

The contemporary debate on diversity and difference in education policies and studies

Tatiane Cosentino Rodrigues^I
Anete Abramowicz^{II}

Abstract

The article proposed here has as its objective to analyze the way in which the concepts of difference and diversity have been used in the contemporary Brazilian debate on education and in public policies in this area. We have tried to identify the theoretical conditions, the practices and policies that have contributed to the rise of the concept of diversity. Used as a slogan during the first presidential term of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, particularly with respect to education, the theme of diversity has undergone various processes of appropriation within the public policies. In order to study these policies we have employed as primary sources official documents such as: the 2003-2010 Government Assessment; the 2004-2007 Pluriannual Plan; the budget laws of the 2003-2006 period; and the management reports of the federal government. We also show, in a summarized manner, how the debate on difference and diversity has been carried out in education, with the objective of understanding the distinctions between the pedagogical proposals denominated multiculturalism, interculturalism, and cultural pluralism. To this end, we have carried out a survey of articles published in academic journals between 1990 and 2007. The assessment has shown that these actions were concentrated in the Ministries of Culture, Health and, mainly, Education, which reaffirms the centrality of education as a process and of the school as a social institution in the approach and/or mediation of the dilemmas faced by the Brazilian society at the start of this century. In summary, we have made an effort to analyze the various theoretical and practical streams that debate and compete for the concepts of diversity and difference in the area of education.

Keywords

Educational policy – Diversity and difference – Ethnical-racial relations – Lula government.

I- Universidade Federal de Pernambuco,
Recife, PE, Brazil.
Contact: tatiane.cosentino@gmail.com

II- Universidade Federal de São Carlos,
São Carlos, SP, Brazil.
Contact: aneteabramo@gmail.com

O debate contemporâneo sobre a diversidade e a diferença nas políticas e pesquisas em educação

Tatiane Cosentino Rodrigues^I
Anete Abramowicz^{II}

Resumo

O artigo proposto tem por objetivo analisar a maneira pela qual os conceitos de diferença e diversidade têm sido utilizados no debate contemporâneo brasileiro em educação e nas políticas públicas da área. Procuramos identificar as condições teóricas, as práticas e as políticas que possibilitaram a ascensão do conceito de diversidade. Acionado como slogan do primeiro mandato do presidente Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, sobretudo no que diz respeito à educação, o tema da diversidade passou por diferentes processos de apropriação nas políticas públicas. Para avaliar tais políticas, utilizamos como fontes primárias de pesquisa documentos oficiais como: o Balanço de Governo 2003-2010; o Plano Plurianual 2004-2007; as leis orçamentárias do período 2003-2006; e os relatórios de gestão do governo federal. Mostramos também, de maneira sintética, como vem sendo realizado, na educação, o debate sobre a diferença e a diversidade, com o objetivo de compreender as distinções entre as propostas pedagógicas denominadas multiculturalismo, interculturalismo e pluralismo cultural. Para tanto, realizamos um levantamento de artigos publicados em periódicos entre os anos 1990 e 2007. O levantamento indicou que essas ações estavam concentradas nos Ministérios da Cultura, da Saúde e, principalmente, da Educação, o que reafirma a centralidade da educação como processo e da escola como instituição social no enquadramento e/ou na mediação dos dilemas expostos à sociedade brasileira neste início de século. Em suma, fizemos um esforço de análise das várias vertentes teóricas e práticas que debatem e disputam os conceitos de diversidade e diferença na área da educação.

Palavras-chave

Política educacional – Diversidade e diferença – Relações étnico-raciais – Governo Lula.

I- Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Recife, PE, Brasil.
Contato: tatiane.cosentino@gmail.com

II- Universidade Federal de São Carlos, São Carlos, SP, Brasil.
Contato: aneteabramo@gmail.com

Focusing on educational policies and on the academic production in education, the article has as its objective to analyze the contemporary debate about culture, diversity and differences.¹ For that, it seeks to map out the different uses, conceptions and meanings attributed to these concepts and tries to establish a contrast between their uses and their theoretical conceptualizations.

The element that triggered this proposal was the observation that, during the last 20 years, diversity and other themes related to it have been given a central role in national and international debates, in the discussions about development, and in the formulation of public policies, particularly in the area of education. The phrase has been used ever more frequently in the titles of programs and actions by the Brazilian government, as well as by its secretariats and in its publications.

If, on one hand, the use of this concept may signal the occurrence of a turn in social thinking,² on the other hand, the lack of precision or indiscriminateness in that use may result in its being a mere praise of difference, plurality and diversity, becoming a conceptual trap and a political strategy of underrating and/or appeasement of differences and inequalities.

In view of the growing affirmation of identities, the idea of diversity became a significant fact, especially in the societies influenced by the European colonialism, in which groups and individuals reaffirm their local peculiarities and ethnical, racial, cultural or religious identities, drawing the attention of international organisms to attributes of globalization which are not just socioeconomic or technological.

1- This theme was originally developed in the article *A diferença e a diversidade na educação* (ABRAMOWICZ; RODRIGUES; CRUZ, 2011).

2- This turn in social thinking results from the fact that this movement opposes the orientation of various social scientists that put forward, and still maintain, the idea that concomitantly with the emergence of modern industrial society, the projection and the meaning of race and ethnicity would tend to disappear in heterogeneous societies. Ethnicity and the racial differences would be anachronisms restricted to pre-modern or traditional societies (INGLIS, 1996).

This situation has led to the growing intervention of international organisms in issues related to diversity. The recognition of cultural diversity has been the object of bulletins and resolutions by organisms such as UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), and acquires multiple expressions throughout the trajectory of this organization. In the 1990s, a report by the World Commission on Culture and Development discusses the issue of diversity in a document entitled *Our creative diversity*, whose corollary amounts to the requirement of a virtue of tolerance. This virtue is also invoked in the report prepared for UNESCO by the International Commission on Education for the 21st-Century (DELORS, 1996). Both documents reaffirm the idea of a coalition of different cultures. In 2001, in its universal declaration on this issue, UNESCO states that the respect to cultural diversity is more than just the right, but is also an indispensable condition for the politics designed to promote the dialogue among peoples.

