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ANTI-RACIST EDUCATION: RACIAL LITERACY IN TEACHER TRAINING

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research was to analyze the impact of teacher training in racial literacy on pedagogical practice, investigating how this training influences the implementation of anti-racist practices in the classroom. The research was exploratory, with a qualitative approach, and the sample was composed of fifteen education professionals, selected by convenience. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, with the aid of tape recorders, and data analysis used the discourse analysis technique. The results

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showed that most teachers did not receive adequate training on racial issues during graduation, and many sought extra training to deal with diversity in the classroom. However, educators face challenges such as resistance from students and colleagues, lack of institutional support, and scarcity of teaching materials. Despite these difficulties, many recognize the importance of racial literacy and seek to integrate it creatively into their pedagogical practices. The analysis revealed that, although there are advances in anti-racist practices, cultural change in schools is slow and requires continuous support from managers and public policies to ensure the effective implementation of these practices.

Keywords: Education. Anti-racist. Racial Literacy.

INTRODUCTION

Anti-racist education is a field of study and practice that aims to combat racism in its multiple aspects, promoting equality and social justice. In the Brazilian context, where the marks of slavery and racial inequality persist in a profound way, this approach becomes even more urgent. The fight against racism involves a reconfiguration of educational practices, making them more inclusive and sensitive to the specificities of different racial groups. In this sense, the construction of an anti-racist education requires not only the engagement of public policies, but also the training of teachers who know how to recognize complex racial relations and can act in a critical and transformative way (Alves; Teixeira; Santos, 2022).

The concept of racial literacy is a fundamental part of this educational proposal. It refers to knowledge, understanding, and skills related to racial issues, and applies both to the ability to identify racism in its various forms, and to the ability to promote an environment of respect and appreciation of differences. Racial literacy is not limited to the teaching of content about Afro-Brazilian history and culture, but also involves the development of a critical posture that contributes to the deconstruction of stereotypes, prejudices, and inequalities present in society (Araújo; Walnut; Guerra, 2023).

In teacher training, racial literacy is an essential tool for the construction of anti-racist pedagogical practices. This means that teachers need not only theoretical knowledge, but also practical skills to deal with racial diversity in the classroom. The initial and continuing education of teachers therefore needs to include discussions about the history of racism, the contribution of black and indigenous populations to the construction of the country, and the ways in which educational structures reproduce racial inequalities. In addition, training should promote a critical reflection on educators' own attitudes and beliefs, encouraging them to position themselves in an ethical and transformative way in the educational process (Camargo; Faustino; Benite, 2023).

This training process should not be limited to isolated courses or short modules on diversity, but should be integrated into the continuous training of teachers throughout their career. It is necessary that pedagogical practices be constantly revisited, with the aim of identifying and correcting possible reinforcements of structural racism. Racial literacy, therefore, becomes a reflective and constant practice, which must permeate all dimensions of teaching, from planning to student evaluation. This implies a change in the way curricular content is approached, with an emphasis on anti-racist perspectives that value the plurality of identities and experiences of students (Araújo; Walnut; Guerra, 2023).

Thus, the objective of this research was to analyze the impact of teacher training in racial literacy on the pedagogical practice of teachers, in order to understand how this training influences the implementation of anti-racist practices in the classroom. To this end, the contents, methodologies and challenges faced by teachers when integrating racial literacy into their daily practice will be investigated. The students' perception of the school environment will also be considered, seeking to assess whether anti-racist actions have a positive impact on the construction of a more egalitarian and respectful coexistence.

The importance of investing in teacher training focused on racial literacy is fundamental for the construction of a more just and egalitarian society. By empowering educators to act in an anti-racist manner, we are contributing not only to changing attitudes in the school environment, but also to transforming the social structures that perpetuate racial inequality. Well-trained teachers can directly influence the formation of new generations, ensuring that children and young people grow up in an environment where racism is not tolerated and where all cultures and identities are valued and respected.

METHODOLOGY

The research carried out is exploratory, with the objective of investigating the perceptions and practices of education professionals with regard to racial literacy in teacher training. This type of research is aimed at gathering initial information on a topic, allowing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon studied, but without the intention of generalizing the results to a large universe of professionals. Exploratory research is particularly useful when there is a knowledge gap or when the topic has not been widely studied, as is the case with racial literacy in teacher education.

