

Racialized Xenophobia: Inequality in the reception of immigrant students as a challenge for Human Rights Education

Xenofobia racializada: Desigualdade na acolhida a estudantes imigrantes como desafio à Educação em Direitos Humanos

Oliveira, Leila Maria ⁽ⁱ⁾

Casali, Alípio ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾

⁽ⁱ⁾ Prefeitura de Santo André, Secretaria Municipal de Educação – SME – Santo André, SP, Brasil. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1299-2425>, leila_bracu@hotmail.com

⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo – PUC-SP, Faculdade de Educação, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação: Currículo, São Paulo, SP, Brasil. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3883-3051>, casali@pucsp.br

Abstract

This study uses the Human Rights Education (HRE) theoretical framework to analyze the relation between xenophobia and racism against immigrant students. A qualitative research experiment was carried out in a municipal elementary school with a significant presence of immigrant students in the city of São Paulo. This research found that racism, associated with xenophobia (here referred to as racialized xenophobia), determines the chances of immigrant students being integrated into public schools. This discriminatory inequality poses a serious and urgent challenge for Human Rights Education, demanding a curricular practice that is expressly committed to overcoming this injustice in schools that receive immigrant students.

Keywords: curriculum, immigrants, racialized xenofobia, human rights

Resumo

Este artigo mobiliza os fundamentos do referencial teórico da Educação em Direitos Humanos para analisar a relação entre xenofobia e racismo contra estudantes imigrantes, à luz de uma experiência de pesquisa qualitativa realizada em uma escola de educação básica no município de São Paulo com expressiva presença de estudantes imigrantes. A pesquisa permitiu concluir que o racismo associado à xenofobia (denominado xenofobia racializada) determina as probabilidades de integração de estudantes imigrantes na escola pública. Essa desigualdade discriminatória apresenta-se como um grave e urgente desafio para a Educação em Direitos Humanos, que requer uma prática curricular expressamente comprometida com a superação dessa injustiça nas escolas que recebem estudantes imigrantes.

Palavras-chave: currículo, imigrantes, xenofobia racializada, direitos humanos

Background¹

The Duque de Caxias Municipal Elementary School (EMEF), located at Baixada do Glicério, District of Liberdade, in downtown São Paulo, was the field of a doctoral research entitled *[suppressed information]* (Autor 1, 2019). The school is located at a territory in which significant buildings are established: large pensions, the largest evangelical commercial center in the state, the luxurious building of the State Court of Justice, and the Igreja da Paz [Church of Peace], known for being a place of passage and reception for immigrants from different parts of the world. This location makes this school an institution especially sought after by immigrant students, or children of immigrants, from countries such as Venezuela, Argentina, China, Angola, Nigeria, Bolivia, among others, but mainly from Syria and Haiti.

The school's Pedagogical and Political Project expressly considers the appreciation of diversity, thus being a precious document, but fails to specify the theme 'immigration,' considering the public that it serves and having as reference the City Curriculum, which values diversity and differences in the way of being, having and learning, informed by an inclusive, plural and democratic perspective (Secretaria Municipal de Educação, 2019).

¹ The research that originated this article was duly submitted to and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University in whose Program it was carried out.

According to the teachers, the pedagogical projects for reception instituted in this school geared toward immigrant students were initiated in 2017. Nevertheless, it was observed, throughout the research work, that the probabilities of reception and integration are unevenly distributed among the various groups of immigrants that attend the school.

The literature acknowledges this obvious inequality between immigrants and natives/nationals, but has indicated as its main cause the foreign students' low proficiency in the national language (Benevides, 2010; Oliveira, 2013; Uchôa, 2010). Field observation, in this study, provided evidence that the students' physical appearance—related to phenotype and, more specifically, skin color (their position compared to national standards of ethnic-racial classification)—is often more relevant than the 'national language proficiency' factor, which had been reported as the main differential for the integration of these students (Oliveira, 2019).

The observations also showed that immigrant students with similar national and linguistic backgrounds tend, initially, to group together, for mutual help, conversation and play, but, gradually, the different geographical origins lose importance as identity markers between them. This same research found that immigrant students with Western phenotypes (such as Syrians and Venezuelans) are integrated more quickly, upon learning the Portuguese language, than Angolan and Guinean students, for example—even though they speak Portuguese fluently. Thus, the hypothesis explored in this research was the existence of an unequal distribution of reception or hostility toward different groups of immigrant students, depending on their hetero-classification in the national racial classification system (Oliveira, 2019). At the end of the research, it was concluded that ethnic-racial markers prevail as exclusion factors more significantly than the 'immigrant' and 'language' markers.