Recognizing cultural diversity as a resource to be promoted, one of the focuses of the report *Investing in cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue* (UNESCO, 2009) is the proposal and the comprehension of what is intercultural dialogue. Any effort towards intercultural dialogue must be built upon the premise that all cultures are and have been in a continuous process of evolution, being the result of multiple influences throughout history. In such perspective, the characteristics perceived as fixed or identity, that seem to isolate us from one another and sow the seeds of stereotype, of discrimination or stigmatization, should not be seen as obstacles to dialogue, but rather as the very ground upon which such dialogue can begin (UNESCO, 2009).

UNESCO states that intercultural abilities are tools that promote the coming together of people from different cultures, and that education is a fundamental instrument in accomplishing this mission. Therefore,

multicultural education must be complemented with intercultural education and by education through cultural diversity. Intercultural education, under the perspective of UNESCO, refers to a learning that is rooted in culture itself – languages, values, worldviews and systems of knowledge –, being at the same time receptive and open to the appreciation of other forms of knowledge, values, cultures and languages (UNESCO, 2009).

In order to analyze this scenario of colonialism, exclusion and racism, we based this article on two hypotheses. The first is a device that works in the symbolic organization of the social, not just in the sense of trying to represent the social groups or to reflect them, but also demonstrating a productive character, a characteristic of producing reality and instituting it. Also, culture as a device acts in the sense of organizing, orienting and containing differences/diversities, organizing and producing the social space.

The second hypothesis is that failing to differentiate diversity from difference has the effect of emptying sometimes one concept, sometimes the other. Diversity placed in the sphere of culture empties inequality, since what is called social, the latter being the locus of culture (culture is a strand of the social), is not, and cannot be confused with, the economic sector. Placing diversity in the *social* sphere is a way of inventing a whole social economy that makes it possible to qualify the distinction between rich and poor and/or situate it in new terms, so as to distinguish it from inequality. Thus, one talks about diversity without inequality. And diversity empties difference because the diverse contains in itself the idea of identities that relate to each other, that are composed and tolerate each other as if it was possible to established egalitarian dialogues without the power/knowledge hierarchies, when the very function of difference is to blur identities and not to institute them.

Under the veil of diversity, the recognition of the various identities and/or

cultures is permeated by the ever so present issue of tolerance, since to ask for tolerance still signifies keeping intact the hierarchies of what is considered as hegemonic. Apart from that, diversity is the keyword to the possibility of expanding the field of the capital, which penetrates more and more often into previously intact subjectivities. Products are sold for differences and, in this sense, one has to promote them. In other words, diversity was understood as a form of government exercised by the public policy in the field of culture as a strategy to appease inequalities and of emptying the field of difference, having as its function to blur identities and to break down hegemonies.

Education and culture

The debate about culture is not a recent theme in the human sciences. The concept helped to construct the specificity of human sciences, and in the distinction between what could be regarded as properly human and the natural realm.

Cuche (1999) draws our attention to the importance of the reconstitution of the social genesis of the word – that is, of the analysis about how it was formed and about the scientific concept of it – as a process necessary to the understanding of the current meaning of the concept of culture and of its use in the social sciences.

To that author, it is important that we analyze particularly the French example of the use of culture, because the decisive semantic evolution of the word – that will allow next the invention of the concept – was produced in the French language. The term *culture*, in a figurative sense, begins to establish itself in the 18th century. Progressively, culture and is up the employed to designate formation, education of the spirit. This use was sanctioned by the end of that century by *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* (5th edition, Paris, 1798), which underscores the conceptual opposition between nature and culture. Such opposition, according

to Cuche, was fundamental to the thinkers of the Enlightenment, who conceive culture as a distinctive character of the human species. For them, culture is the sum of knowledges, taken as a whole, throughout its history (CUCHE, 1999).

In the 17th century German language, *Kultur* seems to be the exact transposition of the French word. However, according to Cuche, the German notion of *Kultur* will, from the 19th century onwards, gradually shift towards the delimitation and consolidation of national differences. It becomes, then, a particularistic notion that opposes the universalistic French notion of civilization, which is the expression of a nation whose national unity is seen as conquered long ago.

Anthropology has attached itself more widely to such concept, but the notion has spread and it began to be claimed by other areas, among them education, in which there are many definitions. Although at the root of the concept of culture is the idea that it is a symbolic repertoire of experiences – material and immaterial – of a group of people, and is characterized by being a concept that retains some notion of mobility, since culture changes and, therefore, its *local* and movable nature seems to be intrinsic to it, that was not and is not sufficient to stop the dispute and the debate about its universal character, about its multi and at same time local and specific, character.

As it has been used, the idea of culture has served as a trope for race, as diversity, as difference, as curricular response given by the public policies to the social movements that claim cultural reparation and/or representation (of the singular meanings they attribute to things and to the world), as a generic key attributed to *things* (the multiple possibilities of meaning given by social groups) we do not know exactly, as if into doing one could equalize the problems of inequalities/differences present at school. Culture is sometimes seen as local and singular, sometimes as the *common* and universal of a people. That is, it is sometimes singular, sometimes plural,

sometimes common, sometimes universal, sometimes specific, and sometimes local.

In the area of education, the semantic explosion has produced distinctive proposals in the key of culture that can be called multiculturalisms, interculturalisms, culturalism etc. Now culture designates identity, now the difference and the diverse, now it is that which means *me*, now it is *the other*. Now culture is the synthesis and the common to all cultures, a mosaic of cultures, as in multiculturalism in one of its branches. It is this generalized use of the word culture, associated to the diverse, to diversity and/or difference, but also to the one, to the universal, to the common and the local, that has been object of dispute not just theoretical, but also of the social practice, contributing to the lack of precision and to the conceptual deflation of culture, diversity and difference. One says culture and no one knows any more what is the meaning attributed to it.

