

THE DECOLONIAL PROJECT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE THEORIES OF CURRICULUM: seeking for new epistemologies

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Abstract

This article has the goal of establishing an interface between decolonity and curriculum with the intent of thinking and creating other epistemic places on educational theories and practices. It discusses the contributions of decoloniality for the elaboration of a new curriculum to raise awareness on identities and experiences of social groups historically subordinate by the colonization of power, of being, and knowledge. Also, it highlights the protagonism of black intellectuals from Brazil, especially the theory of black feminism, in the proposition of the decolonial turning point in a context that lacks debates about it as a theory academically legitimized. Furthermore, it points out the potentialities of a decolonized curriculum to think about other possibilities of knowledge and for a pedagogy that is not subservient and surrendered by Euro-centered and colonizing ways of thinking.

Keywords: Decolonity; Curriculum; Epistemologies.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the advances on debates about the complicity of educational institutes through their pedagogical practices and their curriculum for the propagation of stereotypes and reinforcement of subordinate places for social segments historically excluded and vulnerable. Thereby, these people have been organizing themselves as groups, in which they have been elaborating and proposing places to think about material and epistemic losses provoked by the pedagogical way of thinking based on occidental, Euro-centered, cisgender, heterosexual, and Christians values. The positions defended by these social segments, such as feminist groups, black and indigenous movements, and the LGBTTQIA+¹ community, establishes that just the presence of bodies and subjectivities at educational institutes are not sufficient. Therefore, it is necessary to think about a new curriculum aligned with different experiences, perspectives, and for social acknowledgement.

¹ Initials for Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transvesties, Transexuals, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual. The "+" is used to include other groups and variations of gender and sexuality.

The proposition of programs and studies that include the production of theories by these social groups, the elaborations of quotas and specific ways for admission of these social segments on undergraduate and graduate courses, and the proposition of curriculum guidelines that aim to diminish the damages provoked by epistemicide² policies at institutionalized centers of knowledge are uncontested proofs that the curriculum is being constantly transformed and disputed (ARROYO, 2013).

Therefore, by thinking about the role of education to confront structural racism, and bringing up other epistemologies and possibilities to talk about educational processes developed at Brazilian institutes of education, is how we will be conducting this research. Thus, we established an interface between the decolonial way of thinking and the theories about curriculum with the intent of constructing a project that subverts the logic of dominant epistemologies, which is universal and homogenizing, besides its acts for the perpetuation of practices of exclusion and marginalization of social groups that do not recognize themselves within the curriculum traditionally taught. Furthermore, we argue about decolonity as a theoretical and political instrument to fight against the epistemicide provoked by the imposition of a monoculture with European and occidental bases.

Also, we highlight distinct protagonists of movements and social groups that confront this issue. However, we will be specifically discussing propositions and educational public policies that have been produced by the Brazilian Black Movement (Movimento Negro Brasileiro).

The methodology chosen for this research is of qualitative approach with analysis and descriptions made through the procedures of bibliographical studies. Thereby, the structure of this article, which starts with this introduction, is organized in four sections. For the second section, we elaborated a history of concepts about the decolonial way of thinking, starting with its genealogy on African and Caribbean theorists on decolonity, in postcolonial studies, and cultural studies of the English language.

For the third section, we argue about the decolonial way of thinking as an instrument for the contestation of territories of the educational curriculum, and then, we conclude with the fourth section, presenting nuances that cause reflection about potentials of the decolonial thinking for the theories about curriculum.

2. From postcoloniality to the decolonial turning point: a path of political and epistemological resistance

The roots of decolonial projects can be found in the development of postcolonial studies by intellectuals of developing countries rooted in the main academic anglophone centers. The post-coloniales proposed to elaborate an incisive critique to the relations of power based on different nations that are heiresses of political, ideological, and economic structures of European colonial expansion. Furthermore, they created a counter-narrative for the processes of naturalization of the modern way of thinking by occidentals. According to Maldonado-Torres (2018, p. 30), “[...] it is usually understood as the era of the most advanced

² Santos and Meneses (2009) analyzed the epistemicide as a process of erasure of political, epistemological, cultural, and social perspectives that are not validated by modern and occidental knowledge. According to these authors, this phenomenon is a result of the structures inherited by people living in colonized lands by Europe since the 16th century, and perpetuated in the process of expansion of capitalism and of imperialist domination.

form of civilization, when compared to other sociocultural, political, and economic contexts that are portrayed as less civilized, uncivilized, wild, or primitive”³.

In the perspective of their intellectuals, the concepts and categories of the Euro-centered way of thinking were not sufficient to deal with the complexities of the political, economic, cultural, and social scene of the 20th century, which was marked by the horrors of the World War II (1939 - 1945), the geopolitical polarization of the occident as a result of the Cold War (1947 - 1991), the constant migratory fluxes and by the processes of decolonization⁴ of territories occupied by European imperialism in Asia, Caribbean, and African continents, culminating in the emergence of nations on recently freed territories (BERNADINO-COSTA; GROSFÓGUEL, 2016).

