Brazilian schools and society.

Discourses and Meanings Articulated in the Curricular Policies for Education on Ethnic-Racial Relations

Curricular policy, in terms of Decolonial Theory (DT), presents a series of signifiers that mobilize discourses and meanings. This perspective allows for a reading of the curriculum that is produced and reinterpreted in different cultural realities, where, through power relations, there is a struggle to confer centrality to what is supposed or defined, albeit provisionally and contextually, as the best or most necessary education/school, the most relevant knowledge, the best policy, among other determined and determining signifiers in educational and/or curricular policy.

It is within this theoretical perspective that I seek to interpret the polysemy of meanings attributed to the signifier "Education for Ethnic-Racial Relations" (ERER) in the curricular policies of basic education, proliferated within the scope of the Workers' Party governments, and which emphasized discursive productions during the Dilma Rousseff administrations (2011-2016).

From the outset, we concur with Lopes (2018, p. 133, our translation) regarding the incompleteness in the analysis of the policy in question, given the impossibility of "full comprehension of any meaning supposed to be carried by the signifiers of a text," which, being marked by polysemic fluctuation, allows for numerous possibilities of reading and interpretations. Proposals and practices will always intersect a policy (read here as Discourses),

repeatedly reinterpreted and re-signified in its different contexts of influence and production. Thus, every meaning attributed to the signifier ERER is contextual, provisional, precarious, and contingent.

Therefore, agreeing with the assertion of Lopes and Macedo (2011a, 2011b) that Curriculum is a text and, as such, does not have a closed and definitive meaning within the scope of curricular theory, being open to multiple readings and interpretations, we continue by asking: What is understood by Education for Ethnic-Racial Relations in curricular policy? How is this signifier represented in the basic education curriculum policy? Which voices are present and absent? What intentions, values, purposes, and demands are represented in the texts of this curricular policy?

Various meanings are attributed to ERER in the texts of this policy. In Laws No. 10.639/2003 and No. 11.645/2008, the goal is to reformulate the Eurocentric curriculum, justifying that it is "urgent to demystify Eurocentrism to rethink a new model of society in which we are not all just white, as the textbook makes us believe" (Brazil, 1999, p. 10943). The aim is to resonate in teaching processes "the history and contributions of Blacks and Indigenous peoples," which means promoting the (re)cognition of these subjects, historically denied and discriminated against, also in the school curriculum.

Thus, the initial proposal of this policy, whose official text does not mention the terms "ethnic-racial relations," diversity, racial equality, or racism, focuses on promoting the appreciation of respect and combating discrimination through the knowledge intended with the "Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous history and culture." This represents a preliminary attempt to signify ERER through the teaching of the history and cultures of the main ethnic groups of the Brazilian people.

On the other hand, in the secondary or supporting texts of this policy, especially in the productions and expansions developed during Dilma's government, it is possible to identify the subordination and/or centrality of other meanings and demands. These aspects may have been left implicit or marginalized in the main text, becoming evident only in their ramifications, highlighting the place and meaning of the "ethnic" and "racial" characteristics of this policy. The defining assumptions of this policy tend to privilege the racial aspect over the ethnic, although there are some exceptions that will be addressed in the next section.

At this moment, we argue that the essence of the policy is to bring to light the ethnic-racial issues historically neglected in this country. In this sense, I reiterate the contributions of Gomes (2005) in a supporting document for the implementation of Law No. 10.639/2003:

[...] reflecting on the Brazilian racial issue is not something particular that should interest only people who belong to the Black ethnic/racial group. It is a social, political, and cultural issue for all Brazilians. In other words, it is an issue of Brazilian and global society when we expand our reflection on the relations between Blacks and Whites, among other ethnic-racial groups, in different international contexts. Ultimately, it is a human issue. Therefore, it is necessary to talk about the racial issue, demystify racism, and overcome racial discrimination (Gomes, 2005, p. 51, our translation).

In this perspective, it is worth noting that "If chaos, the free flow of signifiers, deferral, instability, and emptiness constitute us, any stable meaning, any identity stability can only be constituted politically, as a result of a political decision" (Lopes, 2018, p. 148-149, our translation). Thus, the transversality conferred to issues encompassing diversity and the promotion of racial equality demanded a political decision, not just from a partisan group, but from the various social and identity subjects intertwined in the network of articulation in favor of a given policy.

[...] without affirmative actions, we will not make equality of opportunities a reality... We have already won several battles, but full racial democracy will still demand what the minister called 'come prepared,' which is immense determination and strong political will (Rousseff, 2013, s.p., our translation)³.

