Policy discourses and multi-scalar interactions in curriculum development: Institutionalizing and translating ethnicity/race issues in Brazilian education
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Introduction
This is the text of the samba song “Nega Maluca” (crazy black woman) used during one of the presentations given at the celebration of National Black Consciousness Day held on a Saturday morning in School 10. One of the 6th-grade pupils, dressed in a few torn apart colorful pieces of cloth tied together around her waist, an old wig with badly kept curly black hair, and wearing heavy make-up with lipstick smeared all around her mouth, danced joyfully to the stirring rhythms of this well-known song. The 200 people or so in the audience in the sports court (pupils from different grades, teachers, the pedagogical/management team, and one representative from the municipality secretariat of education) reacted enthusiastically, laughing, clapping, and dancing.

Of the twelve schools I analyzed in Niterói in the first stage of fieldwork in this municipality, School 10 was one where a slight majority of actors did express having a positive view of Law 10.639. In the second stage of fieldwork in Niterói, on this specific Saturday, I observed teachers organizing a variety of activities related to the school-wide project entitled “Africa em nós” (Africa within us). I observed African tales being read, an exhibition of African masks pupils had made, a presentation of poems on the theme racism, discrimination, and identity, and a black fashion show. This celebration of National Black Consciousness Day, a school holiday detailed in clause 79-B of Law 10.639 (see Chapter 1) and as such obligatory at all public and private primary and secondary schools, was not celebrated at all in most of the other eleven schools I visited in Niterói. However, as the opening of this chapter illustrates, in School 10 too the enactments on the law were based on different interpretations. Some of them – like the “crazy black woman” presentation – even resulted in practices that are at complete odds with the objectives on which the law is based.

In this chapter I present data collected to gain insight into the question of how the new policy discourse, presented in the last two chapters, is received and recontextualized at the school level, and what conditions contribute to its effective implementation (sub-question B). Understanding the recontextualization and translation of the new policy discourse into problems and issues for schools is considered essential in order to gain insight into how discourses and multi-scalar interactions influence the process of curriculum development with regard to ethnicity/race and education in contemporary Brazil. The focus is on understanding the dialectical processes between the politics concerning ethnicity/race and education (discussed in the previous two chapters) and pedagogical practices and strategies in schools.

In the period in which this study was conducted, no systematic evaluation by authorities of the implementation of Law 10.639 existed.\(^{209}\) Therefore, in line with the explorative character of this part of the study, I hope to give an initial impetus to the further investigation of the formation and transformation of pedagogical practices related to Law 10.639 in the school context.\(^{210}\) I do this by focusing on three issues: 1) What contextual factors affect the implementation related to Law 10.639 and the Curriculum Directive 003/2004 in one municipality school in Niterói, Rio de Janeiro (empirical question b1), 2) How do members of the pedagogical/management team (educationists, coordinators, principal, and vice-principal) and teachers in the school acknowledge and translate the content of Law 10.639 and the Curriculum Directive 003/2004 (empirical question b2) and, 3) How does the personal background of teachers influence the way they work in the school with ethnicity/race issues (empirical question b3). However, before turning to the analysis of data collected on School 10 that was taken as a case, the situation regarding the implementation of Law 10.639 in twelve of the larger schools in municipality Niterói is briefly commented on.

6.1 Beyond a Focus on Implementation

As clarified in Chapter 2, this project started with the idea that teachers – as well as other members of the pedagogical and school management team in schools (such as educationists, principals, management team, and coordinators) – are crucial agents in the (de)construction of mechanisms of exclusion in education. As such, these actors are seen as playing a fundamental role in counteracting ethnic/racial inequalities in education, contributing to the promotion of a more (also ethnically/racially) just society. However, processes of recontextualization and translation of policy discourses in the school are considered as standing in dialectical relation to processes and actors “outside” the school context, such as those extensively discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. In those chapters, the focus was on the discussion of processes and actors active in the official political arena and the civil society arena, while here the focus is primarily on the analysis of data gathered at the school level (in the pedagogical arena). However, also for this chapter it is essential to keep in mind that the framing of issues, the production of policy as texts, and the recontextualization and implementation of policies at the school level cannot be understood in isolation, as they are three phases in the policy process that interrelate and overlap.

\(^{209}\) In fact, Chapter 5 highlighted how, at the time of fieldwork, a “monitoring system” was still being developed within departments of the Ministry of Education.

\(^{210}\) This part of the study thus links up with the work realized in the project “Law 10.639 and Teaching Geography” conducted by the research group Geography, race relations and social movements, at Rio de Janeiro State University (UERJ) in which I participated in 2007-2010.
Studying Law 10.639 in a school is about gaining insight in what is “thinkable” and “unthinkable” in the school context with concern to ethnicity/race issues. As explained in the theoretical chapter, policy as discourse definitely establishes limits to the range of thought possible, as discourses incorporate meanings, and use propositions and words, on the basis of which certain possibilities of thinking are constructed while others are excluded (Ball, 1993). At the same time, however, politicians and other actors involved in the creation of policy texts cannot control the meanings given to texts in the pedagogical arena (Bowe et al., 1992). Professionals at work are no “naïve readers [of policy texts], they observe based on their own histories, experiences, values and intentions.” (Bowe et al., 1992: 22). In sum, policies are not simply implemented, but are recontextualized in practice (Ball et al., 2012: 3).

Like all policy instruments, Law 10.639 also “classifies” knowledge in a specific way (Bernstein, 1990). As was discussed in Chapter 4, in the case of Law 10.639, the classification of knowledge with regard to ethnicity/race was based on the frame of the Brazilian Black Movement, characterized by a sociopolitical interpretation of ethnicity/race issues. 211 This interpretation emphasizes the need to remain conscious of the political character and role of educational contexts, processes, contents, and actors. From this perspective, in (the formation and transformation of) pedagogical practices differences should be addressed, and the relationships and processes between different (cultural or ethnic/racial) groups should be studied. Hence, the frame of the Law takes into account identities and groups, yet allows for multiple forms of – collective – identity, sources of solidarity, dynamics, and hybridity of cultures. In the process of developing pedagogical practices and educational contents, conflict should be recognized and taken into account. Where the objective is to empower minorities, the importance is recognized of supporting and actively seeking input from oppressed groups (see also Sleeter, 1996). Moreover, in revising educational contents and practices, the intention is to interrogate “modernity” and investigate the dominance of whiteness, and the intersection of ethnicity/race categories with class and gender categories in histories and realities of exclusion. Accordingly, based on the sociopolitical approach, Law 10.639 redefines the perspective taken on Brazilian reality and the approach to ethnicity/race issues in the dominant curriculum.

In the investigation of the processes taking place in the school context, this chapter focuses on the processes in which the new policy is received and translated in discourse. As mentioned above, before turning to the analysis of data collected on School 10 that was taken as a case, the situation regarding the implementation of Law 10.639 in twelve of the larger schools in municipality Niterói will be briefly commented on.

6.2 Mapping the Local Situation: Law 10.639 in Niterói Primary Schools

Before selecting a case school where I would conduct a more in-depth analysis, the idea was to gain insight into the ways Law 10.639 and the Curriculum Directives were being implemented in a broad as possible range of schools, six years after approval of the law. To this end, I analyzed twelve municipality schools for primary education in the municipality of Niterói, in the state of Rio de Janeiro, collecting data with members of the pedagogical team (educationists and coordinators) and the school management team (a principal and/or vice-principal). Semi-structured interviews were held and in a few cases where the actors could not meet for an interview, a questionnaire was left

211 The sociopolitical interpretation of ethnicity/race issues was discussed in Chapter 2.
addressing the same issues as the interview. Table 6.1 summarizes answers given regarding the issues covered in the interviews and questionnaires.

| Table 6.1 Knowledge and beliefs of the pedagogical/management team\(^{212}\) of 12 schools in Niterói |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---|
| **Issue** | **%** |
| Know about Law 10.639 | 75 |
| Confirmed having read it | 25 |
| Opinion on Law 10.639 |  |
| Positive | 57.1 |
| Negative | 7.1 |
| Ambivalent | 28.6 |
| Did not respond | 7.2 |
| Have read Curriculum Directives | 12.5 |
| Have informed themselves about issue | 31.3 |
| Completed training on issue\(^{213}\) | 31.3 |
| Confirm that school works with theme | 62.5 |
| Confirm that Political Pedagogic Project includes theme | 37.5 |
| Identify racism in their school | 37.5 |

Source: Interviews (N=16) conducted at 12 municipal schools, Niterói.

The outcomes presented in Table 6.1 show that the majority of the members of the pedagogical/management team in the twelve schools knew about Law 10.639, while a considerably smaller number had read the policy text itself. A slight majority of these actors evaluated the law positively. A small percentage was explicitly negative, while nearly a third held a rather ambivalent opinion. One third of the participants confirmed having followed some kind of training on the issue, while the same number also said to have informed themselves on the issue in other ways (for example, by reading about it and through other media). A slight majority stated that their school worked with the issues covered by Law 10.639, while slightly over a third confirmed that the Political Pedagogic Project of the school covered the issue. Moreover, a third again of the school administration members identified some kind of manifestation of racism in their school.

Looking at these findings, two issues catch the eye: Firstly, only a slight majority had an explicitly positive opinion on Law 10.639. Secondly, the number of actors confirming that they know the law is much higher than the percentage that read the law or the Curriculum Directives, or the number stating having informed themselves or having followed training on the issue. This leads to the conclusion that the knowledge of the majority of the members does not have a solid base. Implementation based on some level of ignorance, as well as “inactions” (Lukes in Hay, 2002a: 179), are still considered to be “enactments.” These enactments also influence the recontextualization process in the school (the anecdote at the beginning of this chapter is a good example). Accordingly, when reading the outcomes in Table 6.1 it should be kept in mind that perceptions and evaluations of these members, regarding the implementation of the law and concerning the identification of racism in the school, are based on this weak knowledge base.

