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Curricula for children: disputes, resistance, and the creation of a possible emancipatory, anti-racist, and teacher-valuing education


Currículos para as infâncias: disputas, resistências e a criação de uma possível educação emancipadora, antirracista e de valorização dos professores

Currículos para las infancias: disputas, resistencias y la creación de una educación emancipadora posible, antirracista y de valoración de los docentes

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Abstract

This article analyzes the disputes and resistances within curricula directed toward childhoods in the Brazilian context, based on the dialogue between three doctoral theses focused on public schools to examine the relationships among childhoods, curriculum, and teachers' continuing education. This is a qualitative and bibliographic study (Gil, 2009), grounded in documentary analysis (Laville & Dionne, 1999) of the theses, and employing content analysis (Bardin, 2016) as its methodological procedure, identifying convergences, tensions, and possibilities for articulation. The research reveals that the curriculum constitutes a field of ideological struggles, marked by attempts to control narratives through the exclusion of themes related to race, class, and Afro-Brazilian religions, thereby promoting curricular whitening. Such control is evident both in basic education and in initial and continuing teacher education, through movements such as *Escola Sem Partido* (ES?P – “School Without Party”) and programs such as the *Programa Nacional do Livro e do Material Didático* (PNLD – National Textbook and Teaching Material Program). In contrast, the recognition of the knowledge production processes by student-children within the school context, through the Philosophy of Children approach, stands out as an emancipatory curricular proposal, centered on listening and questioning, in opposition to standardized and exclusionary teaching models. In this sense, childhood—historically constructed and in constant re-signification—emerges in the contemporary educational scenario not only as a stage of development, but as a fertile field of cultural and social production in which curricula play a central role (Arroyo, 2013). Thus, the analysis indicates that teachers' continuing education is a strategic space to strengthen professional autonomy and emancipation, and to promote inclusive, democratic, and anti-racist curricula. This fosters a broader understanding of these fields of dispute and reinforces the role of public schools as spaces of freedom, resistance, and social transformation that value both childhoods and teachers.

Keywords: Curriculum in Dispute, Childhoods, Philosophy of Children, Continuing Teacher Education, Teacher Autonomy, *Escola Sem Partido*.

Resumo

*Este artigo analisa as disputas e resistências nos currículos voltados às infâncias do cenário brasileiro a partir do diálogo entre três teses de doutoramento que se debruçam sobre o contexto da escola pública para pensar as relações entre infâncias, currículo e formação continuada dos professores. Trata-se de uma pesquisa de caráter qualitativo e bibliográfico (Gil, 2009), fundamentada na análise documental (Laville; Dionne, 1999) das teses, e que utiliza como procedimento metodológico a análise de conteúdo (Bardin, 2016), identificando convergências, tensões e possibilidades de articulação. A pesquisa revela que o currículo se constitui como um campo de lutas ideológicas, marcado por tentativas de controle das narrativas a partir da exclusão de temáticas relacionadas à raça, classe e religiões de matriz africana, promovendo um branqueamento curricular, tanto na educação básica quanto na formação inicial e continuada de professores, a partir de movimentos como o *Escola Sem Partido* (ES?P) e também de programas como o *Programa Nacional do Livro e do Material Didático* (PNLD). Em contrapartida, destaca-se o reconhecimento do processo de produção do conhecimento pelas crianças-estudantes no contexto escolar, por meio da filosofia das crianças, como proposta curricular emancipatória, centrada na escuta e no perguntar, em contraposição a modelos padronizados e excludentes de ensino. Nesse sentido, a infância, categoria historicamente construída e em constante ressignificação, emerge no cenário educacional contemporâneo não apenas como um período de desenvolvimento, mas como um campo fértil de produção cultural e social, em que os currículos desempenham um papel central (Arroyo, 2013). Deste modo, a análise indica que a formação continuada de professores é espaço estratégico para fortalecer a autonomia e a emancipação docente e promover currículos inclusivos, democráticos e antirracistas,*

possibilitando uma compreensão mais abrangente sobre estes campos de disputas e reforçando a escola pública como território de liberdade, resistência e transformação social, que valorize as infâncias e docentes.

Palavras-chave: Currículo em Disputa, Infâncias, Filosofia das Crianças, Formação Continuada de Professores, Autonomia Docente, Escola Sem Partido.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza las disputas y resistencias en los currículos enfocados en la infancia en el escenario brasileño, a partir del diálogo entre tres tesis de doctorado que abordan el contexto de la escuela pública para reflexionar sobre las relaciones entre infancias, currículo y formación continua de los docentes. Se trata de una investigación de carácter cualitativo y bibliográfico (Gil, 2009), fundamentada en el análisis documental (Laville; Dionne, 1999) de las tesis, y que utiliza como procedimiento metodológico el análisis de contenido (Bardin, 2016), identificando convergencias, tensiones y posibilidades de articulación. La investigación revela que el currículo se constituye como un campo de luchas ideológicas, marcado por intentos de control de las narrativas a partir de la exclusión de temáticas relacionadas con la raza, la clase y las religiones de matriz africana, promoviendo un blanqueamiento curricular, tanto en la educación básica como en la formación inicial y continua de docentes, a partir de movimientos como la Escuela Sin Partido (ESP) y también de programas como el Programa Nacional del Libro y del Material Didáctico (PNLD). En contrapartida, se destaca el reconocimiento del proceso de producción de conocimiento por parte de las niñas y niños en el contexto escolar, a través de la filosofía de la infancia, como una propuesta curricular emancipadora, centrada en la escucha y en preguntar, en contrapunto a modelos estandarizados y excluyentes de enseñanza. En ese sentido, la infancia, categoría históricamente construida y en constante resignificación, emerge en el escenario educativo contemporáneo no solo como un período de desarrollo, sino como un campo fértil de producción cultural y social, en el que los currículos desempeñan un papel central (Arroyo, 2013). De este modo, el análisis indica que la formación continua de los docentes es un espacio estratégico para fortalecer la autonomía y la emancipación docente y promover currículos inclusivos, democráticos y antirracistas, posibilitando una comprensión más amplia sobre estos campos de disputas y reforzando la escuela pública como territorio de libertad, resistencia y transformación social, que valore las infancias y a los docentes.

