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TEACHING AND LEARNING POPULAR DANCES:

Historical, curricular, and methodo-
logical perspectives.

*ENSINO E APRENDÊNCIAS DAS DANÇAS POPULRES:
Perspectivas históricas, curriculares e metodológicas*

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ABSTRACT


The study focuses on making a historical review of the epistemological conceptions present in teaching, from basic education curricula to higher education. The hypothesis considered is that of the continuous presence of Eurocentric content that has permeated education in the country since previous centuries, placing the knowledge of the people, of our land, as supporting or even silenced in the curricula. The theoretical contribution is based on the educational propositions of Freire (2014), on the considerations about the curriculum systematized by Silva (2019) and Castro-Gomez (2007) and historically resumed by Carvalho (2019). The problematizations are anchored in the reflections of Kilomba (2019) and dialogue with the practical ways of teaching popular dance, developed by Ligiéro (2011), among other authors that strengthen the discourse shared here. As a result, we bring a possibility of theoretical-practical work to teaching popular dances, repeating Ligiéro's triad and adding contextualization as another vertex to be inserted as a methodological principle.

KEYWORDS Curriculum; Popular Dances; Teaching.

RESUMO

O estudo se concentra em fazer uma retomada histórica sobre as concepções epistemológicas presentes no ensino, desde os currículos da educação básica ao ensino superior. A vertente considerada é a da presença contínua de conteúdos eurocêntricos que vem permeando o ensino no país desde os séculos anteriores, colocando os saberes do povo, da nossa terra, como coadjuvantes ou mesmo silenciados nos currículos. O aporte teórico está fundamentado nas proposições educacionais de Freire (2014), nas considerações sobre o currículo sistematizadas por Silva (2019) e Castro-Gomez (2007) e retomadas historicamente por Carvalho (2019). As problematizações se ancoram nas reflexões de Kilomba (2019) e dialogam com as vias práticas para o ensino da dança popular, desenvolvidas por Ligiéro (2011), entre outros autores que fortalecem o discurso aqui compartilhado. Como resultado, trazemos uma possibilidade de trabalho teórico-prático para o ensino das danças populares repetindo a tríade de Ligiéro e adicionando a 'contextualização' como mais uma vértice a ser inserida como princípio metodológico.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Currículo; Danças Populares; Ensino.



TEACHING AND LEARNING POPULAR DANCES: historical, curricular and methodological perspectives.

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Introduction

For colonialist domination to take place, it undertakes to invade the Culture of the dominated, covering up its cultural identity. Therefore, one of the first things the colonizer seeks is to impose his language. Language is such a strong and concrete knowledge for human beings that, in addition to sound emission, they act in our corporeity. By imprinting his language on the colonized group, the colonizer also infers a body mark to the group that receives it.

We can identify this language-body by observing people from different locations in their daily oratory. Exaggeration, introspection, looking, hands shaking together the expression, among other bodily vocabularies, are printed along with the speech.

By forcibly incorporating their language, the colonizer also hurts the body as a place for the cultural expression of the human person. In an almost entirely oral culture like the indigenous one, we can assess the rupture that took place in the language and, consequently, in the body of these peoples in the period of maritime expansion. Over the years, this break has become practically irreversible. Paulo Freire (2014) makes the following observation:

It is interesting to observe the position of the dominator, be it by a person, be it a group, be it a class, be it a mass, or, depending, be it a nation before the dominated. BR One of the fundamental characteristics of the process of colonialist or class domination, sex, all mixed up, is the dominator's need to invade the dominated culturally. (FREIRE, 2014, p.28)

This cultural invasion of indigenous-Brazilian Culture, when it comes to the contact imposed by the Portuguese, was so aggressive that even today, we find Brazilians capable of defending the reduction of the lands of our original peoples, disregarding the quality of life of these communities and their perpetuation. Centuries later, we continue to place ourselves in the colonizer's vision. We will be educated to kill ourselves, literally. The Brazilian indigenous peoples are seen in an exotic way, separated from our nature and contemporaneity. However, similar reports can be associated with groups of black, disabled, fat, LGBTQIA+, and/or quilombola peo-

ple. However, these differences are discursively produced and politically institutionalized. They are associated with power relations, and our reflections must problematize these power relations.