It is a fact that diversity and ethnic-racial debate have had a certain centrality in the policies developed by the PT governments⁴ in recent decades, from the government programs, registered with the TSE in the elections (2002, 2006, 2010, 2014), which include these propositions linking them to educational issues, especially in the Documents "Brazil without racism" and "A school the size of Brazil," to the creation of a National Secretariat for Combating Racism of the PT in the Party's directory structure. These decisions and political texts (discourse) reverberate within this government, speeches on the social quality of education, as a means of combating racism, of economic and social transformation, decisive "to break with the condition of subalternity of the majority of the people" (PT, 2002a, p. 7, our translation), being "necessary to go beyond the adoption of antidiscriminatory policies. It is necessary to

³ Speech by President Dilma Rousseff, at the opening ceremony of the 3rd National Conference for the Promotion of Racial Equality. Available at: <http://www.biblioteca.presidencia.gov.br/discursos/discursos-da-presidenta/discorso-da-presidenta-da-republica-dilma-rousseff-durante-cerimonia-de-abertura-da-3a-conferencia-nacional-de-promocao-da-igualdade-racial-brasilia-df>. Accessed on: 20 Mar. 2023.

⁴ We emphasize that by government, we mean political parties that made up the coalition, militancy, social movements, executive, legislative and normative bodies, epistemic communities, and intellectuals involved in the policies and actions developed in this period.

combine them with public policies in various areas and to adopt a new model of development for Brazil, economically viable, ecologically sustainable, and racially and socially just" (PT, 2002, p. 13, our translation).

In the document "*Brazil without racism*," this political group emphasizes, in the Axis destined for education, that: "[...] the construction of a pedagogical project based on the principles of diversity, equity, and social justice is urgent," and among the actions, one must "Ensure quality teaching and the adoption of interethnic, interracial, and non-sexist pedagogy in the educational system," so it is necessary to adopt, in policies supporting scientific and technological research, equal treatment for projects related to racial relations (PT, 2002, p. 16, our translation).

Thus, in the period from 2011 to 2016, the articulations are continued and resized in the contexts of text production, MEC/SECADI, and CNE, with the entry of new subjects into discursive chains, which begin to mobilize important agendas around the meaning and organicity of curricular policies for ERER. Witnessed at this moment is the production of important political texts⁵, such as National Plans that express government planning and define actions and strategies for the implementation of Laws No. 10.639/2003 and No. 11.645/2008 (Brasil, 2013a); Operational guidelines, Reports, and Opinions strained by questions from civil society⁶ regarding the implementation of these policies; as well as unprecedented Guidelines, aimed at meeting educational demands of quilombola communities that in this period had advancements in the agenda of public policies, enunciating meanings based on the valorization of differences.

These potent texts of ERER curricular policies are the results of strong articulations forged in the contexts of influence and text production, through the circulation of state agencies, representatives of social movements, epistemic communities, and political parties, which interrelate in these spaces as producers and vectors of discourses and policies.

In these processes of decision-making and policy formulation, we observe an intense movement of epistemic communities represented by intellectuals⁷, linked to ethnic and racial

⁵ The texts referring to ERER curricular policies for Basic Education in the period 2011-2016 are described in the document analysis corpus, in the introduction of this work.

⁶ CNE/CEB Opinions No. 16/2010 (BRASIL, 2010e); CNE/CEB no. 15/2010 and CNE/CEB no. 6/2011, with a report made by Councilor Nilma Lino Gomes are the results of the CNE's response to questions, complaints and problems raised by citizens of civil society regarding effectiveness and applicability of the Education Guidelines to ethnic-racial relations.

⁷ Petronilha Beatriz G. Silva (UFScar/Movimento Negro/CNE); Nilma Lino Gomes (UFMG/*Movimento Negro/CNE/MEC*); Matilde Ribeiro (Black movement/ PT/ SEPPIR); Rita Gomes do Nascimento (*Indigenous Movement/CNE*), as well as Nilcéa Freire; Edson Santos; Kabengele Munanga and many others, linked to this

studies and many others who, whether in contexts of influence or text production, operated potent signifiers that circulate the EREER curricular policy, from which several meanings are mobilized by surrounding discourses in this policy, such as Promotion of equality/Elimination of racial and social inequalities; (Re) education of racial relations and anti-racist education, for the purpose of combating racism; Social justice; recognition of differences and plurality.

The participation and intellectual power of epistemic communities mobilized discourses and conferred legitimacy to the meanings fixed in the texts of EREER policies and other affirmative actions, produced in Brazil in recent decades, which aim to contemplate diversity and address differences. These communities "have social recognition and authority based on the knowledge they have or are supposed to have" (Antoniades, 2003 apud Torres; Dias, 2011, p. 208, our translation), constituting the process of policy articulation and acting in various contexts, which in Ball's view (2009, p. 306), can "nest within each other" as they interrelate.

Epistemic communities, therefore, are not constituted a priori or even based on a supposed classist or partisan identity. They are forged from the articulation of certain demands, contingent and provisional. [...]. In these terms, they seek to hegemonize certain meanings by disseminating diagnoses about policies. They are inscribed in an arena of constant disputes and negotiations, traversed by relations of knowledge-power, in order to confer meanings to policies (Torres; Dias, 2011, p. 211, our translation).

