


ETHNIC–RACIAL RELATIONS IN EDUCATION: CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES AND PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

Ethnic–racial relations in Brazilian education constitute a privileged space for addressing historical inequalities and promoting social equity. Schools, as environments for comprehensive development and mediation of social interactions, reflect structural tensions such as racism, yet also possess the potential to value cultural diversity, recognize historically marginalized knowledge, and foster inclusive practices. In

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this context, this study aims to analyze contemporary challenges and pedagogical perspectives regarding ethnic–racial relations in education, considering legal frameworks, institutional practices, and theoretical foundations that guide the implementation of antiracist educational policies. This research adopts a qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive approach, conducted through bibliographic and documental review between November and December 2025, using databases such as SciELO, CAPES, CLACSO, and UNESCO, in addition to educational legislation. The results indicate that, despite a consistent normative framework, the implementation of ethnic–racial education faces obstacles related to structural racism, the predominance of Eurocentric curricula, insufficient teacher training, and institutional weaknesses. Therefore, it is evident that ethnic–racial education should be understood as a constitutive dimension of the pedagogical project, integrating legislation, theory, and educational practices to promote diversity, strengthen equity, and transform social relations within the school context.

Keywords: Antiracist Education; Cultural Diversity; Educational Policies; Inclusion; Teacher Training.



INTRODUCTION

Ethnic–racial relations in the educational field have intensified in recent decades, driven by the recognition of inequalities historically produced in Brazilian society and of their unfoldings in schooling processes. The school—understood as a space for human formation, knowledge production, and the construction of meaning—occupies a strategic position in mediating social relations, being able both to perpetuate exclusionary practices and to foster educational experiences guided by the recognition of diversity and the promotion of racial equity (Freire, 2001). In this context, education presents itself as a privileged field for confronting racial hierarchies and for consolidating pedagogical practices committed to social justice.

At the normative level, the Brazilian legal framework establishes relevant foundations for promoting racial equality in the educational context. The 1988 Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil guarantees education as a fundamental social right and reaffirms the principle of equality, guiding public policies aimed at overcoming social and racial inequalities (Brasil, 1988). Complementarily, the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law defines education as a broad formative process aimed at the full development of the learner (Brasil, 1996). The mandatory inclusion of the theme of Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous History and Culture in school curricula, instituted by Law No. 11,645/2008, represents a significant advance in recognizing ethnic–racial diversity; however, its pedagogical implementation still reveals challenges related to teacher training, curricular organization, and institutional practices (Brasil, 2008).

The problem that guides this study arises from the persistence of racial inequalities within school institutions, even in the face of legal advances and specific guidelines directed at education on ethnic–racial relations. Racism, understood as a structural phenomenon, operates systemically, traversing institutions, public policies, and social practices, which contributes to the reproduction of educational and symbolic inequalities in everyday school life (Almeida, 2019). This dynamic directly affects the school experiences of Black students, interfering with their educational trajectories and with processes of social recognition.

In the pedagogical sphere, building an education committed to ethnic–racial relations requires confronting naturalized discriminatory practices and the historical silences present in school curricula. Research indicates that racism manifests itself from the earliest stages of schooling, often in covert ways, influencing processes of socialization, learning, and the constitution of subjects' identities (Cavalleiro, 2003).

This study engages with approaches that understand education as a transformative social practice. The Freirean conception of education, grounded in dialogue, critical consciousness, and the emancipation of subjects, offers consistent foundations for constructing a pedagogy committed to overcoming



oppression (Freire, 2005). Convergently, contributions by Gomes (2017) highlight the role of the Black Movement as an educating agent and producer of knowledge that challenges hegemonic curricula, while Munanga (2001) emphasizes the need to value African and Afro-Brazilian matrices as a central element of antiracist education.

Given this context, the general objective of this study is to analyze the contemporary challenges and pedagogical perspectives of ethnic–racial relations in education, considering normative advances, theoretical contributions, and practices developed within the school environment. Specifically, it seeks to examine the role of educational legislation in promoting education on ethnic–racial relations; to identify obstacles and potentialities of pedagogical practices aimed at confronting racism in everyday school life; and to discuss theoretical foundations that support the construction of an education committed to racial equity, the recognition of diversity, and the transformation of social relations.

METHODOLOGY

The study was developed through a bibliographic and documentary review, with a qualitative approach and an exploratory–descriptive nature, with the objective of analyzing the contemporary challenges and pedagogical perspectives of ethnic–racial relations in the educational field. This methodological design enables the collection, systematization, and critical interpretation of academic productions and normative documents, favoring an expanded understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, in line with methodological guidelines proposed by Gil (2019).