This relationship is built mainly during our school years, starting with primary education. We will be used to believing that before the Portuguese landed in Brazil, as if we had no past. Indigenous people appear with an air of savagery in the story told in the light of the white colonizer and reproduced in textbooks.

Tomaz Tadeu da Silva (2019) finds this reproduction of the contents as perpetrators of gender, race, and ethnic stereotypes. According to their financial, behavioral, and ethnic-racial patterns, teachers internalize them by casting expectations of success or failure on the group of students themselves.

We have failed and will continue to fall with the next generations. How to sow hope in the face of these findings? For this historical reparation, "[...] We need to be aware of the political nature of education." (FREIRE, 2014, p. 40). The educator may understand himself as a politician working in favor of whom he is teaching. We understand that reproducing white history without a critical-reflexive sense reinforces eurocentric stereotypes as exclusive epistememes of legitimate knowledge.

Worked for several years in public schools and projects for children and young people on the outskirts of the city where I live, Natal – Rio Grande do Norte; finding students who drop out of school is not difficult. For several years I wondered what happened on this journey. The years of experience, research, and especially the conversation with these subjects began to indicate the existing distance in the curricula that these students had, and have access to, with their social contexts. We continue dialoguing with Tadeu Silva (2019) when elucidating that:

The curricular text, broadly understood here – the didactic and paradidactic book, the oral lessons, the official curricular guidelines, the school rituals, and the festive and commemorative dates – is filled with national, ethnic, and racial narratives. Generally, these narratives celebrate national origin myths, confirm dominant identities' privilege, and treat dominated identities as exotic or folkloric. Regarding racial representation, the curriculum text preserves the

marks of the colonial heritage. The curriculum is undoubtedly, among other things, a racial text. The issue of race and ethnicity is not simply a "cross-cutting issue": it is a central issue of knowledge, power, and identity. (SILVA, 2019, p. 101-102).

We treat the central as peripheral in education. As a result, the primary school remains cracked with a gap that seems incurable to us: having in our curriculum knowledge dissociated from the situation of these students and reinforcers of prejudices. We need to promote the right of these students to be subjects of rights because "[...] nobody gets there, starting from there, but from a certain here. This means, ultimately, that the educator can't ignore, underestimate or deny the "knowledge gained from experience" with which students arrive at school" (FREIRE, 2018, p. 82).

This "right here" by the author denounces the need to approach and validate the knowledge of the students' experience as knowledge; that he can recognize the narratives as subjects belonging to them, as one of their agents; however, the school has consistently reproduced the discourse of the dominant classes.

The objective of traditional theories advocates acceptance, adjustment, and adaptation in an unquestionable way, that is, the status quo. They offer a subordinate and obedient character formation for the poorest social stratum, while people from the ruling classes are prepared for leadership and control. Students from these classes end up falling by the wayside without even reaching the levels where the habits of the dominant types are learned. The mechanisms are geared precisely to make that happen. (SILVA, 2019).

In addition to the productivist mirror that is drawn in the curriculum, with different approaches to the operating class, there are reinforcers of a dominant culture that exudes prestige and social values. Subordinates, seeing the restricted future that awaits them in the fields of work, feel excluded from what is considered acceptable 'talk'.

Critical theories begin to distrust and confront this model, to question the status quo and work towards transformation and positioning in the face of reproductive approaches, impoverished in reflection. This is the path we need to walk.