As illustrated by the examples cited, these agents and identities, responsible for a rich intellectual production that supported historical struggles against racism, reflected in the demands for EREER, operate in different spheres and various and simultaneous functions. They can even articulate their activism and productions with governmental bodies, parties, and political agencies, with a view to representing and ensuring that historical demands of popular movements take shape in public policies because, as explained by Torres; Dias (2011, p. 209, our translation), "at certain moments their intimate relationship with the government tends to favor their action in the context of defining policy texts".

Reading politics through the lens of TD and the theoretical constructs of Stephen Ball (2009) led us to revisit criticisms of the "co-optation of social movements" by left-wing parties that governed the country for almost two decades. After all, in political processes, enveloped

epistemic field, offered important contributions to MEC/SECADI in the development of literature to support and encourage the training of educators for the applicability of the EREER policy, such as: Education for All Collection; Anti-racist education: paths opened by Federal Law nº 10,639/2003; Questions about curriculum: diversity and curriculum (Gomes, 2007); Racial equality in Brazil: reflections on the International Year of People of African Descent; Overcoming Racism at School.

by power relations, whose centrality is the target, articulation is the determining and irrefutable piece for hegemony that "can only take place in a field dominated by articulatory practices" (Laclau; Mouffe, 2015a, p. 254, our translation).

In this perspective, we use as an example the researchers/activists of the Black Movement who have assumed relevant roles in the history of affirmative public policies in the country, in order to illustrate the dynamics of these identities in this cyclical and determining Movement in the formulations of unprecedented policies in the Lula/Dilma governments. This Movement confirms that "there is no origin in politics: There are acts of power, in all contexts, trying to produce a center in meaning and close the discursive structure, even if precarious and contingently" (Lopes, 2016, p. 9, our translation).

The history and actions of these and many other representatives of the Black Movement and intellectuals of the ethnic-racial theme, such as Ana Célia de Silva, Petrônio Domingues, Elisa Larkin Nascimento, Abdias do Nascimento, Lélia Gonzalez, Clóvis Moura, Florestan Fernandes⁸, whether opposing theories that favored ethnocentric ideologies and racial democracy, or disseminating anti-racism and re-education of mentalities, reveal how historical and potent the action of the Afro-descendant Movement is.

Since the 1930s, this Movement has been articulating itself, forming its activism, constituting epistemic communities, "intellectually configuring its actions," and organizing political and social ramifications, which "over time have been erecting the history of the Black people and gestating their education" around the struggles for transformations in society.

According to Silva and Barbosa (1997, p. 9-11, our translation), "it is no longer just a matter of denouncing the oppressions always suffered, nor of proclaiming themselves human in the face of those who dehumanize them, but rather of expressing critical knowledge of the lived reality and from it organizing their actions" in struggles that trigger and legitimize the demands of this Movement in the powerful and progressive affirmative policies achieved in recent decades.

⁸ We cite, as an example, some works by these intellectuals that highlight their contribution to the approach to racial relations in Brazil: SILVA, Ana C. *A discriminação do negro no livro didático*. 3.ed. Salvador: Edufba, 2019. DOMINGUES, Petrônio. *Protagonismo negro em São Paulo: história e historiografia*. São Paulo: Edições SESC, 2019. MOURA, Clovis. *Sociologia do negro brasileiro*. São Paulo: Ática, 1988. NASCIMENTO, ELISA L. *O sortilégio da cor*. São Paulo: Selo Negro, 2003. NASCIMENTO, Abdias. *O genocídio do negro brasileiro: processo de um racismo mascarado*. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2001. GONZALEZ, Lélia. *Por um feminismo afro-latino-americano*. Organizado por Flávia Rios e Márcia Lima. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar Editores, 2020. FERNANDS, Florestan. *Branços e negros em São Paulo*. São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1959.

We have made progress in recognizing the existence of racism and social discrimination. This is one of the great achievements of the federal government in the last decade, with President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva as its icon. But we need to be aware that, despite all advances, we are still not in power as we should be. Investment in public administration management facing the challenge of including the historical demands of the black population contributes to the nation's development because there is no democracy with racism (Sampaio, 2012, p. 102, our translation).

Therefore, the meanings represented by discourses, "the first ontological element present in every social or political configuration" (Mendonça, 2015, p. 75, our translation), protagonized by this Movement, mobilized among other demands and policies, the alteration of the curriculum, including in it, knowledge and principles of promoting equality, combating racism, social justice, and valuing diversity and differences.

In this context, the logic of difference was operated through the presence of heterogeneous elements, represented by the historical demands of the Black and Quilombola Movements, as well as the logic of equivalence explained by the convergence of different demands, that is, points of intersection, differences dissolved into chains of negotiating meanings. These, in turn, mutually converge in the action of these ethnic-racial groups, which may or may not be universalized, depending, according to Laclau (2011), on the constitution of an empty signifier, when a particular signifier is hegemonized, coming to represent universality in the chain of equivalence.