As for the approach, the research was qualitative, as it sought to understand the experience and perception of the professionals in a more subjective and detailed way. Qualitative research allows the researcher to investigate the motivations, beliefs, and attitudes of the participants, offering a richer and more complex understanding of the phenomenon in question. By adopting this approach, the research focused on collecting non-numerical data, but rather on narratives and reports that could reflect the realities of educators in relation to training in racial literacy (Lima; Domingues Junior; Gomes, 2023; File; Domingues Junior; Slva, 2024; Lima et al., 2024; Lima et al;, 2024; File; Silva; Domingues Júnior, 2024).

The research sample was composed of fifteen education professionals, selected by convenience. The choice for this type of sampling was due to the accessibility and availability of the participants, and the selected professionals were located in a context in

which the researcher could easily establish contact. Convenience sampling is a common technique in exploratory studies when the objective is not to make generalizations, but rather to deepen the understanding of a phenomenon in a specific group, in this case, educators who were willing to participate and whose experience could add relevant information to the research.

Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews are a qualitative technique that allows the researcher to explore the opinions, attitudes, and experiences of the participants in a detailed and open way. They are carried out in a semi-structured format, which means that the researcher follows a basic script, but gives freedom for the interviewee to express himself more freely, addressing aspects that they consider relevant.

The research was conducted as follows: first, an initial contact was made with the manager of the educational institution, who helped to authorize access to the teachers. Then, the interviews were scheduled with the professionals who agreed to participate. During the interviews, recorders were used to record the participants' speeches. All respondents were previously informed about the objectives of the research and gave their consent to be recorded, ensuring compliance with ethical principles and confidentiality.

Data analysis was performed using the discourse analysis technique. This approach allows us to examine how the participants construct meanings in their speeches, considering the social and cultural context in which they are inserted. Discourse analysis seeks to identify the power relations, values and representations present in the reports, allowing us to understand how racial issues are addressed by education professionals and what are the conceptions and practices related to racial literacy. From the data collected in the interviews, it was possible to identify recurring patterns and themes, in addition to exploring the different perspectives of educators on the impact of training in racial literacy on their pedagogical practices.

RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The results of this research revealed a series of perceptions and practices among education professionals in relation to racial literacy and how it impacts their pedagogical practices. The analysis of the interviews, carried out with fifteen educators, showed the diversity of experiences and challenges encountered by teachers in the implementation of anti-racist practices in the classroom.

Regarding initial training, most of the interviewees reported that there was no adequate approach to racism and racial diversity in their undergraduate courses. According

to respondent E02, "we had practically no training on this during college, so we had to learn empirically, dealing with the diversity of students". This highlights an important gap in initial training, compromising the anti-racist performance of teachers, especially with regard to pedagogical practice.

However, some mentioned that, throughout their career, they sought extra training, as highlighted by respondent E05: "I took courses on inclusive education and diversity, but only after I entered teaching." This data shows that many educators try to make up for the lack of knowledge formally acquired through extracurricular courses, but reveals a critical deficiency in initial training.

When it comes to the challenges faced by teachers, many pointed out the resistance of students and even other colleagues who still maintain prejudiced conceptions. Respondent E07 shared: "I try to promote inclusion, but I face resistance, especially from older students, who already come with ideas formed from home." This resistance was a significant obstacle for teachers to apply racial literacy strategies.

In addition, the lack of flexibility in the school curriculum was also pointed out as a difficulty. E10 mentioned: "Traditional disciplines do not give enough space to discuss topics related to racial diversity and the history of blacks in Brazil." On the other hand, most teachers recognized the importance of racial literacy for the formation of a more just and egalitarian society.

Respondent E03 stated: "Racial literacy is fundamental, as it helps students to perceive themselves as part of the country's history and culture." This view was shared by other educators, who consider teaching about racial issues essential for the empowerment of students, especially those of black and indigenous origin. E06 explained: "The inclusion of the stories of resistance and black culture brings another vision of Brazil and helps to break stigmas." This reveals a deep understanding of the importance of racial literacy, not only for students from historically marginalized racial groups, but for society as a whole.

