

Afro-Brazilian Literature in Early Childhood Education: challenges to teacher education

Marta Regina Paulo da Silvaⁱ

Municipal University of São Caetano do Sul, São Caetano do Sul, SP, Brazil

Abstract

Based on the results of a research that analyzed the representations of black girls in Afro-Brazilian children's literature worked in Early Childhood Education, this article discusses the challenges to teacher education in the realization of an educational work that breaks with racist, sexist and adult-centric pedagogical practices. The research, which had as methodological procedures the survey of Afro-Brazilian literature books used by teachers and the analysis of representations of black girls conveyed in them, dialogued with Freirean epistemology, social studies of childhood and literature. The analysis revealed that Afro-Brazilian literature is little worked in Early Childhood Education and, among the most used books, there are remnants of a Eurocentric perspective, which refers to the need to discuss this theme in training spaces. The article concludes with the defense of a teacher education marked by childhood and intercultural dialogue in the construction of a critical and decolonial intercultural education.

Keywords

Afro-Brazilian literature; Early childhood education; gender; ethnic-racial relations.

Literatura afro-brasileira na Educação Infantil: desafios à formação docente

Resumo

A partir dos resultados de uma pesquisa que analisou as representações de meninas negras na literatura infantil afro-brasileira trabalhada na Educação Infantil, este artigo discorre sobre os desafios à formação docente na efetivação de um trabalho educativo que rompa com práticas pedagógicas racistas, sexistas e adultocêntricas. A pesquisa, que teve como procedimentos metodológicos o levantamento dos livros de literatura afro-brasileira utilizados por docentes e a análise das representações de meninas negras neles veiculados, dialogou com a epistemologia *freireana*, estudos sociais da infância e literatura. A análise revelou que a literatura afro-brasileira é pouco trabalhada na Educação Infantil e, dentre os livros mais utilizados, verificam-se resquícios de uma perspectiva eurocêntrica, o que remete à necessidade de discussão dessa temática nos espaços formativos. O artigo conclui com a defesa de uma formação docente marcada pela infância e pelo diálogo intercultural na construção de uma educação intercultural crítica e decolonial.

Palavras-chave

literatura afro-brasileira; Educação Infantil; gênero; relações étnico-raciais.

Literatura afrobrasileña en la educación infantil: desafíos para la formación de professores

Resumen

A partir de los resultados de una investigación que analizó las representaciones de las niñas negras en la literatura infantil afrobrasileña trabajada en la educación infantil, este artículo discute los desafíos de la formación docente en la realización de un trabajo educativo que rompa con prácticas pedagógicas racistas, sexistas y adultocéntricas. La investigación, cuyos procedimientos metodológicos fueron el levantamiento de libros de literatura afrobrasileña utilizados por docentes y el análisis de las representaciones de niñas negras transmitidas en ellos, dialogó con la epistemología de Freire, estudios sociales de la infancia y literatura. El análisis reveló que la literatura afrobrasileña es poco utilizada en la educación infantil y, entre los libros más utilizados, hay restos de una perspectiva eurocéntrica, lo que se refiere a la necesidad de discusión de este tema en los espacios de formación. El artículo concluye con la defensa de la formación docente marcada por la infancia y el diálogo intercultural en la construcción de una educación intercultural crítica y decolonial.

Palabras clave

literatura afrobrasileña; educación infantil; género; relaciones étnico-raciales.

1 Introduction

Although in recent years we can observe advances in combating racial and gender inequalities, socioeconomic indicators reveal a reality still marked by prejudice, discrimination and exclusion. These indicators also highlight the need to address gender and race/ethnicity issues in an intersectional way, in order to analyze the interaction processes between these two categories in the construction of situations of exclusion and oppression.

The scenario becomes even more complex when we analyze it in relation to the age category, since children are the ones who suffer the most from the effects of oppression mechanisms. The disregard for Brazilian children, especially black, indigenous and poor children, is perverse. Deaths, sexual abuse, starvation and so many other forms of violence mark the lives of millions of children in our country, frequent victims of government neglect.

This context reminds us of our ethical commitment to children and with it the need to problematize the processes of dehumanization historically built and aggravated in recent years, especially with the health crisis caused by Covid-19, in order to build with them times and spaces in which they can follow their ontological vocation to “be more”

(FREIRE, 2003), that is, their permanent and curious adventure for knowledge of themselves, the other and the world and, in the process, the construction of their identities.