On the one hand, native/national students reported "having no problems with the presence of students from other countries," claiming that, with them, they could learn new things, including a new language. On the other hand, immigrant students claimed to suffer discrimination, having reported physical and verbal abuse motivated "by the fact that they are black." These hierarchical ethnic-racial representations have shown to exert a decisive influence on the dynamics of sociability in this school studied, although these racial factors are not the only ones considered. Given this situation, the notion of xenophobia alone proved weak and insufficient for the purpose of analyzing the phenomenon, since aversion to immigrant students did not represent all subtleties of the conflicts experienced by different groups of immigrants as

a result of their classification in local racialization systems. Therefore, the concept of *racialized xenophobia*, as proposed by Faustino and Oliveira (2021), was required for understanding similar phenomena and situations.

The conclusions of this study have once again raised the important issue of cognitive and psychological foundations as inseparable from cultural and moral conditions in the process of *recognizing* the *Other*. Accordingly, the study demonstrated, as mentioned, that the issue of exclusion is no more decisively associated with xenophobia than with racism and that resistances to deal with foreign immigrants can always be dissolved through the recognition of phenotypic similarities (*they* are similar to *us*), while racism, even among compatriots, can always be a reason for exclusion (*they* are a threat to *us*).

The theme refers to several fundamental issues, which are impossible to be fully elucidated, since they even refer to ancestral nebulosities, whether from the point of view of cultural anthropology, psychology/psychoanalysis, or, more recently, the field of neurosciences (Mlodinow, 2013).

Ambivalences in the recognition of the foreigner as Other in symmetrical dignity

No political-cultural position of the Other is more external, more radical and more vulnerable than that of the condition of *foreigner* (Casali, 2018a). We do not refer to the foreigner in a position of possible symmetrical relationships (as in tourist or commercial relationships, for example), but to the foreigner in their extreme position, of maximally *stranger*, as is the case of the refugee immigrant, seeking asylum, fleeing from civil wars, calamities, hunger.

A work expressively entitled *De l'hospitalité*, by Derrida and Dufourmantelle (1997), can be, here, an important conceptual reference to elucidate the subtle—and at the same time radical—semantic and political-cultural elaborations around the *foreign* Other. Derrida indicates the ambivalence inherent in hospitality, tensioned between the unconditional (ideal of ethical hospitality—based on gratuitousness) and the conditional (when it implies some reciprocity). In the same work, Dufourmantelle's conferences explore hospitality as a means of receiving the stranger within each subject, from a psychoanalytic point of view. It is about the theme of *Ksenía* (Ξενία): an intangible Greek institution, of a social, cultural, moral character—which translates,

approximately, as *hospitality*. For the classical Greek citizen (until the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC), especially, *Ksenía* was an inalienable, inviolable moral duty. It is a practice based on a concept of extraordinary and thought-provoking semantic scope: since *ksénos* (ξένος) was the Other, the foreigner, but it could also mean the *extravagant*, even the *enemy* (giving rise, for us, to the term *xenophobia*); but, at the same time, *ksénos* was *the guest* (Pereira, 1998). It is inevitable to ask what cultural experience was the that which enabled the conversion of a foreigner, seen as a potential enemy, into a *guest*, to the extent of receiving them into one's own home and offering them shelter and food.

A second Greek concept is equally essential to our reference. This is the term *éthnos* (ἔθνος), which had two major meanings: one, as a noun, meaning *nation*, *people*, *tribe*; and the other, as an adjective, characterizing *the strange* (Pereira, 1998). This broad arc of meaning is also interesting, since it reduces every nation, people, tribe to the probability of being strange (and, as such, threatening), more than *partner* and, at the limit, *familiar*. Ethnography, as a Cultural Anthropology method, has incorporated this ambivalence to propose, as a means of learning about the Other, this mental game of researchers of seeking to familiarize oneself with the strange while seeking to find strange the familiarity with oneself with one's own people (Erickson, 1984).

A third concept, now Latin, completes our analytical reference. In Rome, originally, there were two *synonymous* terms, but with a double meaning, apparently contradictory: *hostis* and *hospes* meant, both, synonymously, simultaneously, the *foreigner* and the *guest* (Torrinha, 1942). There seems to be no doubt that both, although lexically distinct, would be a translation of a part of the duplicity of meanings inherent in the Greek *Ksenía*, to which we refer, however, here, meaning that the *foreigner deserves* to be treated as a *guest*. It is not unreasonable to imagine that the moral device that supported this duplicity would lie in the fact that the foreigner was thought of as someone *to whom hospitality was owed precisely because*, being a foreigner, they had no shelter. Therefore, a certain moral universality (with its generous and gratuitous selflessness) would be superimposed, in this aspect, on political and cultural particularity (with its acute sense of tribal, national corporate self-protection). However, the term *hostis*, at the same time, did not lose, among the Latins, the other meaning present in the Greek *Ksenía*: that of *enemy*—the *hostile*. This third meaning also operated as a warning to the risks inherent in receiving foreigners and appeared as blatant evidence of the frequent breach of the moral duty of hospitality, with the reduction of this foreign Other to the condition of a threatening Other.