However, in the sense of being the signifiers of the excluded (or simply of exclusion), the various excluded categories must cancel their differences by forming a chain of equivalences of what the system demonizes to signify itself. Again, we see here the possibility of an empty signifier announcing itself through this logic in which differences dissolve into chains of equivalences (Laclau, 2011, p. 70-71, our translation).

Comparing the base texts of the curricular policy for EREER (Brasil, 2003b) and (Brasil, 2008b) and their guidelines with the political texts produced during the Dilma government, the prevalence of six powerful discourses around the signifier EREER is observed. These discourses, which have remained, been potentiated, or shifted over time, resizing the policy texts and operating in articulatory practices since the creation of the policy in 2003, include: valuing and (re) recognizing diversity, social justice, promotion of racial equality, elimination of inequalities, combating racism, and respect for differences.

These discourses potentiated the production, hegemony, and consolidation of affirmative and identity policies, proliferated during the last decades, as, according to Laclauian

formulation revisited in (Lopes, 2018, p. 144, our translation), "hegemony equals discourse. A discourse constituting hegemony is the effect of an articulatory practice. The elements of a discourse are not pre-existent to this practice. They are produced in relational and contextual terms in articulation."

The elements of diversity, combating racism, and eliminating inequalities, read in political texts, sometimes as signifiers, sometimes as signified, strongly associated with educational policies, remained as the flagship and "backdrop" of curricular policies in the Lula/Dilma governments.

Furthermore, the slogan and logo "Brazil: a country for all" of the Lula government itself enunciates the strong mark of diversity and inclusion, as explained by Jorge (2017), in elucidating that the meaning of the logo is based on the myth of the three races and portrays the Brazilian population united in this diversity, both in the effusion of colors and in the slogan, where the letters of the syllable "SIL" in the expression BRAZIL "Country for all," represent the three ethnic-racial groups that founded the Brazilian population. In Dilma's first term, continues the author, the slogan explicitly states the agenda of the Federal Government, to end poverty/eliminate inequalities, and the discourse of "economic power" gives way to Brazil's main contradiction: a country with many riches, yet with great social inequality. In the second term (2014-2016), the slogan was changed because there were new agendas for the government. "Educator homeland" enunciated the latest focus of the federal government: education and citizenship.

The Support Document for the EREER curricular policy, entitled "Contributions to the Implementation of Law No. 10,639/2003" (Brasil, 2008a, p. 28), emphasizes and corroborates the interpretation of EREER's significance as the valorization of diversity, which, as mentioned earlier, shifts polysemically as a signifier and/or as a signified, relating to other expressions of meaning in the chains of signification of curricular policy.

Furthermore, in the National Curricular Guidelines for Ethnic-Racial Relations Education (DCNs/ERER) of 2004, it is observed that the meanings attributed to the term EREER fluctuate in a complex discursive movement. These meanings are expressed by demands for reparation, recognition, and combatting racism, anchored in discourses of promoting equality, valuing diversity, and re-educating ethnic-racial relations (RER). These demands account for affirmative actions of recognition and valorization of Afro-descendant history, culture, and identity, transformed into public policies and systematized in the National Plan for the Implementation of DCNs/ERER and for the teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African history and

culture (Brasil, 2013a). These guidelines are provided for in both the Federal Constitution of 1988 (Art. 5, I, Art. 210, Art. 206, I, § 1 of Art. 242, Art. 215, and Art. 216) and the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (9.394/1996, Art. 26, 26A, and 79B).

Thus, it is possible to identify the sense of valuing diversity associated with the "Recognition Policy," conferred to the signifier ERER in the text of the DCNs/ERER (Brasil, 2013b, p. 134) and in its Implementation Plan, whose adoption requires and signifies recognition and valorization of the ethnic-racial and cultural diversity constitutive of the Brazilian population. According to the opinion, "recognition requires the adoption of educational policies and pedagogical strategies for valuing diversity, in order to overcome the ethnic-racial inequality present in Brazilian school education" (Brasil, 2013b, p. 135, our translation).

Therefore, the sense of (re)cognition present in the texts of this curricular policy is linked to discourses of diversity and Promotion of Equality, aiming at repairing the injustices and exclusions imposed on the black population and other subalternized and silenced ethnic-racial segments, such as Indigenous peoples and *quilombolas* who, even today, suffer from the legacies of the colonial and slave processes.