Palabras clave: Currículo en Disputa, Infancias, Filosofía de los Niños, Formación Continua de Docentes, Autonomía Docente, Escuela Sin Partido.

Introduction

This article aims to analyze the disputes and resistances within curricula directed toward childhoods in the Brazilian context, seeking to understand how such confrontations reveal distinct projects of society and education in tension with the perspective of emancipatory education. Drawing on the dialogue among three doctoral theses grounded in the context of public schooling, it problematizes the relationships among childhoods, curriculum, and teachers' continuing education. Childhood, understood as a historically constructed social and political category in constant re-signification, emerges in the contemporary educational scenario not merely as a developmental stage but as a fertile field of cultural and social production, wherein curricula play a central role—traversed by tensions, conservative impositions, and practices of resistance (Arroyo, 2013). Far from being neutral, curricular arrangements are the outcomes of ideological and political disputes that shape the experiences and subjectivities of children.

In this regard, the article proposes to weave a dialogue among the perspectives of these three academic investigations, problematizing the production of curricula *for* and/or *with* childhoods in Brazil, within a context marked by tensions, resistances, and an ongoing pursuit of new educational possibilities. When considering the offensive of projects that seek to silence topics such as race and class—such as the *Escola Sem Partido* (ES?P)¹ movement—the emergence of the philosophy of childhood appears as an emancipatory alternative which, alongside continuing teacher education, assumes a strategic role in defending public education. The aim, therefore, is to highlight how curricula constitute arenas of struggle that directly impact the experiences of childhood and the autonomy of teachers.

Inspired by the power of dialogue established among the selected theses, and using content analysis methodology that fosters the exchange of knowledge and the collective construction of meaning, this study reflects upon the thematic intersections of these works. The thesis *“Race and Class in the Perspective of the Escola Sem Partido (ES?P) Movement and Its Effects on the Practices of Teachers in Brazilian Public Schools”* sheds light on the ideological disputes that seek to control the curriculum, curtailing the discussion of topics such as Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous history and culture, as well as race and class issues (Escola Sem Partido, 2012). This opposition manifests as clear resistance to the construction of curricula that encompass the diversity of childhoods—particularly Black and Indigenous childhoods—and that promote critical thinking and social emancipation.

The research entitled *“Philosophical Education from the Perspective of the Philosophy of Childhood: ‘Children Have a Different Way of Thinking’”* offers a counterpoint by proposing a curriculum that values the critical and questioning capacities inherent to childhood. The advocacy of the philosophy of childhood encourages reflection on pedagogical models that deviate from standardization and open spaces for the autonomous construction of knowledge by children, recognizing their “different ways of thinking” and challenging traditional, content-driven curricula.

Finally, the thesis *“Understandings and Meanings of Secondary Education Managers and Pedagogues from the Curitiba Education Center Regarding Continuing Teacher Education”*—although focused on secondary education—offers valuable insights into the understanding of continuing education (CE) and its influence on curriculum implementation in schools. Even though its analytical focus was on secondary education, the guiding documents used for discussion are the same as those for other stages of basic education: Resolution No. 02/2015 (now revoked) and Resolution No. 01/2020. The perceptions of managers and pedagogues regarding the CE process and its relationship with curricular guidelines for teacher education reveal how this field—also curricular—is a space of contestation (Dourado, 2019). The presence or absence of continuing education exposes tensions and challenges that teachers face daily, affecting how sensitive themes and childhood diversity are addressed in educational processes. Hence, the three theses converge on crucial points for problematizing curricular production, its enactment *with* and *for* childhoods, and teacher autonomy.