Influenced by critiques of language and for the social meaning proposed by the post structuralism, by the process of decentralization of individuals proposed by postmodernism, and by cultural studies of the English language, especially the ones that have been developed by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), founded in 1964, at Birmingham University of the United Kingdom, the postcolonial studies contested the colonial domain and its legacy (COSTA, 2006). Also, they focused on denouncing stereotypes imposed on colonized people by the Euro-centered perspective that legitimates a speech that represented these people as subordinated and inferior.

One of the main contributions of the English cultural studies to think about colonialism and modern occident are the works developed by Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, Paul Gilroy, and Edward Said, this last one being a literary critique and palestine politic that published the book *Orientalism* in 1987, which is considered to be one of the main contributions to postcolonial theories. In this book, Said tracks the roots of the discursive construction of the orient in an occidental perspective, which is always accompanied by inferences of inferiority due to their contrast.

The palestine intellectual affirms that the orient was conditioned as an entity forged by Europeans through their literary works, the colonial bureaucracy, the vocabulary, the memories recorded, and other narrative experiences “[...] helped to define Europe (the occident) in terms of idea, identity, personality, and its contrasting experiences” (SAID, 1990, p. 14). Therefore, the orient would have been defined as the place where they would establish themselves by the beginning of the 18th century as the most prosperous and successful imperialist achievements. Also, the orient would be interpreted as a cultural competitor by the occident.

By elaborating that argument, Said (1990) considers the processes of colonization that have been confronted by African and American continents more than four centuries as irrelevant. Nevertheless, as Europe only built its image as more consistent than the oriental side by the 18th century with the establishment of its empires in Asia, what does the violence of colonial expansion have represented for these “other” territories since the 15th century?

According to Mignolo (2020), when it is pointed out that there are no possibilities to think about the

³ All original quotations in Portuguese were translated to English in this article.

⁴ The meanings attributed to decolonization and decolonity in this research are not identical. Decolonization refers to historical processes of colonial release, which were under the domain of European empires. The meaning adopted for decolonity is aligned with Maldonado-Torres (2019, p. 36), who says that “[...] it fights against coloniality effects and its material, epistemic, symbolic losses”, which is a global logic of dehumanization that persists even after the end of formal colonies.

occidental colonial constitution and modernity dissociated from the transatlantic routes because: “[...] the biggest, richer, and old colonies are not oriental, but occidental: the occidental Indians and then the Americas [...]. It was through the Western Indians that the great flux of resources, such as gold and silver, went to Spain and to other European nations” (MIGNOLO, 2020, p. 87).

This reflection is an alert for the recurrent emphasis on Cultural Studies of English language that intends to think about postcoloniality and theories of the processes of decolonization to not ignore political and theoretical projects that have been proposed by Caribbean and African intellectuals inside and outside European countries. Therefore, Rosevics (2017) remembers that postcoloniality, as a theory, does not have a unique origin, but it is associated with different names of intellectual and projects that emerged with the 20th century, and they proposed to: “[...] identify the antagonistic relationship between colonizers and colonized people while seeking to denounce different types of oppression” (ROSEVICS, 2017, p. 187).

Among the projects that were cited, it is important to remember the path of Almícar Cabral, a prominent historical figure that fought for the independence of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde, which were under Portugal colonial domain. His acts as an academic, political marxist, and revolutionary, was marked by his critics against colonialism, its nefarious legacy, and the fights for national freedom.

It is important to highlight the theoretical contributions of francophone intellectuals, such as Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Édouard Glissant, and Aimé Césaire. The intellectual Aimé Césaire was a poet, dramaturge, and a noticeable martinican politic, publishing his most known book: *Discours sur colonialisme*, in 1950. This manifest details the intrinsic relations between capitalism, colonialism, racism, subservence of the European *intelligentsia* to the processes of domination, and violence in colonies. He affirms that Europe is indefensible because of its moribund morality that is unable to deal with the problems created by Europeans. Also, Césaire exemplify it with the Jewish holocaust by describing the ways that colonizers build their civilizations meanwhile they dehumanize colonized people by generating processes of brutalization and degradation (CESAIRE, 2020).

However, the influences that Cultural Studies of English Language exercised over the postcolonial way of thinking is recognized and highlighted for some works that discuss that matter (MIGNOLO, 2020; MALDONADO-TORRES, 2018). Bernadino-Costa and Grosfóguel (2016, p. 15) affirm that:

[...] It has been mostly produced by intellectuals of developing countries of departments of cultural, English language, and anthropology of English universities studies, and then, the anthropology of American universities. The obvious consequence of this was the fact that postcoloniality got a mother tongue, the English language, and structured routes, the Anglophone world.