Hence, based on these data alone, we do not know very much about the meaning of these statements and opinions, and how they relate to what actually happens in the school. When actors confirm their school works with the law, this leads to a number of questions: 1) Is this really the

\(^{212}\) Educationists, coordinators, and the principal and/or vice principal.

\(^{213}\) Varying in type and duration, from short in-service training sessions to courses provided by an actor outside the school and regular teacher-training program.
case? (Did participants not simply give politically correct answers?), and 2) In what way and based on what interpretation do the actors in the school work with it? Does a presentation of a samba dance on National Black Consciousness Day on the 20th of November, or inviting a capoeira group for a performance once a year mean that the law is being implemented? These first data do not provide enough information to really answer the question through which processes the content of Law 10.639 and the Curriculum Directives are translated into dealing with problems and issues in these schools, and what the responses of the schools to these problems and issues are (Dale, 1994). They do not give us insight into the interpretations, contestations, and recreations related to the issues covered in the law. Moreover, members of the management team might have different views on and experiences with the topic than teachers. Accordingly, the data presented above only reflect the state of art concerning basic knowledge and beliefs of members of the pedagogical/management team on Law 10.639 and their views on its implementation in the institution.

For an in-depth understanding of the processes and the responses to these, the answers of individual actors need to be closely analyzed. These answers need to be triangulated with other data sources such as statements of other team members, document analysis, and observation in the school context. Therefore, the data analysis focuses on qualitative data collected at one of the 12 schools. Focusing the analysis on one school allowed me to embark on a more in-depth investigation of the formation and transformation of pedagogical practices related to Law 10.639 in the school context.

6.3 The Case of School 10

As no data were available on “the state of art” concerning enactments related to Law 10.639 on the municipality schools in Niterói, I based my selection of the case school on observations made during the first fieldwork visits. Compared to the other 11 schools, in School 10 a larger percentage of actors considered the law important, and tried to develop work related to it. Moreover, School 10 was one of the larger schools that, in addition to the regular first and second cycle of primary education, also offered an evening education program for youth and adults. It was also an institution where, compared to the other schools, more members of the school management and pedagogical team recognized the importance of working with the issues covered by Law 10.639, with many actors in the institution confirming that the school worked with the issue. I also became interested in focusing on School 10 as it was a school that attracted pupils belonging to the lowest socioeconomic sections of society. Hence, the societal problem of exclusion was most directly visible inside and around this school.

In the case school, data were collected through interviews, surveys, and focus group discussions with different actors (members of the school management team, the pedagogical team, teachers, and pupils), analyzing documents (such as the Political Pedagogic Project and other project descriptions), and observation. When analyzing the data gathered on this case school, I also often turned to revised data collected on the other schools, as this allowed me to reflect on and understand issues and processes observed in School 10. In order to understand the ways in which Law 10.639 is being recontextualized and translated in the case of School 10, it is important to gain insight into the context, and to get a clearer picture of the actors operating within it. The next section therefore focuses on the school population and the school culture.

214 See Chapter 3 for an explanation of how School 10 was selected for doing a more in-depth investigation.
6.3.1 The School Population

School 10 is one of the larger schools in the municipality of Niterói, and had a school population of 766 at the time of the fieldwork. As mentioned, the school provides education in the two cycles of primary education (total of 9 years, pupils aged 6-14), and youth and adult education (EJA, for youth older than 15 and adults). The institution is situated on the border with another municipality, on top of a hill between a lower middle-class neighborhood, with one or two-story, medium-size fenced or walled houses along quiet streets on the one side, and a fast-growing, densely populated, and busy lower-class neighborhood (or “community”) on the other (see Figure 6.1). This neighborhood consists of small one, two or three-story houses and small shops constructed close together lining narrow, mostly unpaved streets. One broader street, with little traffic and a bus stop next to a bakery/bar/hangout separates the school from this community, where most pupils of School 10 came from.

A vast majority of pupils from School 10 came from low-income households with a monthly income between EUR 210 and 420, even some with a monthly income below EUR 210. Most pupils attending the regular program lived with three or four others in a small residence. Nearly a quarter of these pupils had at least one parent/caretaker who had not completed primary education. Very few pupils had one parent/caretaker who had completed secondary education or higher education. Concerning ethnic/racial identity, when asked to choose between the race/color categories as defined by the IBGE, a majority of pupils identified themselves as brown or black. When pupils were allowed to identify themselves in their own words, these two categories were split up into a wide range of other words in which color or ethnic/racial identity were expressed. The alternative concepts used most often were moreno, escuro, and negro (brown, dark, negro). The fact is that the vast majority of the pupils did not consider themselves white, but in some way or another recognized Afro-Brazilian influences in their ethnic/racial identity.

Considering the profile of the teaching force of School 10, more than half the teachers had completed a post-Bachelor’s (Master’s or specialization) degree program or course, or had obtained

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215 In Brazil the word community is often used as a synonym for slum (in Portuguese favela). This was also the word used by the professional team of School 10 when they referred to where most of their pupils lived.

216 The information regarding the household situation and ethnic/racial identity of the pupils was collected through a survey. The survey was completed by 85 percent of the pupils attending in regular attendance, and 66 percent of pupils attending the evening EJA program. These data provided a basic overview of the socioeconomic condition of the related households. For a complete overview of the household situation and ethnic/racial identity of the pupils of School 10, see Appendix VII.

217 For an explanation of the ethnicity/race categories used by IBGE see the discussion in Chapter 1.

218 As table VIIb in Appendix VII shows, at School 10, 34 percent of the EJA students did not fill in this question. During data collection on this school, and also on the other case school (School 3), this group of students in general was perceived as having much greater difficulties with filling in the questionnaire. In the first place literacy problems existed, but it also seemed that individuals were not used to having to state their color/racial/ethnic identity; a certain taboo seemed to exist. This was also perceived when the students were allowed to define their ethnic/racial identity in their own words. Then sentences like “I am a bit dark, I believe,” “I am not white,” “A bit light, a dirty kind of white” were used which reflect the fact that these people identify themselves by comparing themselves to the (white) norm. It was interesting to perceive this difference, as it could be a sign of the fact that discussing ethnicity/race is becoming more accepted throughout the generations.

219 It is important to note the difficulty of translating these terms, as in some cases they have completely different meanings in different (national/historical) contexts. For example, while in the United States use of the term “negro” is considered highly offensive by some black American leaders, who associate it with the long history of slavery, segregation, and discrimination, in Brazil this use of the word was introduced by the Black Movement as indicating the political consciousness related to accepting one’s identity (see, e.g., Silva in Brazil, 2004: 14-15), with negro then referring not only to skin color, but also – or in the first place – to a political identity.
a doctorate degree. A majority of this group had a minimum of three years of experience as a professional in education (most even had over 10 years), with the majority having already worked at least three to six years in School 10. Most of these teachers also worked at another school, implying that most of them worked part-time at School 10. Among the teaching force, men were in the minority. Concerning ethnic/racial identity, when asked to choose between the race/color categories as defined by the IBGE, most of the teachers who filled in the question, identified themselves as white. However, when the categories black and brown are combined (as mentioned before, something often done in analysis, for example by the IBGE to indicate the Afro-Brazilian segment of the population), a majority of this group of teachers (54%) considered themselves black or brown. Many teachers did not answer when they were asked to describe their ethnic/racial identity in their own words. Of those who did answer, a majority identified themselves as white. Others used a wide range of other words, of which the most often encountered were “negra,” “mestica,” and “morena.” Of those responding to this open question, slightly more than 40 percent of the teaching force in one way or another considered they had at least some Afro-Brazilian influences in their color/ethnic racial identity.

Among the pedagogical/management team, a majority had completed a post-Bachelor’s (Master’s or specialization) degree program or course, or had a higher education degree. The majority of team members that responded to the question had worked in School 10 for ten or more years. One third of the pedagogical/management team members also worked at another school, implying that some members worked part-time at School 10. All the pedagogical/management team members were women. When asked to identify their own ethnical/racial identity using the IBGE race/color categories, a majority responding to the question identified themselves as white. Other prominent responses were brown and black. Combining the last two categories, it can be observed that one third of the pedagogical/management team members identified at least some Afro-Brazilian elements in their ethnic/racial identity. This means that, compared to the pupils and the teachers, fewer members of the pedagogical/management team identified themselves as Afro-Brazilian.

Data were collected through surveys that asked for information about education and professional history and identity. The survey was filled in by 57 percent of the teachers. The rest of the teachers were not present at the meetings in which I distributed the survey (often because they were giving classes at other schools that day). In a few cases teachers who were present did not fill in the survey. When my assistant or I had the opportunity to ask why they did not participate, often lack of time was given as reason. In some cases teachers were seen correcting and grading work during the meetings. For a complete overview of the background information and ethnic/racial identity of the teachers at School 10, see Table VIIIa in Appendix VIII.

For a complete overview of the background information and ethnic/racial identity of the pedagogical/management team at School 10, Table VIIIb in Appendix VIII.

Almost 25% of the pedagogical/management team members did not respond this question.
Figure 6.1 Images of the direct surroundings of School 10

- Side entrance to School 10
- Main street next to School 10
- Main access road to neighborhood
- View opposite school entrance — entrance to the community
6.3.2 School and Teaching Culture

In general, I experienced an open and positive atmosphere at School 10. The relationship between the educationists, school management team, teachers, and other school staff seemed to be open and democratic. This was reflected by the fact that at least some members of the pedagogical/management team, consisting of a principal, vice-principal, four pedagogic supervisors, and three series coordinators, were always present in team meetings or team-wide activities within the school. This was also the case when group activities related to this research project took place.223

In the team meetings in which I participated, the discussion often turned to the problems encountered with regard to the pupils and the context in which they live. The difficult socioeconomic home situation, drugs and alcohol abuse, the absence of caretakers, drug traffic, violence, insecurity, and adolescent pregnancy were recurrent issues in team meetings when reflecting on the school and its pupils. This is illustrated by the following statement made by one of the teachers:

*If we manage to not have a single pupil enter drug trafficking, if we manage to convey to a pupil the idea that there are other possibilities, then we are already very happy. Because aspiring to a legal job, considering new horizons, is already very difficult. They are very rooted [in the community], they only have this world you see.* (S10-171110)

Most professional educators at this school recognized the excluded position of this community, and thus of the huge majority of their pupils. Many team members expressed the idea that in the community where most pupils came from the presence of the state was only marked by a small healthcare center and a brutal police force. The school was referred to as a public institution with an important role in the community. Discussion on what is good education in current Brazilian society and specifically in the context of this community was recurrent within the team.