As for pedagogical practices, teachers revealed a considerable effort to integrate racial themes into the curriculum, although strategies vary greatly. Respondent E01, for example, mentioned: "I try to use books and materials that portray Afro-Brazilian culture, I have debates about racism and the importance of valuing black culture." E04, on the other hand, highlighted the importance of addressing racial issues in a transversal way in the various disciplines: "Whenever I can, I talk about racism and inclusion within mathematics, geography, and even literature." Despite these initiatives, many teachers reported difficulties related to the lack of adequate teaching materials and the little space in the curriculum for these debates.

Teachers also noticed a positive change in relationships between students when racial literacy was applied consistently. Respondent E08 stated that by promoting discussions about racism, "I noticed that students began to respect each other more and understand each other better." However, some teachers, such as E09, highlighted that the changes are not immediate: "The changes are slow, you can't see an immediate transformation, but I know that I am contributing to something bigger." This reveals that, although anti-racist practices are beginning to show results, cultural transformation in schools is a gradual and long process.

School management was another factor mentioned by respondents, with many reporting that it plays a crucial role in the implementation of anti-racist practices, although there is still a lack of effective support. E11 commented: "The school even supports it, but there is a lack of more direction and a more structured training for educators." This report suggests that school management needs not only to support, but also to provide the necessary conditions for teachers to implement these practices more effectively.

The lack of material resources, such as books and other specific pedagogical materials on racial issues, was another challenge identified by the teachers. E12 stated: "The school should invest more in specific books and materials that talk about racial issues, so that we can work on these themes in a more practical way."

In addition to racial issues, many interviewees also addressed the need to integrate racial literacy with other forms of diversity, such as gender and inclusion of people with disabilities. Respondent E14 highlighted: "It's no use just talking about racism, we have to discuss gender, sexual diversity, because all of this is interconnected." This point reflects a broader vision of inclusive education, where racial literacy is part of a larger movement for social justice and inclusion, involving multiple fronts of diversity.

Students' perception of the school environment was also a topic discussed, with many teachers highlighting a growing interest and engagement on the part of students. E15 observed: "The students are more curious, they want to know more about the history of Brazil, about the social movements." However, discrimination is still present, as reported by E13: "Unfortunately, there is still a lot of veiled discrimination among students, but I believe that debates help to raise awareness." This data shows that, although the school environment is becoming more inclusive, there is still a lot of work to be done to eradicate racism in relationships between students.

Finally, the survey also showed that many educators are striving to promote racial inclusion through their own initiatives, such as courses and continuing education, seeking alternatives in the face of the lack of institutional support. E02 concluded: "I think that if we

have more training, both for us and for the students, things will improve." This indicates that continuing education is a fundamental strategy for the advancement of racial literacy, but it also reveals that the process is slow and depends on a collective effort.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research showed that, despite the gaps in initial training and the challenges encountered in daily school life, there is a growing awareness among educators about the importance of racial literacy in building a more just and egalitarian society. Although teachers recognize the crucial role of this literacy for social transformation, the difficulties in integrating the topic into the school curriculum and the resistance of students and colleagues indicate that cultural change in schools is a complex and time-consuming process.

The study also revealed that, despite the lack of institutional support and the scarcity of pedagogical materials, many teachers are adopting creative strategies and seeking continuing education to fill these gaps. This demonstrates a personal commitment of educators to the anti-racist cause, but also highlights the urgent need for educational policies that ensure adequate training and the provision of pedagogical resources.

Another important point is that school management needs to play a more active role in supporting anti-racist practices, offering adequate conditions for teachers to integrate these issues effectively into their pedagogical practices. The lack of institutional support was a constant challenge, which highlights the importance of joint work between educators, managers and public policies so that anti-racist education is effectively implemented.

In addition, the results indicate that racial literacy should be addressed in a transversal and integrated way with other diversity issues, such as gender and inclusion of people with disabilities. This interconnected approach strengthens the movement for social justice and contributes to the formation of a more inclusive and respectful society. Although the research has shown advances in anti-racist pedagogical practices, the transformation of the school reality in relation to racism will be gradual and will require continuous effort. Raising students' awareness of racial issues and creating a more respectful environment are important steps, but there are still significant challenges to overcome.

In short, racial literacy in teacher training is essential for the construction of a fairer and more egalitarian future. Investing in the continuous training of educators, offering adequate resources, and implementing public policies that support these practices are fundamental actions to ensure that future generations grow up in an environment free of racism, where diversity is valued and respected.

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