In the last decades, but is debate intensified with globalization and with all the technological changes and those of the capital, which, in a certain way, have abolished boundaries not only territorial, but also subjective, of the unconscious, since the logic of the capital began to act in areas previously inviolable. Although the virtual has unified us above every nation, in a kind of empire, trumping the very identity of the people that was constructed in an imaginary plan in which it hid and/or eliminated differences, and that corresponded in practice to the racial subordination and social purification, now, with globalization, it is the very nation/people that claims a culture. Therefore, it is not easy to realize theoretically the debate that underlies this dispute between culture, diversity and difference, a dispute that clearly is not just semantic.

The ascent of the social

If we agree with Lazzarato (2011, p.16) that the “social has been introduced as a mode of governing ever since the relation between

the capitalist economy and politics became problematic”, then education as a ramification of the social field is the place where an intervention is possible so as to produce, reconcile and/or give an answer to conflicts found in society through the material basis and in social relations.

Through education, under the key of culture, there is the possibility of a governing that keeps and preserves a global character exerted upon society, and also as a local answer to the claims of belonging and/or compensation. After all, we agree with Lazzarato (2011, p.17) in his statement that “society is not the space where one manufactures some distance or autonomy from the state, but the correlate of government techniques”. It is in this sense that the government programs we analyze here promote a governing under the banner of culture, seeking to position itself at the same time between the global character – that which means belonging to the Brazilian people (race, language, sexuality of the nation³) – and the local character, distinguished by the regional manifestations and as an answer to social movements, especially the black and the LGBT movements under the heading of diversity.

The limits of Brazilian culturalism

The analyses made about the Brazilian academic production reveal that the concept of diversity is immersed in a group of themes/proposals, such as cultural plurality, multiculturalism, and interculturalism. The discussion about culture appears as central in all these perspectives, since behind this group of proposals for multicultural or intercultural education, there is a struggle/dispute for a concept of culture and for a model for the *management* of cultural diversity in defense of society (FOUCAULT, 1999).

3- The sexuality of the nation is also debated when, for example, we discuss and prohibit the publication of what was regarded as the Kit against homophobia, produced by the Ministry for Education in 2010.

Multiculturalism reaches Brazil in the 1930s as part of a reflection about our formation as a people, about issues resulting from the presence of such diverse people in our process of national formation, something that represents a novelty in terms of the application of this concept. In that same decade, a landmark in culturalist reflection in Brazil, two sources of cultural diversity received the attention of anthropologists and, particularly, of politicians and educators: the numerous descendants of Italian, German and Japanese immigrants, concentrated in their almost totality in the states of the South, and the descendants of Africans, disseminated throughout the country, to profoundly different groups.

What are the concerns that each of these groups raise for those who have to organize the education system? According to Consorte (1997), in a first approximation these worries seem to be two: on the one hand, the Brazilianizing of the descendants of immigrants, such that they would not become cultural lumps capable of threatening the national unity; on the other hand, the eradication of cultural traditions of African origin, a permanent threat to the project of constructing a White, Western and Christian country. Thus, instead of valuing difference, the concerns are focused on the vanishing of the original cultural matrices of the groups involved – German and Italian, on the one hand, African on the other.

The affirmation of the culturalist postulates about the non-existence of a necessary relation between race and culture – an affirmation, therefore, of the primacy of the cultural upon the biological in the construction of the human modes of living, of diversity as an absolute value and, in so doing, of the positiveness of the African influence in our formation – will become more clear after the work of Gilberto Freyre in *Casa grande & senzala*⁴), whose debt to Franz Boas in the understanding of our people was recognized by him straightforwardly.

4- Published in English as *The Masters and the Slaves* (TN).

Making use of the culturalist approach he learned during his stay in the United States of America, the author attempted to discredit the thesis that Blacks could be inferior to Whites in physical and mental terms. The publication of *Casa grande & senzala* is warmly received and applauded as an ode to miscegenation and to the African contribution to our formation, although the author is until this day widely criticized as the creator of the myth of the three races, as the founder of the myth of racial democracy in a country where race prejudice was and still is a fact.

One of the main controversies about Gilberto Freyre's work refers precisely to the uncertainty about the extent to which he effectively was a good disciple of Franz Boas's and of the North American culturalist tradition, having abandoned entirely the racialist theoretical framework.

The work by Dávila (2003) reveals how the culturalist option in Brazil obscured the racialist framework inscribed above all in the educational policies; the author conducted a historical and documental study about some of the educational reforms carried out in Brazil, showing how the process of creation and expansion of Brazilian public schooling is related to the racial issue, in the form in which the eugenic thinking had deep roots in the history of education and of educational thinking in our country in a period that was important for many public projects of transformation of Brazilian society.

When analyzing the Brazilian public policies that expanded and reformed the education system, particularly that of Rio de Janeiro in the first half of the 20th century, Dávila argues that these reforms were defined and executed based on the assumption of the existence of brutal disadvantages among the nonwhite and poor Brazilians, disadvantages that rendered them inferior and slowed the country down.

In his study, Dávila makes use of numerous primary documental sources, such as testimonies, photographs, newspapers articles, and he examines minutely Brazilian

and international archives. With strict methodological care, he articulates these sources, clarifying that such policies were driven by a logic that reflected the medical and sociological thinking of White elites. The author finds evidence that during the Old Republic and the Vargas Era, the reformist educational policies, which were established primarily in the city of Rio de Janeiro, despite bringing wider access to education to the socially marginalized segments, also established differentiated forms of dealing with children coming from these social groups.

The link between education and culture was established with a function of unification through assimilation as one of the pillars of education. Such assimilation, within the project of the eradication of cultures such as the African and the Brazilian Indian, constituted a mechanism for the formation and production of a universal subject.

The resurfacing of discussions about education and culture brings to the debate the questioning about this supposed universality, which is founded on Western and European culture, considered as the carrier of universality. The proposal for the eradication of certain cultures resulted in the affirmation, on the part of some groups, of their cultural particularity.