According to some teachers, the dominant attitude among the pupils towards education was one of non-interest. Many team members expressed the idea that among the pupils the notion prevailed that education is not required to be successful in life. Some team members found that pupils were much more oriented towards earning money in an “easy” manner – that is, in illegal and dangerous ways – following examples set by other “powerful” youngsters in the community, or focused on looking for low-paid and less prestigious jobs, following the path of most parents and family members. A few teachers expressed the idea that, based on a lack of compromise and responsibility, some parents and pupils only used the school to receive social support such as free meals and the monthly income provided by the conditional cash transfer program Bolsa Familia. With regard to this “mismatch” between what pupils look for in a school and what their institution could offer, in one discussion a few teachers even referred to the school and education in general as an “instituição falida” (a failed institution). Accordingly, some teachers admitted feeling powerless in their role as educators and a tendency towards “giving up,” not wanting to invest more time and energy in critically looking at the role of the school and their own pedagogical practices in changing the reality of the pupils. Other teachers framed the problem in a different way. This is illustrated by the following quote from a focus group discussion with a group of teachers from the second cycle. While agreeing with the observation of non-interest and lack of involvement of part of the pupils, they also emphasized the broader societal context in which these pupils grow up and to which the school and its professionals need to respond:

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223 Such as focus group discussions and data feedback sessions (see Chapter 3).
Teacher 1: [With the infrastructure that we have here, they [the pupils] should have the best education possible. But when is that the case? Only when the education they receive is in some way significant for them. They do not get that schools are meant for study. They think it is there to do anything, you know? But then, who puts this in their minds? Who causes this?

Teacher 2: [...] The school is not the only failed institution. All public institutions are. Just think about the police... about healthcare. When you start to think about this, then you see that it seems that all responsibility is put on the school. But the fact is that our society is not going well. It is not only the school. There are various factors. [...] And all this influences what the school represents today.

Teacher 3: And we keep working the same way, even when today the reality is different and we are in a complete different situation.

Teacher 2: This is exactly what we need to discuss [...] (S10-09092009)

The idea is shared widely among Brazilian scholars that in Brazil school inclusion has not managed to overcome the level of simple integration into the institutional space of the school. Senna, Glatt, and Mattos (2005: 69) affirm, for example, that it is not enough to just include new pupils in the school, as was done in Brazil in pioneering fashion. They argue: “Today we must go further: it is necessary to make the included individuals real social subjects, legitimately recognized as such, or there is a risk of giving school a merely existentialist character.” Accordingly, reference is made to the need of “changing the paradigm of education.”

In this regard, in School 10 two clashing discourses were observed: one group of professionals holding on to what education and school traditionally represented, and another group trying to reformulate the pedagogical project, looking for ways to respond to the needs, reality, struggles, and identities of the pupils and their parents they serve. In the next quote – taken from the same focus group discussion cited above – the experience of this division is clearly expressed by one of the teachers:

Teacher 1: [...] I believe that our fault – the fault of the education we provide here today – is that we always base ourselves on common sense. We base ourselves on pre-established parameters. [...] Accordingly, if I do not manage to see that reality has changed, that the parameters need to change, I will keep arguing “Aaah... in former days it was like this... in former days it was like that...”

Teacher 2: When here [in the school] we say we are going to realize a project, teachers protest “Then we need to work more, we need to do this, we need to do that...” They do not think it is necessary. Something that should be natural, obvious. We should not need to have a special day for that, a special law that tells us what to do if this all could come more naturally... (S10-09092009)

These tensions were observed as playing part in the overall school culture, observable during the team meetings but also in physical aspects of the school. In the team meetings, a majority of teachers played an active role, while a small group clearly distanced themselves – both physically (correcting exams during the focus group discussion) and content-wise in the discussions – from the idea that education and the manner of educating should be questioned and revised. Interestingly, in this regard the pedagogical/management team was not observed as taking a lead in the discussion and reformulation of teaching in the school.

While openings for debate existed, in practice the continuity of “traditional” forms of schooling seemed to dominate in the educational culture in the school. This traditional form of schooling was found in such aspects of the school as singing the national hymn, and physical aspects such as the use of school uniforms, the school bell, and the religious/Christian messages,
representations, and symbols spread across the school (see Figure 6.2). It could also be recognized in non-physical aspects such as the division of the learning process into different subjects, and holding on to the pre-established (and often outdated) teaching material. In sum, the fact that a majority of the teachers, in the autonomy they had vis-à-vis daily practice, confirmed holding on to a hierarchical approach to knowledge. Thereby they gave preference to the more “instrumental” aspects of education, which in turn resulted in the continuity of traditional forms of schooling. Reference to the community and the school as two producers of knowledge was rarely found. This culture should also be understood as influencing the ways in which new policy initiatives such as Law 10.639 were received. Henceforth the next section focuses on the ways in which Law 10.639 was recontextualized in School 10.
Religious message on the wall of the dining hall: “The Lord is my shepherd and I shall lack nothing.”

Religious message on the wall of the dining hall: “The Lord blesses the food we shall eat.”

“Happy Christmas.”

Symbolic representations of school and surrounding in corridor.
6.3.3 Recontextualization of Law 10.639

As highlighted in the last section, in the focus group discussions, while debating ethnicity/race issues in education in general and Law 10.639 in particular, several issues were brought up by the pedagogical/management team members and teachers. In addition to the data collected through the surveys and interviews, these debates offered opportunities to further identify the ways in which these actors problematized issues regarding ethnicity/race in the school and how they reflected on the development of (their own) pedagogical practices related to these issues. Regarding problematization, issues came up such as (racist) teasing, (race and religion related) prejudice among the pupils, low self-esteem of black pupils, and (exclusionary) social structures in the classroom.

The first data collected during fieldwork at School 10 regarding implementation related to and knowledge of Law 10.639 gave a similar picture of the twelve schools as discussed earlier (see overview of answers given in Tables 6.2 and 6.3). A slight majority of staff said they had a positive opinion regarding the law, and a majority confirmed that the school worked with the contents of the law. At the same time, the data show that the knowledge base of the teachers and the pedagogical/management team regarding the issue of Law 10.639 was not very strong.224 While almost all members of the pedagogical/management team knew about Law 10.639, only half of this group said they had read it. Even fewer teachers knew the law existed and almost none of them confirmed having read it. The interviews and focus group discussion clarified that many of the actors who knew about the law had merely “heard about it,” some during their standard academic training, others from colleagues, and some through popular media.225

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224 The collected data reveal that ethnicity/race issues in general or on Law 10.639 are not even part of standard academic training of pedagogical/management team members.

225 The fact that their knowledge of the content of the law is rather superficial is confirmed in the ways in which these actors frame the essence of the law. This issue will be discussed later in the chapter.
Table 6.2
Overview data collection outcomes of School 10 teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers that confirm knowing about Law 10.639</td>
<td>68.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers that confirmed to have read it</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers that confirm having read Curriculum Directives</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers that confirm having informed themselves about issue</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*In what way</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations*</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal experiences</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During standard academic schooling</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional – academic or other – training/lecture*</td>
<td>8.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Teachers in School 10 that mentioned having (partial) information</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g., through colleagues or training)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers that completed training on issue</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Duration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1 and 2 hrs</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar (between 2 hrs and whole day)</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short course (more days, up to 50 hrs)</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer course (51 hrs or more)</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers that confirm working with theme</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*In what way</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In their subject(s)</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In special project(s)</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Frequency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every week</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every month</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each semester</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each year</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion of teachers regarding Law 10.639 proposal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambivalent</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not respond</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Questionnaires (N= 35), conducted in August 2009
Table 6.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members that confirm knowing about Law 10.639</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members that confirm having read it</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members that confirm having read Curriculum Directives</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members that confirm having informed themselves about issue</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>In what way</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations*</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal experiences</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During standard academic schooling</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional – academic or other – training/lecture*</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Members that mentioned to have got (part of) information in School 10 (e.g., through colleagues or training)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members that completed training on issue</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Duration</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1 and 2 hrs</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar (between 2 hrs and whole day)</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short course (more days, up to 50 hrs)</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer course (51 hrs or more)</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members that confirm that school works with theme</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>In what way</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In specific subject(s)</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In special project(s)</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Frequency</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every week</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every month</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each semester</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each year</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members that confirm that Political Pedagogic Project of the school includes the issue</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion members regarding Law 10.639 proposal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>55.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambivalent</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not respond</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members that confirm the existence of some manifestation of racism in the school</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interviews and questionnaires (N= 9) conducted in June-September 2009
As stated earlier, it was the intention in this study to triangulate answers of individual actors with other data sources such as statements of other team members, document analysis, and observation in the school context. Accordingly, combining the outcomes of the interviews and surveys on the issues included in the tables, descriptions given by actors of the essence of the law, and their reflections on pedagogical practices, it was inferred that a majority of the team members hold interpretations of Law 10.639 and the Curriculum Directives that are not in line with these instruments’ original frame. Of the pedagogical/management team member accounts, 22.2 percent fits under what I referred to in Chapter 2 as the cultural interpretation, while 54.3 percent of the teacher accounts would fit this interpretation. In addition, 66.6 percent of the School 10 pedagogical/management team accounts show elements of a sociopolitical interpretation. Among the teachers, 34.2 percent of the statements somewhere reflected a sociopolitical interpretation. In both approaches, more and less critical interpretations could be found. The next section will focus first on how this majority of teachers reflected on the essence of the law. The discussion then turns to how they reflected on their pedagogical practices concerning issues related to Law 10.639.