It is urgent that the classes economically excluded from the narratives, primarily black people, be able to overcome the barrier of education from man-object to man-subject. These people must recognize themselves in discussions as creators of Culture, whether children, young people, or adults (FREIRE, 2017). The lines, the stories, and the images need to reveal their own stories as identification triggers and, consequently, generate greater interest.

If they talk to me in Chinese, I cannot maintain a relationship with the dialogue because it is incomprehensible in my context; distant. I will not reach an understanding and at some point, what was supposed to be a dialogue will turn into a monologue on the part of the one who produces the speech; my attention, my look, my body, and my presence will be diluted in front of the unknown. As an analogy, this distancing happens, with students from the less affluent layers of society, in the face of the Brazilian school curricula.

Faced with these considerations, we educators need to develop new attitudes toward teaching and learning. We must look at students, see them, and listen to them. These distances are mediated in primary education and also reverberate in higher education. In the direction of Grada Kilomba's (2019) proposition, we ask ourselves: What knowledge circulates in academic agendas? What is validated? She reinforces her criticism of the fact that:

The academic center is not a neutral place. It is a white space where the privilege of speech has been denied to black people. Historically, this is a space where we have been voiceless and white academics have developed theoretical discourses that formally constructed us as the inferior "Others," placing African women in absolute subordination to the white subject. (KILOMBA, 2019, p. 50)

It has happened since the creation of Brazilian higher institutions, instituted with a considerable delay compared to other South American countries where colonization was Spanish. Some examples include Lima, Quito, Mexico City, Córdoba, and Bogotá. "In addition, the Hispanic colonies relied on the press, which allowed the publication of books in almost all Latin American countries since the 18th century" (CARVALHO, 2019, p. 83), except Brazil. This historic resumption reinforces the country with a short written tradition in which the press was installed only in 1808, under the king's control.

Higher schools were introduced in the 19th century, and universities only started to be built in the second half of the same century, in a late and diminished format, formatted from parameters of European universities, only in a simplified version.

During the 19th century, there was a mobilization in the opposite direction to the creation of Brazilian universities. Although discussions started in the 1823 Constituent Assembly, which intended to open two universities, one in Rio de Janeiro and the other in Olinda - Pernambuco, the project was not enacted. With these currents, we arrived in the 19th century as one of the few independent countries without a university. (CARVALHO, 2019).

This lack of awareness triggered the delay of critical and political knowledge of the population since the academic environment supports this type of discussion. It is possible coming across empty opinions, including that of politicians who manage the nation, as a parameter of truths in confrontation, even with science and its density. It is used as a political game in search of their benefit by the rulers because our academic tradition is very recent, and the poorest population has recently had access to these more critical readings and discussions. We have a significant delay in scientific thinking on the part of the majority of people and its reason lies, in part, in this context. However, we will not go into that discussion in this article.

For Carvalho (2019), in addition to all this delay in creation, Brazilian universities were founded based on the principles of the definitive truths of Eurocentric narratives and their purist, racist and xenophobic model, resulting from imperialism, colonialism, and Atlantic slavery of previous centuries. For example, universities such as UFRJ and USP were founded by French missions, including a white elite as masters, with a discourse not unlike their whitened origins.

We bond with the Europeans and place ourselves as their subjects: in the middle of the 20th century, they taught us how a modern university should work, and we faithfully repeated the indicated way. It established a subordinate and dependent foundation pattern (CARVALHO, 2019, p. 85).

The knowledge of the land, the influences of our people, and the knowledge that permeates it were totally disregarded. We remain subaltern. Academic structures are controlled by Eurocentric knowledge that declares itself to be universal when we know very well that this is not the case. There is no "curriculum fairness" [a term coined by Robert Connell. BR There is a constant cycle in these spaces of unequal relations of race, gender, and economic power that occurs in the circulation of people as well as in the discourses produced.

We need to implement in Brazilian universities decolonization of the Eurocentric order of knowledge. One of the steps that have been taken recently is the discussion of racism itself as a problem of significant social bloodletting, showing disrespect to those who go through this situation in the most diverse spaces, including the academic one.