SEARCH PROCEDURES

The searches were guided by the following question: “In what ways do academic production and normative documents address the challenges and pedagogical perspectives of ethnic–racial relations in education?” References were retrieved between November and December 2025 in the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), the CAPES Periodicals Portal, the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO), and the UNESCO Digital Library, in addition to institutional repositories and the Legislation Portal of the Presidency of the Republic, especially with regard to documents produced by the Ministry of Education.

Descriptors in Portuguese were used, applied both individually and in combination through the Boolean operators AND and OR, including the terms (relações étnico-raciais), (educação), (educação antirracista), (currículo), (formação docente), and (racismo estrutural).



Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Academic productions and official documents that presented a direct relation to the field of ethnic–racial relations in education were included, encompassing scientific articles, books, book chapters, and educational legislation. Inclusion criteria considered thematic pertinence, theoretical relevance, and alignment with the study’s objectives.

No temporal cut-off was established for source selection, since the topic under investigation requires dialogue between classic works and contemporary contributions, both fundamental to the historical, political, and pedagogical understanding of ethnic–racial relations in the educational context. Excluded materials comprised duplicates, items without linkage to the educational field, and texts that addressed the topic superficially or without articulation to the adopted theoretical framework.

SELECTION AND SAMPLE OF RESULTS

The initial search identified 21 productions. After reading the titles and abstracts, it was verified that all adhered to the research objective, with no duplicates identified. Subsequently, a full reading of the material was conducted, confirming its theoretical and thematic relevance. Thus, the selected productions constitute the study sample and were analyzed qualitatively.

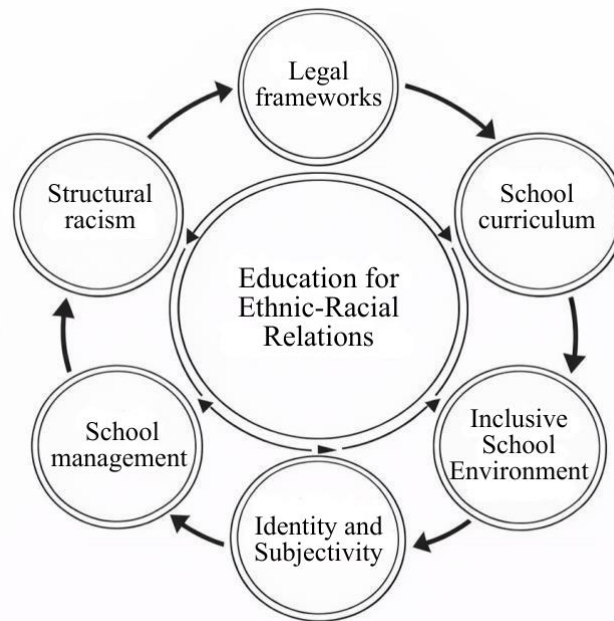
ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

Analysis of the selected material was conducted through content analysis, as proposed by Bardin (2016). The process began with floating reading, enabling familiarity with the corpus and the identification of recurring ideas related to ethnic–racial relations in education. Next, the material was explored by identifying units of meaning and organizing thematic axes, considering the recurrence, relevance, and coherence of the contents with the study’s objectives. Finally, an interpretive treatment of the results was carried out, articulating the analytical axes with the adopted theoretical framework, which enabled the construction of inferences and critical reflections on the challenges and pedagogical perspectives of ethnic–racial relations in the educational context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of Education on Ethnic–Racial Relations within the school context constitutes a systemic and interdependent process, as illustrated in Diagram 1. The results indicate that this process is sustained by multiple structuring axes that articulate continuously, directly influencing pedagogical practices and the institutional organization of schools.

Diagram 1 – Structuring axes of Education on Ethnic–Racial Relations in the school context.



Source: Authors (2025).

LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS OF EDUCATION ON ETHNIC–RACIAL RELATIONS

Analysis of the normative corpus shows that education on ethnic–racial relations in Brazil is grounded in constitutional principles that ensure both the social right to education and equality as a structuring value of the democratic rule of law (Brasil, 1988). Within educational legislation, there is explicit attribution to the school of a social function that goes beyond the transmission of content, orienting toward the integral formation of subjects and the confrontation of historically produced inequalities (Brasil, 1996).