At some point, later, after the period of assimilation of Greek culture by the Romans, the two terms (*hostis* and *hospes*) were distinguished and separated in opposite meanings, now irreconcilable (*hostis* as *enemy*: the *hostile*; and *hospes* as *guest*, who will also be a *commensal*, one who shares the table). In the English language, curiously, part of the original meaning of this Latin concept was preserved intact: *host*, *hostel* do not mean *hostile*, but *host*, *lodging*.

These considerations on the Hellenic and Latin semantic background make sense in this analysis under the assumption that language, much more than a mere instrumental communication device, is an element structuring the cultural matrix of individuals and peoples, and by hypothesis acts unconsciously in the Iberian colonialist matrix that founded us. Here, these etymological and semantic considerations enable us to illustrate the radical ambivalence with the *foreigner*, which we bring from the Greco-Latin culture, which is one of our cultural matrices. This ambivalence reveals the undeniable recognition that the foreigner *needs* and, therefore, morally *deserves* hospitality; at the same time, it reveals, as in an accusation, the moral baseness of hegemonic policies and cultures that try to ‘protect’ the established system from a possible (supposed, alleged, imagined) *threat*, and its resistance to taking this step of trust towards and within the unknown Other (Casali, 2018a).

This conceptual and cultural ambivalence present in the fundamentals of the neologism *hospitalité*, employed by Derrida and Dufourmantelle (1997), which fuses *hospitality* with *hostility*, refers to the *strange-familiar* of ethnography, as well as to the *foreign-guest* *ksenós*. The *ksenía*, the ethical demarcation of hospitality open to foreigners, still sounds like a timely imperative for immigration policies, laws and immigrant reception practices in the contemporary world.

When we consider the theme of hospitality toward foreigners in relation to the cultural sphere of those who, in this research, appear as the main victims of racialized xenophobia—namely, black immigrants in school—, then, in addition to the destructive violence that they suffer, there is a no less tragic cultural irony. As, in the great African cultural matrix, from which these persons who are now discriminated against come, there is a philosophy of life that surpasses even the humanitarian sense of hospitality experienced by the Greeks in the *Ksenía*. We are talking about *Ubuntu*.

According to the Congolese sociologist Bas Itele Malomalo (2014), hospitality toward foreigners in African cultures is not only a trait present in certain reception rituals, but something that structures the entire relationship of identity and otherness. The set of African

cultures has a more general *ethos*—which, in the Zulu and Shona languages, is named *Ubuntu*—of perception of otherness based on principles of humility, empathy, respect and cooperation.

Ubuntu ancestry enable us to define it as a cultural “paradigm” with unlimited educational potential, worldwide in scope. The meaning of the word is comprehensive: it implies reception, sharing, community, generosity.

The expression *Ubuntu* has gained prominence, more recently, through the voices of leaders such as Nelson Mandela (2006), with the notable explanation of the meaning of the *Ubuntu* experience in an interview with South African journalist Tim Modise: “A traveller through a country would stop at a village and he didn’t have to ask for food or for water. Once he stops, the people give him food, entertain him.

Another voice, among the most authorized to describe the meaning of *Ubuntu*, is that of the South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu (2006 apud Murithi, 2006, p. 28, free translation). Thus he expressed himself:

“Ubuntu . . . speaks to the very essence of being human. When you want to give high praise to someone we say: “Yu, u Nobuntu”; he or she has Ubuntu. This means that they are generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate. They share what they have. It also means that my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in theirs. We belong in a bundle of life. We say, “a person is a person through other people.” I am human because I belong, I participate, and I share.”

Nigerian educator Joan Osa Oviawe (2016, p. 1, free translation), from Cornell University, NY, USA, is emphatic in stating that “there is room for an *ubuntu* philosophy in education, both in Africa and in the whole world.” Along the same lines, South African educator Lesley Le Grange (2011), from Stellenbosch University, South Africa, argues that *Ubuntu* has the potential to transform education for the whole world. And Ivorian sociologist and historian N’Dri Thérèse Assié-Lumumba (2017, p. 1, free translation) emphasizes that “the *Ubuntu* paradigm. . . can provide possibilities for growth and renewal in the field of comparative and international education”; and, in analyzing the epistemological reach of *Ubuntu*, seeks to demonstrate it as a valuable opportunity in the context of globalization for a worldwide change in education: “Ubuntu paradigm promotes the philosophy and practice for valuing humaneness toward others and humanism that conceptualizes and treats the world as a complex and interdependent ecosystem of humans, nature, and the planet” (Assié-Lumumba, 2017, p. 11).

South African professor James Ogude (2019), from the University of Pretoria, a researcher in African Literature and Culture, argues that *Ubuntu* can be a model for reconstituting inclusive communities, emphasizing the importance of this philosophy in integrating immigrants and promoting harmonious coexistence in schools.