Reproducing Ethnicity/Race in the School

In the accounts of a majority of the team members, several elements of the cultural approach to ethnicity/race issues, and the formal approach to equality of opportunities in education were recognized. This section presents examples of these narratives to illustrate how certain narratives reproduce ethnicity/race issues in the school context. The following elements of the reproduction discourse will be highlighted: the principle of non-discrimination; the understanding of the Law 10.639 proposal as supplementary educational contents; the focus on “the other”; and whiteness as norm.

The principle of non-discrimination

The following statement made by one teacher during a focus group discussion with a group of teachers from the second cycle is a good illustration of how the principle of non-discrimination is linked to arguments against the law:

I do not understand the obligatory character. We are all humans! Do you understand? I do not see why I should be obliged to work on culture or race when I do not see a difference [between pupils] [...] I think it is something completely incomprehensible! [...] I understand the importance of working with it [ethnicity/race issues], but I can’t see the difference [between pupils]. I believe that the basic principle is loving they neighbor. One should work on that, understand? (S10-09092009).

This teacher defines her resistance by the fact that the curricular content regarding ethnicity/race issues takes the form of a law that obliges schools and teachers to work with it. While this teacher expressed “understanding the importance of working with the issue,” she then explained not agreeing with the content of the law, as “she does not see cultural or racial differences.” As can be read, she refers thereby to the – in Brazil often heard Christian – principle of *loving thy neighbor* (“amor ao proximo”). She expresses her preference to work on the dissemination of this principle

226 When analyzing the statements of actors it is striking that some actors who did confirm knowing about the law did not give an answer when they were asked to reflect on its essence (amongst the pedagogical/management team of School 10 this was 11% and amongst the teachers 14%). Another 22 percent of the pedagogical/management team and 9 percent of the teachers, in response to this question, simply copied the brief description of the law I used in the surveys and interviews (“a law that makes obligatory the teaching on Afro-Brazilian and African history and culture”).

227 The remaining percentage (amongst the pedagogical/management team 11.2% and amongst the teachers 11.5%) is made up of unclear answers to the question and non-response to the issue.
instead of “working on culture or race.” Similar arguments from other teachers also reflected the idea that it should not be compulsory to work with the issues covered by Law 10.639. They reflected the idea that the teaching and learning process, in this regard too, should be “pleasant,” something that comes about “naturally.” In this regard the idea was often expressed that “kids do not discriminate.” This was presented as yet another argument to not touch upon the issue.

This idea was also reflected in pedagogical practices. Some actors referred to name-calling among pupils (using words like “ape”) as “simply teasing between kids,” or as “minor incidents,” while others understood this to be racist manifestations fitting in a wider pattern of problematization of the black identity and normalization of the white identity. For example, in one focus group discussion with teachers from the second cycle, the first response to my question whether they perceived racism in the school was:

Teacher 1: Real racism I haven’t seen yet.
Teacher 2: I believe never... I believe that the majority here is black.
Teacher 1: We have these kids jokes, but I believe we have nothing serious.

(S10-09092009)

Analyzing these statements, it can be seen that the arguments are built around a restricted understanding of the concepts culture, race, and racism. I argue that this lack of conceptual understanding is one of the factors lying at the core of the explanation for why the law is implemented only by some. I will return to this issue later.

Ethnicity/Race Issues as Supplementary Contents

In line with the principle of non-discrimination and the idea that we should not be obliged to work on “culture” and “race,” several actors expressed the opinion that the teaching and learning process should be something pleasant that comes about “naturally.” One teacher stated, for example: “This should be part of the curriculum without the need for a law that makes it compulsory. The issues should be approached in a natural way” (S10TM18). This kind of statement indicates the idea that the law is supplementary to educational contents and processes. The dominance of this idea was, among others, reflected in the fact that a majority of those actors who stated that they worked with the law said they did so merely in the context of the school-wide celebration of National Black Consciousness Day once every year. Many teachers also referred to activities related to the “Africanity project” which was to take place in the period of my fieldwork (see Figure 6.3 below). The practices observed on this occasion, partially described at the beginning of this chapter, also show how the understanding of ethnicity/race issues as supplementary contents often accompany a focus on cultural expressions such as music, literature, and dance. This importance given to the extracurricular (and often “celebrative”) character of working with the contents of Law 10.639, reflects the cultural interpretation of working with identity, difference, and inequality in education that starts from a (voluntary) “celebration of differences” instead of a critical questioning of and engagement with underlying power issues.

It was observed that by considering the law to be a “non-obligatory supplement,” in fact the problem (or at least the urgency of the problem) underlying the claim of the law – the existence of racism in education and in Brazilian society in general – goes unrecognized. Hence the historical struggle of groups – in this case the struggle giving rise to Law 10.639 – and the lived realities of racial exclusion of individuals is neglected. Moreover, this non-recognition leads to a superficial focus on culture and traditions. As already mentioned, at some point the non-critical sociopolitical
interpretation of the law comes close to the cultural interpretation in this sense. Accordingly, some less critical sociopolitical interpretations of the law showed a similar approach on this point. For example, when asked to reflect on the essence of Law 10.639, in an interview this pedagogical/management team member formulated it as follows:

[Studying the] issue of the history of Africa, we do not have that as a tradition. Since we started to study, we study the history of Europe. With regard to Africa, we are only taught that the slaves were brought to Brazil. [...] We never studied their traditions. We only know this about our history. As such this law came to stimulate us to also look for African literature, something we do not know anything about. And [consider] our culture, completely awash with these issues from the African culture, in our vocabulary [...] In this sense really, if there would not have been this law, this issue would remain forgotten like it always has been. [...] From the moment on that the law makes it compulsory to study African culture, and even African literature, I will believe that the theme has started to gain more importance in the school. And, in that way, from the next generations onward this will become something more natural. (S10PMCE16)

It is worth recalling here that this pedagogical/management team member does touch slightly on the sociopolitical meaning and value of the law (she does reflect on what was taught up until now). Nonetheless, the fragment is a clear example of a problematization of the current state of affairs, with no critical reflection on the need to revise already existing dominant ideas, attitudes, and educational contents and processes. The emphasis in this account lies on the need for a search for supplementary knowledge, with this actor referring to culturally related knowledge such as traditions and literature. Building on the work of May and Sleeter (2010), this actor could be said to describe the essence of the problem as lying in a misunderstanding of difference that is based on a lack of knowledge. Accordingly, the problem can be solved only by providing supplementary knowledge through teaching about “them.”

To clarify the argument, the following statement, a pedagogical/management team member’s response to an open question during an interview, can be considered an interpretation that does reflect an understanding of the law as an opportunity to also critically examine the majority in power and the dominant ideas, beliefs, and educational contents and processes regarding culture and (racial/ethnical) identity:

I believe that it [the Law] opens up a new horizon for pupils, from which the pupils can see our society in another way. Because until now, what we have taught our pupils on a daily basis is that blacks were slaves, that they suffered being a slave. This was the idea pupils generally had. But now we start to show them something else: “Look, blacks were cheap laborers. I mean, They did not cost anything! And without this undervalued labor force, the owners of the sugar mills would not have anything and Brasil would not have had the level of development it had at the time!” Consequently, I believe that it is about the transformation of this issue for the pupils, about showing the importance of this culture and history to our everyday lives. (S10PMCH16)

By referring to the need to transform pupils’ views on and understanding of society and everyday life, this teacher indeed questions and problematizes the mainstream curriculum (the way history is told), and so points to the need to revise ideas, beliefs, and contents. This thus is an example of a more critical sociopolitical interpretation of Law 10.639.
Focus on the Other
As seen above, the understanding of Law 10.639 as supplementary content links to the idea that ethnicity/race issues and Law 10.639 is for and about “them”/“the other” – in the context of Law 10.639 this refers to the black pupils. It was found that many cultural accounts (as well as some less critical sociopolitical accounts) of teachers and pedagogical/management team members were accompanied by a mere focus on “them” and “their ethnicity/race, culture and identity.” This is in line with the widespread idea of Law 10.639 being “the law of and for blacks” (see Chapter 5 for discussion on how this idea is also present in the official political arena).

The understanding of ethnicity/race issues as being for and about “them” or “the other” was perceived, for example, in the way the actors in the school reflected on a perceived low self-esteem of black pupils. Prejudice among and the lack of self-esteem of black pupils was a recurrent issue in the interviews, focus group discussions, and answers given to open questions in the surveys. Accordingly, a majority identified discrimination to be a problem among “them” (black pupils). At School 10, and at the other schools too, several teachers and pedagogical/management team members identified it as a factor that makes the development of work towards implementation of Law 10.639 difficult. A few teachers even referred in the questionnaires to low

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228 The program lists the activities of the day (dance presentations, capoeira, literary café, exhibitions, and a closing samba) and workshops (maracatu dance, nago, banto puppets, fabric painting, and making bijouterie) and announces the closure of the day with a samba music. It also quotes a poem written by Nelson Mandela: “No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”

229 Amongst the teachers, seven mentioned the issue of prejudice and (low) self-esteem of black pupils.
self-esteem among black pupils as one of the factors most negatively affecting the development of pedagogical practices regarding Law 10.639:

*The children themselves deny their own identity. This makes it difficult to explain the issue and introduce the pupils to the context of the theme.* (S10TX39)

*The children from the 6th and 7th year already feel ashamed about being black, and at the same time they discriminate their peers. Until now I haven’t met a child proud about his or her color, or about his or her ancestors.* (S10TY39)

*The black child does not accept being black. This is a fact that makes me a bit insecure about how to approach the issue.* (S10TAC39)

*Some pupils discriminate themselves and also their colleagues.* (S10TA39)

As can be observed in these quotes, statements that referred to low self-esteem were often accompanied by statements regarding discrimination, racism, or prejudice among black pupils. Interestingly, other actors in the school, while observing among black pupils the problems of assuming blackness, refer to it not as a factor that frustrates, but as something that shows the urgency of the need to work with the issues proposed by Law 10.639. Hence, some of these actors identified the moments in which these kind of conflicts emerge to be opportunities to work on the theme. Again, here it is argued that the different understanding of concepts such as prejudice, identity, and race are what make these actors approach the issue in such a different way.