The questioning of the curriculum, made by black and Indigenous movements when recognizing Ethnic-Racial Relations Education (ERER) through the teaching of Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous history and cultures, according to the perspectives of Law No. 11,645/2008 and Opinion CNE/CEB No. 14/2015, which deal with the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the History and Cultures of Indigenous Peoples in Basic Education (DOIHCPI), as a result of Law No. 11,645/2008 (Brasil, 2016a), represents discourses advocating for the overcoming of monocultural educational proposals and for the openness to plurality and recognition of differences. These texts promote the construction of positive ethnic-racial relations through the promotion of interculturality or interethnic education, discourses, and meanings already observed, even tangentially, in the Implementation Plan of the DCNs/ERER, formalized by the MEC/SECADI in 2009 and reissued in 2013. As Rita do Nascimento, an Indigenous representative in the CNE and rapporteur of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the History and Cultures of Indigenous Peoples in Basic Education (DOIHCPI), states:

[...], the Indigenous movement also recognizing the importance of the Law in question for the agenda of **intercultural education**, assumed as a banner of struggle for a plural, democratic society with less unequal **interethnic** relations, has taken as a strategic action in its demands the effective

implementation of Law No. 11,645/2008 (Brasil, 2016a, p. 7, emphasis added, our translation).

The processing and approval of the DOIHCPI (Brasil, 2016a) express articulations around the legitimacy of the Indigenous dimension in the EREER curricular policy and a resizing of the meanings of Recognition and combatting ethnic and racial discriminations, now directed towards Indigenous peoples.

As already stated, the text of this Opinion expresses the interest, articulation, and political decision to tension the sense of difference in Ethnic-Racial Relations Education (ERER) policies. This movement aims to give voice to silenced demands, also present in curriculum policies, such as those of indigenous peoples and *quilombolas*. In this way, the goal is to enable positive representations and relations of the different cultures and ethnicities that form the Brazilian people, aiming to combat ethnic-racial discrimination and ensure the preservation of their specificities, ancestries, and ethnic and cultural differences.

Thus, it is possible to identify in the policy texts produced in the period from 2011 to 2016 the displacement, emergence, and potentiation of the discourse and sense of valuing difference, which is now equivalenced, now prevails over the sense of diversity, accentuated in the foundational texts of the EREER policy. This significance of policy with the sense of difference is mobilized by discourses in defense of multiculturalism and intercultural or interethnic education, enunciated in the DCNs/EEQ (Opinion CNE/CEB No. 16/2012), in the DOIHCPI (Opinion CNE/CEB No. 14/2015), as well as in Plans, Conference resolutions, and technical reports from this period. We reiterate with Tomé and Macedo that

[...] the issue of difference or diversity is increasingly present in public policies in Brazil. On the one hand, the demands and pressures of social movements have ensured greater representation of historically excluded identity groups. On the other hand, at the international level, a set of multilateral agents has begun to incorporate a multicultural discourse that promises to mitigate the effects of unequal globalization (Tomé; Macedo, 2018, p. 305, our translation).

To better explain this shift in the sense of difference in the policies produced in Dilma's government, I refer to the questions raised by Candau (2008) in this study, which explains and ratifies the existence of these tensions between equality and differences in the current context of paradigm crises, marked by an excluding neoliberal globalization: "Are we experiencing a shift in emphasis today? Are we all equal, or are we all different? Do we want to be equal, or do we want to be different?"

In this sense, the author cites the Human Development Report (2004) from the United Nations Development Programme and emphasizes that, "today the center of interest has shifted, which does not mean 'denying equality, but rather placing much more emphasis on the theme of difference'" (Candau, 2008, p. 46, our translation).

The discourse of difference is also echoed in the DCNs for Human Rights Education (Opinion CNE/CP No. 08/2012), which presents recognition and valorization of differences and diversities as one of its principles, as well as in the DCNs/EEQ, whose curriculum should "be constructed based on the values and interests of quilombola communities regarding their society and school projects," considering that such singularities demand from the education systems the guarantee of an egalitarian education that, at the same time, recognizes the right to difference for the diverse social collectives that compose our society (Brasil, 2013b, p. 471, emphasis added, our translation).

Through the documentary analysis of the curricular policy for ERER, I identify a strong demarcation of the binomial Promotion of equality/Combat of inequalities in the significance of this policy. In the words of former President Dilma Rousseff, despite the progress made in favor of racial equality, discrimination persists in this society. "Afro-descendants are still the ones who suffer the most from unemployment, extreme poverty, and violence, which has victimized so many young people in our urban peripheries," therefore, "the recognition of the contribution of Afro-descendants must necessarily be accompanied by public policies promoting equality" (Rousseff, 2011, s/p., our translation).

Reiterating the arguments previously stated, it is possible to consider that inequalities still constitute a vital marker in Brazil's social statistics and indicators. These inequalities were forged throughout the country's history by the socio-economic development models characteristic of the imperialist, slave, republican, and capitalist systems, whose logic still prevails, disproportionately affecting the impoverished lower classes.