Another movement in the direction of thinking more seriously about liberating universities from homogeneous, racist, and Eurocentric discourses is to assert the responsible occupation of vacancies designated for ethnic-racial quotas, subsidized by Federal Law No. 12,711, of 2012.

We saw for a long time that Brazilian universities were occupied almost exclusively by privileged students in various instances, coming from wealthy classes and therefore with greater possibilities of achieving this training. Educated throughout their lives to occupy these places in academia and society. On the other hand, the marginalized tried to compete in unequal and inconsistent conditions with their competitors, prepared in other conditions.

Quota policies signal a first reparation movement and broaden the debate on racism within these instances, causing instability and a new logical order of promoting decolonial thinking in practice. This sphere includes other groups such as people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+, quilombolas, and indigenous people.

Talking about a decolonial education is speaking from a theoretical perspective that refers to the possibilities of critical thinking from those subaltern by capitalist modernity. In the wake of this perspective, the attempt is to build a theoretical project aimed at critical and transdisciplinary thinking, also characterized as a force

and political attitude to oppose the reference trends of Eurocentric perspectives of construction of historical and social knowledge (OLIVEIRA 2016, p. 35)

Another urgent need to gain visibility in institutions is to rethink curricula with the bias of colonizers, racists, and sexists that is chronically repeated in university spaces. In addition to access, it is necessary to implement actions that generate identification in ethnic-racial groups when entering academic centers. Finally, we are talking about the need for decolonized curricula, which is only possible "[...] through the decolonization of institutions that produce or manage knowledge." (CASTRO-GÓMEZ, 2007, p. 88).

University procedures and narratives must assume a posture focused on their students and the values that arrive with them, assimilated to the implication of living. In addition to affirmative actions, we need to implement teaching that confronts the racism that trains a new generation of black, white, disabled, LGBTQIA+, and quilombola university students who visualize the diversity of diverse knowledge, building a multi-epistemic university (CARVALHO, 2019).

Grada Kilomba's denunciation echoes and requires a new order from whites: "It is not that we have not spoken. The fact is that our voices, thanks to a racist system, have been systematically disqualified, considered invalid knowledge" (KILOMBA, 2019, p. 51). That is, we need to listen and rethink these structures together.

Concerning graduates of degree courses, these are the professionals currently in training who, formed from other approaches, will be able to remove secular stones in structures, working from primary education.

We are talking about a new generation of workers who will occupy public positions, politicians, traders, and health professionals who will be in dialogue with a closer approach to different Brazilian contexts, more willing to consider plural knowledge.

For many black, LGBTQIA+, disabled, indigenous, and quilombola people, in addition to access, they must also have opportunities to become masters in academic spaces, not limited to the place of apprentices. Moving the base is a broad project that covers the structure of the courses, the disciplines offered and their menus, the

authors to be read, the hiring of professors, and the way of evaluating; that is, it is a complex gear that is still moving forward. Short steps in the Brazilian system.

One more point in this reflection is the recognition of masters of popular Culture in their notorious knowledge. It marks a principle of pluri-epistemic valuation, placing these makers and knowers soaked in Culture as knowledgeable of specific aspects. By promoting them as masters of knowledge, the academic public begins to project looks of interest and admiration, just like their master teachers. Carvalho (2007) advances this thought by saying that

[...] the validation of science is more prosperous with Afro-Brazilian and indigenous masters [...]. Hence the fertility of the inter-epistemic dialogue generated in the classes between masters, students, and partner professors. It is about making different principles of access to knowledge coexist without having to reduce one in terms of the other [...] (CARVALHO, 2007, p. 100)

However, displacement needs to strengthen and grow, not as a faceted camouflaged kindness act, but an appreciation of the knowledge and actions of those who are an indispensable part of the 'brasis' that have established themselves in history and in contemporary times.