Daycare centers and preschools are spaces for meetings and confrontations with differences. As the first stage of basic education, such educational spaces have the functions of caring and educating in an inseparable way, guaranteeing the child “[...] the right to protection, health, freedom, trust, respect, dignity, play, coexistence and interaction with other children” (BRASIL, 2010, p. 18). This implies the construction of an educational daily life in which dialogue, playfulness and loving-kindness are foundational. Thus, it is up to these institutions to respect, welcome and value differences, in which actions that reinforce prejudices and stereotypes are not allowed. On the contrary, they must *provide opportunities for experiences* that make it possible to build other ways of being and being in the world, as well as new sensibilities committed to the rupture of relations of domination and exclusion.

This is one of the challenges faced by educational institutions, as we still face a standardization dynamic marked by a hegemonic curriculum that, when prioritizing a single knowledge, hierarchizes knowledge, classifying it as legitimate or not. This “[...] appropriation-denial of knowledge acted and acts as demarcation-recognition or segregation of the diversity of social, ethnic, racial, gender, field and periphery collectives” (ARROYO, 2013, p. 14).

In line with Arroyo (2013), we understand the curriculum as a disputed territory. In this sense, it is essential to know what knowledge is produced, appropriated and silenced in the daily life of educational institutions in order to problematize the monocultural curriculum still present in most educational institutions and build emancipatory proposals that not only accept differences, but that welcome and value them.

In this perspective, we recognize that the work with Afro-Brazilian literature can constitute an opportunity to re-establish the representations of differences in the educational environment, since it presents, as Duarte (2017, p. 7, emphasis added), an Afro-Brazilian authorial voice; Afro-Brazilian themes; linguistic constructions marked by an Afro-Brazilianness and a “[...] *point of view or place of political and cultural enunciation* identified to Afro-Descendance”. However, even this literature can carry remnants of a

Eurocentric perspective, which justifies the importance of analyzing it in order to unveil sexist, racist and adult-centric marks conveyed in its pages.

Thus, we were interested in investigating how the categories gender, race/ethnicity and age are represented in this literature. We know that the image of the girl and the black woman in literature is marked by a history of absence and/or caricatured representation, in which several stereotypes are conveyed. They are images of devaluation, being recurrent those that they are presented as supporting, with subaltern functions, being considered socially of less importance. These images aim to simplify, essentialize and naturalize characteristics of a group, reducing them and demarcating their places in society.

Breaking with these stereotypes is urgent, since its function is to exclude everything that does not fit, that is, everything that does not fit the standard white man, Christian and heterosexual. Thus, the practices of representation have their marks in ethnocentrism. In a country where every day the number of femicides and violence against women, children, blacks and indigenous people grows, urgent actions are needed to unveil and promote a critical reflection on the practices that historically perpetuate the image of the black girl and woman as submissive and fragile, almost always in positions where they are subjugated and subordinated.

To this end, we present in this article the results of a research that analyzed the representations of black girls in Afro-Brazilian children's literature, aiming to understand their contribution to the strengthening of a positive image of the black girl in the face of stereotypes and prejudices that marked and, to some extent, still mark her image in children's literature. This is qualitative research that had as methodological procedures: the survey of books of Afro-Brazilian children's literature used by teachers of Early Childhood Education and the analysis of representations of black girls conveyed in the two books most worked with children. The investigation dialogued with *Freirean* epistemology, social studies of childhood and literature.

Thus, we first discussed Afro-Brazilian literature and Early Childhood Education, problematizing racism, sexism and adult centrism, present in Brazilian society and consequently in daycare centers and preschools. Next, we discuss the challenges of teacher education in the face of this theme. Our desire is to contribute to the studies and

practices aimed at building an emancipatory education from daycare, so that together with the children we can fight for a more democratic and just society.

2 Afro-Brazilian Literature in Early Childhood Education

In order to identify the books of Afro-Brazilian literature most used by educators, a survey was carried out through the Google Forms form. The choice of respondents was supported by the “snowball” or snowball sampling technique, a sampling method that consists of establishing, by the researcher, the “key informants”, so that they identify and put in contact with the researcher other possible respondents who qualify for inclusion, and for them, in turn, to identify others (COHEN; MANION; MORRISON, 2007). In the case of the investigation in question, the key informants were the members of the research group. The criterion for the selection of respondents was to be teachers in public institutions of Early Childhood Education in the municipalities that make up the Greater ABC Paulista Region: Diadema, Mauá, Ribeirão Pires, Rio Grande da Serra, Santo André, São Bernardo do Campo and São Caetano do Sul.

The initial questions referred to the general information of the participants. Sixty-four teachers answered the questionnaire, all of them female. Regarding race/ethnicity, the vast majority declared themselves white, 64.1%; 17.2%, brown; 12.5%, black; 3.1%, indigenous; and 3.1%, yellow. As for age, 62.5% are over 40 years old. 53.1% work in daycare and 46.9% in preschool. Regarding the time of teaching experience, only 14.1% have less than five years of experience, which indicates that the vast majority (85.9%) have worked for a long time with young children.

