

ARTICLE

The social construction of a quilombola school: the experience of the Caveira community, RJ

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to describe and analyze the social construction of a quilombola school and its curriculum, identifying relevant actors, agency processes, and disputes of meaning about Quilombola School Education. It outlines a case study conducted at Dona Rosa Geralda, a Quilombola Municipal School, in the municipality of São Pedro da Aldeia, state of Rio de Janeiro, with ethnographic observations and interviews conducted at the school, in the community, and in the Municipal Department of Education, from 2017 to 2019. Among the results, the following stand out: the existence of a strong meaning attributed to the school as an agency of community identity; the appropriation by its professionals of discursive elements associated with the black movement, as curricular resolutions available for translating quilombola educational policies; and the existence of mediations and dilemmas that make up this experience and that can provide elements for a research agenda.

KEYWORDS

education and identity; quilombola education; differentiated curriculum.

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A CONSTRUÇÃO SOCIAL DE UMA ESCOLA QUILOMBOLA: A EXPERIÊNCIA DA COMUNIDADE CAVEIRA, RJ

RESUMO

O artigo tem por objetivo descrever e analisar o processo de construção social de uma escola quilombola e seu currículo, identificando atores sociais, processos de agenciamento e disputas de sentido sobre Educação Escolar Quilombola. Apresenta um estudo de caso da Escola Municipal Quilombola Dona Rosa Geralda, no município de São Pedro da Aldeia, Rio de Janeiro, com observações etnográficas e entrevistas realizadas na escola, na comunidade e na Secretaria Municipal de Educação entre os anos de 2017 e 2019. Entre os resultados, destacam-se: a presença de um forte sentido atribuído à escola enquanto agenciadora da identidade comunitária; a apropriação por seus profissionais de elementos discursivos associados aos movimentos negros enquanto resoluções curriculares disponíveis de tradução das políticas de educação quilombola; e a existência de mediações e dilemas que compõem essa experiência e que podem fornecer elementos para uma agenda de pesquisa.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

educação e identidade; educação quilombola; currículo diferenciado.

LA CONSTRUCCIÓN SOCIAL DE UNA ESCUELA QUILOMBOLA: LA EXPERIENCIA DE LA COMUNIDAD CAVEIRA, RJ

RESUMEN

El artículo tuvo como objetivo describir y analizar el proceso de construcción social de una escuela quilombola y su currículo, identificando actores sociales, procesos de agencia y disputas de significado sobre la Educación Escolar Quilombola. Presenta un estudio de caso en la Escuela Municipal Quilombola Dona Rosa Geralda, en el municipio de São Pedro da Aldeia, Rio de Janeiro, con observaciones etnográficas y entrevistas realizadas en la escuela, en la comunidad y en el Departamento de Educación Municipal, entre 2017 y 2019. Entre los resultados, se destacan: la presencia de un fuerte sentido atribuido a la escuela como agente de identidad comunitaria; la apropiación por parte de sus profesionales de elementos discursivos asociados con el Movimiento Negro como resoluciones curriculares disponibles para la traducción de las políticas educativas quilombolas; y la existencia de mediaciones y dilemas que conforman esta experiencia y que pueden proporcionar elementos para una agenda de investigación.

PALABRAS CLAVE

educación e identidade; educação quilombola; currículo diferenciado.

INTRODUCTION

From the normative point of view (Brasil, 2012), Quilombola¹ School Education (QSE) is a teaching modality that should be provided by educational establishments located in quilombola territories or places that welcome students from quilombos in the different stages and modalities of Basic Education. The National Curriculum Guidelines for Quilombola Education are based on the following prerogatives: collective memory; reminiscent languages; civilization milestones; cultural practices; technologies and forms of labor production; collections and oral repertoires; celebrations, uses, traditions, and other elements that compose the cultural heritage of quilombola communities all over the country; and, finally, territoriality (Brasil, 2012). Such guidelines mention words such as: “own pedagogy”, “respect to the ethnic and cultural specificity of each community”, “culturally differentiated groups”, “own forms of social organization”, need to “design contextualized learning and pedagogic materials according to the ethnic and racial identity of the group” (Brasil, 2012), and other correlated expressions that show QSE is supported by the different socio-cultural realities of each quilombola community.

It is undeniable that the process of implementing a quilombola education policy, represented by its respective curriculum guidelines, has been challenging for the classic republican school model, starting with the strong association between the becoming of the school and the becoming of the local community, established in its regulations. The classic institutional program, according to an expression coined by Dubet (2011), which would be associated with the republican school model, was based on the definition of a counterpoint concerning the primary forms of belongingness and connection of the individuals being taught. This is supported by the notion that individuals should be the owners of their own bodies and destinies, without being subjected to the determinations of their families, either by lineage or direct belongingness to communities that define their place and protection networks (Castel, 2005). Therefore, the republican school, through its rites, disciplines, and morals, was expected to teach individuals about new social dispositions that despite not annulling family and community dispositions, could provide them with some autonomy regarding new paths and decisions concerning these instances. This counterpoint provided by the educational role of the school would not only ensure the production of a new type of individual, especially national citizens in liberal democracies, beyond the dispositions provided by their primary groups; but also, on the other hand, question social solidarity and legitimate authority configurations, both in terms of family and community.

1 Quilombola: these are people belonging to an ethnic-racial group who inhabit demarcated territories and are descendants, directly or indirectly, of the African population that was enslaved in colony Brazil. Quilombo: meant, in the period of slavery, the territories occupied clandestinely by slaves who escaped from the oppression imposed by the slave production mode in the colonial period. Today, this term today means the lands occupied by remnants of quilombolas fighting for rights, recognition and legal possession of the lands they occupy.

