

## EDUCATION OF IMMIGRANT STUDENTS: THE EXPERIENCE OF A STATE SCHOOL IN SÃO PAULO

Lineu Norio Kohatsu <sup>1</sup>; Maria da Conceição Pereira Ramos <sup>2,4</sup>; Natalia Ramos <sup>3,4</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The study aimed to investigate the experience of immigrant student integration at a state school in São Paulo. Data was collected through interviews with the head teacher, the pedagogical coordinator, teachers and Bolivian immigrant parents; classroom observations, break time and meetings regarding projects for immigrant students; application of the proximity scale among students and analysis of school performance. The results showed that, in terms of professional and parental perceptions, there was a significant reduction in displays of prejudice and discrimination, as well as greater interaction among students. School initiatives focussed on immigrant culture should be highlighted, as well as the incorporation of the theme of immigration into the curriculum via learning roadmaps produced by teachers. Finally, the importance of democratic management and collective participation for a more inclusive school is also underlined.

Keywords: Public School Education; Immigration; Elementary School Students.

## Educación de alumnos inmigrantes: la experiencia de una escuela pública en São Paulo

### RESUMEN

El estudio tiene por objetivo general investigar la experiencia en la acogida de alumnos inmigrantes en una escuela municipal de enseñanza fundamental de São Paulo. La recolección de datos fue realizada por medio de entrevistas con el director, coordinador pedagógico, profesores y padres inmigrantes bolivianos; observaciones de clase, recreo y reuniones de los proyectos destinados a los alumnos inmigrantes, aplicación de la escala de proximidad entre alumnos y análisis del rendimiento escolar. Los resultados apuntaron que, en la percepción de los profesionales y de los padres, hubo una reducción significativa de las manifestaciones de prejuicio y discriminación, así como mayor interacción entre los alumnos. Las iniciativas de la escuela en el sentido de valorización de la cultura de los inmigrantes deben ser destacadas, así como la incorporación del tema de la inmigración en el plan de estudios por medio de los itinerarios de aprendizaje producidos por los profesores. Por último, se destaca la importancia de la gestión democrática y de la participación colectiva para el desarrollo de una escuela más inclusiva.

**Palabras clave:** Enseñanza en la escuela pública; inmigración, estudiantes de 1er grado.

## Educação de alunos imigrantes: a experiência de uma escola pública em São Paulo

### RESUMO

O estudo teve por objetivo geral investigar a experiência de uma escola municipal de ensino fundamental de São Paulo no acolhimento de alunos imigrantes. A coleta de dados foi realizada por meio de entrevistas com diretor, coordenador pedagógico, professores e pais imigrantes bolivianos; observações de sala de aula, recreio e reuniões dos projetos destinados aos alunos imigrantes; aplicação da escala de proximidade entre alunos e análise do rendimento escolar. Os resultados apontaram que, na percepção dos profissionais e dos pais, houve uma redução significativa das manifestações de preconceito e discriminação, assim como maior interação entre os alunos. Iniciativas da escola no sentido de valorização da cultura dos imigrantes devem ser destacadas, assim como a incorporação do tema da imigração no currículo por meio dos roteiros de aprendizagem produzidos pelos professores. Por fim, destaca-se a importância da gestão democrática e da participação coletiva para o desenvolvimento de uma escola mais inclusiva.

**Palavras-chave:** Ensino público; imigração; estudantes de ensino fundamental.

<sup>1</sup> Universidade de São Paulo – Instituto de Psicologia – São Paulo – SP – Brasil; [lineubr@gmail.com](mailto:lineubr@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Universidade do Porto – Faculdade de Economia – Porto – Portugal; [cramos@fep.up.pt](mailto:cramos@fep.up.pt)

<sup>3</sup> Universidade Aberta de Lisboa – Lisboa – Portugal; [natalia@uab.pt](mailto:natalia@uab.pt)

<sup>4</sup> Centro de Estudos das Migrações e Relações Interculturais – CEMRI – Lisboa – Portugal



## INTRODUCTION

The growth of transnational migratory flows (Ramos, 2013) has led to the need for greater reflection upon the subsequent impacts on social life, particularly in education (Ramos, 2007).