Evidently, since our theme refers to the ethical imperative of international intercultural world coexistence, there is no lack of project identities (Hall, 1999) among white researchers and educators from the North Atlantic, as is the case of Cláudia Ruitenber (2015), who, postulating a cosmopolitan ethics, calls schools to open up and receive immigrant children in an environment of respectful hospitality that promotes cultural differences.

One of the most relevant aspects of the most recent researches in the field of Neurosciences, in turn, is also related to our issue: the recognition of the differences of/in the Other. For the human brain, all recognition (especially the recognition of the Other) is always an image operation. Our brain has a specific region for managing vision (as well as others for smell, hearing, etc.), in which there is an even more specific region to analyze and classify faces (Kandel, 2009; Mlodinow, 2013). As the recognition of the Other is, first of all, a survival function (it is vital to know how to distinguish between predators and members of the group), such recognition must be processed with maximum effectiveness and efficiency. The device used by the brain combines context recognition with the classification of the seen/heard object. We have *neurons* in the prefrontal cortex that respond to *categories* (Kandel, 2009; Damásio, 2011). The brain *first* captures the raw meaning of an object and only then deals with its *individuality*. This strategy produces a distorting effect on classification: objects belonging to the *same category* always look *more* similar than they actually are (and the reverse equally), that is, when *we classify*, *we polarize* (Mlodinow, 2013). Polarization is a *simplification*, and this can be another facilitator for violent discrimination against the Other (Casali, 2018a).

Moreover, classification works through a metonymic reduction of the object seen to *one of its apparent traits* of identity. Such reduction enables the *gain* of immediacy in recognition, which is vital for safety. The detail makes the difference. However, in the case of the recognition of Other human beings that are *strange* to the family, tribal, national bond, this metonymic reduction can imply, and usually implies, the moral cost of *preconception*, and can operate the violence of *non-recognition* on everything else *not seen*: the invisible traits of the Other's identity

(Casali, 2018a). In the case of racism and xenophobia in Brazil: what is first seen is not the *person*, but the *skin color* of their *body* and, only later, their *origin*.

Considering this marker of inferiorizing differentiation (Santos, 1996, 2006), we revisit the debates on human rights education to think, on the one hand, about the particularities of the racialized xenophobia² found in schools and, on the other hand, about the possibilities of creating curricular devices geared toward these violences, which may be able to *make a difference*—in the double sense of this expression.

Historical rise of Human Rights

It was in the Enlightenment that began the “cultural and political movements around the world, which established in constitutions and laws the recognition of the dignity of the Other” (Casali 2, 2018b, p. 8, free translation). These movements occurred in different Western countries, such as in the United States of America, with the *Virginia Declaration of Rights* (1776), in the context of the struggle for independence, and shortly after in France, with the French Revolution (1789) (Casali, 2018b). However, it was only in the post-World War II context that the United Nations instituted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with the main, specific and pragmatic objective of promoting world peace and strengthening humanitarian rights.

The Brazilian Government adhered to the recommendations of the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993, establishing, in May 1996, the National Human Rights Program (PNDH), with the objective of systematizing the demands of Brazilian society regarding the protection and promotion of human rights and finding possible solutions, supporting the formulation and implementation of public policies to guarantee these rights—especially from the perspective of the relationship between education and citizenship.

Casali (2018b) notes the enormous contribution of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the recognition of the inalienable human rights of socially marginalized groups and emphasizes that the validation of the Universal Declaration was possible through contributions from mythical, religious, cultural and political systems. According to Casali (2018b, p. 560, free translation), “this pragmatic motivation, the result of political negotiation

² Xenophobia associated with racism, a concept proposed by Faustino and Oliveira (2021).

between the powers of the time, seeking global governability, explains why human rights remained in the field of (partial) international validation and not in the field of universal validation.”

An issue that emerges from that, especially when considering the theme of the presence of immigrants in the educational context, is the adopted universality criteria: since the legal, ethical and philosophical framework that underlies the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is explicitly ‘Western’, it is worth asking whether, and to what extent, European culture could be taken as a universal reference for the definition of universal values such as dignity, democracy and justice. According to Santos (2006, p. 441, free translation), “as long as they are conceived as universal human rights in the abstract, human rights will tend to operate as globalized localism and, therefore, as a form of hegemonic globalization.” The quote of the aforementioned author implies that it is not possible to validate human rights when we do not consider social, economic, political, religious, cultural and physical differences.

According to Santos (2013), criticism of human rights discourses reveals that the world’s population has been conceived more as an “object” of human rights discourses than as a “subject” of human rights. According to the Portuguese sociologist, this finding could lead to a mistaken strategy of suspending criticism of the human rights discourse, replacing it with criticism only of practices that are not carried out.