The authors also point out that the Anglophone postcoloniality was felt by the groups of Subordinate Studies, which were created from Asian, American, and Latin American critics of culture that live at universities of the United States of America and of England. The phenomenon of formation of these groups can be explained by the processes of colonization that occurred at each territory mentioned and the resulting legacy from this system. Curiel (2020, p. 122) points out that the constitution of these groups can be interpreted as an epistemic exercise to understand that: “[...] the societies were not colonized in the same way, and thus, do not have the same meaning as postcolonial societies”.

The Group of Subordinate Studies from South Asia, founded in 1970, had Ranajit Guha as an representative that gathered other important intellectuals related to the studies of anthropology, political sciences, and

cultural and literary critics. Homi Bhabha, Chandra Mohanty, Shahid Amin, David Arnold, Partha Chatterjee, Gayatri Chakrabarty Spivak, and Dipesh Chakrabarty, were some of the intellectuals that proposed to think about the relations between colonialism, science, knowledge, and power. They also aimed to:

[...] demolish colonial and nationalist reasoning in India, restoring the plural and decentralized condition to subordinated people. The collection of books, studies, and publications under the auspice of Guha proposed to apprehend the subordinated and silenced consciousness by the colonial and nationalist speech, seeking for the contradictions of these speeches in silenced and obliterated voices (BERNADINO-COSTA; GROSGOUEL, 2016, p. 16).

The Latin American Group of Subordinate Studies emerged in the decade of 1990, gathering intellectuals related to North-American universities. They debated in a multidisciplinary way, aiming to recover the long tradition of political and epistemic resistance of colonialism constructed by Latin America. Furthermore, they proposed to discuss the role that occidental theories had for people subordinated by occidental modernity in the process of overseas expansion of the Iberian Peninsula.

Influenced by political transformations in Latin American countries in the 20th century, these intellectuals sought to fill the gaps left by postcolonial theories in the analysis of the colonialist context and of the Euro-North-American dependence to understand Latin America. The critics established by the Group of South Asia were made to the occidental empires settled in the orient between the 18th and 19th centuries⁵, which were mostly English and French, thus, did not match their contexts.

Bernadino-Costa and Grosfoguel (2016, p.16) pointed out that “[...] even though the long colonial history in Latin American and of the reactions to the effects of colonization, which can be named as coloniality, the intellectuals of this location are not shown in postcolonial studies”. Therefore, in the perspective of this group, modernity is a phenomenon socially constructed that goes back to the colonizer project perpetrated by Spain and Portugal, culminating in the invention of America. Mignolo (2020) points out that, as a geosocial entity forged by the modern world wide system, America was fundamental for the development of a world wide capitalist economy. Thus, the intellectuals related to the group made critics to the epistemic occidental patterns or Euro-centered, even though it had its limitations.

That limitation comes from the fact that, even though the efforts of that group for the construction of theories that subvert the occidental science had the intent of thinking about the Latin-American reality, these proposals still suffered meaningful influences of the European episteme, especially by the post-structuralism and Marxist theorists.

Grosfoguel (2008) points out that the predominant episteme of these occidental intellectuals intermediated by what he named as “the four knights of apocalypse”: the influences and theorizations of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Ranajit Guha, and Antonio Gramsci. The French intellectuals sought to learn how to critique the language created in the post-structuralist perspective to explain the role of the occidental discussion for the construction of a colonial world and the differences of colonized people.

The influence of the Italian philosopher is shown on the ideas about the hegemonic culture and of subordination (GRAMSCI, 2015; 1982). These categories created by Gramsci were essential for the

⁵ Curiel (2020) points out that the emphasis on modernity for South Asian intellectuals has a theoretical and political issue as it ignores colonial experiences that had been faced by African and American continents since the 15th century.

consolidation of the cultural studies and the postcolonial criticism. When there is an appropriation by these distinct intellectuals and by the groups to which they were affiliated, the concepts of subordination and hegemony expand to cover different realities in analysis.

However, the interpretation of theories of French post-structuralism and the Marxist critiques of Gramsci were not sufficient to slow down the crisis that the group suffered by the end of the decade of 1990, provoking its process of breakdown. Grosfoguel lists other causes that contributed for this process:

The members of the Latin-American Group of Subordinate Studies were mostly Latin American academics living in the USA. Even though they have tried to produce an alternative and radical knowledge, they reproduced the epistemic set of the Regional Studies of the United States. The majority opted to study the subordinate perspective instead of producing with that perspective and so on. [...] The members underestimated their ethnic and racial perspectives from the region and mostly preferred the occidental intellectuals. (GROSFOGUEL, 2008, p. 116).