The presence of immigrant students of different nationalities creates multi-ethnic, multilingual and multicultural environments, necessitating changes in the social role of schools, which historically disseminated the official language of a country. This contributed to the formation of national identities, which was a necessary condition for cohesive modern national states (Zanotti, 1972).

In certain countries, such as Portugal, the integration of immigrant students has meant the revision of policies, theoretical models and educational practices. Research indicates<sup>1</sup> that confronting prejudice, discrimination, xenophobia against immigrant and ethnic minority students (Botas, 2010; Silva, 2007), non-mother-tongue teaching and learning (Cardoso, 2005) and intercultural education (Ramos N., 2007, 2009, 2011; Silva, 2016) is necessary to reduce immigrant educational failure and promote social and educational inclusion.

In Brazil, according to data from the school census of 2016<sup>2</sup> (INEP, 2017), 74,826 foreign students are enrolled in basic education. The largest student groups are Bolivian (9,757 enrolments), USA (9,029), Portuguese (7,435), Japanese (5,840), Paraguayan (5,253), Argentinean (3,437), Spanish (3,285), among others.

In the state of São Paulo, the *Secretaria Estadual da Educação* (2017) (State Secretariat of Education) states that around 9,500 foreign students are enrolled in state schools, which represents an increase of 66% in relation to 2010, when 5,700 students were registered. São Paulo is the municipality with the highest number of students of other nationalities (5,636 enrolments), 58% of whom are Bolivians (3,281).

According to data from the *Secretaria Municipal de Educação* (Municipal Secretariat of Education) of São Paulo (2016), 4,067 immigrant students are studying in the municipal education network, of whom approximately 78% are of Latin American origin (17 nationalities). The largest groups are Bolivian (2,633 enrolments), Paraguayan (123 enrolments), Argentine (118 enrolments) and Peruvian (110 enrolments).

Prejudice and discrimination regarding Bolivian students have also been investigated in Brazilian

research<sup>3</sup> (Magalhães & Schilling, 2012; Pontedeiro, 2013; Carvalho, 2015; Freitas & Silva, 2015; Silva & Pinezi, 2015).

The studies undertaken by Crochík, based on the Critical Theory of Society, are a major contribution to the understanding of prejudice. According to Crochík (1997), prejudice is a response to imaginary threats, a distortion of reality, demonstrating difficulty in experimentation and reflection. As such, interaction would not necessarily imply less prejudice, as presumed with the contact hypothesis (Crochík, 2001, p. 83), because prejudice is maintained by the prejudiced individual's inability to identify themselves with their victim (Crochík, 2011, p. 29). However, despite such difficulties, identification with the more vulnerable person would allow the prejudiced person to reflect upon their own vulnerability (Crochík, 2001, p. 88).

Although Crochík's, Kohatsu's, Dias's, Freller's and Casco's (2013) research on inclusion and discrimination at school does not address the issue of immigrants, it is still an important reference, due to the theoretical revision of prejudice and discrimination and the research methodology regarding inclusive education, combining different tools, which were also adopted in this research.

Considering the current nature and relevance of the theme, a study was undertaken at a state school in São Paulo, in order to share the experience of immigrant student integration, the results of which are presented in this article.

## THE SCHOOL

Escola Municipal de Ensino Fundamental – Escola C. – is in the Pari neighbourhood, in the São Paulo municipality, where there is a significant number of Bolivian immigrants (Silva, 2006).

In 2011, after a change of school management, action was taken to prevent discrimination against and bullying of immigrant students. Since then, guided by principles such as safeguarding education, citizenship and human rights, which can be found in the Escola C. Pedagogic Policy Project, various projects have been undertaken to promote integration among immigrant and Brazilian students.

Currently, around 20% of the 490 students enrolled at Escola C. come from other countries, most from Latin America (Bolivia, Peru, Paraguay, Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico), some from other continents, such as Syria and Angola.