It was in the 1960s, with the work of Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes in France, and of Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart in the United Kingdom, that the *cultural turn* began to have a larger impact upon intellectual and academic life, and that a new interdisciplinary field of study, organized around culture as a central concept – the field of cultural studies –, began to take shape stimulated in part by the foundation in 1964 of a graduate research center, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies of the University of Birmingham (HALL, 1997).

According to Hall (1997), the *cultural turn* refers to an approach in contemporary social analysis that began to see culture as a constitutive condition of social life, and no longer as a dependent variable. To the author, the cultural revolution in the 20th century was

due to the untenability of the old distinction made by classic Marxism between the economic basis and the ideological superstructure, since, given the current circumstances, the media is a critical part of the material infrastructure of modern societies.

The expression *centrality of culture*, as stated by the author, indicates the form in which culture penetrates each corner of contemporary social life, proliferating secondary environments, mediating everything (HALL, 1997). Under this perspective, identities are culturally formed, which means that we must think about social identities as being constituted within the representation, through culture and not outside it.

Cultural studies encompass multiple discourses, as well as distinct histories. Despite the several important differences within the field of cultural studies itself, there is the sketch of a line of thinking: the opposition to the residual role, of a mere reflection, attributed to the cultural. This paradigm is opposed to the basis-superstructure scheme of formulating the relation between ideal and material forms, especially where the basis is defined as a determination by the economic in a simpler sense. The *cultural turn* meant the effort to define culture not as something that raises like dust from the clashes at the material basis of society – that is, as something superstructural –, but as a concept that institutes the real, the identities; culture attributes meanings, it has a producing character and not only that of representing the social reality.

From homogeneity to diversity: the appropriations of Brazilian production

We can say, broadly speaking, that in the 1990s the Brazilian education debate about culture centered mainly on issues relative to curriculum, despite the fact that this theme was present in didactics, in teacher education, in the analysis of and about school daily life etc. The National Curriculum Parameters (PCN), by bringing cultural

plurality as a transversal theme, created at first a territory, a place for the containing of the themes put forward in education. School failure, learning difficulties, the social demands for reparation and recognition, remained circumscribed within culture and within the debate about school curriculum.

The 1990s are considered as a reference in this passage, because that period was marked by a context of claims in which different social movements denounced the discriminatory practices present in education and demanded change, whilst eroding the *myth of racial democracy*.

In that decade, a culturalist explanatory view of school failure and a certain recognition of different cultures were superimposed. Within that period one can also identify the influence of a discursive script at a world level, in which the reflections of the education scholars are integrated in a systematic manner. An education concerned with incorporating the cultural diversity in the pedagogical daily life has emerged in national and international discussions and debates, in an attempt to question theoretical assumptions and pedagogical and curriculum implications of an education focused on valuing multiple identities within a formal education.

All these factors have contributed to make the discussion about culture, diversity, multiculturalism and interculturalism grow considerably, particularly in education. All the consolidated production of the 1980s and 1990s about the intersection of race and education was until then concentrated on the work of a small number of researchers and/or social movements.

Since the 1990s the confluence of the factors mentioned above has stimulated the production about such themes (education, culture, multiculturalism, interculturalism etc.). Generally speaking, after the analyses of the articles published in 23 journals between 90 and 2007,⁵ and of 44 works presented in

5- In total, 137 articles in 23 journals were selected. The selection was based on the analysis of the abstracts, using the following keywords or

annual meetings of the *Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação em Educação* (National Association of Graduate Studies in Education), one can say that the debate in Brazil takes place between the multiculturalists and interculturalists, and the post-structuralist and post-colonialist streams. Based on the analysis of the works selected it is possible to list some point in common, or *point of departure*, used by an expressive number of researchers to refer to the process or passage from a homogeneous education to an education that considers diversity.

In a brief and preliminary synthesis, we can point our differences of conception within what has been called multiculturalism. Some researchers that declare themselves as belonging to the critical intercultural field see multiculturalism within phenomenology as circumscribed to the acceptance and experience of subjects, and consider that a multicultural proposal would be a proposal *for a mosaic of cultures, a fair of cultures* that would keep intact the hierarchies of power, of knowledge and economic (CANEN, 2000). In multiculturalism, tolerance would be the *value*, the purpose, the point of departure and of arrival of the education process. There is under this perspective in attempt to cultural integration, a universal citizenship. The multiculturalism that links itself to the race debate is not pursued further by the intercultural stream to which it belongs (RODRIGUES, 2011).

There is also the critical multiculturalism, whose major exponent is Peter McLaren, who works under the Marxist perspective and incorporates race in his analytics. In Brazil Peter McLaren Candau and Moreira would

themes: diversity, difference, culture and education, multiculturalism, interculturalism, transculturalism, pluralism, ethnicity, race, gender and sexuality. The journals selected were: *Cadernos CEDES, Cadernos de Pesquisa, Cadernos Pagu, Currículo sem Fronteiras, Educação e Pesquisa, Educação e Sociedade, Educar em Revista, Ensaio: avaliação políticas públicas de educação, Estudos Afro-Asiáticos, Estudos Avançados, Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais, Revista Brasileira de Educação, Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos, Revista da Faculdade de Educação, Revista Dados, Revista de Antropologia, Revista Estudos Feministas, Revista Sociologias, Revista USP, São Paulo em Perspectiva, Scripta Nova, Tempo Social e Revista Brasileira de Educação*. The complete analysis of the data and materials used can be seen in Rodrigues (2011).

belong to this stream. Lopes and Macedo (2011) observe that in the 2000s Moreira began to defend explicitly and forcefully the primacy of discussions on knowledge in the field of curriculum, disavowing the centrality of the discussions about culture that he helped to introduce a decade earlier among the central themes of the country. In this sense, Moreira began to defend basic contents that allow the education of subjects as active citizens. He accepts the centrality of culture and keeps the position that curriculum must stimulate the recognition of differences and the dialogue between them. He therefore defends the “contribution of curriculum to the construction of a world that accepts differences, but that fights against social and economic inequalities” (LOPES, MACEDO, 2011, p. 191).