The establishment of mandatory teaching of Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous History and Culture in school curricula represents a relevant normative milestone in recognizing ethnic–racial diversity (Brasil, 2008). However, documents produced by the Ministry of Education indicate that the effectiveness of this legislation depends on articulation among curricular proposals, teacher-training policies, and school management practices (Brasil, 2006). The National Plan for Implementing the Curricular Guidelines reinforces the understanding that consolidating this theme requires continuous, systemic, and institutionalized actions within educational networks (Brasil, 2009), as shown in Table 1.



Table 1 – Main legal milestones of education on ethnic–racial relations in Brazil

Legal document	Year	Central contribution
Federal Constitution	1988	Guarantee of the right to education and the principle of equality
Law No. 9,394 (LDB)	1996	Social function of the school and integral formation
Law No. 11,645	2008	Mandatory teaching of Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous History and Culture
National Curricular Guidelines	2006	Pedagogical guidance for education on ethnic–racial relations
National Implementation Plan	2009	Structuring of continuous educational policies

Source: Authors (2025).

STRUCTURAL RACISM AND EVERYDAY SCHOOL LIFE

The analyzed studies converge in indicating that racism continues to operate as a structuring element of social relations, manifesting persistently in the school context (Almeida, 2019). This condition has a direct impact on institutional dynamics, influencing pedagogical practices, everyday interactions, and evaluation processes, which contributes to the reproduction of educational inequalities.

Regarding the initial stages of schooling, investigations show that racism tends to express itself subtly and in a naturalized manner through attitudes, discourses, and silences that permeate everyday school life (Cavalleiro, 2003). Such manifestations compromise the construction of positive school experiences for Black children and reinforce mechanisms of symbolic exclusion that affect educational trajectories from childhood (Cavalleiro, 2004), as presented in Table 2.



Table 2 – Main manifestations of racism in the school context

Dimension	Identified examples
Pedagogical practices	Eurocentric content and lack of representativeness
Interpersonal relations	Microaggressions and stigmatization
School assessment	Differentiated performance expectations
Institutional organization	Silencing of the racial theme

Source: Authors (2025).

CURRICULUM, COLONIALITY, AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

The results indicate that the school curriculum constitutes a central space of symbolic dispute in the field of ethnic–racial relations (see Table 3). The persistence of Eurocentric approaches in content and historical narratives contributes to the invisibilization of African and Afro-Brazilian knowledge, limiting the recognition of cultural diversity in the educational environment (Quijano, 2005).

Productions focused on antiracist education highlight that a critical review of curricula is an indispensable condition for valuing African and Afro-Brazilian matrices as legitimate components of school knowledge (Munanga, 2001). From this perspective, the ethnic–racial theme should not be treated episodically, but integrated in a transversal and structuring manner into the pedagogical projects of educational institutions (Gomes, 2005).

Table 3 – Curricular challenges in education on ethnic–racial relations

Curricular aspect	Observed challenges
Content	Predominance of Eurocentric narratives
Pedagogical approach	Ad hoc treatment of the racial theme
Curricular integration	Low transversality of the theme
Didactic materials	Scarcity of contextualized resources
Pedagogical project	Lack of clear institutional guidelines

Source: Authors (2025).

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TEACHER TRAINING AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

The analyzed productions show that teacher training is one of the main challenges for implementing education on ethnic–racial relations, as demonstrated in Table 4. The incipient presence of the racial theme in initial teacher education programs compromises teachers’ ability to critically handle situations of discrimination and prejudice in everyday school life (Silva, 2007).

More recent studies point out that continuing education plays a strategic role in building antiracist pedagogical practices, as it fosters reflective processes regarding curriculum, identity, and racial inequalities (Silva, 2018). Pedagogical conceptions grounded in dialogue and the emancipation of subjects reinforce the necessity of an educational practice committed to social transformation and to confronting oppression (Freire, 2001). This perspective assigns educators an indispensable ethical and political engagement to promote equity in the school environment (Freire, 2005).

Contemporary approaches further emphasize that antiracist pedagogical practices must recognize the experiences of subjects and promote educational environments based on listening, respect for differences, and the valorization of identities (hooks, 2017). In this sense, teaching practice emerges as a central element for consolidating an education committed to racial justice (Pineiro, 2023).

Table 4 – Challenges in teacher training for antiracist education

Dimension	Main obstacles
Initial training	Limited inclusion of the racial theme
Continuing education	Fragmented and discontinuous actions
Teaching practice	Insecurity in the face of situations of racism
Critical reflection	Lack of systematic formative spaces
Institutional commitment	Weak support from education networks

Source: Authors (2025).