## THE RESEARCH

Overall objective:

<sup>3</sup> According to a review of the literature based on the dissertations and theses at the University of São Paulo and Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo.

<sup>1</sup> According to a bibliographical review undertaken with dissertations and theses from the libraries of the University of Porto, Lisbon's Universidade Aberta (Open University) and the theses collection at Observatório das Migrações - <https://www.om.acm.gov.pt/publicacoes-om/colecao-teses>.

<sup>2</sup> Provided by INEP via Citizen Information Service.

- To research the experience of immigrant student integration at Escola C.

Specific objectives

To research:

- the perception of Escola C. agents (head teacher, pedagogic coordinator and teachers) in relation to progress achieved with projects and initiatives undertaken with immigrant students and existing challenges;
- how the issue of immigration and immigrant student culture have been included in teaching practice and the curriculum;
- the interaction between immigrant and Brazilian students;
- (immigrant) parents' expectations and fears regarding to their children's education.

## METHOD

### Subjects

- a) Head teacher, pedagogic coordinator and 14 *ensino fundamental II* (basic education) teachers
- b) *Ensino fundamental* students from seven classes (5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> years)
- c) *Ensino fundamental* immigrant students<sup>4</sup> from seven classes (5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> years)
- d) Bolivian parents of seven students (4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> years)

### Tools

- a) A semi-structured interview guide (Robson, 2002, cited by Crochík et al., 2013) used with school professionals: head teacher, pedagogical coordinator and teachers;
- b) A semi-structured interview guide used with Bolivian parents;
- c) A classroom and break time observation guide;
- d) Proximity scale among students - sociogram (Krech; Crutchfield; Ballachey, 1975, cited by Crochík et al., 2013) to verify the degree of preference/rejection among immigrant and Brazilian students. The sociogram is made up of six questions: three that indicate preference and three that show rejection. Each student is given a score obtained using the formula:  $I = (P/3n-3) - (R/3n-3)$ , where I is the proximity index; P, the number of preference indications the student receives; R, the number of rejection indications; N, the number of students in the class. The score can range from -1 to +1; the higher the number, the greater the acceptance of a student by his/her schoolmates, and vice versa.
- e) School reports.

<sup>4</sup>No distinction was made between first and second-generation students, i.e., children of immigrant parents but born in Brazil.

## Procedures

Data collection began after the project was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Institute of Psychology, University of São Paulo (USP). Data were collected throughout 2017, using common ethical procedures.

The interviews with professionals were recorded individually at the school. With parents, some were held at the school, others in their homes. These were recorded when consent was given. After transcription, collation was undertaken to identify concordant and divergent aspects regarding the projects, progress made and existing challenges (head teacher, coordinator and teachers) and the children's interaction at the school, cultural habits, language and expectations regarding their schooling (parents).

Observations and the implementation of the sociogram were undertaken in 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>-year classes. The data obtained were collated to identify the interaction between immigrant and Brazilian students.

School reports were consulted at the end of the school year to obtain final grades. Immigrant student grades were compared to the class average of each subject. The results were compared with the perceptions of the interviewees (professionals and parents).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Interview with teachers, coordinator and head teacher

Some teachers (Portuguese-1, teacher-mediator, geography-2 and physical education) said that there were no projects or initiatives regarding immigrant student integration when they first joined Escola C.

The head teacher, the teacher of Portuguese-1 and the geography-2 teacher recalled that students of Bolivian origin only associated with schoolmates of the same group, interacting little with Brazilian classmates.

The Portuguese-1 teacher remembered that there was prejudice from other students in relation to Bolivians; the violence that immigrant students suffered was also mentioned by the teacher-mediator: "*we heard that 'Bolivians paid a toll'*". However, according to the teacher of Portuguese-1, silence reigned.

### The start of immigrant student integration initiatives and projects

The teachers of Portuguese-1, geography-1 and geography-2 said that work with immigrant students only began in 2011, when the current head teacher took up the post.