From the analytical point of view (Arruti, 2017; Maroun and Carvalho, 2017), QSE is based on a different perspective than that previously described, highlighting the importance of the interface between practices and pieces of knowledge belonging to the school tradition in general, as well as unique practices and pieces of knowledge shared within each one of these communities that form the heterogeneous universe of quilombos in Brazil. With less contrast, and ideally in a more conciliatory manner, according to the ideal type designed in national regulations, QSE would be inseparably associated with memory, the forms of local solidarity and authority, and, at the same time, it should handle the know-how or universal pieces of knowledge established in the basic curriculum.

The contemporary concept of quilombo, despite its disputes of meaning (Jorge, 2016; Miranda, 2018) or the processes of giving new meaning (Arruti, 2006), refers to groups that are self-proclaimed as remaining parts of the quilombo, and has some characteristics in common, such as a specific social organization based on bonds of solidarity and kinship; territoriality characterized by the common use of the land; a common origin or ancestry; the sharing of collective memory about the history of land occupation and group formation; a collective (re)built identity or in process of being (re)built, claimed by habits, rituals, and/or shared pieces of knowledge (Arruti, 2006). In this sense, such a concept includes, in its formulation, the assumption that each quilombola community has its own process of construction and identity reaffirmation, which indicates the absence of a model that is readily available and can determine how these groups are formed and self-proclaimed as such.

The quilombola communities, as rightful entities, are still relatively new realities in the Brazilian republic history, since many of them are still in the process of recognition or entitlement (Jorge, 2016). If we consider that a normative QSE model only appears after the publication of its guidelines, in 2012, we can state that we are facing processes of construction and legitimation — both for a differentiated education² and for strengthening the ethnic identities of such groups (Barth, 2000). We should mention that QSE is still under construction, susceptible to experiments from education systems managers, school agents, and the communities themselves. As warned by Arruti (2017, p. 109), “quilombola school education is not even a reality for which we can propose an accurate report, a specific pedagogical proposal, or a defined public policy”. However, the inseparability between the paths of the quilombola schools and communities has already been translated into concrete experiences in the public education system. For Maroun and Carvalho (2017), who analyzed two quilombola schools in unique contexts through ethnography, the experiences of QSE can be as different as the very own process of training and self-attribution of the communities themselves.

2 The notion of distinguished education is directly associated with the learning processes followed by traditional communities, either based on school education or not. In the school environment, differentiated education should be regarded as going beyond the universal curriculum, incorporating traditional knowledges and their practices of transmission.

In this sense, this article describes and analyzes the social construction of a quilombola school and its differentiated curriculum, identifying relevant parties, administrators, disputes of meaning, competing interpretations about QSE, among others. Dona Rosa Geralda da Silveira Municipal Quilombola School, in the state of Rio de Janeiro, is the first school in the state to have the quilombola title in its name.

The accumulated empirical data used as the basis for this article were obtained from ethnographic observations and interviews conducted in the aforementioned school, in the quilombola community of Caveira³, and in the Municipal Secretariat of Education of São Pedro da Aldeia, from 2017 to 2019. This article has three parts. In the first one, we introduce the Caveira community, its process of being recognized as a remaining part of the quilombo, and the meanings the local leaders have associated with the school's construction and functioning. In the second part, we describe how the school routine was built in its multiple dimensions, that is, the school curriculum in practical actions during the years in which the school was active and observed by us, during the term of principal-1, from 2017 to 2019. In the third part, after the management of the Municipal Secretariat of Education and the school changed, with principal-2, we began a process of debate to build a curriculum that could represent, as determined by law, the ethnic and cultural specificity of the group, or, more prosaically, the "singularity" of the Caveira quilombo. In the last section, we present the final considerations, which, in a way, point to important aspects for the field of research in quilombola education.

CAVEIRA-BOTAFOGO QUILOMBO AND THE MEANINGS ATTRIBUTED TO THE SCHOOL

The Caveira community is located in the rural area of the city of São Pedro da Aldeia, in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Nowadays, in a 220-hectare land, there are about 220 families, or approximately 1,200 people (Costa, 2016). According to the collection *Terras de Quilombo* (Costa, 2016), the quilombolas in this community mostly descend from black enslaved individuals who already occupied this area, even before slavery was abolished, working in the field and raising small-sized animals. With time, because of land sales and exogenous marriages, outsiders were introduced to the community, which did not impact the kin relationships between the residents or farming and breeding practices in the original formation of the families⁴. Such aspects would have been essential for the resistance of the community against continuous attempts of eviction from the alleged landowners who arrived at the region during different times. From the 1950s to the 1970s, land-use conflicts

3 In the documents submitted by leaders, the name of the community appears as Caveira-Botafogo. In this article, we use Caveira, as shown in *Collection Terras de Quilombo (Coleção Terras de Quilombo)* (Costa, 2016) and in the certification process in *Fundação Cultural Palmares*.

4 The anthropological report of the Caveira quilombo Caveira (Carvalho and O'Dwyer, 1998) indicates four original family formations: Silveira, Santos, Marcianos, and Ivo. The data collected in the field mention the following families: Silveira, Santos, and Souza.

reached a critical point and led to a resistance movement against the invaders due to the close connection between the community and rural unionism (Arruti and Figueiredo, 2005).

According to Arruti and Figueiredo (2005), the Caveira quilombola community was formed by a process of dissolution of the Campos Novos farm, composed of black enslaved individuals who stayed in the land that had been abandoned by its former owner. According to reports from the community, the process of recognition began in the 1990s, and the government at the time had strong participation in the process, represented by Governor Benedita da Silva, who was informed about the struggles of the families in Caveira regarding land tenure. This process reached Palmares Cultural Foundation (*Fundação Cultural Palmares*) in 2002, which then began the process of certification on behalf of the community as a remaining part of the quilombo; the process was concluded in 2004. This action was a result of new quilombola communities spreading and emerging in the region because existing similar conditions were acknowledged and, therefore, the rights to the respective occupied territories:

Quilombola communities that are close to the Caveira Quilombola — such as Rasa, Botafogo, and Preto Forro — share a similar history and have also claimed entitlement of their land. The Preto Forro community, located in the rural neighborhood of Angelim, in Cabo Frio, has already been officially considered a quilombola community. (Costa, 2016, p. 3)

Arruti and Figueiredo (2005) point out to the fact that recognizing Caveira as a remaining part of the quilombo was not prompted by a claim from the community⁵, but to its historical and sociological characterization based on the following items:

- prevalence of the black population, descending from slaves;
- social memory of slavery connected to a specific geographic and social territory;
- permanence of that population in the same territory for generations, which tended to date back to the abolition period or even before it;
- prevalence of kin relationships as an integrating factor of the population in question.