Subsequent questions were specific to the topic. 96.4% said they work with Afro-Brazilian literature with children in Early Childhood Education, that is, almost all teachers; 15.6%, once a week; 10.9%, between two and three times a week; 3.1%, between four and five times a week; 14.1%, biweekly; 18.8%, monthly; 9.4%, on specific dates; 28.1% answered “other”. We observed that, although the vast majority reported working with this literature, only 29.6% presented it to children at least once a week. It also drew our attention to the percentage presented of 28.1% for the alternative “other”, which suggests that this literature is worked very sporadically or else that it is not worked, considering that 3.6% of teachers answered not working with Afro-Brazilian literature.

For the alternative "on specific dates", they were asked, through an open question, to specify what these dates would be, when 12 teachers answered this question with the following answers: Black Consciousness Day (five answers); according to the demand that arises (one answer); when they observe some behavior of the children in relation to the difference of another child (one answer); there are no specific dates (three answers); International Women's Day (one answer); Day of Liberation of "Slaves" (one answer).

The educators were asked, also through an open question, to indicate two books of Afro-Brazilian literature that they used in their work with the children. Data analysis revealed that, although a variety of titles were cited by the teachers, the two books most worked with the children were: *Pretty Girl with the ribbon (Menina Bonita do Laço de fita)* (46.9%) and *O (Lelé's hair) cabelo de Lelé* (39%). These two works made up the second stage of the research, which consisted of analyzing the representations of black girls conveyed in its pages, with the aim of problematizing them and reflecting on their potency in working with children.

The book *Menina bonita do laço de fita (Menina Bonita do Laço de fita)*, written by Ana Maria Machado and illustrated by Claudius, was published in 1986 by Attica. The narrative revolves around the white rabbit, who harbors admiration for the black girl and longs to have a "black" daughter like her. So, again and again, he asks the girl the secret of her being so "black". The title of the book suggests the protagonism of a child, a black girl, but she is not the protagonist. The protagonism is found in the rabbit: male, white and adult. The rabbit is given the floor. It is he who thinks, questions, investigates, dreams. The nameless girl takes the place of the one who knows nothing. It is the adults who have the knowledge: "The girl did not know and was already inventing something else" (MACHADO, 1986, p. 15).

The position occupied by the girl in the work reinforces the hegemonic image of the woman as a passive, quiet and fragile being, as well as the image of the child as a subject of "lack": immature, minor, shallow tablet, without reason and judgment and, therefore, without the right to voice and participation in the different contexts in which they are inserted. This image follows the history of childhood and is updated daily in social practices and interactions between children and between them and adults. According to Sarmiento (2005, p. 365), demographic variations, economic relations and their

differentiated impacts on different age groups and public policies, as well as symbolic devices, social practices and lifestyles of children and adults, are part of this process.

In the course of the narrative, the mother intervenes to explain why the girl was "black": "Arts of a grandmother she had" (MACHADO, 1986, p. 15); although in the sequence she returns to the rabbit seeking to understand what the mother said, the text suggests one of the principles of African culture: ancestry, which concerns the bond with who came before and with who will come after us. Ancestry carries the marks inscribed in our memory, in our way of being and being in the world, being present, according to Trindade (2005), in Afro-Brazilian civilizational values, namely: orality, music, circularity, corporeality and cooperativity. However, this ethical commitment to life, including the one that will exist after us, is emptied of its meaning with the rabbit, who associates it to look like his relatives: "[...] because we always look like parents, uncles, grandparents and even crooked relatives" (MACHADO, 1986, p. 16).

The work also ends by fostering the myth of racial democracy, in particular, by the representation of the girl's mother as a "[...] beautiful and laughing mulatto" (MACHADO, 1986, p. 15), which refers to the idea of miscegenation. Added to this is the union of the rabbit with a black rabbit: "You didn't have to look very hard. He soon found a dark rabbit like the night, who thought that white rabbit was cute" (MACHADO, 1986, p.18). With her, she had a litter of rabbits: "There was a rabbit for every taste: white very white, white half gray, white tabby in black, black tabby in white and even a very black rabbit" (MACHADO, 1986, p. 20).

The concept of racial democracy understands that blacks and whites live harmoniously and fraternally, enjoying equal opportunities for existence. However, as Nascimento asserts (1978, p. 92):

[...] we must understand racial democracy as meaning the perfect metaphor to designate Brazilian-style racism: not as obvious as the racism of the United States and not as legalized as South Africa's apartheid, but effectively institutionalized at the official levels of government, as well as diffused in the social, psychological, economic, political and cultural fabric of the country's society.