When accepting the position, the head teacher already knew that Escola C. had immigrant students, which is why he expected to encounter projects focussed on that group. However, to his surprise, no work was being done, probably because "*the immigrants were*

*no trouble, they are well-behaved students, they are academically successful”.*

The first step, taken in 2011, was to call the parents of foreign students and discover how their children felt about Escola C. The parents detailed violent episodes that their children had endured.

The head teacher recalled the group work done by students to raise issues they wanted to discuss. The answers were tabulated and organised into two graphs. The first one contained the problems: *“bullying, prejudice, discrimination appeared”*; in the second, the solutions provided by the students. The head teacher mentioned that one of the proposals was controversial, as the students wanted *“specific classes for immigrants”*, just like the Bolivian mothers interviewed by Magalhães and Schiling (2012). *“There was so much violence and prejudice that they wanted a class for Bolivians.”* After considerable discussion with the students, the proposal was not implemented.

From 2012 to 2014, the student project was coordinated solely by the head teacher, with the help of the deputy head. Only in 2014 did the project include a teacher, a history graduate who was responsible for the computer room and who coordinated fortnightly meetings with immigrant students.

In 2014, there was a field trip to Bolivia, with the participation of the head teacher, students of Bolivian origin, teachers, two researchers and one intern. According to the pedagogical coordinator, the field trip *“is symbolically very strong in the teachers’ narrative”*, which, on the positive side, saw more teachers get involved, who began proposing new projects.

According to the teacher responsible for the computer room, the project’s initial objective was to deal with situations of discrimination experienced in Escola C., however, as more teachers got involved, there were other projects that focussed on immigrant and refugee students’ culture.

### **The effects of the projects**

From what can be gleaned from the interviews with the professionals at Escola C., there is a general belief that the work done led to better integration of immigrant and refugee students.

According to the teacher-mediator, there was *“major change”*. Escola C. was more receptive and immigrant students *“more integrated”*. In the view of the science teacher *“it improved considerably”*, although he believes the discrimination was *“more hidden”*, because in 2013 *“segregation was very open and cruel.”*

The Portuguese-2 teacher reported that her students are not currently discriminated against and participate a great deal in class - *“I think this is the result of the project”*. The history-2 teacher commented that

the project contributed to improving interpersonal relations and adds: *“I realise that a lot of prejudice and discrimination has to do with being ignorant of the Other’s condition, not knowing or not wanting to look at the Other’s situation.”* It is also worth adding the mathematics teacher’s words: *“Knowledge can overcome this barrier of prejudice.”*

In terms of other positives, the reading room teacher mentioned an initiative by students from Bolivian families (class 6 B), who gave Spanish lessons to their Brazilian schoolmates: *“I think this is a sign of improved integration”*. And she concludes: *“The more they participate in the project, the quicker they develop, the quick they position themselves.”*

It is worth highlighting the observation made by the pedagogic coordinator: *“when I do the class representative elections and I have three classes with representatives who are Bolivian or the children of Bolivians, I think that’s a very positive sign”*.

The maths, English and history-1 teachers made comparisons with state schools in which they have taught and commented that students in Escola C. are *“more respected”* (maths teacher), *“participate more”* and are *“much more involved”* (English teacher), attributing these differences to the outcomes of projects, management and teachers (history-1 teacher).

The maths teacher also underlined the importance that the Bolivian families give to school: *“You realise all the hope that they place in the children’s education. They really value it.”* And the physical education-1 teacher agrees: *“the family cares about school”*.

Although the teachers’ perceptions of Bolivian students are often positive, the pedagogical coordinator warned that this occurs to the extent that the students meet *“what is expected of immigrants behaviour, how they should be in school”*, and there is little tolerance when expectations are not met.

### **The challenges**

A challenge highlighted by the computer room, history-2 and Portuguese-1 teachers was the need to include the issue of immigration in the Escola C. curriculum.

It is important to highlight that, in 2017, the teachers started working with the learning roadmaps with *ensino fundamental II* classes. According to the history-2 teacher, this way of working with roadmaps *“facilitates interdisciplinary work”* and favours the inclusion of key content, of new knowledge.