Drumming – Singing – Dancing – Contextualizing

For the systematization of a work that prioritizes the multi-reference curriculum in primary or higher education, we need to bring the knowledge that tells our history to the center. Refocus. Teaching popular dances responsibly gives space and visibility to what we will call a 'new order' in priorities since its content can cover interdisciplinary aspects by crossing several layers of life. Placing popular dances with an interdisciplinary character in the curriculum is to make it clear that art is not a mirror of society, as we are used to say. Still, it is society itself since the people who embody them are the same ones who carry out routine procedures and are social citizens. The body that dances is the same: goes to school, to work, buys and sells, kisses and sleeps; it is made possible in some instances and denied in others; that is, it is the social body. This body

is contemporary. Otherwise: "There is a danger of praising the distinctive values of "community" as if they do not participate in a dynamic relationship with all the other matters that compete around them". (HALL, 2013, p.99)

Working with popular dances requires the care to understand them in their present, current bodies inserted in urban centers, besieged by technology, and related to the world and the things of the world. One can no longer speak of this knowledge apart from the cities and their sociability as if they were exclusively in the interior, rural areas. However, their community base has a more significant reference in these places.

We are talking about a body that dialogues with technology. This is the body of the encounter. At another time, when we spoke of popular dances, we spoke of the body of the fisherman, the housewife, and the farmer, imprinting on these references a kind of genuine purism associated with the lack of education due to these people's private access to education. These dances were and remained movements populated by impurities, built with gains and losses, and this perpetuating condition of precariousness also in modernity. The human being is precarious in itself.

We understand and consider this a permanent scenario that propagates in many communities where these dances are experienced. Still, the transformations that have occurred in them, including the insertion of technology, are fundamental.

We cannot treat these actions as dances of the past, done by people in the past. How could that be true if dance is performed by bodies in the present, in contemporaneity? Talking about cultural achievements is not a return trip, "It is not an 'archaeology.' Culture is a production. It has its raw material, its resources, its "productive work." It depends on a knowledge of tradition as "the same in mutation" and "a set of genealogies" (HALL, 2013, p. 49)

For this reason, we chose to distance ourselves from the term "folklore dances" as it refers to the Brazilian northeast. We try not to give an exotic look to dances with a valuable character. They are transformed together with the body of the participants, and they start to attract judgmental glances from the "being" or "being" not to be,"

which is not what we believe. The "folkloric" is situated in an imaginary apart from dynamic social communicability networks. It looks static in time, aged and concentrated.

In its dynamism, Culture allows us to review tradition so that we can give continuity to a continuous becoming based on reference and gratitude to those who came before us. When carrying out studies focused on African performances, Ligiério (2011) criticizes the absence of these studies in universities since:

The connection of these dances with African Culture is so evident that it has been overlooked and little studied by the academic world, which prefers to see it as a reflection of mixtures conditioned by international pop culture or a consequence of miscegenation or syncretism (LIGIÉRO, 2011, p.133).

The author shows that black performance is sometimes marked by the resistance and affirmation of its makers who, in a situation of diaspora, sought elements that would establish their reconnection with the land of origin. We talk about practices from traditional to contemporary expressions. In the context of traditional performances, Ligiéro (2011) points out that the triad "drumming-singing-dancing" can be considered a significant axis of these practices, being found in different ethnic groups that made up the African diaspora in Brazil. The body is experienced as a center of total expression, although its meanings and spiritualities vary from one community to another.

Batuque appears as a spiritual language that is articulated. Singing is perceived as the interpretation of these languages for the community present in the here and now, an interaction. The dance would be the "acceptance of the spiritual messages propagated" through our own body, as well as the meeting of the members of the community in the joint celebrations, under the perfect balance of life. This is how Zéca Ligiéro (2011) explains it. By recomposing the body in the experience of these dimensions, drumming-singing-dancing and reconnecting allows the fluid connection of energy, acting between the living and the dead, permeating the human atmosphere.