IDENTITY, SUBJECTIVITY, AND EXPERIENCES OF RACIALIZATION

The results show that ethnic–racial relations in the educational context also express themselves in subjective dimensions related to identity construction processes and experiences of racialization (Table 5). Classic studies indicate that racism produces profound impacts on the psychic constitution of Black subjects, influencing perceptions of belonging, self-esteem, and social recognition (Fanon, 2008).

Education and Knowledge: Past, Present and Future



Contemporary analyses point out that everyday racism manifests through symbolic practices that directly affect Black students' school experiences, reinforcing feelings of devaluation and exclusion (Kilomba, 2019). These dynamics underscore the importance of pedagogical practices that recognize subjects' lived experiences and promote inclusive and welcoming school environments (Silva, 2018). International documents reinforce the role of education as a strategic space for promoting social justice and democratic coexistence in contexts marked by diversity (UNESCO, 2022).

Table 5 – Subjective and institutional dimensions of education on ethnic–racial relations

Dimension	Educational implications
Identity	Impacts on self-esteem and belonging
Subjectivity	Experiences of racialization in everyday school life
School management	Strategic role in promoting equity
Institutional climate	Construction of inclusive environments
Collective participation	Strengthening of democratic management

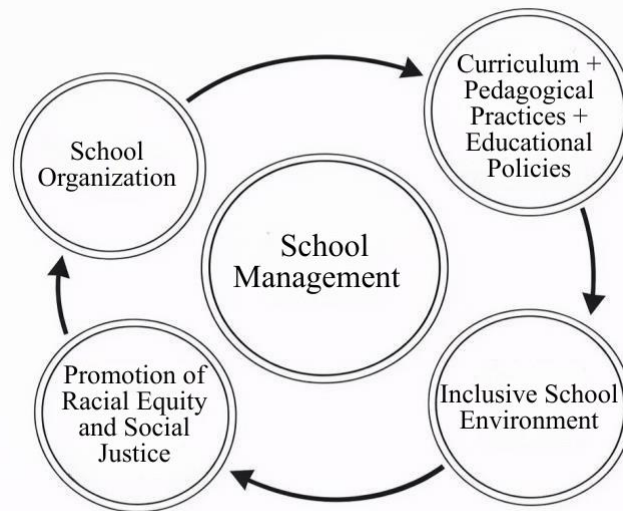
Source: Authors (2025).

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL ORGANIZATION

The analyzed productions indicate that implementing education on ethnic–racial relations is intrinsically related to schools' institutional organization, as shown in Diagram 2. School management plays a central role in articulating curriculum, pedagogical practices, and educational policies, directly influencing the construction of more inclusive school environments (Libâneo, 2007).

Models of democratic management are considered fundamental for promoting collective participation, institutional dialogue, and commitment to racial equity, contributing to the consolidation of educational practices aligned with the principles of inclusion and social justice (Vasconcellos, 2008).

Diagram 2 – School Management and Education on Ethnic–Racial Relations



Source: Authors (2025).

CONCLUSION

Education, as a social and political practice, occupies a strategic position in promoting equity and recognizing ethnic–racial diversity, while simultaneously reflecting the tensions and inequalities historically constituted in Brazilian society. In this sense, the school proves to be a privileged space for confronting racism and for building social relations oriented toward justice and inclusion.

Accordingly, this study aimed to analyze the contemporary challenges and pedagogical perspectives of ethnic–racial relations in education, articulating legal frameworks, academic productions, and relevant theoretical contributions. The bibliographic and documentary review showed that, although Brazil has a consistent normative framework, the implementation of education on ethnic–racial relations in everyday school life still appears uneven, conditioned by institutional, curricular, and formative limitations.

The results indicated that structural racism remains a structuring element of school practices, manifesting in curricula, pedagogical relations, and socialization processes. It was observed that the persistence of Eurocentric frameworks contributes to the invisibilization of Afro-Brazilian and African knowledge, while weaknesses in teacher training hinder the consolidation of systematic pedagogical practices aimed at confronting racial inequalities.

As a contribution, this study reaffirms the need to understand education on ethnic–racial relations as a constitutive dimension of the pedagogical project of educational institutions. By integrating legislation, theoretical foundations, and educational analyses, the research expands understanding of the obstacles and possibilities for building educational practices committed to racial equity, the recognition of diversity, and the transformation of social relations.



Finally, it is suggested that future research deepen the analysis of pedagogical experiences and institutional policies aimed at antiracist education, especially regarding teacher training and school management, so as to support more consistent educational actions aligned with the demands of democratic and inclusive education.



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