In the second semester of 2018, Escola C. expanded the work proposal, with interdisciplinary study guides, with material produced by teachers, including changing the way students are grouped, guided by class tutors.

Another challenge highlighted by the pedagogical

coordinator was the attention given to other student groups: *"In addition to the issue of immigrants, of migrants ... there's the invisible group too ... we haven't talked about what it means to be a young black person in this place and the community of that place is black."*

The same issue was underlined by the head teacher: *"The dilemma that worries us most today, which is also part of our Pedagogical Policy Project, are the poorest and black students. (...) Our challenge is: how do we integrate non-foreigners living in poverty?"*

### Interviews with parents

Seven interviews were conducted: father of student G (4 B); father of Yo (4 A); father and mother of C (5 B); mother of R (6 A); father and mother of M (6 B); father of T (6 B); mother of J (6 B) and Y (7 A). The interviewees are Bolivian, married, have more than one child, some of whom also studied at Escola C.

"All interviewees said that Escola C. is good. For R's mother, the school is good because *"pasa clase de español<sup>5</sup>"* and R liked the school because it has *"computadora"* classes. R said that some teachers speak Spanish, lend books in the language, and one teacher had been to Bolivia. T's father made positive comments about the projects his daughter participates in.

J and Y's mother said that *"the school is good. It could give more homework. It's welcoming, it's not like the other schools. It doesn't have bullying, none of that."* However, the parents agreed that Bolivian schools were more demanding. According to R's mother: *"La escuela boliviana es mejor. Todas as matérias aprendem bem. Más exigente."* (Bolivian schools are better. They learn all subjects well. It is more demanding).

No parent complained that their children suffered from discrimination at school. At Escola C. - *"all students are treated the same,"* said G's father. *"They're all mixed together, Brazilians, Bolivians, Paraguayans, Colombians - all the same,"* said C's father. M's parents believe that Escola C. has improved considerably with the current head teacher.

G's father said his daughter has Brazilian friends, but her best friend at school is Bolivian. For R's mother, her son is shy and does not talk to his classmates, only communicating with his cousin. According to Y's mother, at school, her daughter has more Brazilian friends. This was also verified by observations and the sociogram.

In terms of languages, the parents of G, Yo and R said that they speak Spanish at home, but Yo's father said that he speaks Portuguese with his son. C's father and J and Y's mother said that they speak Spanish and Portuguese at home, *"mixed together"* (C's father). J and Y's mother said that her daughters speak Portuguese together, but emphasised the importance of Spanish,

because they travel to Bolivia often. T's father said that they talk in Portuguese with their children. He thinks knowing the Quechua language of their grandparents is important but believes that English and Mandarin would be more important for work if they want to live in another country.

Bilingualism is common practice in the family environment and most parents are not worried about their children forgetting their mother tongue. Magalhães and Schilling's research (2012) indicated that most families seemed to maintain Spanish in the private sphere; the same conclusion was reached by Oliveira (2014), however, she considered that the second generation were not skilled when speaking Spanish and, therefore, could not be considered bilingual, but rather linguistically assimilated.

Generally, parents consider maintaining cultural traditions important, but do so in different ways. Some (M's parents and the parents of J and Y) actively participate in Bolivian folkloric groups, while others said they have already participated (G's father and the father of Yo) or only watch festivities (R's mother). T's father said that they are evangelical and do not attend festivities due to work commitments and their new-born son. Despite their differences, Praça Kantuta (popular with Andean communities) was mentioned by everyone.

It was clear that all interviewees expected their children to do well at school; T's father and J's mother explained the importance of studying for work and getting into university. What parents said confirms school professionals' perception, reinforcing what was highlighted in other studies (Magalhães; Schilling, 2012; Silva & Pinezi, 2015). In the master's dissertation undertaken in Portuguese schools, Mirotschnik (2006) also found that immigrant parents from Eastern Europe had high expectations regarding their children's schooling and that education was considered a means to becoming successful in life.