This drumming-singing-dancing triad is not just a way of synthesizing the aesthetic elements of a manifestation but a strategy of

worshipping a memory and exercising it with the body in its fullness. They are propelling bases that, if understood and lived, can feed the posterity of the cultural phenomenon.

In them, we find a path that, in addition to synthesizing the practices and knowledge of African peoples, can be extended to teaching popular dances as triggers of the teaching and learning process. The implication of the total body can be achieved in these dimensions.

The batuque works the experimentation of percussive instruments, sounds produced with objects, with the mouth, with palms, in the tapping of the feet on the ground, exploring different rhythms and times according to the proposed cultural expression.

Singing comes as a response, a chorus that learns the song led by the master teacher in verses that also reinforce the collectivity usually found in popular dances.

Dance is the movement triggered, usually by the steps that mark the identity of these dances, and are covered with the corporeities of the participants of each class/workshop/course present.

Although we believe in this triad presented by Zeca Ligiéro and propagated as an approach to the teaching of popular dances, we bring the need for one more element so that we can outline a teaching method in popular dances, which is contextualization. Ancestral knowledge, the importance of its masters, the context of these dances in the original populations, and their reconfigurations need to appear.

'Contextualize' is a way of "presenting a context" and/or "interpreting according to the context." Both meanings contemplate what we project in this didactic principle. For the teaching and learning of these dances, their contexts reveal a lot about their creations. Introduce and attend to them based on the circumstances you are in and that you imbibe yourself.

It is inevitable not to go through the triad do – appreciate – contextualize composed by Ana Mae Barbosa, created more specifically for the teaching of Visual Arts and, later, widely spread in the learning of other languages. Aspects of artistic creation are involved in the axis of making. The subject gives the possibility of becoming an author, and he needs to mobilize knowledge about languages to

transform them into artistic inventions (OLIVEIRA; CORREIA, 2018) [Blog about art-education, available at: <https://revistacontemporartes.com.br/2018/12/14/education-of-arts-the-triangular-approach-of-ana-mae-Barbosa/> accessed on September 12, 2020;].

In the axis of appreciation, reading skills are mobilized that require the subject to master the structuring codes of a work and its formal relationships intertwined with the symbolic aspects of artistic production. Here, a series of relations provoked by the interaction between subject and object of a subjective nature operate in the reading carried out by the subject of the work (OLIVEIRA; CORREIA, 2018).

Contextualization allows us to understand under what conditions it was produced and its power relations implicit in this production (OLIVEIRA; CORREIA, 2018). When it comes to popular dances, this contextualization penetrates the meaning of the cultural affectations experienced by a group, community, or master and in them are more significant meanings related to ancestry and spirituality that touch cultural expression.

We talk about the presentation of masters and playing teachers, regions in which they are and were populated, their people, their beliefs, their conventions and all the information that can give visibility and visibility to the dimensions of dance. We talk about making use of any original speech intention and looking at who offered us this dance.

Referring to Zéca Ligiéro and Ana Mae Barbosa, we accommodated the approaches from the perspective of teaching and learning popular dances in the proposal of a quartet that I synthesize in drumming-singing-dancing-contextualizing.

This path is flexible in construction and can be organized in whatever order the mediator finds most efficient for approaching a dance to a specific group of students/stakeholders. The horizontality of knowledge is equivalent and touches each other at all times.

It is inadmissible that we move towards a decolonial proposal without marking the territory of those before us as priests of wisdom and anchors of our practices. We start with concrete references, and

they need to be in evidence. Although we experience a dance displaced from its place of belonging, this reference should not be hidden but valued.

When carrying out the workshops with the Ciranda dance, I have presented this court as a principle of this educational practice, seeking to strengthen the important points in this teaching and learning. Drumming-singing-dancing-contextualizing has been supporting my pedagogical choice for teaching popular dances.

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