On the other hand, the strong participation of one of the political leaders of the community in the fight for the local quilombola recognition resulted in him running and being elected as a member of the city council, giving him access to the networks in politics and municipal public management, thus giving visibility to the cause. Roberto Santos, known as Robertão, current president of the Association of the Remaining Parties of Botafogo-Caveira Quilombo (*Associação*

5 The self-attribution made by the community in the process of being recognized as a quilombola community, according to decree 4887, from November 20, 2003, was not determinant in Caveira certification process.

dos Remanescentes do Quilombo Botafogo-Caveira — ARQBC), acting as the city councilor of São Pedro da Aldeia, went to Brasília to search for recognition and certification. He comments that: “with the publication, we did have something official. At that time, we knew we could work, because, before that, no one took action” (Aug. 2019). However, since the certification was granted by *Fundação Cultural Palmares* in 2004, the quilombolas of Caveira still have not obtained the definitive ownership of the land from Brazilian Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (*Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária* — INCRA), which is a common fact in Brazil among the communities that have been certified but not entitled (Jorge, 2016). This puts them halfway between the process of land certification and entitlement. This makes their fight inconclusive, still alive, not only concerning the final goal of land entitlement, but also the construction of a recognized and vibrating quilombo⁶.

In this sense, it is interesting to mention how the notions and pieces of knowledge of “what it is to be quilombola” are built and circulate between the remaining communities of quilombo in the state of Rio de Janeiro, turning some of these communities into self-management role models for others that are still in the process of identity reaffirmation, as seems to be the case for Caveira. There, the leaders mentioned some recognized quilombos that saw their communities develop based on tourism, craftwork, culinary, trade of specific products, specific cultural practices etc. The Campinho da Independência quilombo, in the city of Paraty, is usually mentioned by these leaders in the stories⁷. Guided by these models, Caveira has been producing events and activities in this sense, such as Samba of Quilombo, which occurs on the first Sunday of each month; tours and trails in the region; races and visits to the houses of those who grow roots, vegetables, fruit, and breed small animals for their own consumption and small scale trading.

Despite being recognized and certified as remaining parties⁸ in *Fundação Cultural Palmares*, the community still has not obtained direct symbolic and material feedback, and it is still lacking public infrastructure, such as basic sanitation. Leaders mention that, until 2009, lighting was precarious. Mr. João Carlos, Dona Almerinda’s son, recalls that electric energy was installed in the residences in 1981 or 1982: “I had my first TV set as an adult, it was powered by battery”. “We used candles, lamps, lanterns to do everything”. He says his mother reminded him that until electricity arrived, full moon nights were the best ones to take walks and visit relatives (Costa, 2016, p. 11).

6 A conservative approach emerged again in the Brazilian sociopolitical scenario, making the struggle and conservation of the rights of quilombola communities and indigenous peoples in the current context even more difficult (Jorge, 2016; Brandão and Jorge, 2018).

7 Experiences in other quilombos are publicized and become a reference in self-management and education.

8 Being classified as quilombola implies in a different treatment by the government — program Brazil Quilombola (PBQ-2004) and Agenda Social Quilombola — Decree 6261/2007.

After the Constitution of 1988, which identified the remaining parties of the quilombo as rightful individuals, quilombola communities progressively emerged all over the country, which led to a fight claiming for distribution, recognition, and services offered by the government (Arruti, 2006; Fraser, 2007). The fight commanded by community leaders in the search for access to differentiated public policies has been associated not only with the central goal of entitlement of the occupied land, and the ethnic and cultural recognition of its identity and traditional pieces of knowledge; but also to all of the associated processes, which we can call local development yearnings, from which that rural zone had always been excluded.

The search for recognition and rights of quilombola communities has produced a new and legitimate social grammar. Such a grammar led to a new type of organization among “similar ones”, a community, in a society of individuals who fight against the government claiming protection and social rights (Castel, 2005). Maybe we are facing a similar phenomenon to the one Leite Lopes (2004) described as, in the context of environmental struggles, “environmentalization” of social conflicts, that is, old claims for the right to citizenship (such as access to basic goods, sanitation, minimum income, education etc.) that gain new meanings in view of new environmental rights, new concepts associated with them, and the production of new identities in the public space. To paraphrase Leite Lopes, it is possible to say that old local social claims and social protection have been transformed into “quilombola” needs for these individuals with few material, symbolic, and organizational resources. Such a movement, which we can describe as “quilombolization”, or the emergence of “remaining parties” (Arruti, 2006), considering the proper differences, is similar to the notion of “mixed indigenous” of the Northeast of Brazil, developed by Oliveira (1998), being both authors supported by the concept of ethnicity (Barth, 2000).

The demand for a local school in Caveira was one of the elements incorporated into the fight for basic rights, made stronger by a quilombola certification. According to reports from some residents, the school was a long-running request of the community, since the nearest school was 14 km away from Caveira. The request only became stronger once the community was certified, in 2004. Then, in a piece of land donated by one of the remaining parties, Dona Rosa Geralda de Oliveira, the City Hall built the school in 2013 and it currently offers Early Childhood education and the first years of Elementary School. Having a school had been a desire for generations and it was made stronger exactly because it was a “quilombola” struggle, in a recognized community. Within its new grammar, it obtained the necessary symbolic and social resources to have its long-running social requests met.