Also, the issue about the postcolonial analytical category carries historical ambiguities, thus, it should start by its conceptual variations, which depend on the place and the historical context where they were produced. Therefore, Mignolo (2020) points out that the Latin American studies produced in the United States were not capable of creating awareness about the different existences between the Anglo-Saxon American and the Latin-American. For the author, this differentiation is fundamental because it stimulates reflection on basic aspects of subordinate critiques. For example, to inform:

[...] the place agency and *locus* of enunciation from where they produce imaginary constructions (in other words, the result of academic studies or the intellectual reflections); or, for the reflection about the implications and consequences of being and to be into academic epistemic, political, and epistemic investments (MIGNOLO, 2020, p. 259).

Before the millennial generation, the wishes for a profound radicalization on the critique about the prevalence of modern occidental and Euro-centered way of thinking in Latin-American Postcolonial and Subordinate Studies provoked the necessity of creating new epistemic projects that would privilege experiences and knowledge of groups and individuals historically ignored by the occident. According to Rosevics (2017, p. 189):

While post-colonials were getting closer to postmodernism and post-structuralism, the decolonials engaged on a project similar to the political-left theoretic critiques. It means that decolonials sought emancipation from all types of domination and oppression through an interdisciplinary dialogue between economy, policy, and culture.

Therefore, the Modernism/Coloniality Group emerged, which would focus on intellectuals and social activists related to North-American universities, such as Duke University and New York State University. Also, they focused on intellectuals that criticize ethnic, racial, and regional perspectives of Latin-America. It is important to mention the studies developed by Enrique Dussel, Immanuel Wallerstein, Arturo Escobar, Fernando Coronil, Edgardo Lander, Anibal Quijano, Walter Mignolo, Catherine Wash, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Maria Lugones, Castro-Gómez, Ramon Grosfoguel, Glória Anzaldúa, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Rigoberta Menchú, and Luciana Ballestrin.

Therefore, the production of knowledge influenced by conceptions of modern science is tensioned and redone through distinct epistemes created by the subordinate world, which start to disagree with the

hegemonic production of a scientific discuss professedly unilateral and globalizer. Thereby, the subordinate knowledge or the subordinate reasoning can be understood as “[...] a set of different theoretical practices that emerge from the answers to the colonial legacy on the intersection of a modern Euro-American history.” (MIGNOLO, 2020, p. 135).

From the concerns that arose within the Modernism/Coloniality Group, Maldonado-Torres (2008) creates the category of decolonity influenced by the idea of “decolonial turning point” (giro decolonial) that transforms subordinated people on agents for social changes, resisting to political and epistemic dominations and the structures of the occidental way of thinking (MIGNOLO, 2020). Also, he establishes that the decolonial turning point should provide a withdrawal from Euro-North-American modernism/colonialism⁶, besides its capitalist, racist, and patriarchal features and its epistemes because the processes of domination and hierarchization are continuous projects.

Moreover, it was proposed to be aesthetic. According to the author, this can be justified because the body is a constitutive part of the decolonial behavior: “[...] it permits the possibility to critic, and also, it permits the capability of introspection, of recognizing other people’s selves, and of the world, which challenges the concepts of modernism/coloniality” (MALDONADO-TORRES, 2018, p. 36). Thereby, the body is subversive because it brings questions and epistemes that emerge from within.

Therefore, the decolonial way of thinking is a political, aesthetic, ethic, theoretical, and epistemic project. However, it is not limited to the academic environment, which acts for the complaint and suppression of colonial domains: the domains of power, of being, and knowledge. Ochy Curiel (2020, p.128) points out that these systems, “[...] constitute an unclear side of the occidental modernism”.

The coloniality of power was made possible because it acts primarily on the construction of a system for classification and hierarchization due to a supposed natural difference between center and periphery, in other words, the idea of races. Furthermore, the articulation between this hierarchical system of racial classification and its *modus operandi* of capitalist production in America, characterized by “[...] the constitution of a new structure to control works, resources and its products” (QUIJANO, 2005, p. 118).

The idea of race as a biological category was an important excuse for political and economic domination in colonized countries. Thereby, the imaginary created by occidental racism would justify the exploration of workforces at the colonies, the control over natural resources, and the scarcity created for money and the world-wide business.

In agreement with the perspectives of Fanon (1968, 2008) and Memmi (1977), it can be understood that the impacts caused on the psychological constitution of colonized people because of the subjectivation/epidermization of racism and racial hierarchizations based on biological categories were responsible for the construction of a complex of inferiority, which is augmented by a continuous process of self negation. The coloniality of the being acts on the annulment of ontological conditions and for the humanity destruction of a colonized person (MALDONADO-TORRES, 2007).