**Whiteness as Norm**

Related to the last point, it is interesting to note that the huge majority of teachers and pedagogical/management team members, when reflecting on Law 10.639 and related issues such as race, prejudice, and identity, only reflected on “blackness” (“their” – the pupils – identity). “Whiteness,” on the other hand, seen also as an ethnic/racial identity created throughout history, went unmentioned. This can be considered to be an example of the “continued invisibility of whiteness,” the refusal to acknowledge how white people are implicated in relations of social domination, subordination, and instances of economic exploitation (Solomon et al., 2005: 159, see also the discussion in Chapter 2).

The lack of critical reflection on whiteness was perceived when the issue of racism was debated, but also when members were asked to describe the racial identity or character of the pupils and teachers in School 10. In some cases responses contained the words “just normal” or “just white.” This shows how whiteness is often considered the norm that, in the view of some actors, does not need to be mentioned or critically investigated.230

While focusing on “them” and “their ethnicity/race culture and identity” the majority in power and problematization of its influence on the development and maintenance of the mainstream curriculum (what is thought in schools) is left out of the discussion. Accordingly, the “continued invisibility of whiteness” was another factor that helped in maintaining distance from

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230 The fact that some social beliefs are very strong is in the Brazilian case is illustrated by the fact that even some black individuals in their discourse expressed considering whiteness the norm. This was perceived, for example, in the words used by students when they were asked to describe their own racial/color identity. Some white students affirmed to be “normal, white,” while some black individuals stated being “a bit white,” “half white” or “dirty white.” However, students are also agents with strategies – and these can be strategies that go against the dominant social norm in society too. This was illustrated, for example, by answers such as “I am black and beautiful” and “I am marvelous, I am black.”
becoming involved with Law 10.639. The fact that reflecting on “whiteness” seems to be unthinkable in the context of School 10, can therefore be understood to be an example of how socially shared beliefs also exist in the school. In the theoretical discussion on ideology and discourse presented in Chapter 2, it was argued that social beliefs are frequently grounded in discourses in which certain beliefs are presupposed by the narrator (sometimes unconsciously) and not considered explicitly as information.

In sum, while some actors argue that working with these issues should “come about naturally,” in these narratives ethnicity/race issues are not discussed as a “natural” part of the curriculum. Various conscious or unconscious, joint and individual strategies were found concerning how a majority of actors in the school distanced themselves from the law and the development of transformative pedagogical practices related to it. The dominant idea is that the law is supplementary to educational contents and processes, carries no obligations, and is not a necessary revision of these contents and processes. The notion that working with the law should be somehow pleasant is expressed and is accompanied by the fear that the obligation of working on the issue could bring about (more) conflict, and ultimately increase prejudice. The fear of clashes and the non-recognition or neglect of (sometimes latent or veiled) conflict already present was something perceived more generally at School 10, as well as at the other schools. For example, it also appeared in things said in relation to the issue of racism in the school. It was found that in this approach the problem that provides the basis for the law – the existence of racism in education, and in Brazilian society in general – goes unrecognized, and the sociopolitical context in, and the historical struggle through which the law came about is neglected.

**Transforming Ethnicity/Race Issues**
A minority of teachers and pedagogical/management team members in the school expressed a more sociopolitical interpretation of and approach towards Law 10.639. As stated earlier, in their descriptions of the essence of the law, 66.6 percent of the accounts of the pedagogical/management team in School 10 show elements of a sociopolitical interpretation. Interestingly, among the teachers only 34.2 percent of the statements reflected this interpretation.

During fieldwork, the more critical problematizations of the issue came to the fore in some of the personal interviews held with pedagogical/management team members, and in the focus group discussions. Interestingly, in the focus group discussions, the more critical problematizations could often be heard after the “official” meeting had ended, when between four and five team members remained in the room for another forty-five minutes, raising and discussing issues brought up in the official meeting.

From the critical sociopolitical perspective, the law was considered an opportunity to critically examine the parameters of education, and the dominant ideas, beliefs, and educational contents regarding culture and (racial/ethnical) identity. Instead of calling it something “oppressive” from “above,” the accounts represented recognition of the frame of and sociopolitical context and struggle behind the policy instrument. For example, two teachers explained:

> I believe the law is keeping up with the growth of social movements that claim equal rights for people with Afro-Brazilian identities. In this sense the law responds to a just social demand and becomes important in the construction of a memory of these people. (S10TD18)

> The existence of this law reveals a prejudiced country with regard to African and Afro-Brazilian culture. However, this is not so explicit for large parts of the population. If such a topic would be important [to
these major parts of the population], it would not have been necessary to create a law in order to
discuss it. (S10TY18)

In addition to a majority that said to work with the contents of the law only once a semester or
once a year, only slightly over 14 percent of the participating teachers mentioned working with the
issue on a daily basis in some way or another. A few teachers said they enjoyed certain opportunities
that arose in the school or community context where they could address the matter, for example
using dialogues or dynamics between pupils to discuss certain issues. One teacher, for example,
stated in the survey to be working with the issue “on a daily basis, in situations in which the theme can be
explored in dialogue. For example when there is a fight between two pupils. One says the other is ugly [the pupils
say] ‘because you have hard hair’” (S10TAB23).

When considering how the teachers with a more critical sociopolitical approach to Law
10.639 reflect on their pedagogical practices, it is shown how, instead of avoiding certain situations
or conflict, these actors enjoy and create spaces/moments in which the issue related to prejudice,
identity, and racism can be addressed. Instead of the textbook, these teachers look for other
supplementary materials to be used in the classroom. In the definition of their role as educator in
these processes, the interference in social dynamics through dialogue takes a central place. Focus in
these practices goes to diminishing prejudice through the unveiling of exclusionary processes, and
stimulating consciousness/demystification of pupil’s beliefs, attitudes, and actions regarding certain issues.
The following is an example of a statement made by one teacher during a focus group discussion
with teachers from the second cycle:

I believe I managed to make some gains. Mainly in some of the groups [of pupils] I had last year. There I
used some of the videos from “a cor da cultura”231 [...]. In this film there is this fantastic Pai de Santo
[priest in Afro-Brazilian religions] making statements about Candomblé [an Afro-Brazilian
religion]. It was about the relation between Candomblé and respect for environment. [...] Oftentimes I bring
my pupils to a certain nature protection area, here close by, for example, and then they see these places full of
things [elements used in Afro-Brazilian religious offer ceremonies] and they say “Ooh! What a
horror! They keep contaminating these areas! ...and this and that...!” Then this was an opportunity for me
to explain that [in these Afro-Brazilian religions] this syncretism exists with European [religious]
elements, [it was an opportunity to explain] that things aren’t exactly like they think. It gave me the
opportunity to show this video that discusses Candomblé and why and how they respect nature. Then they
understood. I believe it demystified in some way or another this idea a bit that “This is Macumba! [an
Afro-Brazilian religion involving syncretistic elements, often referred to by outsiders as
witchcraft] This is not good! And this and that...” I also managed to explain that there are many
evangelic people that go to the nature protection areas to make holy bonfires in the woods, laying waste to the
woods. Then I said “Who is actually affecting [nature] more?” I believe at least they managed to become a
bit less intolerant. But you see, religious intolerance is something that makes me really angry. (S10-
09092009)

The practices of these teachers can be seen to be much more located in the pedagogical and social
processes than in the curricular subjects per se. For example, in the same focus group discussion,
another teacher affirmed the need for intervening in daily exclusionary situations in the classroom
and school. She explained how she would do this when she worked in groups in the classroom.
Based on the perception of exclusion of one pupil in her classroom, she consciously used a
different strategy for group work:

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231 “The Color of Culture” is a government/NGO partnership training program (see Appendix VI).
When I say, “OK, we are going to work in groups,” there are always these pupils who do not want to work with certain other pupils [...] Then I jump in, saying “I want one group here with Maila, another group here with so-and-so,” [...] so as not to have this random division of groups. Then, at another moment I said “OK, now we are going to choose pairs.” When they’re choosing pairs and start up with, “Aww, I do not want to work with Maila.” Then I interfere immediately “Why is that?” “Aw, teacher I don’t want to!” Then I say, “I did not say that you need to like it, I’m not saying you need to be friends for the rest of your life, I’m just asking you to do this assignment together. Imagine that you have a job interview and you turn up, you do not know anybody, and you need to work on something with someone. Would you do it alone? I would say that you do not deserve to work with me, because you can’t work in a team, and this and that…

(S10-09092009)

In this statement the teacher reacts to the widespread idea that children do not discriminate and she counteracts the widespread downplay of jokes and teasing between kids. In the next quote she explains the rationale behind her pedagogical practice:

I believe we should work on it [racism, exclusion] at base level — every time you see a situation in the classroom, the sooner you can have a conversation about this the better. Because, in fact, that’s what it is about, isn’t it? [...] You talk about it and solve it. That should be the logics, shouldn’t it? But this unfortunately does not happen very often. I think we should make this happen more. Because oftentimes you hear for example “Aw… I don’t want to stand behind him…!” [...] Often we do not perceive these kinds of things. [...] I once commented on this in a teacher meeting and then another teacher started like “Oh no, I immediately assign the groups, so these kinds of things can’t happen.” Then I said “But you should not only put together the groups, you should stop this from happening! [...] you should make the pupils understand that there is no reason for excluding other pupils. Because in fact it is not only working in groups you want to teach them, that’s not the only thing. The message is also that they should not discriminate each other! (S10-09092009)