The school was named after Dona Rosa Geralda da Silveira, a local flour producer and one of the main characters of the Caveira community struggles before the land was protected as a result of the quilombo category gaining a new meaning. The school opened on May 28, 2013, and, since then, has welcomed quilombola and non-quilombola children who live in the territory, in the surroundings, and neighboring quilombos.

According to the guidelines of QSE, the school is a space of mediation and reconstruction of ethnic identities through the incorporation and resignification of practices and pieces of knowledge. This can dialogue with the local reality, going beyond the basic curriculum to teach the new generations of quilombola and non-quilombola families. Agents of quilombola identities are part of the recognition of such groups in Brazil (Jorge, 2016). Part of the literature has shown how dances and parties, for instance, have been useful not specifically to “rescue” the past, but to recreate new cultural practices and traditions that validate the quilombolas and produce greater internal cohesion due to a shared social identity. Lara *et al.* (2009) describe, in the quilombola community Paiol de Telha (recognized as quilombola since 1988), the creation of a music and dance company called *Kundun Balé*, and explain that the creation of the company filled out a gap concerning an alleged “absence of black culture” in the community. In this sense, Maroun (2014) showed the role of *jongo* as an element of collective memory and quilombola identity restructuring in Bracuí. The *jongo* practiced nowadays is a process of resignification, since, in the past, it had a strong magical and religious appeal connected to African religions. This practice became a central element in the identity formation of quilombola children and adolescents in Bracuí, thus helping the community resist and stay active in the struggle for their territory and giving public visibility to their requests. In some way, the Caveira school, as one of the mediators in the production of the quilombola identity, can be seen as a microscale representation of the process of reconstruction of quilombola identities in these territories⁹.

Even though the Caveira community has had its formal recognition as quilombola before the school was built, it plays a central role (not the only one, but maybe the main one) in the symbolic construction of the quilombola identity in the community. If we talk about such an argument according to the classic Durkheim’s theory about the concept of education (Durkheim, 2013), innovation can be observed. According to this theory, the role of education is to preserve the values and dispositions that are important for the political society. And, for the quilombola school, its social role extends itself beyond reproduction, thus producing, in this context of analysis, a new element: the attempt to build a local quilombola culture based on the structure of family groups, the dialogue with community mediators, the listing and resignification of practices and elements associated with local cultures and/or memory of slavery and struggle for territory.

With this appeal to build its quilombola identity, the leaders of the community start to envision the school operating as desired and its participation in a potential school curriculum. It would not be sufficient to create a school and call it quilombola; it has a more active sense for the leaders, that is, it should be a place of construction and consolidation of the quilombola identity of Caveira, both in the production of internal recognition, among the residents of the group itself, and externally, considering the government and society in general.

9 Article 68 in the Act of Transitional Constitutional Dispositions (*Ato das Disposições Constitucionais Transitórias* – ADCT) was responsible for marking the beginning of the public discussions that have been multiplied since then (Jorge and Brandão, 2016).

QUILOMBOLA IDENTITY IN SCHOOL PRACTICES (2017–2018)

Since our arrival in the field, in 2017, we were surprised by the fact that the QSE meanings mentioned by the school were associated with elements that were not exactly local or from the community, such as the community or the history of Caveira struggles. The evoked meanings, based on their symbols, images exposed on the school walls, festivities, literature, and learning material, referred to general elements associated with the interpretative scenario of black movements or the search for African ancestry. Through the ethnographic follow-up in 2017 and 2018, when we were inside the school during the term of principal-1, we were able to mainly distinguish two current meaning patterns in the construction of the curriculum. One was based on the narrative construction of recognition and presentification of African ancestry and all sorts of symbols we could, for lack of a better notion, call “Africanities”, available in the collection and the cultural movements of our country. And the second was based on an agenda of recognition, respect for diversity, and empowerment of the black identity, which we could label as dissemination of anti-racist values.

Despite the efforts from the school management and teachers, the weak “quilombolization” of pedagogical practices was remarkable, and such demand existed, among other individuals, the municipal administration, the black movement of the city, the leaders of the community, the media¹⁰, and researchers, like ourselves, who turned to the school to get to know a case of differentiated education. On the other hand, the school teachers offered possible answers, in their routines, using the pedagogical tools they had, with a practical sense of education, based on reifications associated with the common sense about what QSE would be. Being coherent with her training and in doubt about what the practical design of “quilombola pedagogy” would be, one of the teachers from Primary Education said in an interview: “before being quilombolas, they are children, and I educate children” (August 2019). Such a statement refers to the challenge of conciliating the universal (basic curriculum) and the private (local pieces of knowledge) when we take QSE as an analytical field, that is, the design of a differentiated education.

The image of Africa was often evoked in the school routine, in its festivities, decoration, and images, in didactic and supplementary materials, referring to a common ancestry of black and quilombola children in the community. The image at the main entrance of the school is a painting of “Brafica, the longest distance is prejudice”, with the images of overlapping maps of Brazil and the African continent. On the walls along the corridor, leading to the classrooms, the cafeteria, the library, and restrooms, images refer to what we could call feminine images, also associated with “Africanities”. Also in the hall, we observed walls showing the results of the papers made in the trimesters. In 2017, when we started in the field, the quarterly

10 This information was reported in the field, that it was common for journalists to show up to get to know the quilombola school of the region.

themes of the pedagogical project were: “Black mother, yes”; “Legends”; “Black Awareness”. In the Black Awareness celebration of 2017, all school classes organized a parade for the audience. It began with a female student carrying a Brazilian flag, and then each one of the classes paraded with a flag from an African country and clothes that would transmit the generic idea of Africa. Besides having the flags around their bodies, the students had signs hanging from their necks with the names of the countries of the respective flags. The parties, in general, are powerful moments for presenting these symbols and images about the interpretations of quilombola school education.