To understand the process of coloniality of knowledge, Curiel (2020, p. 128) recovers the contributions and critics to the modernism by Castro-Gómez and Lander, and establishes the existence of a perpetuation of

⁶ In agreement with Maldonado-Torres (2019,) the meaning of modernism/coloniality (or just coloniality) is not identical to the meaning of colonialism. The meaning of colonialism is used to describe the processes through which European imperialism expanded their territories across the world, starting in the 15th century.

concepts like: “[...] impartial, objective, universal, and positive knowledge”, created by the coloniality of knowledge. This techno-scientific rational system:

[...] intends to be just an observation, which is capable of translating and to accurately report the characteristics of nature and exotic cultures. It is an imaginary proposed by an impartial stand through which the social world is observed and [...] creates a universal story in which Europe and United States are simultaneously the geographical center and the culmination of temporal movements of knowledge, where the subordinated people’s knowledge is depreciated, ignored, excluded, silenced, and made invisible (CURIEL, 2020, p. 128).

These colonial roots over knowledge and its almost universal epistemes are present on the pedagogical imaginary and on curriculum, which is adopted by educational institutes. Thus, it is important to think about the theories of curriculum under the decolonial perspective with the intent of pointing out and subvert this logic of domination:

[...] Our notions about education, pedagogy, and curriculum are based on Modernism and its modern ideas. Education as it is known nowadays is the concepts of modern and excellence. Its goal is to transmit scientific knowledge, to form a supposedly rational, autonomous, and democratic human being to achieve the modern ideal of a rational, progressive, and democratic society (SILVA, 1999, p. 111).

Therefore, we will be discussing this issue in the next subsection the contributions of the decolonial project, interfaced by the perspectives and epistemes of black intellectuals. We highlight that, when Bernadino-Costa, Maldonado-Torre, and Grosfóguel (2019), highlight the historic tradition of epistemic resistance of black population, the decoloniality cannot be thought as an academic project detached from political fights to transform the social reality engaged by the Black Movement⁷ on its distinct segments.

3. The decolonial curriculum: in search for new epistemes

In *Local Histories/Global Designs* (2020), Walter Mignolo affirms that one of the most successful achievements of the modern/colonial system was the construction of an occidental science that is abstract and universal. The genealogy of this paradigm can be found in the 17th century, “the age of enlightenment”, in *Discours de la Méthode*, by René Descartes. By presenting the duality body/mind (“I think, therefore I am”), the French philosopher creates an epistemic tradition that conceives knowledge as a disembodied, non historical, and objectified entity (BERNADINO-COSTA; MALDONADO-TORRES; GROSGOUEL, 2018).

The Argentine semiologist contradicts this traditional thought when he affirms that all types of knowledge have a geopolitical and geohistorical location, in other words, it is produced under specific interests and

⁷ The concept of Black Movement adopted for this research is not essentialized and static. We comprehend that the Brazilian Black Movement is permeated by issues, such as gender, social class, generation, and region, that act for the construction of a political agenda to fight specific political dispositions. The concept adopted in this research for the Black Movement is in agreement with Gomes (2017, p. 23), who says that “[...] there are diverse forms of organization and articulation of black men and women politically positioned to fight against racism and that aim to overcome this perverse social phenomenon. The political, academic, cultural, religious, and artistic groups participate in these definitions, aiming to overcome racism and racial discrimination, but also, to valorize and to claim black history and culture in Brazil, to disrupt racist barriers imposed to black men and women in the occupation of different places in society”.

distinct geographic and historical contexts (MIGNOLO, 2020). Thereby, the theoretical project of Mignolo details the paradigms and power projects that constitutes the abstract universalism, how it historically acted to silence and erase other epistemes, and the naturalization of cartesian binarisms. For example: catholic/pagan people, rationals/irrational, moderns/traditionals, civilized/barbarians, subjects/objects of knowledge.

According to Santos (2007), the instruments that separate these dichotomous pairs created by the occidental modern *logos* can be understood as abyssal lines that radically act on the impossibility of shared presence. These lines divide who or what is situated by the side of science (“the correct side”) and what was situated by the side of some belief, superstition, ignorance, opinions, and idolatries (“the other side”). The author explains that being situated by “the other side” of this abyssal thought is the same as being understood as an object for scientific studies, but not as people that produce knowledge or an epistemic agent because their knowledge is interpreted through an incomprehensive perspective.

Therefore, the abyssal thought is an instrument to construct and deepen distinctions by producing nonexistence and invisibility. To become nonexistent means that they are irrelevant or incomprehensible in any sense. The invisibility is based on:

[...] the invisibility of types of knowledge that do not fit in any modality of “the correct side”. I refer to popular knowledge, lay people, peasants, or indigenous people, which are made irrelevant or incommensurable as they are beyond the true or false reality (SANTOS, 2007, p. 72).

Ribeiro (2019) unveils the intrinsic connections between the idea of an abstract universal science and power relations that permeate multiple places in our society, such as educational environments. The philosopher points out that while the universalist belief persists, the institutes are based on their own instruments, such as the curriculum, enabling privileges to some identities and oppression against others.

The cognitive injustice forged by the relation power/knowledge is noticeable as it produces invisibility or disallow epistemes at places that produce knowledge, culminating in global injustice, which can be understood as the permanency in the zone of to be or not to be from coloniality (SANTOS, 2007).