Discussions about curriculum in contemporary education reveal a landscape of intense ideological disputes, particularly regarding the design and implementation of proposals directed toward childhood. The inclusion or

¹ Acronym that we use to question the supposed neutrality that the Escola Sem Partido movement promotes about itself, as used by Batista (2023).

exclusion of certain topics reflects ongoing struggles over which values, knowledges, and identities are to be legitimized within schools. In this context, Batista (2023) directly exposes the opposition of the *Escola Sem Partido* movement (ES?P) to the inclusion of crucial topics such as Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous history and culture, as well as issues of race and class. According to the author, this posture translates into clear resistance to building curricula that not only reflect the inherent diversity of childhoods but also foster critical thinking and the emancipation of children—especially Black and Indigenous ones. The demonization of Afro-Brazilian religions provides a striking example of this dispute over which contents should compose the school curriculum. Gomes (2017) explains that,

Despite legal achievements, the effective implementation of education on ethnic-racial relations, particularly regarding Afro-Brazilian cultures and religions, faces deep resistance, often manifesting in invisibility, denial, and demonization of such knowledge within schools. This occurs because “the curriculum is not neutral but a field of dispute where definitions are made about which knowledges are valid and which are silenced” (Gomes, 2017, p. 78).

In this sense, Zanini’s (2024) thesis, by addressing the philosophy of childhood, questions a curricular model that values the critical and questioning capacities inherent to children. This approach directly challenges traditional and content-centered educational models that often neglect children’s protagonism in knowledge construction. The very premise that “children have a different way of thinking” (Zanini, 2024) signals an epistemological dispute regarding curriculum design and purpose, advocating for an education that recognizes and stimulates children’s intellectual autonomy. This stance, validated by the *children-students*² who participate in the research, demands recognition within the school context alongside their teachers. As stated by Pérola, one of the children in the study: “If it weren’t for teachers—someone teaching us—we wouldn’t want to think about anything” (Zanini, 2024, p. 117).

Listening to these *children-students* prompted a movement of resistance and acknowledgment of teachers’ crucial roles, revealing that both children and teachers become key allies in breaking with the “monolithic logics of curricular structures and arrangements” (Arroyo, 2013, p. 215), which disregard the singularities of human formation and childhood time, as well as constrain teacher authorship and autonomy (Zanini, 2024, p. 118).

The close relationship between children and teachers extends beyond school contexts to encompass the orientations teachers receive and their continuing education processes. In this perspective, Silva’s (2023) thesis, which touches upon political disputes in continuing education, demonstrates how CE can constitute either a space of resistance or a mechanism reinforcing hegemonic curricula. The ways in which managers and pedagogues understand and implement continuing education directly affect teachers’ capacity to resist external impositions and to develop more autonomous practices responsive to childhoods’ needs. The demand for continuing education itself reveals both gaps and forms of resistance in dealing with complex curricular challenges.

Despite the disputes and resistances marking the curricular field, education remains a fertile arena for recognizing multiple ways of conceiving childhood thought and existence. Amid ideological battles over curriculum, teacher resistance and the defense of autonomy emerge as crucial elements in the pursuit of a more democratic and inclusive education. Batista (2023) highlights teachers’ resistance to ES?P’s restrictions on teaching freedom and the inclusion of sensitive issues, emphasizing the importance of valuing teachers’ knowledge and defending academic freedom as central to educational justice. As Batista (2023, p. 185) states, “for the right to education to be realized, beyond the enforcement of legislation, it is essential to defend public schooling, freedom to teach, recognition of the teaching profession, and the appreciation of teachers’ knowledge.”

The philosophy of childhood (Zanini, 2024) constitutes, in itself, an intrinsic resistance to a “banking” and content-driven educational model, particularly when *children-students* actively claim their participation in curricular,

² It is emphasized the conception of children-students, rather than “pupil,” recognizing that even under school institutionalization, from the perspective of a “pupil’s craft” (Marchi, 2010), children resist and find in some teachers the assurance of experiencing their childhoods within the school environment (Zanini, 2024).

institutional, and formative processes. The advocacy for children's participation in knowledge construction demands teaching practices grounded in active listening and dialogue, resisting the imposition of prepackaged truths. By centering on children's "different ways of thinking" and on the promotion of philosophical thought in childhood, Zanini (2024) exemplifies a movement toward creating new ways of understanding and engaging with the world—rooted in listening to children's voices and recognizing them as producers of knowledge and meaning (Sirota, 2001; Sarmiento, 2011).

This perspective, corroborated by interviews with pedagogues from public schools in Paraná (Silva, 2023), highlights their understandings of curriculum and its guidelines, as well as their training needs for implementation, revealing tensions between official proposals and classroom realities. Such dynamics directly influence educators' ability to address sensitive topics and to engage with children's contributions.

Batista (2023), by addressing intense ideological disputes surrounding curricula, demonstrates that resistance to the ES?P ideology and advocacy for the inclusion of Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous history and culture represent acts of creating new educational narratives and more equitable knowledge spaces. These efforts aim toward a more inclusive and just education for all childhoods. The pursuit of positive Black representation in textbooks, as discussed by Batista (2023), exemplifies how contesting hegemonic structures opens pathways to more diverse and enriching narratives within the school environment.

In alignment with this view, Silva (2023) argues that when continuing education aligns with critical and emancipatory principles, it holds the potential to empower school leaders and pedagogues to cultivate an environment that promotes more inclusive curricula responsive to diverse childhoods. Continuing education, therefore, is not mere professional updating but a tool to foster reflection and link theory with practice.