The idea that there is racial democracy in our country is intended to hide interracial conflict as well as social inequalities and thus disarticulate the struggle for an anti-racist society. According to Domingues (2005), this myth was based on the process

of miscegenation in the historical formation of the country, marked by the sexual abuse of the slave by the Portuguese master, with the deception that such sexual incursions were evidence of the absence of prejudice. However, “[...] the contacts of absolute intimacy did not annul the relationship of intolerance of the white and subalternity of the black, within a system marked by racial oppression” (DOMINGUES, 2005, p. 124). For the author, sexual violence against black women “manufactured” the figure of the mulatto in the Brazilian racial system, which is “[...] the way found by the ideology of racial democracy to spread the illusion that in Brazil there were no distinctions of ‘race’ ” (DOMINGUES, 2005, p. 125).

The term “mulatto” derives from the Latin “*mulus*”, mule, animal fruit of the crossing of the ass and the mare, two different races, which, due to its hybrid character, is considered an inferior race, since it cannot reproduce. Thus, in line with the Black Movements, we refute the use of the word “mulatto(a) for its linguistic, historical and cultural origin, which conveys “[...] the false impression of racial democracy that exists in the country, associated with the representation of black or mixed-race women through the bleached and hypersexualized body” (SILVA, 2018, p. 77).

The second work of Afro-Brazilian literature most worked by the teachers participating in the research is the book *Lelê's hair (O cabelo de Lelê)*, written by Valéria Belém and illustrated by Adriana Mendonça, published in 2007 by Editora Nacional. The book tells the story of a black girl who feels, at first, aesthetically inferior due to her hair, in the face of the white hegemonic pattern that crystallizes images of straight and blond hair, reiterated in the dolls, heroines and princesses of the stories. Thus, Lelê “Throw it over there, pull it over here. There is no way, there is no way” (BELÉM, 2007, p. 7). The narrative develops with the girl's search to understand the origin of her hair and consequently her identity. According to Gomes (2012), the intervention in the body and hair for the black man is not only a matter of aesthetics, but identity, especially because the hair seen as “bad” expresses the racism and racial inequality that falls on him. For the author, there is a zone of tension between a standard of real body beauty and an ideal.

This tension that the author deals with is present in *Lelê's hair (O cabelo de Lelê)*, in which the protagonist, immersed in a culture that daily reiterates an aesthetic

standard of beauty, appropriates the history of her ancestors and builds her belonging ethnic.

Through reading, you discover the symbolism of your hair. She observes people like her, who had the same hair and skin as her, she feels included, belonging to a culture, to a people. She learns about Africa and about “[...] love in the curled hair” (BELÉM, 2007, p. 14) and realizes that her beauty comes from her (her) ancestors and from everyone who fought for their rights, “[...] heritage exchanged in the womb of the race” (BELÉM, 2007, p. 23).

Lelê's process leads us to think about identity not as an essence, but as a permanently unfinished construction permeated by power relations. In this regard, Silva (2000, p. 96-97) clarifies that:

Identity is not fixed, stable, coherent, unified, permanent. Nor is identity homogeneous, definitive, finished, identical, transcendental. On the other hand, we can say that identity is a construction, an effect, a production process, a relationship, a performative act. Identity is unstable, contradictory, fragmented, inconsistent, unfinished. Identity is linked to discursive and narrative structures. Identity is linked to systems of representation. Identity has close connections to power relations.

In this construction, the protagonist of the narrative on screen presents herself as a curious, restless child, who asks and asks herself. Thus, we observe a conception of a powerful, *questioning*, curious child, who reads and communicates the world, who learns, who produces culture, a citizen child (SILVA, 2021). We can also verify a representation of a girl who breaks with stereotypes of the fragile and passive woman. However, in the encounter with the boy, we come across remnants that mark sexism. The character, who is represented until then in unisex clothes, jokingly, starts to dress differently. This change “[...] enchants the boy he approaches” (BELÉM, 2007, p. 24) and soon we see the couple dancing, she in a white dress, which tends to a kind of child eroticization through matrimonial logic (FELIPE; GUIZZO, 2003), referring to a social practice that was historically naturalized.

When analyzing these two works, we affirm, in line with Louro (2003, p. 99), that “[...] it is not necessary to ask whether a representation ‘corresponds ‘or not to the ‘real’, but, instead, how the representations produce meanings, what their effects on the subjects, how they construct the ‘real’”. Thus, it is necessary to clarify the meanings constructed by children from these narratives, as well as the meanings

attributed by the teachers themselves and their pedagogical intentionality when presenting them to children. Still with this author, we recognize that identities cannot be thought out of power relations, since they are forged in the midst of political relations. Thus, which identities have been forged and which have been silenced in the daily lives of Early Childhood Education institutions?