These accounts are an example of how some actors in the school, instead of referring to prejudice among the pupils as factor that frustrates the development of pedagogical practices related to Law 10.639, use observations with regard to exclusionary processes in the school context as opportunities to work toward education in which all pupils feel recognized and valued. Accordingly, low self-esteem and difficulties regarding recognition of the (Afro-Brazilian) identity among pupils, in the view of these actors, indeed show the need for working on the issues covered by Law 10.639. Hence, the idea was expressed that working on strengthening the (Afro-Brazilian) identity of pupils could stimulate the further development of educational practices concerning ethnicity/race (some observations made during fieldwork visits conducted in schools in other municipalities confirm the same rationale, see photos in Figure 6.4 below). Accordingly, these actors did express an idea on their role as professional educator regarding this “problem,” although often doing so indirectly.
Figure 6.4  Images of the final presentation of the Afro-Brazilian identity project made during fieldwork visit to state school in the municipality of Caxias, Rio de Janeiro, October 2008
6.3.4 Factors Explaining Responses in the School

While a majority of the teachers and the pedagogical/management team in School 10 confirmed that the school worked with Law 10.639, besides the celebration of National Black Consciousness Day, not much continuity on institution-wide work on the issue was observed within the school. Regarding the recontextualization of Law 10.639 in the school, it can be stated that at some specific moments, in specific ways, and guided by individual actors, transformative practices with regard to ethnicity/race issues took place. While critical reflection on the need to (also) revise educational contents did exist, when actors reflected on their own pedagogical practices, in most accounts actions mainly took place in the pedagogical and social processes in the school.

Considering the fact that in School 10 at specific moments, in specific ways, guided by individual actors, transformative practices concerning ethnicity/race issues seemed to take place, the question arose what the factors were that positively and negatively influenced the development of other pedagogical practices related to Law 10.639 in the school. In the surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions held with team members, they were asked to identify these factors. After identifying the “positive” and “negative” factors, the actors were asked to rank them from most influential to least influential. In this section I will first present the factors brought up by the teachers and the pedagogical/management team, and then relate these to other issues and factors I identified as playing part in the process of recontextualization of Law 10.639.

Negative Factors

Considering the factors that in the view of the participants negatively influenced the formation of pedagogical practices towards the implementation of Law 10.639 (see Tables 6.6 and 6.7), (little and/or lack of) knowledge and training was the most frequently mentioned factor. Lack of material/poor material was the issue raised second most often by teachers. Interestingly, this issue was not identified by the pedagogical/management team members, who in turn identified the lack of external institutional support. As previously mentioned, in the view of the majority of teachers and part of the pedagogical/management team prejudice and low self-esteem of black pupils was another issue making the development of work on ethnicity/race issues and Afro-Brazilian and African culture and history in the school and classroom difficult. In the perspective of the teachers, this was also the case with religious issues. Reference was made to prejudice existing among pupils and within the community regarding religions with an African background. The last factor mentioned by both the pedagogical/management team and teachers as negatively influencing the development of practices related to the topic of Law 10.639, was a lack of time. The heavy workload of teachers leading to a lack of time for dealing with and studying certain issues was mentioned. One teacher referred explicitly in the survey to the (poor) working conditions of teachers in Brazil, arguing that “[there is] a lack of time for studying, because the teacher in Brazil is badly paid and needs to work in three shifts to survive” (S10TAI41).
Table 6.4 Difficulties working with ethnicity/race issues and Afro-Brazilian and African culture and history identified by School 10 teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>No. of times mentioned*</th>
<th>No. of times mentioned as most significant factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little/lack of knowledge and training</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of material/poor material</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prejudice/low self-esteem of black pupils</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious issues</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism/prejudice</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other factors linked to the pupils</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of external institutional support</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not respond</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Some teachers mentioned several factors, while others only mentioned one or none.

Source: Questionnaires (N= 35), conducted in August 2009

Table 6.5 Difficulties in working with ethnicity/race issues and Afro-Brazilian and African culture and history identified by the School 10 pedagogical/management team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>No. of times mentioned*</th>
<th>No. of times mentioned as most significant factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little/lack of knowledge and training</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of external institutional support</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prejudice/low self-esteem of black pupils</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism/Prejudice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of (quality) material</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious issues</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other factors linked to the pupils</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other233</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not respond</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Some team members mentioned several factors, while others only mentioned one or none.

Source: Interviews and questionnaires (N= 9) conducted in the period from June to September 2009

Positive Factors

Regarding the factors that positively influenced the development of pedagogical practices related to the implementation of Law 10.639 (see Tables 6.8 and 6.9) according to School 10 staff, it is striking that teachers gave most credit to *working with certain educational contents.* Some teachers referred to the use of music, arts, literature, and vocabulary (in most cases fitting in a more cultural approach), while other teachers mentioned “working with contents relating to (Afro) identity” (in most cases fitting in a more sociopolitical approach). Another positive influencing factor identified by both the teachers and the pedagogical/management team was the characteristics of the community around the school. Reference was made to the “cultural diversity,” “ethnic differences,” “racial mixing,” the “high percent of black pupils,” and the “realities in which the pupils live.” Moreover, teachers referred to certain working methods as influencing the development of pedagogical practices towards implementation of Law 10.639 in a

232 The category “other” consists of very general and often vague answers to the question, such as, for example “They do not value esthetics” (S10TI40), and “The major difficulty lies in the lack of examination of the issue” (S10TAE39).

233 Here too the category “other” consists of very general and often vague answers to the question, such as, for example, “Culture gap between pupils and teachers” (S10TH48).
positive way. The teachers most frequently mentioned the positive influence of the annual project in November coinciding with National Black Consciousness Day. This factor was not mentioned by the pedagogical/management team. The characteristics of the (organization of) the school and its team was another factor mentioned by both teachers and pedagogical/management team members. While teachers referred to the importance of “support from the management and the pedagogical team,” the pedagogical/management team referred to their role in “involving the whole team” and the need for “democratic relations within the team” The last two positive factors identified, training and (presence of) material, were only mentioned by the pedagogical/management team. As previously mentioned, with regard to the latter factor, two members of the team made reference to the number of publications existing on the topics covered by Law 10.639 as (possibly) stimulating the implementation of Law 10.639 in a positive way. The pedagogical/management team did not elaborate much on the factor “training,” but from other data it was inferred that for them too this is obviously a positive element in implementation.

Table 6.6  Factors stimulating the development of pedagogical practices for working with ethnicity/race issues and Afro-Brazilian and African culture and history identified by School 10 teachers (n = 35)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>No. of times mentioned*</th>
<th>No. of times mentioned as most significant factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working with certain educational content</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of community around the school</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certain working method</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of school, its team &amp; organization</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other 234</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not respond</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Some teachers mentioned several factors while others only mentioned one or none.
Source: Questionnaires (N= 35), conducted in August 2009

234 Here too the category “other” consists of very general and often vague answers to the question, such as, for example, “The work realized by teachers in the classroom” (S10TK42) and “It is necessary to know about differences in order to respect them” (S10TP43). Some of the statements fitting in this category suggest that the question may have been misunderstood by these actors. Some seemed to have formulated an answer in which they express their idea of the concept, instead of regarding what would stimulate developing work related to Law 10.639 in a positive way, regarding (what could be) the positive outcomes of working with the law.
Table 6.7  Factors stimulating the development of pedagogical practices for working with ethnicity/race issues and Afro-Brazilian and African culture and history identified by the School 10 pedagogic/management team (n = 9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>No. of times mentioned *</th>
<th>No. of times mentioned as most significant factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of community around the school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of school, its team &amp; organization</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certain educational content</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certain working method</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other(^{235})</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not respond</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Some team members mentioned several factors, while others only mentioned one or none.

Source: Interviews and questionnaires (N = 9) conducted in the period from June to September 2009

When analyzing the negative and positive factors identified by the team members and analyzing these together with other statements, discussions, and observations, it is interesting to note that certain factors identified by some actors as having a negative influence, are identified by others as having a positive influence. This can be considered an example of how actors respond differently to the context and the “strategic selectivity” playing a role.

Many actors, for example, did identify the presence of racial and religious prejudice among pupils in the school. Observation in the school also showed this. During data collection with the pupils in the classrooms I witnessed both racist jokes between pupils as well as the difficulty some pupils had with assuming their own ethnic/racial identity. I also observed the strong influence of the evangelical church(es) in the community, disseminating a prejudiced discourse on diabolism and black magic when referring to religions with an African background (see Figure 6.5). Interesting to see however, is that, while a majority mentions racial and/or religious prejudice as factors that make it difficult to work with the issues covered by Law 10.639, others mention the characteristics of the community the school served as a factor influencing the development of pedagogical practices concerning the issue in a positive way. In the view of the latter group, these characteristics, instead of being limiting factors, form “a point of departure” for developing work related to the contents of Law 10.639.