In this regard, we reinforce that these structural bases of Brazil are the main roots of the inequalities imprinted, imperatively, in the country's fingerprints. Regarding the ethnic-racial policy discussed in this research, we justify with the DCNs/ERER, approved in 2004 and resized during the Dilma government, that "post-abolition policies were formulated that aimed at whitening the population by the symbolic and material elimination of the presence of blacks, stimulated or produced the scandalous inequalities between whites and blacks, structured in the colonization process" (Brasil, 2013b, p. 137, our translation). Parallel to this period, republican policies were consolidated with the diffusion of racial democracy, whose legacy was the denial

of citizenship, the right to have rights, the reinvention of racism, and the forgetting of Afro-descendants.

Another consequence of the whitening ideologies argued in the Guidelines is their harmful influence on black individuals who "tend to reproduce the prejudice of which they are victims. Racism leaves negative marks on the subjectivity of blacks and those who discriminate against them" (Brasil, 2013b, p. 137, our translation), because, as emphasized by Nascimento (2003), it proves to be flexible and subtle, acting through social representations at the level of the subconscious or the social imaginary.

In addition to perpetuating social inequalities, racism serves broader functions of domination [...]. It does not need to be explicitly stated in direct language, as it is established through the process of socialization, in the representation of reality internalized by individuals. Western hegemony, invisible and muted, reigns in cultural standards and infiltrates the constitution of subjects (Nascimento, 2003, p. 58, our translation).

It was in this sense that the Black Movement, in its various segments, undertook its struggles and demands, initially led by the fight against structural racism and its harmful consequences. The fight against racism became the main demand of this movement and triggered other causes, including proposals and demands for a (Re)education of ethnic-racial relations, as announced by Silva and Barbosa (1997) in the work "*O pensamento negro em educação no Brasil*"⁹.

The need for interethnic relations in Brazil to definitively and rapidly transform has heightened the Black Movement's practices in influencing the content and pedagogical processes in schools. Different groups across the country have implemented alternative projects. Proposals are being presented to educational systems and schools, which are beginning to embrace them enthusiastically, openly taking a stance against racism and all forms of discrimination (Silva; Barbosa, 1997, p. 9, our translation).

Furthermore, statistics compiled by various research agencies, such as IBGE, PNAD, INEP, and studies by international organizations like the UN and UNESCO, converge to the observation that inequalities are targeted by gender, sex, race, and color factors, keeping Afro-descendant and indigenous segments in conditions of marginalization and at the boundaries of citizenship and emancipation.

⁹ "Black Thought in Education in Brazil."

This tragic realization is articulated in Hasenbalg and Silva (2003), in a thorough analysis of the temporal evolution of inequalities in Brazil over two decades (1980-1999) and their relationship with various social strata. According to Silva (2003, p. 445), Brazil ranks among the most unequal countries in the world, and Hasenbalg (2003, p. 470) had already denounced that the asymmetries between inequalities/poverty and the color/race stratum "point to the presence of discriminatory processes that act cumulatively throughout the individual life cycle in the formative stages prior to entering the labor market, as well as in the labor market itself."

According to data from the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM), in 2016, Blacks earned the equivalent of 57% of the average income of Whites. By 2017, this ratio decreased to 53%. Moreover, in a prolonged stagnation of equality that began in 2011 (Oxfam Brasil, 2018, p. 20), for seven years, this percentage has not exceeded 57%. This unjust and persistent distribution imposed extreme poverty on the Black population, remaining "underrepresented among the wealthiest and overrepresented among the poorest: in 2009, in the first tenth of the distribution (the poorest 10% of the population), Blacks accounted for 72%" (Brasil, 2011b, p. 35, our translation).

These data branch out and resonate in the educational reality, repeatedly announced in the official documents of affirmative and educational policies as challenges to be assumed by the State and society as a whole.

Regarding educational inequalities between indigenous peoples and the total Brazilian population, the indices are also concerning. The publication "Education in Diversity: How to Indicate the Differences?" (Brasil, 2006a, p. 62, our translation), states that Indigenous School Education presents the lowest indices, that is, the greatest socio-educational inequalities among the analyzed groups. This reality is recognized in the Implementation Plan of the DCNs/ERER and mobilizes, in this policy text, discourses of Elimination of inequalities associated with Education for ethnic-racial relations, signified, in turn, by the ambivalent sense of "Promotion of equality/Elimination of racial and social inequalities." As evidenced in this important policy planning instrument, "in Elementary Education, educational inequalities in the ethnic-racial scope are striking and perverse," therefore, "Ethnic-Racial Relations Education must be one of the structuring elements of the schools' political-pedagogical project" (Brasil, 2013a, p. 50, our translation).