3 Afro-Brazilian Literature, Early Childhood Education and Teacher Training

Brazilian society projected itself as “white”, which explains the “whitening” policies of the population, whose belief was that, in a process of *mestizaje*, the characteristics of the “white race” prevailed (SILVA, 2007, p. 491). Thus, whiteness constitutes an unquestionable norm in our country. For Munanga (2012, p. 12), the practice of whitening is sustained “[...] by the ideology of racial democracy based on biological and cultural dual miscegenation”. Thus, according to this ideology, the relations between whites and blacks in Brazil are harmonious and, therefore, racial discrimination does not exist, much less racism.

This view is even more accentuated when we think of children, as there is an understanding in our society – and in it among some educators – that there is no racism among children. However, it is necessary to recognize that racism is structural (ALMEIDA, 2019), with girls and boys immersed in it even before they are born, as well as in patriarchy, whose male domination still predominates in the various social instances, perpetuating, for example, different forms of violence against women. This ideal of whiteness and machismo has historically shaped the identities of blacks and non-blacks, men, women and children, intensifying social inequalities.

The body is subject to the expectations, values, beliefs and conceptions of each historical time, which will establish different relations of power on it, hence the intention to monitor and standardize it in an attempt to capture it in the dominant forms that define what it is to be a man, woman, child, black, etc. and how each one should behave. The whiteness and strength of the male to the detriment of the socially negative image of the woman, the black man and the child itself are emphasized.

Racism, sexism and adult centrism – which subjugate the capacity of children and their right to participate in decisions that concern their lives – are present in the daily

lives of all Brazilians, producing unequal conditions of access to opportunities and rights. In this sense, problematizing the power relations that oppress women, blacks and children is urgent and, given their complexity, as revealed by the research findings, the issues of gender, race/ethnicity and age need to be treated intersectionally, in order to unveil the mechanisms that transform differences into inequalities. “In addition, intersectionality deals with how specific actions and policies generate oppressions that flow along such axes, constituting dynamic or active aspects of disempowerment” (CRENSHAW, 2002, p. 177).

Through the analysis of the representation of the black girl in the works most worked with children, we seek, from an intersectional perspective, to cover the social markers: gender, race/ethnicity and age, in order to problematize how these narratives presented to children can contribute in the perspective of an anti-racist and anti-sexist education, which recognizes children as citizens.

Regarding Brazilian children's literature, we know that it is born with an institutional and moralizing bias, aiming to discipline children. In its pages, the representation of black people conveyed racial and sexist prejudices, printing a discourse of naturalization of racial and gender relations. This moralizing and disciplining character has changed over time due to the social and cultural contexts in which such productions were inserted, as well as in the very understanding of a more affirmative image of childhood. As an important language in the humanization process, literature, as Candido (2004, p. 13) asserts, stems from the involvement of literary productions in a complex and contradictory network of experiences:

[...] literature has been a powerful instrument of instruction and education, entering the curricula, being proposed to each one as intellectual and affective equipment. The values that society advocates, or considers harmful, are present in the various manifestations of fiction, poetry and dramatic action. Literature confirms and denies, proposes and denounces, supports and fights, providing the possibility of living dialectically the problems.

Children's literature has specific characteristics, such as: the graphic aspect of the book, format, font, paper texture, illustration, etc. The illustration has a central role, since it is a creative language that provides aesthetic enjoyment and innumerable experiences to readers, not constituting only as a reproduction of the verbal text. In view of this, the literary work exerts on these(as) a certain “power”, negative or positive, as elucidates Debus (2007, p. 268), because, by presenting submissive characters and

without notion of their ethnic belonging, it contributes to a “[...] distorted view of themselves and the other. On the other hand, identification with characters aware of their social role, their origins, and respectful of cultural plurality beckons to a relationship of respect for the other.

For young children, illustrations are fundamental for them to “read” the narratives, even if not in a conventional way, which grants them some empowerment (SILVA, 2012). This is possible, because, as Freire (1986) argues, we read the world before we even read the words. We observe, therefore, the strength of images in the education of children, which makes it essential to analyze the literary production destined to them in order to unveil works that reaffirm prejudices and discrimination, because, when working with an exclusively white literature, educators perpetuate the culture of whitening, affirming the supremacy of one social group over another and favoring situations of prejudice. Therefore, it is necessary to present narratives from different cultures, as “[...] a tool in the fight for an anti-racist Brazil, since such diversity allows children to develop a critical awareness of the discourses that define that there is a superior race/ethnicity to so many others” (SILVA; SANTOS, 2020, p. 665).

In recent decades, we have noticed greater visibility of Afro-Brazilian literature, especially after the enactment of Law No. 10,639/2003, which established the teaching of African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture as mandatory in the official curriculum.