\(^{235}\) The category “other” also consists of very general and often vague answers to the question, such as, for example, “the teachers” (S10TH44) and “support” (S10TH44).
“Only Jesus expels *Exú* [a force from nature/a spirit created by *Olodumare*, a God in Afro-brazilian religions] from people”

“Those who love images [of ‘gods’/spirits from African religion] love the devil”

“Only Jesus expels devils from people”

“Only Jesus expels *Pomba Gira* [a force from nature/a spirit created by *Olodumare*, a God in the Afro-brazilian religions] from people”
The fact that professional actors in the school position themselves differently within the context in which they operate can also be observed regarding other factors, such as “lack of time,” “lack of material” and “lack of knowledge.” Regarding the first issue, the heavy workload of teachers leading to a lack of time for studying certain issues was mentioned. A few actors referred to the (poor) working conditions of teachers in Brazil. This point was confirmed in School 10 by the fact that, although it is a highly qualified and experienced team, almost half of the teachers and a third of the pedagogical/management team also worked in other schools. Returning to this issue in informal conversations during the fieldwork period (in both School 10 and other schools), I perceived, however, that those teachers that tried to work with the issue covered by Law 10.639 were quite sarcastic when referring to the “lack of time” argument, stating that those team members who really saw the importance of working with the issue would always find a way to address it. Reference was then made to these other teachers as “not involving themselves,” “only doing the necessary” (S10TB40), and even to practicing “veiled racism” (S10TB39). In addition, some other actors active outside the school context, while recognizing the current poor working conditions of teachers, and the need to campaign for improvement, expressed the idea that some teachers also lack the will to improve their teaching practices. One actor, linked to the private teachers union in Rio de Janeiro, stated:

The teachers suffer from thousand things and they complain... [...] and they have the right to do so. They do not have good working conditions, they have many pupils in the classroom, and this and that... I only see it like this, teachers nowadays have lost the capacity they had to change the situation in which they find themselves. [...] If I have a class with 40 pupils I need to find a way to make that class one of the best possible! [...] teachers don’t do this. (A13:22)

Similar observations can be made regarding the issue of material and its quality. While the lack of material was the “negative factor” mentioned second most often by teachers at School 10, some other teachers mentioned the existence of material as one of the most positive factors. The pedagogical/management team also emphasized that a lot of material existed, and argued that most teachers simply did not search it out. Observations I made of and the data I collected from different actors both in and outside the schools confirm the fact that since the enactment of Law 10.639 a lot of material has been produced, both at national level by the Ministry of Education, and at local level by NGOs and university associated institutions. In some cases, however, problems seemed to exist in the distribution and dissemination of such works both in and between institutions and organizations in both the official political arena and the pedagogical arena, and within the schools. In their study, Souza and Croso (2007) also found that – although teachers do identify a lack of existing material – a lot material has been developed over the last years, both by institutions linked to national government and by non-governmental initiatives.
books based on this European world vision. The history books, the natural sciences books, geography, Portuguese, they are all based on European knowledge. (S10-171110)

While these issues in themselves relate to the (lack of) priority given to Law 10.639 outside the school context too, such as in the official political arena (see also discussion in Chapter 5), in School 10 the Cor da Cultura program material disseminated by the Ministry of Education did arrive. When considering positive factors, working with certain educational contents was then also indicated by some teachers as a factor that positively influenced the development of pedagogical practices towards the implementation of Law 10.639. The accounts of those teachers working with the law show that here the material produced in the Cor da Cultura program plays a significant role in the development of practices concerning the issue.

The data discussed here clearly show that while some teachers perceive “room for maneuver,” and take up the responsibility and of trying to transform or develop practices within their daily working context, a majority of the teachers and pedagogical/management team members does not seem to see – or does not want to see – their own capacity to (at least partly) change the situation in which they find themselves. It was observed that the majority of negative factors identified by the teachers were presented as lying outside their reach to change.

6.3.5 Perceived Obstacles and Opportunities

Four main and interrelated obstacles were identified as being at the basis of the explanation to why the law is recontextualized and translated in the way it is in School 10. The first obstacle is the lack of a school-wide ongoing project related to ethnicity/race issues. The second is the lack of conceptual understanding on the part of the professional team of concepts related to ethnicity/race. The third obstacle relates to the lack of opportunity for knowledge construction where voices of “minorities in power” are included. And the last obstacle is the lack of external support received in the school for implementation of policies. In this section these three issues will be discussed.

Regarding the first issue, reference was already made to the lack of continuity in the institution-wide work on this issue within the school. This observation was confirmed by the fact that the issue of ethnic/racial inequality and race was not explicitly included in the school’s Political Pedagogic Project (PPP).237 The document does include the concepts inequality/equality and refers to socioeconomic exclusion and social justice (PPP S10: 6-7), although without elaborating on the meaning and relevance of these concepts in the school context, or linking these to other categories of exclusion, such as ethnicity/race and gender, and issues such as racial inequality and racism. Analyzing how the principles of socioeconomic exclusion and social justice are reflected in the way the “general objectives” and “specific objectives” are described, a more formal interpretation of equality of opportunities that focuses on the redistributive elements of social justice discussed in Chapter 2 was seen. An “equality of conditions of access and permanence of pupils” (PPP: 8) is promoted, while a discussion on educational processes and contents (the more recognition-related aspects of social justice) is left out. On the other hand, the PPP does outline stimulating “pupils’

237 In 2001, the municipal secretariat in Niterói requested all schools to come up with a Political Pedagogic Project. Such a project is normally formulated together with representatives of the entire school community (pedagogical/management team, teachers, pupils, and parents and caretakers). The version of the PPP I received dated from 2003 (the year that Law 10.639 was approved). A few members of the pedagogical/management team assured me that there was a more recent version, part of which was being rewritten at the time. After requesting to see it several times, however, I never came to see this version.
understanding and valuing themselves and their social historic context”, “the development of critical thinking and broadening of their world vision”, and “the stimulation of participation and respect for differences” (PPP: 8). Combing these observations, the guiding principle for the school as promoted in the PPP also seems to be redistribution. For the pupils, the principle is “respect for differences.” Discrimination, prejudice, and racism are also not explicitly problematized by these actors. This should be understood as part of the strategic selective context in which actors in the institution operate.

While inclusion in the PPP would have indicated that the issue is part of a broader school project, such projects are sometimes not put into practice. This is, for example, shown by the fact that after 2003, within School 10 yearly school plans were developed in which the ethnicity/race issue was indeed taken up more extensively. This was the case, for example, in the 2009 plan (the year in which I collected most of the data on this school) in which a project on “Africanity” was included. In the text used for the Africanity project it can be observed that part of the issues addressed by Law 10.639 are reflected. In the description of the purpose and objective of the project, discrimination is problematized, as reference is made to “the problems that involve ethnic cultural and religious discrimination” (see Box 6.1). In addition, it explicitly formulates the goal of “reject[ing] all kinds of discrimination,” and highlights the need to “analyze with [as]criterion the attitudes and situations that stimulate all kinds of discrimination and social injustice” (S10, Yearly School Plan 2009, p.5).

Several members of the pedagogical/management team explained that the inclusion of this theme in the 2009 annual project (which in that way was “added” to the PPP) was the work of three teachers, who in 2005 followed the a Cor da Cultura training program. This group at the time shared their newly acquired knowledge with colleagues through in-service training sessions during the weekly planning meetings. However, this group’s activities seemed to have faded away. No team member could recall any specific contents of these sessions, and at the time of my fieldwork only one of these professionals was still working at School 10.

238 Neither the number of meetings dedicated to this issue, nor duration of these, was indicated.
The lack of conceptual understanding was identified as the second factor lying at the core of the explanation to why in School 10 the law is implemented only by some. As the theoretical part of this work highlights, beliefs and knowledge (and the links between the two) play an essential role in the formation and transformation of strategies of action. Accordingly, when focusing on the issue of racial inequality and racism, it is important to understand how actors perceive, interpret, and understand these issues in the context in which they act and whether and how they relate these issues to personal experiences and lived realities of themselves or close relatives. In School 10, it was perceived that different ideas exist as to what racism is, and how it manifests itself in social relations in general, and in the school in particular. Many issues were reflected on, and practices were built on, based on a restricted understanding of the concepts identity, ethnicity, race, and racism.

As mentioned above, when the teachers were asked in the survey to identify the factors that in their view influenced the development of pedagogical practices related to Law 10.639 in a negative way, several teachers identified racism and/or prejudice as one of these. However, when I asked the teachers and pedagogical/management team members in the focus groups and interviews to reflect on the existence of racism in the school, it seemed that actors had very different understandings of what racism entails. As already referred to above, while a few team members confirmed that racism existed in the school, half of these explicitly referred to it only as being a problem of and/or between pupils, and an issue linked to low self-esteem. In this quote from a focus group discussion with teachers from the first cycle of primary education, this interpretation is illustrated:

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**Box 6.1 Purpose and objective of the School 10 Africanity project**

PURPOSE:
Provide the pupils with a repertoire regarding the ethnic/cultural plurality, through the analytic and critical treatment of information regarding the collective memory. Advantage could be taken of elements that provide necessities present for the construction of individual and collective sociocultural identities. In that way, the problems that involve ethnic, cultural and religious discrimination can be brought to light as part of learning and growing in/of the school community.

OBJECTIVE:
- Learn about the diversity of the ethnic cultural patrimony of Brazil.
- Recognize the qualities of the own culture, critically valuing them, enriching the experience as a citizen.
- Reject all kinds of discrimination based on racial/ethnic differences, social class, religion, gender, and other individual or social characteristics.
- Value the diverse cultures present in the formation of the Brazilian people, recognizing their contribution in the process of construction of the Brazilian identity.
- Value the peaceful and creative nature of different components of cultural diversity.
- Analyze with as criteria the attitudes and situations that stimulate all kinds of discrimination and social injustice.


---
Teacher 1: [...] I do not see this conflict a lot in the group. What I see is... that they eew... they do not recognize themselves. For example [when I say] “OK, let’s draw a girl” [...] or when I ask them to draw a self-portrait, they do not portray themselves as black. Some of them, being black, even draw themselves with blond hair. This happens a lot.

[several teachers talking at the same time]

Teacher 2: She [another pupil] was working on the Africanity project, but she had trouble drawing herself as a black girl.

Teacher 3: Yes, the hair they draw like ... ooooh!

[several teachers talking at the same time]

Teacher 2: But some draw blacks with blue eyes.

Teacher 3: Exactly!

Teacher 1: Yes, it is this stereotype to do with [being] white. But...

Teacher 2: Among themselves they don’t...