In short, the evidence points to the belief that children's education, further study and finding a job were more important than concerns about preserving native language and cultural traditions, which is consistent with the observations of Stoer (2008) in relation to Hispanic immigrants in the United States.

### Interaction with students

The data obtained by the sociogram (proximity scale among the students) are presented and compared with observations from the classroom and breaktime. I is the proximity index; the higher the number, the greater the acceptance by schoolmates.

The number of immigrant students refers to the students who participated in the sociogram (25), as there were absences in some classes. It should be

<sup>5</sup> This refers to the Spanish classes given by the students of 6 B.

**Table 1.** Scale of proximity among students

Class	N° of			I = 0
	immigrant students	I positive	I negative	
5 A	6	3	2	1
5 B	6	4	0	2
6 A	4	2	0	2
6 B	3	3	0	0
7 A	2	2	0	0
7 B	3	1	1	1
8 A	1	0	1	0
Total	25	15	5	6

remembered that I is the proximity index. The positive I column shows the number of students in each class who had more indications of preference than rejection (15); the negative I column has the number of students who had more rejections than preferences (5). The I = 0 column shows the number of students whose indications of preference and rejection were the same (6), resulting in I = 0. Of these, four did not receive any indications, neither preference or rejection, which may indicate little interactivity or isolation

It is worth noting that the number of students who had positive I is three times greater than the number of students with negative I, indicating that there is more acceptance than rejection of immigrant students in their respective classes. However, in some classes, the fact that some indications of preference were given by Bolivian classmates cannot be disregarded.

As such, it is presumed that the few indications of rejection associated with the few indications of preference by Brazilian schoolmates do not necessarily indicate a lack of prejudice, discrimination or xenophobia, but rather hidden prejudice, as mentioned by the science teacher, which should be investigated further. It should be remembered that hidden or subtle examples of prejudice were also considered in Portuguese research on students' attitudes towards immigrant classmates (Botas, 2010; Silva, 2007). In addition to this, there is explicit rejection, as noted in relation to a student of Japanese origin, from class 5 A, who received 28 indications of rejection by schoolmates. As it was not possible to determine the reason for this, no connection with the ethnic origin of the student can be established.

Observations and sociogram data showed that some immigrant students prefer to interact with immigrant classmates (6 B); others interact with immigrant and Brazilian classmates (5 A and B) and some interact predominantly with Brazilians (6 A, 7 A and B). In the case of students from 6 A, 7 A and a Paraguayan student

from 7 B, the preference of the immigrant students was mirrored by Brazilian classmates, indicating reciprocity, unlike the Bolivian students of 7 B and 8 A, who interacted with Brazilian classmates, but without reciprocity.

What can be concluded, albeit provisionally, is that there is no single interaction pattern between students, in the same way there is no typical immigrant student behaviour, as some are more extrovert and communicative, while others quieter and shyer. The dominance of Portuguese could be a key factor regarding interactions and behaviour, as observed by Silva and Pinezi (2015), however, this hypothesis would have to be investigated further.

#### Educational achievement of immigrant students

Table 2 presents a summary of subject grades for each class.

According to the table, in most classes, the number of students with a higher grade than the class average predominates, including two students of Bolivian origin (6 A and 7 A) whose marks were significantly higher than the class average.

Although there were below-average grades, it was very rare to find students scoring below five, the minimum pass mark. This only occurred with two students from 5 A, and one of them had poor grades in five subjects. It is worth mentioning that this student received 28 indications of rejections in the sociogram, data that indicates problems of adaptation to the school.

In general, the analysis of academic achievement contradicted the expectation of poor performance by immigrant students, as observed in Portuguese research (Abrantes, 2016; Casa-Nova, 2005; Casimiro, 2006; Pires, 2001), while confirming research data that indicated Bolivians as good students (Magalhães & Schilling, 2012).