Faced with this diverse and unequal reality, it is essential that the formulation of public policies considers the specificities and needs of different ethnic-racial groups. In this sense, it

is coherent to adopt the critique of Discourse Theory (DT) towards universalistic policies and normativity. By opting for the deuniversalization of political subjects, the aim is to break with all forms of essentialism (Mouffe, 2003), considering that:

The fantasy of a fully unified identity is exposed, and in the same movement, the universalist framework is re-edited as a way to enforce the desire for equality in identity-based claims policies. In Laclau's terms (2000), the problem is that the affirmation of particular identities also affirms "those from which they are distinguished, and in that sense, the normative context in which the distinction is made" (Tomé; Macedo, 2018, p. 323, our translation).

In this regard, the extensive creation of governmental bodies and mechanisms, such as SEPIIR (Brasil, 2003), SECADI/MEC (Brasil, 2003), da SECADI/MEC (Brasil, 2004), CADARA (Brasil, 2005) and the National Policy for the Promotion of Racial Equality (Brasil, 2003a), constitutes a watershed in the implementation of public policies for inclusion, promotion of racial equality, and combating inequalities, announcing the willingness to tackle the challenge of developing and implementing educational inclusion policies. For this purpose, the specificities of Brazilian inequalities are considered, and respect and valorization of the multiple contours are ensured, evidenced by the ethnic-racial, cultural, gender, social, environmental, and regional diversity of the national territory (Brasil, 2013a).

The establishment of SEPIIR and SECADI, as well as the fruitful partnership between these two secretariats, occurs in various actions and programs through a wide range of efforts throughout the country to implement public policies to combat inequality [...].

[...] the State establishes the foundations for diversity education policies to become a reality in the country. It also aims to foster their continuity, collaboratively building with various sectors the lines of action that foresee greater coverage for the benefit of historically vulnerable citizens (Brasil, 2013a, p. 10, our translation).

This wide array of measures suggests a political decision to centralize ethnic-racial issues and diversity policies. The slogans of Dilma's government mandates, in which a certain determination to combat socio-economic inequalities through education was interpreted (Brazil, homeland of education), (A rich country is a country without poverty), can be interpreted as a way in which this decision was highlighted.

In the educational sphere, the decision to mainstream ERER policies, formalized by Normative Ordinance MEC No. 21/2013, which included ERER and the Teaching of Afro-

Brazilian and African Culture History, the promotion of racial equality, and the combating of racism in the programs and actions of the Ministry of Education (Brasil, 2013d), reinforces the consensus that schooling and curricular policies for EREER are relevant factors for eliminating inequalities and promoting racial equality.

This political choice is also emphasized and materialized with the government's decision, for the first time in history, to include among the Mega Objective I of the Multi-Year Plan (PPA) 2004-2007, the challenge of "promoting the reduction of racial inequalities" (Brasil, 2003d, p. 56, our translation), which demonstrates a certain determination to place ethnic-racial issues on the political agenda, ensuring the materialization of diversity policies through planning and financing.

In this context, we identify the discourses and meanings of EREER fixed in the primary texts of this policy, mainstreaming other curricular policies, produced during the Lula/Dilma governments, such as Education in Human Rights (EDH), which, from 2003, gained a National Plan for Education in Human Rights (PNEDH), revised in 2006, which became an educational policy of the State. In general terms, it can be said that the Plan highlights the values of respect, solidarity, fraternity, social justice, inclusion, plurality, and sustainability (Brasil, 2013b, p. 332) and, therefore, emphasizes the discourses and meanings present in the DCNs/ERER, incorporating into its propositions the demands for (re)recognition, valorization of diversity, respect for the differences of socially marginalized and subalternized segments, such as blacks, Indigenous peoples, and *quilombolas*.

This cross-cutting and circulation are also highlighted by the rapporteur of Opinion CNE/CEB No. 8/2012, which defines the National Curriculum Guidelines for Education in Human Rights (DCNs/EDH) (Brasil, 2013b, p. 327), Rita Gomes do Nascimento¹⁰. She acknowledges the evolution and strengthening of Human Rights Education policies in the last decade, represented by official mechanisms aimed, among other objectives, at the protection and promotion of the rights of children and adolescents, education on ethnic-racial relations, Quilombola School Education, and indigenous school education (Brasil, 2013b, p. 332, emphasis added). These affirmative policies are intended for social and ethnic-racial diversity, centralized in the context of public policies in recent decades.

¹⁰ The counselor, representative of indigenous peoples at the CNE, also reported CNE/CEB Opinion No. 14/2015 of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the History and Cultures of Indigenous Peoples in the Basic Ed. and chaired the Commission responsible for preparing the DCNs/for the Quilombola School Education (EEQ) reported by Nilma Lino Gomes (representative of the black movement).

In these terms, EREER becomes imperative, given its importance and stated purposes in the text of its Guidelines, which refer to the meanings and discourses hegemonized in the processes of its formulation and officialization, in the contexts of influence and text production. It is possible, therefore, to locate these discursive meanings enunciated in the purposes of EREER which, according to Opinion CNE/CP No. 003, impose the construction of "a just, equal, equitable society", as well as:

Fighting racism, working towards the **end of social and racial inequality**, undertaking the **re-education of ethnic-racial relations** are not exclusive tasks of the school..., however, racism, inequalities, and discrimination prevalent in society permeate through there...[...].