Gomes (2018), remembers a worrying dimension of this process of epistemic deauthorization, the implicit notions on the curriculum about who can speak or who can create an identity and who cannot or does not have access to certain places or social objects, and thus, are relegated to a non existing dimension.

That is the symbiotic relationship between knowledge and power that acquires relevance to create a critical theorization about the curriculum in the perspective of decolonial way of thinking, which unravels the colonial ramifications of knowledge in the pedagogical imaginary. Also, to think about a possible curriculum project to include the knowledges of:

[...] the periphery, workforce, women, racialized/colonized people, homosexuals/lesbians, and the anti systemic movements that participate in the production of knowledge. It means that, even though the world system takes the world as a unit of analysis, it thinks through a certain perspective of the world. (GROSFOGUEL, 2008, p. 136).

The perspective of the world mentioned above constitutes a set of scientific and philosophical assumptions that act to create a complex of inferiority in these social groups. The abstract universalism of modern/colonial reasoning relegated to other segments the roles of dominated, exploited, aberrant, and displaced people. It contributed to the hierarchization of their knowledge as they were always seen as

inferior. Thereby, it is necessary to question the process that resulted on the predominance of only one way of producing knowledge that interpellates many voices and propagates an imaginary of submission to certain social groups that do not fit in the occidental model of civilization and development (GROSFOGUEL, 2008).

Gomes evidenciates the way this project is interfaced on pedagogical practices and adopted curriculum for educational systems in the following passage:

[...] In the context of production of educational theories, the daily pedagogical practices, and the curriculum adopted at Brazilian schools and universities, the history of fights, and the knowledge produced in the fights are not always acknowledged by them. Therefore, it is important to radically criticize the way that knowledge is interpreted by modern science, resulting in a rationality that excludes other ways of thinking and conceiving the world produced out of what is considered to be scientific (GOMES, 2011, p. 144).

Silva (1999) ratifies that the phenomenon of coloniality was established in the beginning of practices and discussions adopted by educational and pedagogical fields. Thereby, the universal and hegemonic notions of gender, sex, race, religion, religion, social class, and other social classifications that highlight differences, were combined on curriculum to marginalize identities that do not conform themselves with definitions of “normal” or “adequate” identities. Maldonado-Torres (2007, p. 131) points out the relation between education and coloniality as existing representations on didactic materials about different people, communities, and identities, even through standards of what is considered to be “a good academic work”. The social structures of exclusion were forged in the colonial context. Therefore, the mechanisms of cultural identity and subjectivity formation are still predominant in the official curriculum: “in which sense the narratives compose the core of contemporary curriculum that keep celebrating the European empire dominion” (SILVA, 1999, p. 129).

Furthermore, we are invited to denaturalize and create another curriculum that is aligned with the political projects and wishes of silenced identities. Also, the curriculum can be modified as it has been politically influenced (MOREIRA; SILVA, 2002). According to Arroyo (2013, p. 40):

The ethical fight of professionals and students to recover what was subtracted, the right to think, to create, to choose what and how to teach, how to learn, which type of knowledge assure the right to understand their experiences, to understand ourselves. In this ethical fight for freedom and protagonism, for the right to an emancipatory knowledge, the curriculum is a disputed territory. It is ethical to question the reasons why the curriculum was turned into a territory, where the accumulated knowledge is considered as the only rationality. It is ethical to assure the right for a diversity of knowledge and ways of thinking our real selves. Therefore, the decolonial project becomes an important disputed instrument in the curriculum territory as it is assumed to be autonomous, there is an emancipation and subversion of the logic of power in terms of knowledge. As this logic is questioned and subverted, the curriculum is opened to other possibilities of learning outcomes with the diversity of epistemes of the world created historically by non hegemonic segments, which were named as ecological knowledge by Santos (2007).

The author establishes that the acknowledgement of the diversity in the world did not always mean the acknowledgement of the epistemic diversity of the world. Thereby, in the ecological perspective of knowledge, it can be understood that “[...] around the world there are many forms of knowledge about matter, society, life, and spirit, and also many forms of concepts and standards on what counts as true

knowledge” (SANTOS, 2007, p. 86).

A hurried interpretation about this premise could conclude that the existence of ecological knowledge means to discredit scientific knowledge. However, the proposal of the author radicalizes and subverts any manichean abstraction because within the perspective defended by him, there is a search for a shared presence among distinct ways of learning about the world, acting in the sense of eliminating abyssal lines and acknowledging that all forms of knowledge are permeated by inner and outer limits.

Therefore, it is possible to correlate the proposal defended by Boaventura Santos to decolonial theories because they are being understood as a constituent of ecological knowledge that emerge from political practices and social experiences produced mainly by social groups and movements. Arroyo (2013) remembers that, we will be creating strategies for the acknowledgement of knowledge forged by non-hegemonic identities through the comprehension of knowledge as a repertoire socially produced.