Lastly, Moreira suggests that the concern with social inequality must be preserved and deepened in the studies about multiculturalists. Since inequalities and differences are inextricably associated in Brazilian reality, it is important that research help us to understand the complexity inherent to this articulation, as well as to formulate strategies of struggle. At the same time, the author points out that it is important to avoid in the analyses reductionisms that would suggest simple subordination to the economic. If race and gender are vital social processes that connect to other social processes that operate in education and in society, we cannot consider that economy accounts for all existing social relations in society. It is not the case, therefore, of reducing racial antagonism to a simple expression of the contradiction between labor and capital. The challenge is perhaps, as argued by Apple (1999), to develop theories and practices that incorporate both the recognition of differences and the commitment to the redistribution of wealth (MOREIRA, 2001).

The critical interculturalists draw from various authors, extracting from their work and reinterpreting some of the concepts – such as Habermas’s *ethical dialogue*; Homi Bhabha’s (1998) *between-places*; and Stuart Hall’s *hybrid*

identity – in order to propose a conception that guarantees a common cultural, and therefore universal, unity to everyone, as a synthesis of the multiple local cultures. This synthesis – dialectic – would constitute the hybridism that is no longer one culture or the other; it is all of them, different, hybrid. In Brazil, Canen, Franco and Oliveira (2000) would be part of this conception.

The perspective adopted by Habermas of the construction of the ethical universalism pleases those authors. An *a posteriori* ethical universalism grounded in argumentative rationality as opposed to an absolute ethical universalism – bound to the scientific rationality that harbors the Enlightenment ideal of the universal validity of the criteria of reason – can, in the reading of Canen, Franco and Oliveira (2000), advanced towards the conception of critical intercultural educational practices that refuse to forsake ethical horizons in the formation of subjectivities.

We arrive, therefore, to the proposal of an ethical dialogue suggested by the authors, which is not equivalent to an uncritical, indistinct acceptance of cultural contents; the universal perspective is maintained as synthesis of multiple cultures, as well as conscience as substitute for tolerance.

In their article *Ética, multiculturalismo e educação: articulação possível?* (Ethics, multiculturalism and education: a possible articulation?), the authors state that the challenge put before post-modern critical multiculturalism is a conception of this re-signification so as to achieve the articulation of the universal identity that constitutes us as human beings, and the plural cultural identities that we carry. More than an epistemological challenge, it is, as emphasized by them, a question of ethics (CANEN; FRANCO; OLIVEIRA, 2000).

Paraíso (2004), in her analysis of the post-critical and/or poststructuralist studies in education in Brazil that take as a reference the works of Deleuze, Guattari, Derrida and Foucault, observed that from the 1990s onwards there is an expansion of works in the area adopting

the post-critical perspective, also denominated poststructuralist. According to the author, since 1994 there appear in the educational field a multiplicity of researches and works that think education, pedagogy, curriculum and other educative practices in a way different from what had been the case until then. In general, such works point to the opening and multiplication of meanings, to the transgression and subversion of what had already been signified in the educational field (PARAÍSO, 2004).

Thus, as a consequence of their interests, the poststructuralist studies in education in Brazil have questioned the knowledge (and their effects of truth and power), the subject (and the different modes and processes of subjectivation) and the educational texts (and the different practices that they produce and institute). Such studies have problematized the modern promises of freedom, conscientization, justice, citizenship and democracy, so widely disseminated by Brazilian critical pedagogies, have abdicated from the exclusivity of the category of social class, and have discussed issues of gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality and age (LOURO, 1995). Questions about the educational times and spaces have also been the object of discussions, bringing to light the processes of creation of modern school, as well as thinking in different ways about difference, identity and the struggle for representation.

The post-critical and poststructuralist perspectives have given up the function of prescribing, of telling others how they must be, do and act. They have, above all, try to implode and radicalize the criticism to what has already been signified in education, seeking to make appear that which was not still signified (PARAÍSO, 2004). For the poststructuralists, the concept of culture is utilized specially for those that work with the theme of curriculum; that way, culture and language get confused with each other. This trend does not deal with

culture as an object of teaching, neither does it deal with the daily production

of our lives. We operate with a wider understanding of culture as that which itself allows signification. Curriculum acts like culture and culture is the very production of meanings inside a system of signification. (LOPES; MACEDO, 2011, p. 203)

This concept of culture and difference sees curriculum as a tool that, at any moment, institutes and produces meanings, referring them back to difference and not to identity.

There is also the *Queer theory* and the ancillary studies: a pedagogy and a curriculum connected to *Queer theory* would have therefore to be like it, subversive and provocative. They would have to do more than including Queer themes or contents; or more than worrying to build a teaching for Queer subjects. Such pedagogy could not be recognized as a pedagogy of the oppressed, as liberating or libertarian. It eludes framing, it finds operating with dualisms that end up keeping the logic of subordination (LOURO, 2001).

The ascent of diversity in Brazilian educational policy

Since the 1990s the reference to diversity became more and more present in the Brazilian political context, motivated by the international pressure to fulfill the international agreements to fight against racial, gender, and other kinds of inequality, as well as by an internal context of intense claims.

The period between 1995 and 2002 correspond to the mandate of Fernando Henrique Cardoso and is characterized by the consolidation of the discussions about local policies, of fight against discrimination, against prejudice and racism in the public sphere. However, as exposed by Jaccoud and Beghin (2002), the country lacks an articulate and organic strategy to face the issue. The actions developed hitherto are characterized as fragmentary, disorganized and with low resolution power.

The post-Durban context and president Lula's election, built in partnership with the social movements based on a government plan whose goals contemplated part of the historic claims of such movements – such as the Black movement and the Women's movement –, created in 2003 a scenario of great expectations regarding the reorganization of institutions and public policies, including the issues of gender, race, sexuality and others, demanding from the State a focal treatment of inequalities thought about for a very long time in an abstract form.