This article is characterized as qualitative and bibliographic research (Gil, 2009), grounded in document analysis (Laville & Dionne, 1999) of three doctoral theses. The methodological procedure consisted of conducting content analysis (Bardin, 2016), identifying convergences, tensions, and articulations around the categories of childhood, curriculum, emancipation, and teacher education. This methodological choice was made because the purpose of the article is not to produce new empirical data but to articulate existing research to reveal meanings, disputes, and resistances surrounding curricular production for childhoods.

The methodology adopted allows for an integrated and critical reading capable of exposing both the strengths and the fragilities of conceptualizing curriculum, childhood, and teacher education from emancipatory and anti-racist perspectives. By interweaving these perspectives, the article seeks to explore how curricular disputes, teacher resistances, and the dialogic engagement with *children-students* point toward the creation of new possibilities for curricula *with* and/or *for* childhoods, within a scenario of constant redefinitions and ideological confrontations in the Brazilian educational field. Accordingly, the article is structured into three sections: 1) The Curricular Field and Childhoods in Dispute; 2) The Battle for the Curriculum: Conservative Projects and the Inclusion/Exclusion of Racial and Class Themes; and 3) Teacher Autonomy and the Creation of Curricular Innovations: Dialogues with the Philosophy of Childhood and Continuing Education.

The Curricular Field and Childhoods in Dispute

The years of laborious learning multiply; more and more schools, examinations, and printed words appear. But the child—so small, so fragile, who has lived so little—has read nothing, knows nothing... A serious question arises: How shall we divide the conquered territories, what tasks and rewards shall belong to each, how shall we organize this newly mastered world? How many workshops must we create, and how shall we distribute them, to guarantee work for all the hands and minds that clamor for it? [...] Politicians and legislators experiment with carefully designed solutions, yet they err at every turn. Among other things, they deliberate and decide upon the destiny of children. But it would never occur to

anyone to ask the child what she thinks, or whether she agrees. After all, what would she have to say? Janusz Korczak (2022, p. 23).

As Korczak (2022) suggests, this incomplete and dismissive perception of children has deep roots in society—particularly within the school context—and continues to be socially shared despite advances in the field of childhood studies (Sarmiento, 2011; Sirota, 2001). The school curriculum, far from being a neutral construct, emerges as the core of education, shaping not only what is learned but also how the world is perceived (Arroyo, 2013). Its centrality becomes even more significant amid growing discussions that recognize childhoods as subjects who produce culture and knowledge rather than merely receive it. This perspective aligns profoundly with Paulo Freire’s (2020) pedagogical philosophy, which defends a dialogical and liberating education that acknowledges children’s intrinsic capacity to question, create, and actively contribute to the construction of knowledge. In this sense, the curriculum becomes a fertile field for the emergence of new understandings about the role of school and society in shaping future generations.

Curricular production is, by nature, a stage for intense ideological and political disputes. As Tomaz Tadeu da Silva (1999) aptly notes, the curriculum is a territory of power where diverse social groups and worldviews contend to determine which knowledges will be legitimized, which histories will be told, and which identities will be valued. Within this context, Batista (2023), when examining disputes over the curriculum and the resistance to ideologies such as *Escola Sem Partido*, illustrates the vitality of this arena. Her work demonstrates that the struggle for a curriculum that includes Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous histories and cultures is, in itself, an act of creating new educational possibilities.

The Battle for the Curriculum: The Conservative Project and the Inclusion/Exclusion of Racial and Class Themes

The configuration of the Brazilian school curriculum and teacher education has become a stage for intense ideological disputes that reflect the tension between opposing societal projects. On one side, there is an effort to strengthen approaches that promote diversity, inclusion, and the recognition of the histories and cultures of peoples who have been historically marginalized—such as Afro-Brazilians and Indigenous groups. On the other side, there emerges a conservative movement seeking to limit or exclude such content, advocating for an ostensibly neutral, Eurocentric education under the pretext of protecting students from ideological influence. These disputes are not merely about content; they represent a broader battle over the meaning of national identity and over the place of race and class within the formation of the school curriculum.

At the heart of this conflict lies the opposition between the *Escola Sem Partido* (ES?P) movement and Law 11.645/08, which embody two diametrically opposed positions. While the latter guarantees the mandatory inclusion of Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous cultural and historical content in school curricula, ES?P advocates for the restriction of such themes, claiming to defend educational neutrality and to prevent ideological bias. Understanding this dynamic is essential to grasp the antagonistic forces that shape curriculum and educational policy in Brazil. These forces reveal the political, economic, and cultural interests at stake in defining what should—or should not—be taught in public and private schools.

The “Escola Sem Partido” Movement and Law 11.645/2008

The *Escola Sem Partido* (ES?P, or “School Without Party”) movement argues that Law 11.645/08 promotes a supposed distortion of the school curriculum by prioritizing ideological approaches at the expense of a neutral and objective academic formation. The founder and coordinator of the movement, Miguel Francisco Urbano Nagib—lawyer and former state prosecutor of São Paulo—along with other authors associated with the movement, articulates a narrative in which the inclusion of such contents is seen as a deviation from traditional educational foundations.

According to this view, these curricular changes would compromise educational quality by diverting attention from traditional and essential subjects deemed necessary for academic development.