Even though we had been conditioned to believe that knowledge production is a task made through a safe distance between researcher and object of study in social experiments, and is conducted by an enlightened intellectual isolated at his or her office, and having as company just the presence of books written by similarly alphabetized individuals with the same epistemic logic, the author remembers that “[...] there are plurality and diversity, not just a hierarchy of human experiences, and they are considered to be valuable because they produce a great diversity of knowledge and ways of thinking reality and think about ourselves as human beings” (ARROYO, 2013, p. 117).

Beyond a concept of an analytical category, Gomes (2018) explains that decoloniality, from educational and curriculum perspectives, acquires the shape of an instrument to fight for those social segments to combat the dominating pedagogical imaginary. In agreement with the author, I believe that a decolonial way of thinking contributes to demystifying impartial propaganda over education. Thereby, it is an ally to dismantling authoritarian and retrograde projects that have been elaborated on education in recent years.

The *Escola Sem Partido*⁸ is an example of these projects that aims to intervene on the autonomy of teachers and educational institutes, claiming that the curriculum should be politically impartial, and for a formation in universal values. Thereby, it is a contradictory project as it defends by extension, the catholic, occidental, caucasian, patriarchal, social classes, and heteronormativity.

Besides the apparent impartiality of this project, there is the postponement of the construction of a critical and emancipatory model of education that cares about the wishes of socially vulnerable groups. Historically,

⁸ Movement created in 2004 by the Lawyer Miguel Nagib, which defends a nonpartisan and impartial education that is “ideology free”. Initially, the movement proposed to gather as many accusations as possible that were made by parents and students that could perceive a supposed political-ideological “indoctrination” at Brazilian schools. It was the beginning of a “witch hunting” inside of educational institutes, where professionals of education were intimidated and coerced because of topics related to the formation of Brazil. For example, the dialogues about racism, male chauvinism, and homophobia, which are within the principles of “*liberdade de cátedra*” and freedom to teach, which are assured by the Federal Constitution of the Brazilian Republic from 1988, and by the Law of Guidelines and Basis (Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional - Lei nº 9.394/96). Even though the movement was defined as independent and without political affiliations, its representatives sought the evangelical political group's support, at the National Congress and at the Senate to obtain its approval, which was not done yet. To better understand this topic, you can read: FRIGOTTO, Gaudêncio (org.). **Escola “sem” partido: esfinge que ameaça a educação e a sociedade brasileira**. 1 ed. Rio de Janeiro: UERJ, 2017. 144 p. Available in: <http://www.redeuniversitas.com.br/2017/08/download-gratuito-do-livro-escola-sem.html>. Accessed in: June, 15 of 2021.

the Brazilian educational system did not take care of these problems and it will turn out to be impossible if this project is approved. Thereby, the decolonial project turns explicit the interests that constitute the curriculum and its steps: constitution, validation, and execution, contributing for it to be seen in a historical or social perspective:

The curriculum, its ordering, and hierarchization of knowledge are part of relations, experiences, interests, and social tensions. It would be ingenuous to think that they are impartial or just a transposition and school product. The teachers and students have the right to know about social tensions that resulted in the systematization of the knowledge that should be learned (ARROYO, 2013, p. 122).

By understanding decoloniality as an instrument of fight, which goes beyond the academic knowledge, Gomes (2018) shows the proposal for a decolonial curriculum through the perspective of a black woman: [...] it is possible to affirm that Brazilian black women and men, which are organized in the Black Movement and in the movement of black women or through independent acts developed by the diversity of black people that have a democratic, public, laic, and antiracist education, have been acting for a long time to decolonize the curriculum. However, it is not a generic decolonization because it has its specificity, in other words, it is the decolonization of curriculum from the perspective of a black woman from Brazil (GOMES, 2018, p. 235).

To defend the existence of a black perspective on decolonial criticisms in the field of education is to acknowledge the protagonism of these people when organized in groups, resulting in the construction of emancipatory knowledges that give context to their fights, history, and identities, thus, provoking the inflection of curriculum through their perspectives, epistemes, and interpretations of social reality.

Gomes (2017, 2018) remembers the historic achievements in the field of education by different segments of the Brazilian Black Movement in the last years. The author points out that this process of construction and dispute of historic marks that precede the insurgency of “decolonial turning point” by the end of the decade of 1990, suggesting that Brazilian black intellectuals already discussed about the urgency of a decolonial education *avant la lettre*.

To bring up the contributions of Brazilian black intellectuals to decolonial debates is an exercise of acknowledgement of political and epistemic experiences of these activist thinkers. Furthermore, it establishes a counterpoint to the recurrent critique that decoloniality – as an academic theory - did not have Brazilians in the condition of representative of this epistemic project as the majority was constituted of Hispanic-American theorists (BERNADINO-COSTA, 2018).