After 2003 some specific actions were implemented that were aligned with the goals and principles presented in the government plan of 2002. Still in 2003, at the federal executive level, the Special Secretariat for Women's Policies (SPM) and the Special Secretariat for Policies to Promote Race Equality (SEPPIR) were created gathering under them a group of actions focused on the Afro descendant population, with special emphasis on acting with the communities from the *quilombos*, on the area of health of the Black population, and also on the field of the teaching of Afro Brazilian history and culture in schools. In that same year, on January 9, the Act No 10 639 was sanctioned, altering the Law of Directives and Bases for National Education, and making mandatory the theme of Afro Brazilian history and culture in basic education.

In what concerns education, and in line with the goals and indications of the government plan about a treatment specific to some groups in situations of discrimination in the country, especially concerning the access and permanence in education, the Secretariat for Continued Education, Literacy and Diversity (SECAD) was created in 2004 within the structure of the Ministry for Education.

SECAD was built with the perspective of contributing to this change in public policy: to achieve compatibility between the universal content of education and the particularistic and differentialist content of affirmative actions for groups, regions and specific classifications;

to account, therefore, for placing at the heart of public policy in education the value of differences and diversity, with their ethnical-racial, generational, handicapped people, gender, sexual orientation, regional, religious, cultural and environmental contents.

According to an assessment of the actions developed by MEC in the 2003–2006 period, we observe a group of 19 actions.⁶ However, it has been observed that actions concentrated primarily in just two Secretariats of the Ministry, namely SECAD and SESU, apart from actions of the Secretariat for Special Education, with a focus already defined for that modality of teaching. With respect to the transversalization of these themes, as expected in other Ministries, it was observed that only some of the actions went beyond the spheres of the Secretariats for Women and Racial Equality Policies.

The creation of SECAD cast and institutional change in the treatment of diversity; such change was, however restricted, since the programs of largest impact regarding the extent of the service and the budget remain indifferent, with exception of the Program *Universidade para Todos* (University for All), which included the ethnical-racial classification in the offer of scholarships for higher education.

Although the creation of SECAD contributed to officialize themes that until then had not been dealt with in the formulation of education policies, it can be seen that the understanding of diversity is still variegated and it changes according with the Secretariats involved in the formulation of the programs. According to the assessment by Moehlecke (2009), SECAD, faced with the objectives that were attributed to it and with the people chosen

to run each one of its groups, with strong links with the social movements of the areas in which they worked, whilst the Secretariat that most explicitly defined the understanding of diversity based on a critical view of policies of difference. SESU, for working specifically with higher education, reinforced in its programs the idea of diversity as a policy of inclusion and/or affirmative action. SEB, in its turn, with its attribution of formulating policies for all basic education, works in its documents and programs chiefly with the idea of social inclusion and difference as valuing of, and tolerance to, cultural diversity (MOEHLECKE, 2009).

The Ministry for Education does not have a single coherent position about the idea of diversity that could guide all its actions. The idea of diversity has served as a wide umbrella concept for the government in the various processes of negotiation with pressure groups.

As in the theoretical discussions we conducted about diversity, the multiplicity of appropriations of diversity expresses the disputes internal and external to the government around the definition of educational projects. Such dispute became evident when we included in the analysis the budgetary provision⁷ for these programs and actions; in the years 2005

6- For these analyses the following programs were considered: *Programa Educação Inclusiva: direito à diversidade*; *Educação em Direitos Humanos*; *Projeto Milton Santos de Acesso ao Ensino Superior*; *Programa Incluir*; *Programa de Apoio à Formação Superior e Licenciaturas Indígenas (PROLIND)*; *Projetos Inovadores em Educação Indígena*; *Programa Conexões de Saberes*; *UNIAFRO*; *Educação Quilombola*; *A cor da cultura*; *Fórum Intergovernamental de Promoção da Igualdade Racial*; *Educação, Gênero e Raça – Rede Universidade Aberta do Brasil*; *Perspectiva étnico-racial no ProUni*; *Programa Afroafetividade*; *Programa Gênero e Diversidade na Escola*; *Programa Brasil sem Homofobia* and *Programa Diversidade na Universidade*.

7- Summary of all calculations made to adjust values and allow comparisons in real values. It mirrors the calculations made at the Citizen Calculator of the Brazilian Central Bank.

Diversity budget (2003 budget corrected for 2006) –initial date: 01/2003; final date: 01/2006; nominal value: R\$ 48.7431.379,00 (real). Calculated data–correction index for the period: 1,2353481; corresponding percent value: 23,5348100%; corrected value for final date: R\$ 60.212.569,94.

Ministry for Education budget (2003 budget corrected for 2006) – initial date: 01/2003; final date: 01/2006; nominal value: R\$ 18.037.343.186,00. Calculated data–correction index for the period: 1,2353481; corresponding percent value: 23,5348100%; corrected value for final date: R\$ 22.282.397.633,87.

Comparison 2005/2006 for diversity (real value of the diversity 2005 budget for 2006) –initial date: 01/2005; final date: 01/2006; nominal value: R\$ 147.265.089,00. Calculated data–Correction index for the period: 1,0544654; corresponding percent value: 5,3365400%; corrected value for final date: R\$ 155.285.940,98.

Comparison 2005/2006 MEC (real value of the diversity 2005 budget for 2006) –initial date: 01/2005; final date: 01/2006; nominal value: R\$ 21.022.574.093,00; calculated data–correction index for the period: 1,0544654; corresponding percent value: 5,4465400%; corrected value for final date: R\$ 22.167.577.000,00.

and 2006 the budget for these policies was less than 1% of the total Ministry budget.

In 2005 the diversity budget represented 0.7% of the total budget of the Ministry. In 2006 this fraction moved to 0.75%. Such evolution represents an increase of 7% and the participation of the diversity budget within the Ministry budget. However, these numbers suggest a reflection along a different line. A participation of just 0.75% points to an insignificant value in budgetary terms. The themes that were intended to be dealt with within the wide spectrum denominated diversity have only a tiny participation in the total Ministry budget: less than 1%. It means that the questions related to diversity remain without effective funding to change the logics in place. The issues belong to an exclusively discursive and abstract sphere of culture/diversities/difference.