The rhetoric employed by the ES?P accuses the guidelines established by the law of fostering a critical reading of Brazilian history, which, they claim, entails a devaluation of Eurocentric culture. The movement's criticism is thus mainly directed at the transformation of curricular content, which, in their understanding, privileges nontraditional topics to the detriment of basic subjects. However, this argument is contested by educators who assert that a truly inclusive education must recognize and value the country's cultural diversity.

Nagib and Silva, frequent references in ES?P discourse, advocate for what they call "ideological neutrality" in schools. Yet this claim has been criticized by scholars who argue that neutrality is impossible in education. The very refusal to acknowledge the contributions of African and Indigenous peoples constitutes an ideological stance in itself—one that perpetuates *whitening*. As Litwinski points out, "the idea of whitening violates not only the value of human dignity but also constitutional principles themselves, since society is plural, and it is everyone's duty to respect others in their differences" (Litwinski, 2018, p. 58).

In this sense, ES?P's resistance to Law 11.645/08 is understood not merely as opposition to curricular reform, but as the expression of a broader political project seeking to preserve existing power structures and silence historically marginalized voices. These issues remain urgent within school contexts, as illustrated by the following dialogue among children-students during a classroom discussion:

Luiza: We think that through our presentation people might realize how much bullying hurts others, because [pauses] I'm living proof of bullying! I've been bullied twice, right?

Raquel: At school?

Luiza: Both in elementary school, before, and here too. And I know how it feels because I've gone through depression twice because of bullying! So it hurts, and we want to make people see that bullying is wrong and can lead to serious consequences like depression, suicide, death, and many other things.

Raquel: Has anyone else ever suffered from bullying? [...]

Julia: People have made fun of my hair. **Enzo:** And my skin color too!

Raquel: Because of your skin color too? Racism? It's important to call it by its name, right?! When there's an act of racism. What happened?

Enzo: It was last year!

Julia: Actually, like, I won't name names, but [...]

Raquel: No need to name names.

Julia: But many of us have suffered because we're a little darker, more mixed, leaning toward Black. We end up suffering both from people's sexism and from racism because of our darker skin—and that hurts, whether we want it or not! (Zanini, 2024, p. 141).

The children's words reveal multiple layers of tension within the school environment, emphasizing the necessity of dialogue as a path toward *alterity*. Beyond peer-to-peer bullying, what emerges as most concerning is the persistence of structural racism and gender-based prejudice. Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) coined the term *intersectionality* to describe how overlapping systems of oppression hinder the creation of a more humane society—discussions that ES?P seeks to silence. The National Textbook and Teaching Materials Program (PNLD) and school textbooks in Brazil, for instance, vividly reflect these ideological disputes that shape both education and childhood.

Textbooks and the PNLD: Complaints, Censorship, and the Struggle for Representation

The ES?P movement frequently criticizes the content of school textbooks (*Livros Didáticos*, LDs), particularly regarding the inclusion of themes related to Ethnic-Racial Relations Education (*Educação para as Relações Étnico-Raciais* – ERER) and Human Rights. ES?P argues that textbooks often present an "ideologized" version of history that privileges critical narratives about Eurocentric culture while disproportionately highlighting Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous contributions.

However, advocates for inclusive education challenge these claims, arguing that Brazil's complex history demands precisely such multiplicity of perspectives. They maintain that it is essential to promote the formation of children who recognize the country's cultural diversity and value the contributions of different peoples, enabling a more critical understanding of historical processes.

Within the PNLD, there is growing concern about the revision and removal of terms related to ERER. ES?P and other conservative movements have influenced the exclusion of expressions promoting critical and inclusive understandings of history, directly affecting how children and young people perceive their identities, social hierarchies, and power structures.

In textbooks, the representation of slavery's violence and the need for positive representation of marginalized groups are subjects of intense debate. Educational specialists such as Silva (2007) and Rosemberg, Bazilli, and Silva (2003) argue that presenting these realities in an informed and sensitive manner is crucial for developing students' critical consciousness.

The ongoing attempts at *whitening* and the resistance to the inclusion of racial and cultural themes in educational materials reflect a persistent struggle for representation and justice in educational narratives. From this perspective, it becomes clear that textbooks and the PNLD are far more than mere pedagogical tools—they are arenas of political, cultural, and social contestation that shape how new generations will come to understand these issues.

Listening to the voices of children within this context reveals the urgency of maintaining such discussions in schools:

Luize: nowadays, in schools, I think we should talk more about education and respect, and, like, about care too. Today people tend to mistreat and disrespect others so much, to treat others as if they're insignificant, you know, comparing them as if some are high and others low. For example, talking about racism: many people still—still, in the twenty-first century—tend to be racist, still judge others by their skin color, still judge others by their financial situation. And that's so... [pauses, searching for words] so... I don't even know how to express it—it's so immature, you know, so...**Eduarda:** Inhumane, maybe? (Zanini, 2024, p. 144).

Luize, a child participant in the study, highlights two crucial elements: the importance of promoting anti-racist education within school settings and the fundamental role of teachers in this process. Therefore, it becomes necessary to ensure access to critical, ongoing teacher education and to cultivate spaces for attentive listening to the voices of children themselves.