As is the case of racism situated in both systems simultaneously and hierarchically, Santos (2006, p. 281, free translation) states that, “in the case of racism, the principle of exclusion is based on the hierarchy of races, and unequal integration occurs, first, through colonial exploitation (slavery, forced labor), and then, through immigration.”

In times of racism, indifference and inequality, and with the intense migratory flow in the 21st century, the world has become more global, spaces have gained new characteristics, accommodating different cultures, favoring what Santos (2006) called globalized localism. In this sense, conceiving human rights in their entirety, it is equally important to value differences in order to combat inequalities.

This theoretical path is relevant for the purposes of this article, because it enables us to thematize the relevance of understanding structural racism (Almeida, 2019) in Brazilian sociability, especially, contemporaneously, its manifestation in the migratory dynamics in Brazil. Consistently, the work of Moura (1988) indicates the presence of racism in the political and

economic choices made by the Brazilian ruling classes in relation to migratory flows. In fact, contrary to what is usually said, Brazil did not build its national identity through the exclusion or inferiorization of the foreigner. On the contrary, the projects of national identity, carried out by the Brazilian ruling classes after the Abolition, excluded precisely black and indigenous populations while investing in the whitening of the ‘working class’ (i.e., of the ‘population’) through public and private incentive to immigration from Europe.

This fact has since implied a context that challenges the categorizations found in studies on immigration: to what extent would Brazil, after all, be a xenophobic country? To what extent does it make sense to talk about xenophobia in a country whose foreigners (as long as they come from Europe, the United States or Japan, for example) have historically been considered ‘superior’ to nationals? The country relied on immigration (especially European) as a ‘logical’ way to whiten society, while refusing, whenever possible, the entry of African immigrants, reproducing, since then, an unequal—racist—distribution in the welcoming or hostile receptivity toward immigrants.

Contrary to the generally warm reception of immigrants from Europe, immigrants considered black here will experience, on the one hand, the negative association that is made with their country or continent of origin and, on the other hand, their arbitrary positioning in the national racial classification system—this process of unequal distribution of receptivity is conceptualized as “racialized xenophobia” (Faustino & Oliveira, 2021). It was observed, in the research on which this article was based (Oliveira, 2019), that this racialized xenophobia, which is also observed in public schools, is a serious threat to human rights and the universal right to education.

Human Rights Education to face Racialized Xenophobia

It is known the extent to which multicultural coexistence—even because it is permeated by different power relations—causes, intensifies and reveals conflicts, with positive and negative effects resulting from incompatibility of opinions, values and needs and, above all, power relations marked by the hierarchical and reifying estrangement of contemporary society (Hall, 1999, 2009). This asymmetry can fuel arrogance in some and exclusion in others, causing violence, nullifying and violating human rights. Therefore, when such culturally asymmetric relationships, especially involving immigrants, occur within school institutions, these institutions

must adopt a fundamental educational role in mediating the resulting violence, offering the subjects involved the possibility of building dignified interpersonal relationships in their daily school life, recognizing differences as wealth and learning from them, cultivating tolerant attitudes.

Since the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it has been assumed that:

Art. 26. . . . Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace (Unicef, 1948).

In the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance (Unesco, 1995), regarding education, article 4.2 notes:

Art. 4.2 Education for tolerance should be considered an urgent imperative; that is why it is necessary to promote systematic and rational tolerance teaching methods that will address the cultural, social, economic, political and religious sources of intolerance - major roots of violence and exclusion. Education policies and programmes should contribute to development of understanding, solidarity and tolerance among individuals as well as among ethnic, social, cultural, religious and linguistic groups and nations.

Recognizing that we are different is not enough to establish cultural diversity, because difference is a mark that can socially label the subject through the bias of supposed inferiority. Accordingly, Candau (2005, p. 19, free translation) argues that:

Equality should not be placed opposite to difference. In fact, equality is not opposed to difference, but rather to inequality, and difference is not opposed to equality, but rather to standardization, to serial production, to uniformity, to always the “same,” to sameness.

However, it was Santos (2003, p. 56, free translation), in their classic aphorism, who explained more fully the overcoming of this apparent incompatibility between equality and difference: “We have the right to be equal when our difference makes us be treated as inferior; and we have the right to be different when our equality deprives us of our characteristics.” For immigrant students, the equality of differences does not mean the adoption of a Brazilian

identity, but only the right to equal opportunities and conditions—a right that is better called ‘equity,’ which does not nullify the right to live differently in terms of culture, lifestyle, etc.

Foreign students, when received with hospitality, in addition to learning the language, find the solidarity and collaborative spirit of the entire school community that receives them, significant attitudes for acting in the group and for the education of these individuals (Ruitenberg, 2015). In addition to communicating and interacting effectively, questioning and suggesting, they can play their role and develop like any other students.