Lastly, we must perform an analysis of the budgetary provision for the initial and final years of the first mandate of President Lula. It is worth recalling that the first year still reflects the previous presidential mandate (Fernando Henrique Cardoso), since the Annual Budgetary Law (LOA in the Portuguese acronym for *Lei Orçamentária Anual*) was prepared during the previous government. The data below demonstrate the variation between 2003 and 2006, in real terms, of the total Ministry for Education budget and of the diversity budget.

Participation of the diversity budget within the Ministry for Education budget	
2003	0.27%
2006	0.75%

Whilst the Ministry for education budget displayed a fall of 2.7% in real terms, the diversity budget increased 268.7%. This demonstrates a change of intention in dealing with the issue of diversity from one government to another, something to be expected with respect to the Lula government, which was built

upon close relations with the social movements that fought for the expansion of public policies focused on the issue of diversity.

Despite an unprecedented variety of programs targeted at the problems related to racism, and diversity, it can be said, in general terms, but that there was lack of interministerial coordination, coherence and communication between programs, and that responsibilities were eventually enclosed within SECAD, SEPPPIR and SPM. The defense of diversity and the struggle for racial equality became part of the government rhetoric, but were still not effectively raised to the level of a State policy.

A similar analysis is presented by Almeida (2011) with respect to the national policies for human rights. According to this author, there was a deflation of this theme within the public sphere, associated to the dominance of an economy-based view of management.

One of the main hopes was the insertion of the 500 actions prescribed in the 2nd Human Rights National Plan into goals defined in the federal budget. But what the follow-up analysis demonstrated was that in the 2004-2007 Pluriannual Plan, without consulting the civil society agents, the government revised its general policy, suppressing 30 out of the 87 programs focused on the protection of human rights. Of the 57 programs kept by the government, 17 received less than 10% of the funds initially planned (ALMEIDA, 2011).

Lastly, we must point out that the progresses and changes implemented during the period analyzed cannot be disregarded, especially because we deal here with an ongoing policy, and because analyzing a process that we are still experiencing makes it difficult to read it and evaluate it with proper detachment.

One of the main positive points of the process denominated here ascent of diversity was the new possibility of the participation of groups hitherto excluded from the public scenario, as well as the pressure that such groups exert for new styles, criteria and policies in the construction of a different State.

Considerations

To begin with, it is worth emphasizing the deflation of culture as an analytical category. For, by understanding it as a device, we presuppose that it operates along two lines: a productive one, in the sense of constructing meanings and the real; and another one as a space used by public policies, a space that circumscribes the sphere of the social and in it acts as a containment field for the disruptive character that the difference heralds in consonance with social movements in general. Culture has been a propitious field of containment and, in so doing, of government. Because of its semantic and analytic breadth, it allows various prescriptions, such as those listed in this article: it is this space of the universal and of the local; it carries in it mobility and permanence; it can be the locus of diversity and difference; and it has served as a space and locus of theoretical disputes and government programs in response to the demands of the social movements. It is in this sense that what has been done is a kind of *cultural justice*, in lieu of social justice.

Brah (2011, p. 212) has proposed an analytical concept that can be of use here to contrast with the deflated concept of culture: it is the notion of *diaspora space*, an immanent and minority space in the intensive, not quantitative, sense. The interesting aspect of this concept in relation to that of culture is that its immanent character does not allow issues such as race, gender, sexuality, social class, inequality and difference, to be detached from social groups and collectives; also, it contains intrinsically the idea of mobility and transiency, as well as the local character of the manifestations and experiences of social groups.

Brah (2001) states that:

my central argument is that the diaspora space as a conceptual category is occupied not only by the migrants and their descendants but also by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous.

In other words, the concept of diaspora space contains genealogies of dispersion intertwined to those that tend to *remain where they are*. That is to say, it is the space of those who are here and of those who came here, no longer the (idealized and homogeneous) idea of country, but that of place, which is not necessarily related to that of country. It is a territorial and temporal inflection (in a conception of time that joins the history of those who came here with that of those who are already here) operated by the social collectives on the basis of racialization, gender, sexuality and ethnicity. Culture, in its turn, has meant the plurality of the same. The fact that Whites do not see themselves in a racialized way results from the fact that White is a significant of domination, just as the heterosexual. Therefore the diaspora space consists in local spaces that permeate all places immanently, such that social groups – not just migrants, but also those excluded – inflect the spaces/territories, converting them in *their place*.

To outline and understand the diaspora spaces that permeate and run through the social space means to accomplish a genealogy of dispersion (of those who migrated or emigrated), entwined with the history of those who are here. Thus, the concept of *place* is tensioned with the idea of dispersion (of those who came here), and to think such concept along these lines produces an immanent criticism to the idea of fixed origins (there are no fixed origins because those who came here and those who are here intermingle). To this extent what exist are differences.

With regard to the public policies on diversity analyzed here, corresponding to the first Lula mandate, we see that the theme of diversity was not dealt with in a coherent form by all the Secretariats of the Ministry for Education, as pointed out in the text, being either approached in an interculturalist perspective, or under a multiculturalist bias, or still scrambling the concepts, which eventually shows in public policies as poorly articulated actions. Besides,

the Ministries expenditure with diversity is still timid – both from the absolute point of view and from the relative one – and insufficient to reverse any current logic.

The expansion of this theme within the public agenda during the first Lula government represented a significant movement forward in comparison to previous governments, especially because it was also a result of the participation of social movements in the construction of a government plan. However, it still remains to be observed the significant inclusion of diversity

policies in the budget and in the Pluriannual Plan, which is important for effectively shifting this theme from the field of rhetoric to the field of public action.

Lastly, we still have to understand how it is possible to achieve the universal ethics proposed by interculturalists, when it has already been torn apart by colonialism. The reconfiguration of such ethics is only possible from this diaspora space, redrawing the lines of gender/race/ethnicity as difference and not as diversity, which proposed to blur these lines.