If the theme of Africa was present, another correlated topic was that of curriculum practices that valued the black movement, but especially those associated with an anti-racist education, a sort of training addressed to the sensitivities of respect to ethnic and racial diversity. The direct association between the concept of quilombo and the agenda of black movements gave the ethnic and racial diversity topics first-level status in the forms of understanding the debate within the curriculum practices experienced, especially in times of school festivities. As reminded by Lívio Sansone (2003), in the past few years, new papers have been published regarding the “so-called” black identities and culture in Brazil, whose symbols and artifacts associated with “black culture” have become more visible than ever: the colors of *axé*, dreadlocks hairstyles, clothes whose style is inspired in a homogeneous Africa, and *capoeira*. These examples stand out, besides showing an increasing interest in “Africa”, the “Black Atlantic”, and African history.

The curriculum text, seen as a contested space and as the totality of school experiences¹¹ and practices (Silva, 2003), was crossed by the “Africanities” topic, with racial and cultural origin reference. By understanding the limits between the normative ideals of QSE and the school practice of teachers, we can say that this treatment, in some moments, ended up reproducing the prioritization and exoticization of images and texts from African-Brazilian culture. It could be possible to name it, to use an expression from another researcher who also studied the school at the period, “an exotic quilombola curriculum”. However, we must understand that, at that time, it was the only possible form of understanding and managing the QSE for the faculty of the school, and, as we know, policy implementation is conditioned to the mediation and apprehension of agents at the end of the process, who act with certain autonomy and limitations (Lipsky, 1980).

Our analysis does not intend to use strategies to deconstruct narratives, national, ethnic, and/or racial identities, like the ones that have been developed in the theoretical fields of post-structuralism, cultural, and postcolonial studies. Our goal is to establish that curriculum experience and construction in the school face all sorts of influence and possible forms of cultural grammar apprehension, which circulate and are available for understanding and appropriation by the teachers

11 Totality that includes architecture, didactic and supplementary books, oral lessons, official curriculum guidelines, school rituals, breaks, festivities etc.

and other school parties. A positive effect of this process was that of providing visibility, recognition, and positivization of being a male or female black person in that quilombola community and the society.

The fieldwork indicated the school was oriented both to educating towards anti-racist sensitivities and to socializing conciliating values and texts, closer to the notion of “tolerance”, “diversity”, and “assimilation” (Candau, 2011). The themes of Africa and the respect to ethnic and racial diversity led to the production of local consensus, considering the profile of the families assisted by the school (both quilombola and non-quilombola). Principal-1 told us that the references to the African past were delicate and included dances that could be associated with African religions. That was because many families in the school were evangelical. It is a known fact that evangelical and neo Pentecostal religions have grown in Brazil, and in the city of São Pedro da Aldeia this reality is also true. According to reports from servants at the secretariat of education, the number of evangelical individuals grew considerably. In the last Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* — IBGE) census, 2010, it was already the religion of most people (42.9%) in terms of religious affiliation in the city (IBGE, 2012). This global number found in the city might reflect the composition of the families that attend the school. The conciliation behavior of the principal, not just considering the evangelical families, was a product of her own associations between “Africanities” and the stereotyped notions of African religiousness. The quilombola ethnicity is not intrinsically nor directly associated with any African religion, let alone with a temporality of slavery (Jorge, 2016). Let us observe a report from the interview with principal-1, in which she gives examples of resistance from the evangelical families who attend the school, and her attempts of mediation:

We work with 30% of the remaining quilombolas, the rest of the children are not quilombolas. And there is a large group of evangelical students who have a distorted notion of Africanities. Many of them think of it is macumba (witchcraft), indeed. When we organize our parties, we see that few parents bring their children, because they think it is not necessary. The dances we prepare and ask the parents for authorization for their children to dance, for example; many of them do not let their children dance; sometimes, they even come to the party, but the child cannot dance. So, we had to reduce that. I tell them, “I’m also Christian, but we are teaching the children culture”. Then, I tell them about the information we collect about some customs, we explain why food is found in the crossroads. Why did that happen? People put it there so that black people who were running away would pass by and eat it, because at a crossroads, regardless of the path, they would see the food. Music is another example. What is music? It is the expression of their pain, when their fellow men were being beaten up, on the trunk, so the songs express this type of suffering. So we are trying to do this work, especially to make parents understand the meaning of a quilombo, what it is and what it is not, so they can understand it. (November 2017)

In the period observed, the school management was not directly related to the community requests and struggles — that was reported to be used several times

by the community leaders. Principal-1, as mentioned, had a more conciliatory behavior, which, in a way, contributed to consolidating an anti-racist curriculum while her standing tried to assimilate the African religions through the bias of her cultural dimension, socializing pieces of knowledge related to “Africanities”. That is, through the reference of a neutral explanatory category about the culture, she tried to legitimize the presence of elements with an African notion of aesthetics. This “cultural path” reflects how these religions are present in the public space. This occurs more clearly in Bahia, where *candomblé* is part of a “*baianidade*” (the quality of being born in the state of Bahia) that is officially promoted by the government and shows the presence of the religion in the public space (Giumbelli, 2008). However, in this case, principal-1 mentioned prejudiced reactions from some families to the aesthetics related to African religions in the school, despite her conciliatory perspective.

Since every curriculum is a contested space and place of dispute among the different social parties and institutions that interact with the school, principal-1 tried to dialogue or not judge too harshly the contrary interpretations of the school community regarding the quilombola education that they defended. The themes of the quarterly educational projects were a kind of response to such criticism, with a clear positive point of view of what the school management considered to be the quilombola identity of the school. For instance, one of the themes was: “Yes, quilombolas; why not?”.