A law that “[...] proposes decolonization, insofar as it contributes to blur the borders of black identity fixed in the slave past, the result of a colonial history that updates itself in daily life” (SANTOS; DANTAS JUNIOR; ZOBOLI, 2020, p. 1). However, as we verified in this work, stereotypes and hierarchical forms are still present in some productions, which puts the need to analyze them from a critical perspective, in order to ensure “The recognition, appreciation, respect and interaction of children with African, Afro-Brazilian histories and cultures, as well as the fight against racism and discrimination” (BRASIL, 2010, p. 21).

In this perspective, educators have a fundamental role in proposing educational contexts that break with stereotyped images that “[...] reserve[m] for the racially hegemonic the privilege of being represented in their diversity” (CARNEIRO, 2011, p. 70). When thinking about working with Afro-Brazilian literature with young children, the

criteria that teachers use to select the works and how they will be worked should be taken care of. We defend with Freire (2020, p. 149) that:

The educational practice [...] is something very serious. We deal with people, with children, adolescents or adults. We participate in their formation. We help them or we harm them in this search. We are intrinsically linked to them in their knowledge process. We can compete with our incompetence, poor preparation, irresponsibility, for their failure. But we can also, with our responsibility, scientific preparation and pleasure for teaching, with our seriousness and testimony of fighting injustices, contribute to the students becoming remarkable presences in the world.

This political, ethical and aesthetic commitment in the education of children implies an equal commitment to teacher education. In a previous study (SILVA; SANTOS, 2020), carried out in a daycare center in the city of São Paulo, the teachers, although they recognized the importance of working with Afro-Brazilian literature, reported that they did little, justifying this fact by the lack of training that dealt with this theme, which, according to them, would give subsidies to address it. This investigation also demonstrated that the theme was little discussed within the daycare center, sometimes restricted to commemorative dates, such as Black Consciousness Day.

The discussion of an emancipatory education that respects, welcomes and values differences cannot be limited to sporadic dates. It needs to go through all the daily life of educational institutions, in order to combat prejudice, discrimination and social exclusion. This implies that it should also permeate teacher education, which, starting from the realities of institutions, can provide time, space and materials for educators to reflect on their pedagogical practice in an action-reflection-action movement. (FREIRE, 2003). There is no neutrality.

In the words of Arroyo (2014, p. 63):

Access to school brings into play millions of lives that until decades ago did not even consider entering this precinct of saving promises. Their lives and those of their collectives have always been at stake, not of chance, but of segregation, repression and inferiorization, of unemployment or migration. Joining the school game imagines itself as the way to escape from those wicked games. Change destination. The frustration is that for high percentages of children, adolescents, youth and adults the game, the school, repeats/legitimizes old games.

We understand that, in order to break with these “old games”, teacher education itself needs to enable intercultural dialogue, recognizing the power of differences in the construction of another, more plural paradigm of knowledge. This implies “[...] re-educating pedagogical sensitivity” (ARROYO, 2013, p. 27), based on a social praxis that is organized in the collective, in which everyone has the right to say their word. Thus, issues related to racism, sexism and adult centrism need to be problematized, in order to “[...] favor the awareness of the privileges that configure the white being in the society in which we live and be able to promote processes oriented to its denaturalization” (Candau, 2020, p. 684).

In this process, childhood, understood here as a condition of human existence itself (SILVA; FASANO, 2020), has much to teach us. It is that driving force, endowed with hope, which is not limited to chronological time. A creative power that invites us to wonder, to ask, to imagine, to worry and to fight (SILVA, 2021). Connecting to childhood, ours and children's, reaffirms in us the ethical and political commitment to build, as Paulo Freire proposed, an education as a practice of freedom, which is opposed to antialogical and oppressive education. In defense of a society with equity and social and cognitive justice, we can build formative practices that educate children, marked by openness and respect for others, in which, from an intercultural perspective, suspend certainties and learn from differences. This is our challenge.

4 Final considerations

Building an intercultural and decolonial education in Early Childhood Education implies the assumption of an ethical, aesthetic and political commitment to children and their educators, given the urgency of breaking with the logic of perpetuating racist, sexist and adult-centric practices. It implies recognizing that education is a political and loving act (FREIRE, 2003). As an act of love, it implies courage and risk.

We know that children's literature has a great influence on the construction of the identity of boys and girls. In this sense, it is up to daycare centers and preschools to present them with a broad and diverse literary repertoire marked by

ethnic and cultural diversity. Among this production, we argue that Afro-Brazilian literature is present, since it enables children to build links with the traditions, customs and values of African and Afro-Brazilian cultures, breaks with the historical silence about the traditions and knowledge of the black population and enables the knowledge of more positive stories and representations of black people, which may favor the empowerment of black children and the construction of their identities.