References

- ABRAMOWICZ, Anete; RODRIGUES, Tatiane Cosentino; CRUZ, Ana Cristina Juvenal da. A diferença e a diversidade na educação. **Contemporânea: Revista de Sociologia da UFSCar**, São Carlos, v. 2, p. 85-97, 2011.
- ALMEIDA, Wellington Lourenço de. A estratégia de políticas públicas em direitos humanos no primeiro mandato Lula. **Revista Katálysis**, v. 14, n. 2, jul./dez. 2011.
- APPLE, Michael W. **Políticas culturais e educação**. Porto: Porto Editora, 1999.
- BRAH, Avtar. **Cartografía de la diáspora: identidades en cuestión**. Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, 2011.
- BHABHA, Homi K. **O local da cultura**. Tradução de Myriam Ávila, Eliana Lourenço de Lima Reis e Gláucia Renata Gonçalves. Belo Horizonte: UFMG, 1998.
- CANEN, Ana. Educação multicultural, identidade nacional e pluralidade cultural: tensões e implicações curriculares. **Cadernos de Pesquisa**, São Paulo, n. 111, 2000. Disponível em: <http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0100-15742000000300007&lng=pt&nrm=iso>. Acesso em: 02 jul. 2008.
- CANEN, Ana; FRANCO, Monique; OLIVEIRA, José Renato. Ética, multiculturalismo e educação: articulação possível? **Revista Brasileira de Educação**, Rio de Janeiro, n. 13, 2000. Disponível em: <http://www.anped.org.br/rbe/rbedigital/RBDE13/RBDE13_08_ESPACO_ABERTO_-_RENATO_ANA_E_MONIQUE.pdf>. Acesso em: 29 jun. 2008.
- CONSORTE, Josildeth Gomes. Culturalismo e educação nos anos 50: o desafio da diversidade. **Cadernos CEDES**, Campinas, v.18, n. 43, 1997. Disponível em: <http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0101-32621997000200003&lng=pt&nrm=iso>. Acesso em: 29 jun. 2008.
- CUCHE, Denys. **A noção de cultura nas ciências sociais**. Tradução de Viviane Ribeiro. Bauru: EDUSC, 1999.
- DÁVILA, Jerry. **Diploma of whiteness: race and social policy in Brazil, 1917-1945**. EUA: Duke University Press, 2003.
- DELORS, Jacques. **Educação: um tesouro a descobrir**. Relatório para a UNESCO da Comissão Internacional sobre Educação para o século XXI. 3. ed. São Paulo: Cortez; Brasília: MEC/UNESCO, 1996.
- FOUCAULT, Michel. **Em defesa da sociedade**. Tradução de Maria Ermantina Galvão. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1999.
- FREYRE, Gilberto. **Casa-grande & senzala: formação da família brasileira sob o regime da economia patriarcal**. 51. ed. rev. São Paulo: Global, 2006.

HALL, Stuart. A centralidade da cultura: notas sobre as revoluções de nosso tempo. **Educação & Realidade**, Porto Alegre, v. 22, n. 2, p. 15-46, 1997.

INGLIS, Christine. **Multiculturalism: new policy responses to diversity**. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1996.

JACCOUD, Luciana B. de; BEGHIN, Nathalie. **Um balanço da intervenção pública no enfrentamento das desigualdades raciais no Brasil**. Brasília: IPEA, 2002.

LAZZARATO, Maurizio. **O governo das desigualdades: crítica da insegurança neoliberal**. Tradução de Renato Abramowicz Santos. São Carlos: EDUFSCar, 2011.

LOPES, Alice C., MACEDO, Elisabeth. **Teorias de currículo**. São Paulo: Cortez, 2011.

LOURO, Guacira L. Gênero, história e educação: construção e desconstrução. **Educação & Realidade**, Porto Alegre, v. 20, n. 2, 1995.

_____. Teoria Queer: uma política pós-identitária para a educação. **Estudos Feministas**, Florianópolis, v. 9, n. 2, 2001. Disponível em: <http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0104-026X2001000200012&lng=pt&nrm=iso>. Acesso em: 01 jul. 2008

MOEHLECKE, Sabrina. As políticas de diversidade na educação no governo Lula. **Cadernos de Pesquisa**, São Paulo, v. 39, n. 137, maio/ago. 2009.

MOREIRA, Antonio Flavio Barbosa. A recente produção científica sobre currículo e multiculturalismo no Brasil (1995-2000): avanços, desafios e tensões. **Revista Brasileira de Educação**, Rio de Janeiro, n. 18, 2001. Disponível em: <http://www.anped.org.br/rbe/rbedigital/RBDE18/RBDE18_08_ANTONIO_FLAVIO_BARBOSA_MOREIRA.pdf>. Acesso em: 01 jul. 2008.

PARAÍSO, Marlucy A. Pesquisas pós-críticas em educação no Brasil: esboço de um mapa. **Cadernos de Pesquisa**, São Paulo, v. 34, n. 122, 2004. Disponível em: <http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0100-15742004000200002&lng=pt&nrm=iso>. Acesso em: 01 jul. 2008.

RODRIGUES, Tatiane C. **A ascensão da diversidade nas políticas educacionais contemporâneas**. Tese (Doutorado em Educação) – Universidade Federal de São Carlos, São Carlos, 2011.

UNESCO. **Unesco world report: investing in cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue**, 2009.

Received on: 22.06.2012

Accepted on: 21.08.2012

Tatiane Cosentino Rodrigues lectures at the *Núcleo de Formação Docente* (Teacher Education Centre) of the Federal University of Pernambuco. E-mail: tatiane.cosentino@gmail.com.

Anete Abramowicz lectures at the Department of Pedagogical Theory and Practices (*Departamento de Teorias e Práticas Pedagógicas*), and at the Graduate Program in Education of the Federal University of São Carlos. She is a researcher of CNPq.