I was doing some research, and we even thought about bringing elements related to the theme “Yes, quilombolas, why not?”, because some parents still think that [...] One of the parents took his children out of the school, and asked me: “are you addressing the quilombola topic with the students?” We said: Yes! We have to, that is our school’s proposal. If we have that name, we have to work with that. Then, he was not very comfortable: “ok, I really like the school, but we can’t; but they want to come, because of their friends”. And then I said: “be my guest, but we cannot stop talking about the quilombolas, we just can’t”. (Principal-1, September 2018)

In this period, the school curriculum was addressed according to the two aforementioned narratives: pedagogical pieces of knowledge and practices related to the notion of “Africanities”, and the appreciation of blackness from the anti-racist perspective. Principal-1 and the faculty, according to their reports, looked for materials online, in book fairs, and bookstores to address the African-Brazilian theme, and at some point, the quilombola topic in a broader sense. These experiences and attempts demonstrated that the pedagogical work was developed without really having a direct connection with the Caveira community, and that the community itself did not work on this co-education process.

Without knowledge and theoretical training about how to work with the quilombola theme, the school management, along with the faculty, made arbitrary decisions based on conciliatory and assimilationist actions. In this sense, the Caveira community would only be a quilombola reference in the school context, without any special treatment given to its specific social, historical, and cultural context.

On the other hand, principal-1 mentioned that the community did not help the school in this process of building a quilombola curriculum. The paths taken by the school management suggest, therefore, an informed distancing from the dimension of the local quilombola struggle, but also with reflections of an almost abandoned public policy, without support or management from the Municipal Secretariat of Education at the time.

They [Secretariat of Education] do not support us very much. [...] There should be a dedicated coordinating staff addressing quilombola education to guide the teachers who come to work, to guide us, and DIPPIR¹², which works with the secretariat of inclusion. However, they also work with field education etc. Bethe did a great job, but she left. (Principal-1, September 2017)

Due to the lack of support and counseling from the secretariat of education, the solution found by the principal was to focus on ethnic and racial diversity, thus assimilating the quilombola identity to this large spectrum:

You say you do not address quilombola issues very deeply because they are very young children, but does the official curriculum include quilombola matters and themes? (Researcher, October 2017)

There are many festive dates, we work a lot with them. Racial discrimination, then comes May 13, we look for these themes and insert them. Because the curriculum is focused on not letting the identity die, to always talk about it. (Principal-1, October 2017)

The strategy adopted by the school management pleased, somehow, both the families of quilombola and non-quilombola students. In the festivities, which are rich moments of ethnography, we could see entire families in the school. Once, we heard the following from a student's mother, identified as white and non-quilombola: "I don't see any problem with this school, it only teaches us to not have prejudice" (November 2018).

From the point of view of political community leaders, the idealization of Africa and the practice of anti-racist pedagogy found in the curriculum of the school, despite being important, clouded local issues or the specific fight of the Caveira-Botafogo quilombo — "quilombola just for show", as mentioned by one of the leaders linked to the residents' association (November 2018). The quilombola identity was, therefore, assimilated at the school through the bias of valuing "Africanities". The meanings circulating in the community itself regarding the school, as well as the meanings of the school community parties in relation to its first years of functioning, showed some discomfort because of the behavior of the school management. To value the black culture and work with an allegedly anti-racist pedagogy,

12 Board for Public Policies and Promotion of Racial Equality.

without considering the memory and history of the Caveira quilombola community, it detached the school from the ethnic territory in which it was inserted. As put by Arruti (2017), the mere classification or name of a school as being “quilombola” does not necessarily make its curriculum or pedagogical practices different.

IN SEARCH OF A DIFFERENTIATED EDUCATION (2019)

Now we will describe the movements of the new school management and a new administration in the Municipal Secretariat of Education, which marked the beginning of an attempt to restructure the quilombola school curriculum. The new secretary of education of the city, Alessandro Teixeira Knauft, who started in September 2018, had to deal with principal-1 leaving the school in May 2019: she did not get enough votes for a new tenure. So, without an election, he named a new principal, who we will call principal-2. After claiming to be committed to implementing a differentiated education in the quilombola school, he structured a pedagogical staff¹³ from the Secretariat of Education, whose mission was to support principal-2 and the faculty of the school in restructuring a curriculum that was in line with the National Curriculum Guidelines for QSE and the Caveira community. The motivation of this political action was a result of the criticism addressed to the work that had been developed until that moment by the school, which did not contemplate differentiated education to meet the demands of that community.

It is worth mentioning some relevant details that preceded this process, accumulated in our ethnographic analyses. The new secretary of education, by taking the challenge of building a quilombola curriculum for the school, became closer to the school and the DIPPIR (Board for Public Policies and Promotion of Racial Equality), located in the City Hall of São Pedro da Aldeia. DIPPIR, among several actions in the City Hall, is also associated with topics of the black movement in the city, and, in the end of July 2019, it organized the 5th edition of the Dandara Guerreira Award¹⁴. The presence of the secretary and principal-2, as well as his speech highlighting the importance of the event, the black movement, and the quilombola school show that quilombola education was now part of the topics that would be addressed during his administration.

This approximation was also observed by us, considering his presence in *Festa da Roça* (Rural Party), in the quilombola school¹⁵. There, the secretary of education introduced us to the pedagogical staff and said, at that time, that the “school was only named ‘quilombola’, and its specificities would be (until the moment) represented by *doce de leite* (milk cream) and *goiabada* (sweet guava paste)” (August 2019). As an administrator, he emphasized that the school was only located in a

13 Formed by history coordinators, by the coordinator of Internal Evaluation and Curriculum, and the coordinators of the other pedagogical departments of Municipal Secretariat of Education (*Secretaria Municipal de Educação* — SMED).

14 More about the event: <http://pmspa.rj.gov.br/5a-edicao-do-premio-dandara-guerreira-e-sucesso-em-sao-pedro-da-aldeia>.

15 Held on August 10, 2019.

quilombola territory and had its name, but it was no different from other schools in the municipal network.