Xenophobia, in everyday school life, as well as racism, affects both discriminated students and those who discriminate. The destructive psychosocial effects that xenophobia and racism can cause in discriminated students range from low self-esteem to school dropout. For those supposedly superior and omnipotent, racism and xenophobia result in the crystallization of the unreal feeling of superiority, reinforcing discrimination in school and other spaces in the public sphere (Martínez-Otero & Miranda, 2010). Considering that schools are spaces for secondary socialization and play a fundamental role in the construction of identity and in the development of human beings, the limits and possibilities of a curriculum for the proper treatment of this theme are discussed.

Human Rights Education in Brazil, based on the *National Plan for Human Rights Education*—PNEDH (Secretaria Especial dos Direitos Humanos, 2007), is directed to respect for differences and commitment to transformation of reality: “Educating for human rights means preparing individuals so they can participate in the formation of a more democratic and fairer society” (Secretaria de Direitos Humanos da Presidência da República, 2013, p. 34, free translation). Therefore, it is evidently necessary that people also recognize their duties, acting consistently with their discourses, for example, with respect for plurality and tolerance of differences in everyday school life.

Recognizing that education professionals have different conceptions, beliefs and, above all, experiences is the first step towards success in the fight against racism and xenophobia in everyday school life, considering teacher training programs and their effects. School institutions, being spaces that can receive several foreign students, may or may not contribute to intensify, or decrease, or solve, in a pedagogically exemplary manner, the conflicts that arise in it through the presence of these Others—immigrant students.

A democratic society depends on a public education system whose curriculum, management, teaching staff, content and strategies are in accordance with Human Rights Education, in which the entire school team has continuous refresher courses and training that represent a real possibility of joint work with extra-school spaces.

It could seem that Human Rights have been recognized, in Brazil, only through more recent official decisions and declarations. However, since the 1934 Constitution³, immigrant students would already have, in fact, the right to education. This right was later formally supported by the Child and Adolescent Statute, in 1990, and current state and municipal legislation, and enshrined in MEC/CNE Resolution No. 01/2020, which: “Provides for the right to enrollment of children and adolescents that are migrants, refugees, stateless persons, and asylum-seekers in the Brazilian public education system.” Even more recently, the so-called Migration Law of 2017 explicitly guarantees immigrant students the right to education, as in “Art. 4. The migrant is guaranteed in the national territory, in condition of equality with nationals: . . . X—right to public education, being prohibited discrimination on grounds of nationality and migratory status.” Nevertheless, even with all these rights guaranteed, immigrant students’ school dropout rates remain significant, and our analytical hypothesis, based on the abovementioned research, is that school dropout occurs in this group because individuals are not recognized as part of the linguistic and cultural community, as a result of this elementary discriminatory device: racialized xenophobia.

This issue of the recognition of the Other by a Community and their due acceptance and inclusion in that same Community is a theme that requires more refined considerations. The Argentine-Mexican philosopher Dussel (2000), inspired by Emanuel Lévinas, dedicated himself to explaining the ethical subtleties implicit in this relation and defined this issue as having an insoluble ambivalence: the Other is a radical exteriority that ethically calls on the Community to recognize and receive them; but there will be no recognition and reception capable of exhausting their ethical exteriority; which is why the ethical relation of the immigrant foreigner, in this case, with a national community will maintain this insoluble tension between a reception that, however generous, will never exhaust its cultural, ethnic-racial, linguistic exteriority, etc.

³ The Constitution of 1934, in its art. 149, already established: “Education is a right of all persons and must be provided by the family and the branches of governments, and they must provide it to Brazilians **and foreigners residing in the country**, in order to enable efficient factors of the moral and economic life of the Nation, and develop in a Brazilian spirit the awareness of human solidarity” (emphasis added).

In this sense, the school, which was and often continues to be designed to produce and preserve a Eurocentric, ‘totalitarian’ discourse, with an ambition to be ‘unique,’ as if nothing existed outside its system, can only conceive that what exists outside it is the different ‘to be excluded’—and excludes it as a victim.

To break with these stigmatizations, it is worth emphasizing the need for a continuing education program for teachers and managers, so they engage in pedagogical projects for recognition of these differences and fight for the valorization of cultures and the strengthening of rights. In this sense, it is clearly stated in the General Competencies of the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) the duty to:

Exercise empathy, dialogue, conflict resolution and cooperation, enforcing respect and promoting respect for others and human rights by with reception and valorization of the diversity of individuals and social groups, their knowledges, identities, cultures and potential, without prejudice of any nature (Ministério da Educação, 2017, p. 10, free translation).

The current text of the BNCC, in its questionable ambiguity of conception, emphasizes the concern to ‘guarantee’ education based on human rights, that is, the minimum condition of fullness of dignity, guided by respect for differences and equality of rights. This document have informed, since 2018, all Brazilian school curricula, of Early Childhood Education, Elementary School and High School, confirming the school institutions’ responsibility—in their corresponding spheres of autonomy and competence, in a contextualized manner—for “incorporating into curricula and pedagogical proposals the requirement to address contemporary subjects that affect human life on a local and global scale, preferably in a transversal and integrative manner” (Ministério da Educação, 2017, p. 19, free translation). The subject of education on ethnic-racial relations and the history and culture of Afro-Brazilian, African, indigenous persons and of other matrices that constitute Brazilian society is an indispensable part of this purpose.