Teacher Autonomy and the Creation of Curricular Possibilities: Dialogues with the Philosophy of Children and Continuing Education

The Philosophy of Children as a Curricular Paradigm

Maitê: I say this — that it's true, this thing about experience that adults talk about and all, but at the same time, sometimes a child can actually know more, because I've heard several teachers say, at the end of the year, they all say the same thing: "Oh, I've learned so much from you!" So, like, children have a lot to add — not only to other children but to adults too. But adults... [pauses, thinking] yeah, I think they think in a different way and... [pauses again, searching for words] that's it. (Zanini, 2024, p. 108).

Recognizing that the educational process is not unidirectional and that children also have something to teach is fundamental for rethinking both the school context and curricular proposals. In her statement, Maitê — a participant in the study — expresses children's perception of the contradiction between how some teachers refer to them and

how they are treated socially by other adults. They thus begin to notice the conflicting interests and incoherent attitudes of adults who place them in subordinate positions.

This awareness leads children to recognize themselves as co-participants in the formative process, prompting them to question the impositions of school structures and to seek active participation in their own learning. In this sense, the defense of the *Philosophy of Children*, as articulated by Zanini (2024), contributes to envisioning an alternative curricular model that, while acknowledging the curriculum as a contested territory (Arroyo, 2013), welcomes children and their contributions within its boundaries. It values critical thinking and the questioning capacity intrinsic to childhood, moving far beyond standardized educational models.

Recognizing the “different way of thinking” characteristic of children is crucial for constructing a curriculum that not only transmits content but also fosters reflection, curiosity, and intellectual autonomy from an early age. By centering the voices of children as producers of meaning and knowledge, the *Philosophy of Children* suggests a dynamic curriculum attuned to the specificities of multiple childhoods, aligned with teachers’ practice. It stands in opposition to the rigidity of the “monolithic logics of structure and curricular orderings” (Arroyo, 2013, p. 215).

This recognition becomes a powerful counterpoint to attempts at control and homogenization of the curriculum—particularly in contexts like Brazil, where educational standardization and the restriction of teacher and student autonomy are frequent. Defending the *Philosophy of Children* and promoting teaching practices grounded in research *with* children, rather than *about* them, thus emerges as an act of resistance (Zanini, 2024). Constructing the curriculum based on children’s inquiries and contributions challenges the imposition of external agendas that disregard their realities and interests within school life—mirroring, for instance, the goals of the *Escola Sem Partido* movement and its attempts to demobilize formative processes, especially those involving the National Textbook and Teaching Materials Program (PNLD).

The appreciation of children’s philosophical thinking, therefore, is not merely a pedagogical strategy but a political act defending the right of children to actively participate in the construction of their own educational processes. This perspective allows for the development of a more inclusive, plural, and responsive curriculum—one that acknowledges the complexity of childhood rather than aiming solely at the reproduction of knowledge or compliance with pre-established standards.

Thus, the *Philosophy of Children* opens paths toward educational spaces where curiosity and questioning are celebrated rather than silenced. Even though the curriculum remains “the most fenced and regulated territory,” it becomes, in everyday school life through teacher-student interactions, “the most politicized, innovated, and re-signified” (Arroyo, 2013, p. 13). Through these relational dynamics, the *real* curriculum can integrate children’s knowledge and aspirations—especially when they are recognized as active participants in learning and as producers of knowledge.

Within this perspective, children also highlight the essential role of teachers in shaping their formative experiences. They remind us that the construction of a *real* curriculum occurs in dialogue with teachers—particularly those who listen to and welcome their contributions. As Pérola, another participant in the study, affirms: “Anything we hear from a teacher makes us think. So [...] if it weren’t for teachers, for someone teaching us, we wouldn’t want to think about anything.” (Zanini, 2024, p. 117).

The children’s reflections make evident that it is teachers’ practice that transforms school into a philosophical space—where learning also means doubting, questioning, and creating. Recognizing this dimension of teachers’ work is fundamental for strengthening pedagogical practices that break away from the “monolithic logics of structure and curricular orderings” (Arroyo, 2013, p. 215), which restrict teacher authorship and disregard the unique temporality and interests of childhood.

Therefore, the process of teachers’ continuing education must be critically examined, particularly in light of policies rooted in the logic of “human capital.” As Laval (2019) argues, these policies—often disguised under the discourse of modernization and efficiency—represent a massive and direct intervention of capital in public education. They erode

teachers' autonomy, intensify external control, and widen the distance between teachers and students. The following section examines these policies of Continuing Education and their impact on teachers' professional practice.

Continuing Teacher Education in Brazil and Its Impact on the Implementation of the School Curriculum

Considering the curricular disputes and the central role of teachers in the formation of children-students, Silva (2023) offers a historical review of policies concerning teachers' continuing education (CE), noting that explicit discussion of the topic in Brazil is relatively recent (Melo & Santos, 2020, as cited in Silva, 2023).

National legislation first mentioned teacher professional development in Law 5.692/1971. However, it was only in the 1990s, following Brazil's political re-democratization, that the State consolidated its legal framework and redefined its role. This process led to significant changes, including the creation of a specific national education law. In 1996, the *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* (LDBEN, Law 9.394/1996) was enacted, making more explicit reference to teachers' continuing education.