The fact that the building is in a quilombola community did not turn the school into a quilombola school and that bothered us. So, the first action was to discuss this matter a little deeper. We are working so that the quilombola identity is strong because the worst thing for a city is to have its history erased, without any reference. (August 2019)

We emphasize that the quilombola adjective in the name of the school seems to produce effects and dilemmas, both for the central administration and for the principals who pass by the school. As observed, the current secretary emphasizes that the school could not be quilombola only in its name. Even during the previous administration, in which principal-1 felt abandoned and without the proper pedagogical knowledge and support from the secretariat of education, she tried, somehow, to change the curriculum based on what she considered to be quilombola. She also felt compelled to address the quilombola topics, as she once put it: “we will have to work that, our school has a proposed title, so if we use it, we have to work on it (September 2017)”. Principal-1, when asked about how she ended up there to run the school, told us she had experience in management, and that she was a teacher in the city. She believed that the fact that she was black encouraged the former secretary to hire her, even if she did not have any involvement whatsoever with the quilombola or the black movement of the region; that shows, among other reasons, the direct association between being quilombola and being black. Another example was observed when we met principal-2, a woman who would be hetero-identified as white, with straight, blond hair. In an informal conversation, she justified that she had black relatives, even though we did not ask her anything. It is interesting to analyze that the quilombola school, when classified as such, generates some obligations in the determination of its curriculum, as well as some limits or responses that are associated with the black movement representation policies, for instance, a movement that can legitimately run a quilombola school.

In order to build a differentiated curriculum as an immediate need for response, the secretariat of education published, in the official gazette of the city, on September 27, 2019, a technical commission to collaborate with the construction of the Dona Rosa Geralda da Silveira Quilombola Curriculum Proposal. The commission included not only the members of the pedagogical staff of the secretariat, the school management, and some of the faculty, but also a representative from National Coordination of Articulation of Quilombola Communities (*Coordenação Nacional de Articulação das Comunidades Quilombolas* — CONAQ), an anthropologist from Universidade Federal Fluminense, and a political leader from the quilombola community, Roberto Santos (Robertão). These last three, with the pedagogical staff of the secretariat, had actively participated in a training course about QSE, addressed only to the faculty of the quilombola school. Each one of them was in charge of a dimension in the construction process, under the supervision and management of the pedagogical staff of the secretariat of education.

Our research team was authorized to accompany and participate in the commission activities, as well as the training course. Therefore, we became active observers of this rich process of building a quilombola curriculum proposal that contemplated local specificities. We will outline herein a summary of some of the issues raised in this process, because the experience of the course would require more profound description and analyses.

The practical purpose of the course was to produce debates and planning models about the quilombola matter in Caveira, aiming at building a differentiated curriculum proposal for the school. The process of construction was based on the following themes: “What does it mean to be quilombola?”; “The history of the quilombola movement and the context of the Caveira community”; “Quilombola identity and culture: different knowledges and their dimensions in the pedagogical practice”. The meetings had the following model: first, there was a lecture with the anthropologist, the representative from CONAQ, and a community leader about the theme¹⁶. After the break, in the second part, all participants gathered together to think about effective pedagogical actions to be performed in the school, based on the content of the first part.

The lessons approached in the course came from the anthropological assumption that each quilombola community has its own social and political organization, which changes with time. It should not be classified based on the essentialist notion of cultural “purity” or “originality”. Therefore, the concept of culture brought up by the anthropologist establishes how the group identifies itself regarding its cultural practices and how they externalize that, that is, how they establish the boundaries between themselves and others (Barth, 2000). This is the phenomenon of ethno-genesis, which considers, on the one hand, recognition in the public sphere and civil society of the group image and its local conflicts, and, on the other, its own self-attribution and political movements (Arruti, 2006). This was the perspective that the anthropologist tried to socialize with the faculty of the quilombola school throughout the course. He encouraged teachers to try and live with, attend, and learn about the Caveira quilombo from community members.

The central topic of the meetings was, therefore, to work with the next steps to actually build a quilombola curriculum at and for Dona Rosa Geralda da Silveira Municipal Quilombola School, aiming, at all times, at a common notion of turning it into an “actual quilombola school”. The idea that the school had to be structured around the history and reality of the Caveira quilombo was repeated often, as aforementioned, by the anthropologist and part of the commission involved in the course. This argument went on through all meetings and created dissonance between the faculty of the school, since they were used to working with the quilombola theme in festivities (May 13; November 20 — Black Awareness Day; Rural Parties etc.), and in some school projects to value and recognize the blackness, anti-racist contexts, and cultural expressions of “Africanities”. Therefore, the first question in the course was provocative: “What does it mean to be quilombola”; but is there an exact meaning?

16 There was variation in the presence of the three speakers during the four meetings.

In a certain way, the anthropologist encouraged the school faculty to research the local memory and produce meta-anthropology narratives to become a sort of raw material to be articulated with the pieces of knowledge prescribed in the basic curriculum. Even though the experience of being in touch with the socialized anthropological notions and pieces of knowledge was well accepted by the teachers, we observed some discomfort regarding how to put this new content into practice. The attempts of the faculty to turn the quilombola themes into “education” in the course workshop generated some distress, while the grammar of anti-racism and “Africanities” was strong and continuous, with a bit of essentialism. In one of these meetings, some teachers explained their difficulties to provide the contents required by the basic curriculum and the specific demands of the quilombola school, which contributed to pedagogical proposals based on the perspective of diversity, instead of difference. As commented by Candau (2011), the very concept of diversity shows cultural essentialism, once it implies the idea that diversity is established, that it pre-exists in relation to the social processes that created it, so that the differences can be assimilated. And exactly because of that, the anthropologist insisted on the argument that the basis of the debate should be the quilombola territory and the local memory about the struggle to remain in the land.