To succeed, the school and its teachers cannot improvise. They must **undo a centuries-old racist** and discriminatory mentality, **overcoming European ethnocentrism**, restructuring ethnic-racial and social relations, and de-alienating pedagogical processes (Brasil, 2013b, p. 136, emphasis added, our translation).

In the passage above, there is a thorough analysis of the strong interconnection between Ethnic-Racial Relations Education (ERER) and "the fight against racism," which assumes particular relevance in the significance of these policies. This relationship is evidenced by its presence in all official texts related to ethnic-racial policies, fluctuating among the discourses and demands of various societal movements. It has even become the subject of media campaigns and slogans of government programs and policies due to the damage caused by this social construction. Originating from colonial and imperialist processes, structural racism still influences social and racial relations, as well as the social imagination of both black and non-black individuals. In the hierarchy of equivalence of these policies, the fight against racism occupies a prominent place as a signifier, signified, or even as an antagonistic point.

In her speech at the Ceremony for the signing of Acts for Agrarian Reform and Quilombola Communities (01/04/2016), President Dilma Rousseff reaffirmed the government's political decision to combat racism: "We want and will continue to ensure that the Brazilian State acts in favor of overcoming the enormous racial inequality and prejudice that still prevail in our country" (Rousseff, 2016, s/p., our translation).

Final considerations

In this article, we present an analysis of the discourses and meanings regarding ethnic-racial relations education found in documents produced between 2011 and 2016. The reading of the EREDCNs indicates that overcoming racism is imperative, and combating it has become a moral and political responsibility, fostering racial and social relations in which everyone can grow and fulfill themselves as human beings and citizens. In light of this, we advocate for the creation of anti-racist pedagogies, as educating for ethnic-racial relations entails developing political awareness of diversity and actions to combat racism and discrimination that lead to "overcoming the indifference, injustice, and disqualification with which blacks, indigenous peoples, and also the lower classes to which blacks generally belong, are commonly treated" (Brasil, 2013b, p. 140, our translation).

It is argued that the potentiality and persistence of discourses combating racism extend to other discursive and social spheres, especially in the political arena. This is evidenced by the prominence of these discourses during the 2018 presidential elections, where demands with a neoliberal and ultraconservative slant, marked by racist, homophobic, and sexist discourses, clashed with gender and race demands represented by various social movements (black, quilombola, indigenous, feminist, LGBTQIAP+). These movements were unified, in this context, by the use of the empty signifier "#EleNãoo#" (Not Him).

Thus, combating racism through anti-racist education and the promotion of positive social representations and healthy racial relations emerges as the primary objective and meaning/sense of EREDC oriented in the secondary texts of this policy, such as the Document "Contributions to the implementation of Law No. 10,639/2003"¹¹.

In the EREDCNs text, it is cautioned that combating racism is not an exclusive demand of the Black Movement but should be the struggle of society as a whole. Based on the studied policy, educating for ethnic-racial relations also means combating racism through the adoption of anti-discrimination pedagogies, based on principles of equality and designed with the aim of re-educating mentalities and fostering positive ethnic-racial relations.

Another discourse permeating the Curricular Policies for EREDC, but amplified in the general DCNs of Basic Education, in the deliberations of CONEB-2008, CONAE 2010 and 2014, as well as in the PNE 2014-2024, was the signifier "education with social quality" or

¹¹ The Document consists of a systematization of the proposal for the National Implementation Plan for the DCNs/EREDC, prepared by the Interministerial Working Group, established by MEC/MJ/SEPPIR.

"Social Quality of Education," which, in conjunction with other signifiers, is associated with the discourse of valuing difference and promoting equality.

Therefore, the demanded social quality is "That which promotes the valorization of differences, equality of conditions and opportunities, respecting regional specificities" (Brasil, 2008c, p. 25, our translation) and values the contextual nature and heterogeneous identities constitutive of the society.

The reality of access, retention, and academic success of the majority of the population belonging to the Black, Indigenous, and Quilombola segments, along with their prevalence in the worst social and educational indicators, is likely responsible for the variation in the meaning of "quality education" or "social quality" in the discussions of representative movements of these groups. This also influences the mobilization of meanings in the curriculum policies for Ethnic-Racial Relations Education (ERER).

In addition to these, it is important to highlight the emergence of the problematization of the discourses of "equality and inclusion," operating a fluctuation of signifiers and the resignification of these meanings examined from the perspective of plurality, interculturality, and recognition of the right to difference. These provocations are accentuated in the discursive chain by the officialities of secondary texts, albeit no less important (unfolding of Law No. 11,645/2008, Law No. 10,639/2003, and their Guidelines), whose production expresses greater organicity and planning of the ERER policy.

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