Reading is a daily activity at work with children in Early Childhood Education. Thus, the infrequency or absence of Afro-Brazilian literature reveals that what is being offered to boys and girls is a predominantly Eurocentric literature, which ends up contributing to the production and dissemination of models of hegemonic identities. However, it must be asked: how has teacher training been working on this theme with educators? How has it been causing the unveiling of sexist and adult centric actions and consequently their deconstruction in the daily life of educational institutions?

Our defense is that, connected with childhood, theirs and children's, educators can rethink their pedagogical practices through an intercultural dialogue, in order to deconstruct the homogenizing and standardizing perspective, unfortunately still present in the daily life of day care centers and preschools, and thus reinvent them, in order to promote a critical and decolonial intercultural education and contribute to the construction of a society with more love, equity and social and cognitive justice.

5 References

- ALMEIDA, S. L. *Racismo estrutural*. São Paulo: Sueli Carneiro; Pólen, 2019.
- ARROYO, M. G. *Currículo, território em disputa*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2013.
- ARROYO, M. G. *Outros sujeitos, outras pedagogias*. 2. ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2014.
- BELÉM, V. *O cabelo de Lelé*. São Paulo: Companhia Nacional, 2007.
- BRASIL. *Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para a Educação Infantil*. Brasília, DF: MEC/SEB, 2010.
- BRASIL. Lei nº 10.639, de 9 de janeiro de 2003. Altera a Lei nº 9.394, de 20 de dezembro de 1996, que estabelece as diretrizes e bases da educação nacional, para

incluir no currículo oficial da Rede de Ensino a obrigatoriedade da temática “História e Cultura Afro-Brasileira”, e dá outras providências. *Diário Oficial [da] República Federativa do Brasil*, Poder Executivo, Brasília, DF, 10 jan. 2003.

CANDAU, V. M. Diferenças, educação intercultural e descolonialidade: temas insurgentes. *Revista Espaço do Currículo*, João Pessoa, v. 13, n. esp., p. 678-686, 2020. Available at: <https://periodicos.ufpb.br/index.php/rec/article/view/54949>. Accessed on: Jan. 20, 2023.

CANDIDO, A. *O direito à literatura*. 4. ed. São Paulo: Duas Cidades, 2004.

CARNEIRO, S. *Racismo, sexismo e desigualdade racial no Brasil*. São Paulo: Selo Negro, 2011.

COHEN, L.; MANION, L.; MORRISON, K. *Research methods in education*. 6. ed. Londres: Routledge, 2007.

CRENSHAW, K. W. Documento para o encontro de especialistas em aspectos da discriminação racial relativos ao gênero. *Revista Estudos Feministas*, Florianópolis, v. 10, n. 1, p. 171-188, 2002. Available at: <https://www.scielo.br/j/ref/a/mbTpP4SFXPnJZ397j8fSBQQ/?lang=pt&format=pdf>. Accessed on: Jan. 20, 2023.

DEBUS, E. S. D. A representação do negro na literatura para crianças e jovens: negação ou construção de uma identidade?. In: AZEVEDO, F. (coord.). *Imaginário, identidades e margens: estudos em torno da literatura infanto-juvenil*. Lisboa, Portugal: Gailivro, 2007, p. 262-269.

DOMINGUES, P. J. O mito da democracia racial e a mestiçagem no Brasil. *Diálogos Latinoamericanos*, Dinamarca, v. 10, n.10, p. 117-132, 2005. Available at: <https://tidsskrift.dk/dialogos/article/view/113653/162272>. Accessed on: Jan. 20, 2023.

DUARTE, E. A. Literatura afro-brasileira: um conceito em construção. *Literafro*, Belo Horizonte, p. 1-10, 2017. Available at: https://social.stoa.usp.br/articles/0037/3053/literatura_afro-brasileira_eduardo.pdf. Accessed on: May 20, 2023.

FELIPE, J.; GUIZZO, B. S. Erotização dos corpos infantis na sociedade de consumo. *Pro-Posições*, Campinas, v. 14, n. 3, p. 119-130, 2003. Available at: https://www.fe.unicamp.br/pf-fe/publicacao/2214/42-dossie-felipej_etal.pdf. Accessed on: Jan. 20, 2023.

FREIRE, P. *A importância do ato de ler: em três textos que se completam*. 3. ed. São Paulo: Autores Associados: Cortez, 1986.

FREIRE, P. *Pedagogia do oprimido*. 35. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 2003.

FREIRE, P. *Professora sim, tia não: cartas a quem ousa ensinar*. 30. ed. Rio de Janeiro/São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 2020.

GOMES, N. L. Relações étnico-raciais, educação e descolonização dos currículos. *Revista Currículo sem Fronteira*, [S.l.], v.12, n. 1, p. 98-109, 2012. Available at: <http://www.curriculosemfronteiras.org/vol12iss1articles/gomes.pdf>. Accessed on: Jan. 20, 2023.