The law distinguishes between the concepts of *continuing education* and *training* but does not clearly define either. Article 62-A, added by Law 12.796/2013, states in its sole paragraph that "continuing education shall be guaranteed for professionals [...] in their workplace or in institutions of basic and higher education, including professional education programs, undergraduate courses, and postgraduate studies" (Brazil, 2013). Although the article offers a broad understanding of possible formats for CE, it does not specify how such programs should be organized (Silva, 2023). Article 87 further determines that education systems must "carry out training programs for all in-service teachers, using also, for this purpose, distance education resources" (Brazil, 1996, Art. 87).

With the approval of the LDBEN (Law 9.394/1996), discussions around continuing education, in-service formation, and professional development gained prominence, as the responsibility for implementation was shared among federal, state, and municipal governments. According to Negoseki (2018, p. 49), this represented "an enormous challenge, as it implied reaching millions of teachers."

Historically, however, continuing education policy has been heavily influenced by the political and ideological orientation of each administration. This instability and lack of continuity in formative initiatives have led to recurring cycles of progress and regression (Silva, 2023). As Nogueira and Borges (2021, p. 189, cited in Silva, 2023) emphasize, "at the national level, continuing education has not been structured as a consistent public policy," a situation that "affects decision-making at state and municipal levels, as these reflect the government's prevailing ideologies and setbacks."

Honório *et al.* (2017, p. 1750) emphasize that "continuing education has been institutionalized in accordance with conceptions that reflect the political context of the period in which this process takes place." Furthermore, according to the authors, continuing education "represents a dynamic process through which teachers [...] by means of lectures, seminars, courses, workshops, or other initiatives, adapt their training to the demands of the teaching act, seeking to teach" (Honório *et al.*, 2017, p. 1750). Thus, continuing education has the capacity to promote reflection on teaching practice, deepening the knowledge acquired in initial training and broadening the possibilities for the production of new knowledge. As previously mentioned, the training of basic education teachers has also become a field of dispute (Dourado, 2016).

In line with this, only in 2015—aiming to meet Goal No. 15 of the National Education Plan (PNE)—was Resolution No. 02/2015 approved in Brazil. This document defines the *National Curriculum Guidelines* for initial higher education teacher training and continuing education. Among its many innovations, it introduced, within a single framework, the premise of conceptualizing and articulating both initial and continuing training for Basic Education teachers. These guidelines, ratified during Dilma Rousseff's administration under a National Education Council (CNE) composed of professors and researchers from various universities and national institutions, granted continuing education an

unprecedented level of importance in Brazil (Silva, 2023). The document emphasized teachers' experiences, the realities of schools, and their pedagogical projects. It also underscored the role and coordination between higher education institutions and basic education schools. Hence, ensuring that teachers have access to training processes developed through partnerships between education departments and universities would serve as a means to prompt reflection on working conditions, the relationship between theory and practice, and the quality of education itself (Silva, 2023).

Resolution No. 02/2015 represented a significant advance in Brazilian educational policy, particularly because it addressed critical issues concerning the valorization of basic education teachers and their initial and continuing training. It can be argued that the training process conceived at that time was innovative, as the resolution met the demands of the educational community, having been extensively discussed and offering a much broader view of teacher education (Dourado, 2015), both initial and continuing. Moreover, it brought into discussion the working conditions and professional valorization of teachers.

However, in 2017, with the ratification of the *Base Nacional Comum Curricular* (BNCC – National Common Curricular Base), the initial and continuing education of Basic Education teachers began to be questioned. Within this context, the approved BNCC document—a guiding framework for state and municipal pedagogical proposals—highlighted that “the first task under the direct responsibility of the Federal Government will be to revise the initial and continuing training of teachers in order to align them with the BNCC” (Brazil, 2017), since “given the evidence of the relevance of teachers and other school staff to student success, this is a fundamental action for the effective implementation of the BNCC” (Brazil, 2017).

Consequently, in 2019, Resolution No. 02/2019 was ratified—defining the *National Curriculum Guidelines* for initial teacher education for Basic Education and instituting the *National Common Base for Initial Teacher Education* (BNC-Formação). This resolution was approved in less than a month and represented a clear rupture with the training model proposed by Resolution No. 02/2015. According to Aguiar and Dourado (2019), following this reform, “teacher education becomes particularly prominent, as it is strategic for the realization of the ongoing reform of basic education, responding to the demands of the market, which advocates for the training of a productive and disciplined subject” (Aguiar & Dourado, 2019, p. 35). By linking the BNCC to teacher education, a new formative project for society emerges (Dourado, 2019; ANFOPE; ANPED). As Pires and Cardoso (2020, p. 77) note:

Nearly 100% of the members of this bicameral commission are affiliated with the private education sector and with business-oriented movements and organizations, such as *Todos pela Educação* and *Todos pela Base*, with only two members connected to the public education network. Among the institutions represented are private higher education institutions, publicly traded educational companies, the *Sistema S*, organizations within the educational materials and technology markets, as well as members linked to multilateral organizations such as the OECD and UNESCO. (Pires & Cardoso, 2020, p. 77).