From the point of view of the school, for the educational administration of the city, school management, teachers, and other professionals who worked in the school, the demand for the construction of a differentiated curriculum based on the (re)production of what could be understood as the “quilombola culture” of Caveira is transformed into extra work in their professional roles. It is as if the school, whose function was to educate for citizenship, for a republican life, for the job market, also needed to manage the local identity and develop a community spirit, which is still, or more than ever, locally fragile, according to the evaluation of the very political leaders of the community. In the words of Maria, a quilombola teacher who has worked in the school since 2015: “We wanted to visit Campinho da Independência, to get to know it [...] we are afraid that everything will be lost because there are so many outsiders, and nothing has been rescued” (November 2017). This line indicates how latent is the feeling of not consolidating a positively built identity, one that is rekindled and reframed in the community, both regarding the history of permanence and fight for the territory, and the alleged hope for the school to take agency in this process of identity affirmation.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The dilemmas, hesitation, and tension found in this case are not apparently limited to the school experience. It is worth mentioning there is no consensus in quilombola education field studies about the concept of differentiated education for these groups. The notion of differentiated education can be represented by isolated initiatives, in which there are converging relationships between the political project of the community and school education (Oliveira, 2006; Silva, 2012; Maroun, 2016).

There are also cases of communities in which such projects are inexistent or under construction. In Caveira, the expected differentiated education seems to be about the very process of building and reaffirming a quilombola identity which is not yet a consolidated piece of data in the community itself, being open to all possible forms of agency that can contribute to this course.

When describing and analyzing the social construction of the quilombola school in the Caveira community, there are specific issues of this empirical field that could contribute to a research agenda about QSE.

The first question that can be brought to the discussion is how to build differentiated education in practice if, generally, the institutions and their respective secretariats of education do not pay differentiated attention to the faculty and the managers of these schools, considering the National Curriculum Guidelines for Quilombola School Education (Brasil, 2012): teachers and managers should preferably be from the communities assisted by the institutions. It is possible to say that these professionals, in the case of QSE, would play a bigger role than working with the universal curriculum only. Based on that normative ideal, they should be political and pedagogical mediators/articulators, working as translators of the “quilombola grammar” in the school curriculum. In the case studied here, despite the initiative of the course about QSE in 2019, the implementation of differentiated education in practice still depends on individual and good gestures, and on the sensitization of the faculty. The teachers must build their identity in articulation with the community in which the school is inserted. However, no public policies offer proper wages, training, and materials so that teachers from quilombola schools can be especially dedicated to the social construction of these schools.

The second topic that is worthy of attention is the fact that quilombola schools do not work with quilombola students only. The conciliatory behavior of managers and teachers that end up being necessary due to the alleged quilombola / non-quilombola competition contributes to “silencing these differences”, taking the school practices and pieces of knowledge to the field of ethnic and racial diversity. However, in Caveira, our field experience shows that both local identity topics and those that address structural racism are essential to form and educate the new generations of quilombola and non-quilombola children. If the school alone cannot overcome racism, and the several forms of racial, territory, and class segregation, it can at least create new sensitivities that yield subjectivities and support a world that is less unfair and unequal.

It is imperative to recognize the importance of the quilombola identity-building experiences inserted into the universe of social recognition policies. The topic of “recognition policies” is wide and surpasses national experiences (Honneth, 2009). To sum up, claims for identity recognition absolutely do not exclude the demand for social and economic equality, but instead, are aligned with them in a complex manner (Fraser, 2007). Therefore, we do not aim at questioning the legitimacy of the fights for identity recognition of today’s social groups, but to point to dilemmas that the social field is urged to solve in the educational proposals supported by recognition policies.

The third question is about what QSE would be, that is, a differentiated type of education for each quilombola community in the Brazilian universe. Considering that quilombola communities are very diverse, and that each one of them has its own process of identity construction and reaffirmation, what is interesting and desirable for one is not necessarily true for the other. However, the emergence of the quilombola matter and the debates about quilombola education and its boundaries are filled with questions. It is important to remember that some of the difficulties are associated with the fact that the concepts with which we operate in these studies — quilombola communities and quilombola school education, to mention a few — bring both empirical and normative references. The empirical reference understands quilombola education as it is materialized in each social context — what we tried to produce in this article. The normative one is the quilombola education in which rules and regulations show the theme as a result of feelings, expectations, and collective values. These dimensions, as well as field disputes, are often intertwined in the literature that approaches this theme (Miranda, 2018).

In fourth place, as warned by Brandão and Jorge (2018), Brazil has been living with strong conservative ideas since 2016. These ideas are intended to delegitimize the legal advances obtained in the form of rights, after the constitution of 1988, in political relations in general and government practices, especially. This scenario has generated consequences for black communities that organize themselves politically around a quilombola identity, especially concerning land ownership that is an issued part of such struggles. The same happens with indigenous communities. Indigenous people are seen as obstacles to predatory logging, mining, and agribusiness because of other mechanisms and legal uses of the land. The investigation of today's differentiated education, as well as the resistance of social players who advocate for public recognition policies, should be part of the analysis of such a movement that is contrary to ethnic rights.

Also, it is important to raise awareness about the analytical limitations of a case study. The experiences of building quilombola school education, in Caveira quilombo, in São Pedro da Aldeia, present us with idiosyncratic elements; therefore, they cannot be extrapolated for the set of quilombola school education experiences in the rest of the country. There are specific characteristics to this school experience that makes it different — but also similar — to other numberless quilombola school education experiences, such as the fact that this quilombola community is still not titled; the level of local development regarding the participation of social movements; the political orientation of the municipal government, among others. We then believe, as stated by Bordieu (2004), that it is interesting to systematically question this case in particular, constituted as “a particular case of the possible”, to take the general or invariable properties from it. In this sense, the movement of Caveira community and its quilombola school can be used as a lesson about differentiated education in an unfinished process, involved in progress and setbacks, challenges to the implementation of QSE in Brazil.

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