Although there is a numerous and qualified literature focused on Education on Ethnic-Racial Relations, the relation between racism and the set of conflicts experienced in everyday school life has not been sufficiently problematized. The significant presence of immigrants from various parts of the world in Brazilian schools, especially in public schools, raises the question of the extent to which difference can be converted into violent conflicts in schools, when permeated by stigmatized and racialized views; and the extent to which it can be converted into

exemplarily pedagogical solutions, when permeated by a community of well-trained educators aware of their role in Human Rights Education.

The situation found in the doctoral thesis research that supports this text suggested the existence of stigmatized hierarchies between the social representations created for the different peoples and cultures that have long been *coloring* Brazil through immigration. These hierarchical representations are factors that must be considered, which have repercussions on the dynamics of sociability in schools. It was in view of this situation that the notion of xenophobia proved insufficient for the analysis of what was observed in this research, since the *national x foreign* polarization did not capture all subtleties of the conflicts experienced by different groups of immigrants due to the Brazilian racial classification system, which is why we used the concept of ‘racialized xenophobia⁴.’

Brazil, despite the colonial genocide imposed on the indigenous populations, continues to be a country formed by ‘foreigners.’ This fact produced and continues to produce, with all its ambiguities, a historical relationship of reception and identification with immigrants from the same nations or continents as the colonizers. The objective of this article is not to discuss the dehumanizing status of the transatlantic trafficking in enslaved human beings, nor its redefinition amid the false polarization between national *x* immigrant-foreign, but only to recognize that colonization implied a social organization and sociability based on exogenous interests, carried out by foreign agents (Faustino, 2020), and that this fact, associated with the economic and ideological needs of each period (Moura, 1988), resulted in the constant incentive to diverse migratory flows (Oliveira, 2019).

In fact, from 2004, because of its remarkable economic and social growth, the country became again an attractive destination for immigrants from different parts of the world. The latest data released by the Department of Education of the state of São Paulo, which has the largest number of immigrants in Brazil, showed the enrollment of 17,880 immigrants in municipal and state schools in 2020, twice as many as in 2013, when there were only approximately 9,000 enrollments. The differential in relation to the traditional influx of immigrants to the country lies in that, now, more dramatically than before, the acceptability of

⁴ Note that the text of the aforementioned doctoral research adopted the concept of xenoracism. However, subsequent researches, such as that of Faustino and Oliveira (2021), problematized the concept of xeno-racism, arguing that the term is insufficient, considering the peculiarities of the origin of Brazilian society.

these new foreigners is characterized more by discrimination motivated by skin color than by nationality or language.

In the school routine that was the object of the research that supports this research, the prevailing aversion is racism: there is less aversion to white immigrant foreigners than to black immigrant foreigners. Immigrants with Western phenotypic traits, after learning Portuguese, are easily integrated, while Angolans, even if they speak Portuguese, will hardly be integrated because they are black Africans.

The finding of this research suggests new theoretical approaches, despite the several studies that focus on racism as one of the central factors for understanding the disparities in access and permanence in education (Cavalleiro, 2005; Jaccoub, 2008; Munanga, 2005; Oliveira, 2012; Silva, 2003; Silva, 2005), and the other investigations that recognize that the presence of immigrants in everyday school life implies new curricular challenges (Autor 1, 2019; Brás, 2015; Oliveira, 2013; Rodrigues, 2017; Uchôa, 2010). These analyses are consistent with Costa (2011, p. 150, free translation), when they say that a quality educational setting is that in which values are taught, learned and experienced, at the same time that “. . . socialization and coexistence practices are guaranteed, strengthening notions of citizenship and equality among all. . .”.

‘Racialized xenophobia’ represents a major threat to human rights, since we are faced with “symbolic violence from social groups that impose norms, values and knowledge considered universal and that do not establish dialogue between the different cultures present in the community and in the school” (Ministério da Educação, 2017, p. 59, free translation).

If education has the function of improving the students’ knowledge and practice, and cannot be dissociated from the formative action committed to conservation or acquisition of knowledge and power (Chizzotti, 2016), the curriculum has the function of problematizing these ways in which contradictions are presented in society and, above all, in school (Gimeno Sacristán, 1999). The theme finds a clear position in Freire (2005), according to whom there are typologically two educations: one that is banking and alienates, dehumanizes and oppresses; and another, the liberating one, which implies awareness and produces humanization and autonomy, constituted by interaction and dialogue.