LOURO, G. L. *Gênero, sexualidade e educação: uma perspectiva pós-estruturalista*. 6. ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2003.

MACHADO, A. M. *Menina bonita do laço de fita*. São Paulo: Ática, 1986.

MUNANGA, K. *Negritude: usos e sentidos*. 3. ed. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2012.

NASCIMENTO, A. *O genocídio do negro brasileiro: processo de um racismo mascarado*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1978.

SANTOS, W. N.; DANTAS JUNIOR, H. S.; ZOBOLI, F. Cinema, educação e africanidades: a memória no documentário *Caixa d'água: qui-lombo é esse?*. *Educação & Formação*, Fortaleza, v. 5, n. 3, p. 1-21, 2020. Available at: <https://revistas.uece.br/index.php/redufor/article/view/2508>. Accessed on: Jan. 20, 2023.

SARMENTO, M. J. Gerações e alteridade: interrogações a partir da Sociologia da Infância. *Educação & Sociedade*, Campinas, v. 26, n. 91, p. 361-378, 2005. Available at: <https://www.scielo.br/j/es/a/3PLsn8PhMzxZJzvdDC3gdKz/?format=pdf&lang=pt>. Accessed on: 20 jan. 2023.

SILVA, L. R. Não me chame de mulata: uma reflexão sobre a tradução em literatura afrodescendente no Brasil no par de línguas espanhol-português. *Trabalhos em Linguística Aplicada*, Campinas, n. 57, p. 71-88, 2018. Available at: <https://periodicos.sbu.unicamp.br/ojs/index.php/tla/article/view/8651618>. Accessed on: Jan. 20, 2023.

SILVA, M. R. P. *Linguagem dos quadrinhos e culturas infantis: "é uma história escorridinha"*. 2012. Tese (Doutorado em Educação) – Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Campinas, 2012.

SILVA, M. R. P. Criança, infância e cidadania: diálogos de inspiração em Paulo Freire. *Espaço Pedagógico*, Passo Fundo, v. 28, n. 1, p. 359-379, 2021. Available at: <http://seer.upf.br/index.php/rep/article/view/10088/114116097>. Accessed on: Sept. 27, 2022.


SILVA, M. R. P.; SANTOS, C. S. A literatura afro-brasileira em um Centro de Educação Infantil do município de São Paulo. *Revista Cocar*, Belém, v. 14, p. 664-680, 2020. Available at: <https://periodicos.uepa.br/index.php/cocar/article/view/3143>. Accessed on: Jan. 20, 2023.

SILVA, M. R. P.; FASANO, E. Crianças e infâncias em Paulo Freire. In: SILVA, M. R. P.; MAFRA, J. F. (org.). *Paulo Freire e a educação das crianças*. São Paulo: BT Acadêmica, 2020. p. 57-82.

SILVA, P. B. G. Aprender, ensinar e relações étnico-raciais no Brasil. *Educação*, Porto Alegre, v. 30, n. 3, p. 489-506, 2007. Available at: <https://revistaseletronicas.pucrs.br/ojs/index.php/faced/article/view/2745>. Accessed on: Jan. 20, 2023.

SILVA, T. T. A produção social da identidade e da diferença. In: SILVA, T. T. (org.). *Identidade e diferença: a perspectiva dos estudos culturais*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2000. p. 73-102.

TRINDADE, A. L. Valores civilizatórios afro-brasileiros na Educação Infantil. Rio de Janeiro: Salto para o Futuro, 2005. Available at: <https://culturamess.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/valoresafrobrasileiros.pdf>. Accessed on: Jan. 20, 2023.

Marta Regina Paulo da Silva, Municipal University of São Caetano do Sul (USCS), Graduate Program in Education (PPGE)
 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8574-760X>
Professor at the PPGE at USCS. PhD in Education from the University of Campinas (Unicamp). Leader of the Childhood, Diversity and Education Study and Research Group (Gepide) and of the Paulo Freire Study and Research Group.
Author's contribution: Conceptualization and writing of the article.
Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/7145831589734229>
E-mail: martarps@uol.com.br

Responsible editor: Lia Machado Fiuza Fialho

Ad hoc reviewers: Nancy Rita Ferreira Vieira and Valdete Côco

Translator: Thiago Moreira

How to cite this article (ABNT):

SILVA, Marta Regina Paulo da. Afro-Brazilian Literature in Early Childhood Education: challenges to teacher education. *Educ. Form.*, Fortaleza, v. 8, e10060, 2023. Available at: <https://revistas.uece.br/index.php/redufor/article/view/e10060>



Received on January 14, 2023.

Accepted on March 28, 2023.

Published on May 3, 2023.