In November 2020, the new *Resolution on Continuing Education No. 01/2020*—which establishes the *National Curriculum Guidelines* for the continuing education of basic education teachers and institutes the *National Common Base for the Continuing Education of Basic Education Teachers* (BNC-Formação Continuada)—was published separately from the resolution addressing initial teacher education. This document received a series of criticisms, particularly from teacher education organizations, researchers in the field, and other scholars who advocate for both initial and continuing education models that conceptualize schools through the articulation between universities and basic education, and between initial and continuing training. Given so many changes, it becomes evident that the political and social materiality guiding this formative process disrupts the relationship previously sought between higher education institutions and schools.

The current *Continuing Education Guidelines* comprise five chapters and sixteen articles, each addressing a specific theme. Additionally, the document includes, as an annex, a framework outlining both general and specific competencies to be developed by teachers. According to Tiroli and Jesus (2022, p. 9), the competency-based model “reduces

the educational process to an economic perspective linked to notions of productivity and efficiency, thereby attributing greater value to practical activities to the detriment of theoretical and conceptual reflections.” The objective, therefore, is to train a merely practical teacher—one who is capable of performing tasks and solving problems that may arise in their pedagogical work and in the daily life of the school, and who is competent at implementing proposals formulated by state and municipal authorities.

Thus, the policies developed by governments and the responsible agencies indicate what type of training teachers will have access to. Such policies begin and end according to the educational priorities and formative interests of each administration, both in relation to teachers and students. According to Tiroli and Jesus (2022):

Public policies guiding teacher education are constantly modified, as this constitutes a field of political dispute and theoretical-pedagogical-conceptual confrontation. It is therefore incumbent upon the researcher to adopt a critical and autonomous stance in order to unveil the ongoing attempts to instrumentalize teacher education for specific purposes—either to serve the State’s intentions or to advance the interests of the market (Tiroli; Jesus, 2022, p. 2).

Continuing teacher education is employed by the State as a means of implementing various proposals and interests, which is why it is understood as a space of ongoing contestation. It is a field that involves significant investments and diverse interests, ranging from the production of didactic materials to the implementation of curricula and market-oriented objectives. However, continuing education also has the potential to encourage teachers to rethink their pedagogical work, deepen the knowledge acquired during initial training, and expand the production of new knowledge. Based on the points presented here, it is possible to affirm that teachers’ work is daily influenced by the ways in which educational policies are articulated, constructed, and implemented.

Magalhães and Azevedo (2015) point out that “teachers have been increasingly deprived of the autonomy that would allow them to reflect, create, and innovate the teaching-learning process together with their students and based on their own contexts” (Magalhães & Azevedo, 2015, p. 18).

In light of the new *Resolution on Continuing Education*, the teacher’s role becomes merely technical, devoid of theoretical and conceptual grounding—concerned only with complying with the “impositions” established by states and municipalities and aligning with the competencies and practices expressed in the guiding documents themselves.

Final Considerations: The Future of Curricula for Childhoods in a Post-Democratic Context

In summary, it is evident that the curriculum is characterized as a dynamic field of disputes and resistances within the Brazilian educational context. The tension between conservative movements—seeking to impose silencing and standardization—and those advocating for emancipatory pedagogical practices reveals the curriculum as a contested field. While the former aim to restrict the plurality of knowledge and render diversities invisible, the latter affirm children-students as active subjects and producers of knowledge, and teaching as a space of resistance and creation of new possibilities—thus highlighting the potential to challenge and construct inclusive, emancipatory, and anti-racist curricula.

The recognition of the “different way of thinking” inherent to children’s philosophy, and the understanding that continuing teacher education must strengthen teaching autonomy within this field of dispute, are both fundamental. These must be understood as crucial strategies to promote a curriculum that is more inclusive, critical, and sensitive to the particularities of childhoods. It is therefore urgent to defend an education that recognizes the child as an active subject in the construction of knowledge and that promotes social justice and equality of opportunity for all childhoods. Equally necessary are continuing education processes that foster reflection on teachers’ work contexts, as well as the close relationship between theory and practice, school and university.

The pursuit of an inclusive curriculum that mirrors Brazil's cultural and historical diversity remains a source of confrontation between conservative and progressive projects. The challenge lies in ensuring that education contributes to building a fairer and more egalitarian society, one in which all identities and histories are acknowledged and valued.

This curricular struggle in Brazil, when viewed through the lens of the *Escola Sem Partido* movement, reflects a broader ideological debate concerning how the nation's history and cultural identity should be taught and understood. The discussion regarding the inclusion or exclusion of racial and class themes reveals profound divergences between a conservative project—rooted in the preservation of established power structures—and more inclusive efforts centered on social justice and the recognition of diverse contributions. In this regard, listening to children-students reveals that they perceive the need for these issues to be addressed within the school context, as such themes are deeply connected to their everyday realities.

The goal of the *Escola Sem Partido* movement to silence discussions of class and race represents an attempt to empty the curriculum of essential social and political debates. This transforms the curriculum into a less plural space, one less capable of forming citizens who are aware of Brazil's reality—marked by class and racial inequality. By restricting critical approaches within public education, the movement prevents children-students from working-class backgrounds from seeing themselves represented and understood, and from having their socioeconomic realities—often marked by exploitation and poverty—addressed and denaturalized, which is crucial for an education that promotes social justice from an early age.

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