Michael Apple (2006), aligned with Freire, argues that the curriculum is a social and cultural mechanism involved in power relations, whose basic axes are ideology, culture and power, working in parallel on the official curriculum with the hidden curriculum, thus being a

continuous process of analysis and reformulation. Consistently, according to Casali (2016, p. 1546, free translation), “A school curriculum is an important part of a *curriculum vitae*: a curriculum of life, for life. It is, from the outset, a bodily experience, singular and collective.”

According to Chizzotti and Ponce (2012), Brazilian curricula are organized—albeit contradictorily—based on a humanist tradition, with the intention of educating citizens for collective coexistence and social cohesion and to train individuals with skills and abilities required by the globalized competition of knowledge. This curriculum of humanist tradition that educates citizens for collective coexistence, the ‘curriculum of life’ (Casali, 2016), is what enables school education to be reorganized pedagogically to receive new students of different nationalities, languages and phenotypes in the daily life. The reorganization of the curriculum in view of cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity is a fundamental process to achieve justice:

Curricular justice is the result of analysis of the curriculum that is elaborated, put into action, evaluated and researched taking into account the extent to which everything that is decided and done in the classroom respects and meets the needs and urgencies of all social groups; it helps us to see, analyze, understand and judge ourselves as ethical, supportive, collaborative people co-responsible for a broader socio-political intervention project aimed at building a more humane, fair and democratic world (Torres Santomé, 2013, p. 9, free translation).

According to Ponce (2016), such education policies and pedagogical practices are of paramount importance to achieve *curricular justice*. In this sense, the point is not only guaranteeing by law the access of immigrant students to school, but also managers and teachers working together toward equality, difference, equity.

Ponce and Neri (2015, p. 333, free translation) aptly note that the curriculum must be organized to combat inequalities and must be an instrument of care for those involved:

... curricular justice is achieved by the pursuit and practice of the school curriculum as an instrument for overcoming inequality; with curricular practice being the key to this process in its three fundamental dimensions: that of the knowledge necessary for curriculum subjects to be equipped to understand the world and themselves in it; that of caring for these subjects involved in the pedagogical process so as to ensure that every person has dignified conditions to develop; and that of the democratic and supportive coexistence that must be promoted in schools.

Therefore, public policies, school institutions and all involved subjects have their importance in this collective work of educating human beings to be more prepared for a more collective and more supportive life, with schools being responsible for dealing with all obstacles that may hinder this purpose (Ponce & Neri, 2015). *Curricular justice* values responsibility in the social function of the school, the State, families and the entire community in building a society that respects human rights. The ideal of *curricular justice* requires not only a curriculum for justice, but, mainly, paraphrasing Paulo Freire (in his “education as practice of freedom”), a ‘curriculum as practice of justice.’

Therefore, the change from an individualized culture to a plural and diverse, democratic culture, combined with public policies and curricular practices focused on differences and respect for human rights, favors the good confrontation of any problem—especially what here we call ‘racialized xenophobia.’

Neither Xenophobia nor Racism: Final Considerations

As previously argued, racialized xenophobia is manifested as an unequal distribution of hostile or welcoming receptivity to immigrants of different nationalities, depending on their local ethnic-racial classification. Physical appearance (especially skin color) stands out in the structurally nationalist, supremacist and racist representations, notorious in Brazilian history; typically Western traits remain as desired and valued, while traits identified as African find the opposite disposition.

In order to pedagogically prevent and combat different types of prejudice and discrimination, it is essential that schools question their role in reproducing these human rights violations and reformulate their curricula from a perspective of complete fulfillment of rights.

We do not lack cultural references for a dignified reception of immigrants, considering the historical and conceptual scope of classical Greek culture: the *Ksenía*. Furthermore, and with much more propriety and relevance, we have cultural references for a humanitarian reception in the African cultural matrix itself—the origin of the main victims of racialized xenophobia—, as seen in the considerations above: *Ubuntu*. The collective awareness of Human Rights requires every effort, especially from schools, to dissolve the structural racism that has to date informed Brazilian history.

The schools' ultimate commitment—the curriculum—is to human dignity, to the construction of a democratic and supportive coexistence—*Ubuntu*. Consistently, we propose that this discrimination, thus called racialized xenophobia, should be considered as a specific priority challenge, among others already posed and discussed in the literature on immigration, as an issue to be addressed by Human Rights Education, aiming at the full recognition of rights, the reception and integration of any and all immigrants who arrive as students at schools.

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Corresponding author:

Oliveira, Leila Maria – Secretaria Municipal de Educação de Santo André, Praça IV Centenário, 04, Prédio da Biblioteca Nair Lacerda, 2º andar – Centro, Santo André - SP, 09015-080, Brasil.

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Responsible editors:

Associate Editor: Chantal Victória Medaets <<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7834-3834>>

Editor-in-Chief: Antônio Carlos Rodrigues de Amorim <<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0323-9207>>