When cross-checking data on social interaction and academic achievement, certain situations can be identified, such as: a student with good academic performance interacting preferentially with immigrant schoolmates; a student with good academic performance interacting with Brazilian schoolmates; a student with good academic performance and low interaction, whether with immigrant or Brazilian schoolmates; students with academic achievement below the class average and with low level of interaction and a student with academic performance below the class average and with high rate of rejection.

The results demonstrate the need for further research on the relationship between interaction and academic achievement.

#### A school in a constant state of reflection and change

**Table 2.** Grades – Subject – Class

Class	5 A			5 B			6 A			6 B			7 A			7 B			8 A		
	<	=	>	<	=	>	<	=	>	<	=	>	<	=	>	<	=	>	<	=	>
POR	2	0	5	0	2	5	2	1	2	1	0	2	2	0	1	1	0	2	1	0	0
MAT	3	0	4	0	1	6	2	0	3	2	1	0	1	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	0
SCI	2	2	3	0	5	2	2	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	3	2	0	1	1	0	0
HIS	2	3	2	0	2	5	2	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	3	3	0	0	1	0	0
GEO	2	0	5	2	2	3	1	1	3	1	0	2	0	1	2	1	0	2	0	1	0
ART	2	0	5	1	0	6	2	1	2	0	1	2	1	0	2	0	2	1	1	0	0
PE	5	0	2	0	0	7	3	0	2	0	0	3	2	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	0
ENG	2	0	5	1	0	6	3	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	3	1	0	2	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

< number of students with a grade lower than the class average; = number of students with a grade equal to the class average; > number of students with a grade higher than the class average.

The analysis of the school's trajectory showed a continuous process of actions and reflections regarding immigrant student integration.

A few years ago, as shown by the accounts of professionals and parents, students of Bolivian origin attending Escola C. were isolated, shy, passive, endured prejudice and discrimination in silence, demonstrating characteristics also identified in other studies (Magalhães & Schilling, 2012; Pontedeiro, 2013; Carvalho, 2015; Freitas & Silva, 2015; Silva and Pinezi, 2015).

Anti-discrimination work led to an appreciation of immigrant culture, which was not mere contemplation and celebration of cultural difference or the "folklorization of minority cultural groups", according to Leite (2005, cited by Silva, 2016, p. 82). In the classrooms, although teaching was focussed on the text book, some teachers linked immigrant student experience to lesson content. Later, greater systematic coordination between projects with immigrants and the inclusion of immigration in the school curriculum, mentioned by certain teachers, occurred via pedagogical practices oriented by learning roadmaps, which resulted in a radical reorganisation of school time and space. The work done at Escola C. is clearly part of the intercultural paradigm, as theorised by Ramos (2007, 2009, 2011).

The creation of places that encourage cultural appreciation and protagonism should be seen as fundamental to overcoming the invisibility of immigrants. However, if we consider that prejudice occurs, to a certain degree, regardless of the characteristics of the objects of prejudice (Cochík, 1997, p. 12), simply emphasising the positive qualities of repressed minorities, as outlined by Adorno (1995, p. 121), may be insufficient. The effects of projects with non-immigrants should also be considered.

The projects initially undertaken with immigrant students, and later extended to the other students, created conditions so that there was identification with more vulnerable people (Cochík, 2001, p. 88), i.e., immigrants. One example is the project on immigration and slave labour organised by the history-2 and computer room teachers, which helped some students recognise similarities between their parents' lives, migrants from other Brazilian states, and those of their immigrant classmates' families.

While acknowledging the limits of enlightenment when dealing with prejudice, which has its roots in objective social conditions (Cochík, 1997, p. 26), the experience of Escola C. demonstrates that school education can contribute to greater self-reflection, as well as the integration of cultural diversity within the educational process.

Considering the unfavourable conditions of the current time, it becomes imperative to recognise the importance of democratic management and collective participation as forms of resistance. These are necessary to empower schools that, without denying the existence of conflicts and contradictions, seek to be constantly reflecting and changing to make education a universal right, without renouncing or excluding differences, otherness, a fundamental condition for the preservation of humanity and citizenship.

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