In agreement with the proposals of Gomes (2018) and Bernadino-Costa (2018), it is important to remember the importance of comprehending the Black Movements through an expanded conception, seeking to understand that the changes proposed for the educational field was not just from academics because not all academics are intellectual just like not all intellectuals are academics. Thereby, we included in this debate the epistemic contributions originated from different actuations, as for example: “[...] activists, teachers, musicians, religious leaders, and poets, all of those who could create a homogeneity and group awareness for black people, and to point out ways of resistance and re-existence” (BERNADINO-COSTA, 2018, p. 120).

Therefore, to think decoloniality dissociated from this political path constructed by the black population in movement would be, according to Bernadino-Costa, Maldonado- Torres, and Grosfoguel (2019, p. 10) “[...]”

a betrayal to the concept of decoloniality”. To avoid this epistemic erasure, it is necessary: [...] to bring to the first plan the political fights of black women, quilombolas, the different black movements, religious people (povo de santo), the marginalized youth, the black aesthetic and arts, and the countless artists and intellectuals (BERNADINO-COSTA; MALDONADO-TORRES; GROSFOGUEL, 2019, p. 10).

The actions of the Black Movements were fundamental to create legal frames for education in the first decades of the 21st century. One important legal frame to be mentioned is the Law nº 10.639/2003 - Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture, which was changed by the Law nº 11.645/08 to include studies about indigenous people and communities from Brazil, The National Curriculum Guidelines for Quilombolas School Education (Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para a Educação Escolar Quilombola - Resolution nº 08 of November, 20 of 2012), the Law of Racial and Social Quotas at Federal Institutes of Higher Education nº 12.711/2012 (Lei de Cotas Sociorraciais nas Instituições Federais de Ensino Superior), and the Law of Quotas for Federal Public Tenders nº 12.900/14 (Lei de Cotas nos Concursos Públicos Federais).

The arguments used by the author, elaborated in her academic acts in the Black Movement, in the movement of black women, and her experience ahead the Ministry of Women, Racial and Youth Equality, and Human Rights between the years of 2015 and 2016, are intended to remember us that:

For a long time, the Black Movement and the black intellectuals identified the presence of coloniality within power patterns of workforce and knowledge in Brazil through their practices and diverse ways of affirmative organizations. They do it by highlighting racial issues, the African reality, and the existence of racism. They deconstruct the ontic colonial myth of human beings and non-human beings, when they affirm and reaffirm ways and alternatives of being human and a protagonist with legal rights that are not acknowledged by hegemonic conceptions of humanity and citizenship (GOMES, 2018, p. 241).

The historic protagonism of the Brazilian black intellectuals and their different segments is a calling for researchers and professionals of education to comprehend that denouncing the processes of subordination of other epistemes perpetrated by the coloniality of knowledge and the political acts to create a curriculum that is related to the decolonial thinking are not sufficient, although necessary.

Finally, it is important to have the presence of non-hegemonic bodies and subjectivities at places where educational knowledge and curriculum are produced, enabling new possibilities for the curriculum of educational institutes to be transformed. Also, there are insurgencies being proposed by these groups, giving the same epistemic attention/responsibility to their knowledge that is given to the Euro centered knowledge.

4. Conclusion

In this research, we highlight the need to rethink the knowledge conveyed through the curriculum of our institutes of education, specifically about the ways that these documents have been causing an epistemic invisibility of groups historically subordinated. Thus, the pedagogical imaginary influenced by the coloniality of power, of being, and of knowledge was evidenced with its epistemicide and epistemic racism, disallowing the contributions of intellectuals that are not affiliated to any hegemonic group, causing the

feeling of non-recognition or self negation in the process of learning.

Therefore, we put into evidence the contributions of decolonial theories to propose pedagogical projects and changes on curriculum that are able to subvert the logic of the universal way of thinking, which is traditionally implicit in our educational institutions. The impartial status of the curriculum on higher education has been acting to silence certain epistemes and the knowledge of the disadvantaged side of the colonial system.

The historical analysis in this research had the intent of locating the roots of the decolonial turning point on the critiques established by postcolonial theories and by the Groups of Subordinated Studies – South Asian and Latin-American – permitted us to infer that, even though there are ethical, political, aesthetic, and epistemic subversions on the curriculum, there are many possibilities to elaborate new ones and to create other knowledges and other pedagogical imaginaries.

The dialogue established with black intellectuals demonstrates their historic protagonism in territorial disputes of the curriculum based on their political and educational knowledge constructed while fighting. It is a call for our places of power – such as the institutes of research and education – to be opened to welcome the presence of these bodies and subjectivities. However, there are still fights against curricular representations that operate on the propagation and teaching of values socially accepted.

When we expand our conceptions about knowledge and curriculum, and when we understand that these are not impartial instruments, we will have the chance to create other project of education that is based on freedom and on the possibilities of learning outcomes with epistemes that emerge from the contrast of different identities, subjectivities, and experiences that constitute our society.

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