Teacher 1: Neither do I see this conflict among them, no. (S10-171110)

The divergent understandings and the discussions that emerged regarding the meaning of racism during the focus group discussions illustrate the lack of conceptualization of the issue of ethnicity, race, identity, and racism. This lack of conceptual understanding partly explains why ethnicity/race issues were not problematized in a critical way, and why the team members identify it as something that is not related to their own role as a person and a professional. Accordingly, racism within the team or between team members and pupils was not identified by the pedagogical/management team when I asked about it explicitly. Only two teachers referred to team-related racism when I asked them to identify factors that make the development of work related to Law 10.639 difficult.239 The tendency to attribute prejudice and racism to the “other” is a widely encountered phenomenon, both in Brazil and across the globe (see also Essed, 1991, Van Dijk, 1998). In any case, in Brazil, based on findings collected in studies conducted since the 1980’s240 this is often referred to as “racismo a Brasileira” (a Brazilian kind of racism). Since the 1980’s, several studies conducted in Brazil have confirmed the trend of citizens (both black and white) affirming the existence of racism in society, yet denying their own (implicit) involvement in (ethnic/racial) exclusionary practices, and/or situations and structures (as victim and/or offender). A result of this is that – since the underlying prejudice/racism goes unquestioned – the victim, in this case the black pupil, is blamed for his or her own exclusion (“They do not recognize themselves”). This blaming is what implicitly happened in conversations like the one quoted above. Munanga (2009: 16), a Brazilian scholar known for his writings on racism, therefore refers to Brazilian racism as a perfect crime: “Our racism is like a perfect crime because the victim is held responsible for racist exclusion and those who act racist do not have a problem.”

In focus group discussions like the one cited above, it also became clear that ethnicity/race and racism were not issues normally debated in the team. At times the debate, organized in the

239 As already cited above, they mentioned the “veiled racism of some colleagues” (S10TB39), and “encountering prejudice and [teachers] being unprepared to deal with differences” (S10TP40).

240 In a study conducted in São Paulo in 1988, 97% of interviewees confirmed not being prejudiced, while 98% of the 97% stated they knew other people (often close relatives) who were prejudiced. In that sense this confirms that almost all Brazilians seem to consider Brazil to be “an island of racial democracy, surrounded by racists” (Schwarcz, 1998). Similar conclusions were drawn in a study conducted by the Brazilian newspaper Folha de Sao Paulo in 1995, which was repeated in 2008. While 87% of interviewees confirmed that prejudice against blacks in the country existed in 1995, only 10% found that they themselves held some prejudice to a degree. In 2008 the percentages were 91% and 3% respectively.
context of the research, functioned as a space for negotiation of meaning, knowledge construction, and experience sharing on the issue of racism. The following fragment illustrates how the definition of the concept was sought in a conversation between four teachers. When I asked these first-grade teachers whether they identified racism in the school, the following discussion took place:

Teacher 1: Real racism I haven’t seen yet.
Teacher 2: I believe they never… I believe the majority here is black, isn’t it?
Teacher 1: Although the kids jokes, but serious... serious things I do not believe…
Teacher 3: Six-year-old kids, indeed... indeed... Besides already feeling ashamed of their color, which is the result of discrimination because of their hair etc…
Teacher 1: But that is their own prejudice, isn’t it?
[several teachers talking at the same time] [...] 
Teacher 3: Independently of having themselves... having straight hair or not, they tease their classmates with curly hair.
Teacher 4: Indeed!
Teacher 2: That’s it.
Teacher 1: That’s a form of prejudice.
Teacher 2: It is... 
Teacher 1: But...
Teacher 2: They…
Teacher 1: It is between them!
Teacher 2: Exactly! It isn’t the white pupils [discriminating] against the black ones, it’s the black pupils, yes!
[several teachers talking at the same time]
Teacher 1: Yes, it is a lack of them recognizing themselves. They do not recognize themselves.
Teacher 1: That’s it.
Teacher 1: When you ask “What is your color?” they do not say white. They say “moreninho,” or “mulatinho,” or whatever.
Teacher 2: Brown…
Teacher 1: Yes, brown.
Teacher 2: They do not recognize themselves. [...] 
Teacher 3: I do not believe that this is only the prejudice against themselves. This also exists in the …
even more in this age, when they are already forming their identity, they will [come to] recognize themselves or not. But this also comes from people that are not black.
Teacher 1: OK. But it is also what they see. For example when they switch on the television, they see “malhação” [a popular television comedy], the main actress ...
Teacher 2: They do not see themselves [represented]
Teacher 1: She [the lead actress] is white and has straight hair, or a bit wavy. But she is white.
Teacher 5: It’s not just the lead actress, it’s the majority.
[several teachers talking at the same time]
Teacher 1: She [the main actress] has nothing that represents them, so…
Teacher 5: They do not see themselves [represented] there.
Teacher 2: Yes.
Teacher 5: The black actor is the servant. (S10-260809)

This fragment shows how the meaning of the concept racism is negotiated and constructed (in this conversation it was a negotiation between four white female teachers and a black male teacher, Teacher 3). Analyzing this discussion it can be seen that it is the input from the black teacher that brings the discussion to another level: a level in which racism is not only seen as something happening in and between individuals, but as a pattern of behaviors and expressions that should be
understood as part of a social structure in which white – and being white – is valued positively, while black – and being black – is not valued (and may even be problematized). Interesting as well is the observation that after such a critical turn in the discussion, due to input from one of the team members, other teachers started to reflect on what this means for their pedagogical practices and their role as educators.

The discussion continues:

Teacher 3: It was on purpose that I gave the example of the younger pupils, because it is exactly what you are stating here: it [prejudice] is created through the television or even by their own parents, neighbors etc…

Teacher 5: That’s true.

Teacher 3: A six or seven-year-old kid does not have the maturity, the badness to be prejudiced by themselves. I believe it is produced by…

[several teachers talking at the same time]

Teacher 5: It comes through what they hear and see in other places.

Teacher 4: That’s right.

Teacher 5: Recently I watched a video where a teacher did an experiment with a group of pupils and black dolls. What she did? She had several black and white dolls and none of the kids – certainly not the black ones – took the black dolls. They took the white ones to play with. [...] Market research was also done in this regard, because the production of black dolls only started recently. And it was confirmed that there is not a lot of acceptance.

Teacher 1: Even when you ask them to paint, they do not paint themselves as being black.

Teacher 2: No they don’t. [...] They don’t paint the figure black, with dark hair.

Teacher 1: They draw blond…

Teacher 2: Blond with blue eyes.

Teacher 5: I sincerely have difficulties in working with this […] One kid for example said “I am not black, teacher. Look here, I’m not black. She is black, I’m not.” So, how should we work with this? “No! You are black!” How could we contribute towards these kids accepting themselves as black?

Teacher 2: Yes, I have this in my classroom as well.

Teacher 1: You should also be careful of how you put it, because the parents…

Teacher 5: Yes, imagine! Then the pupil comes home “Oooh the teacher called me black!”

(S10-260809)

This discussion shows that the observed prejudice and non-recognition of and between black pupils was linked to a broader problematization of the issue. This approach contrasts with what was heard in another discussion with teachers from the first cycle of primary education (S10:171110) cited in earlier in this section, where the issue of low self-esteem was instead simply presented as being “their problem.” Many questions remain unanswered in this last discussion, although the problematization did touch slightly on the role of the teacher in this regard. Accordingly, these were moments in which knowledge construction with regard to the issue began to take place.

Taking up the question of how personal background influences the way teachers in the school work with ethnicity/race issues, I observed that it was often input from members of the team that identified themselves as black, or from self-identified white members who referred to an intimate relationship with (a) black person(s), that presented a more critical problematization of the issue of racism in their institution.241 These members, being in the minority, addressed the issue of

241 Analysis of the surveys and the interviews conducted at School 10 show that the majority of the actors with a positive opinion regarding the law identified themselves as black or brown (62%). A further 27.3 percent identified
racism not only as an individual problem, but in the first place as a societal and institutional problem. Consequently, they expressed a more critical sociopolitical interpretation of Law 10.639 and recognized their individual agency and need to act upon it.

The theoretical discussion in Chapter 2 helps to explain the observation made above regarding the personal involvement with racism of those team members that at some moments provoked a more critical discussion in the group. Theory on beliefs points to the fact that beliefs have a strong affective and evaluative component, as they are often linked to experiences lived by the individual (Nespor, 1987). Beliefs guide perceptions and “color” subsequent experiences. Based on the theoretical framework it can be argued that, in a societal context dominated by the doctrine of the racial democracy, and by an institutional context characterized by a lack of support and training on the issue, it is much more improbable that members who have never suffered from racism themselves – or who do not have an intimate relation with an individual that has suffered this form of exclusion – will understand what racism is, and recognize its dynamics in daily situations and practices. This lack of understanding leads to a non-critical problematization of the issue, and to a non-recognition of the personal influence. As an example it is interesting to recall the quote from a focus group discussion between teachers from the second cycle in which one teacher advocated for the principle of *loving thy neighbor* (see quote from discussion S10-09092009 in section 6.3.3), and to share the reaction to this statement of another (black female) team member (Teacher 2). In response to the words of one teacher (Teacher 1) who – acting based on the principle of “*amor ao proximo*” – expressed not being able “to see a difference,” this second teacher deconstructs the idea that “we are equal” and that no racism exists. By giving an example from her personal daily life, she shows that differences exist because people are treated differently:

Teacher 2: *This is human behavior, don’t you see that?! That is the damn free will, “I simply do not want to like you!”*

Teacher 1: *This is really difficult for me to understand.*

Teacher 2: *There is no philosophical argument in there you see? “I do not want… I do not like … and that’s it! There is no argument that will make me like it, because I just don’t like it. They gave me the right to not like something.” Do you see? Moreover, “Besides giving me the right not to like it, I have the right to fight [campaign] for something, but if I do not want to do that, if I want to do nothing, that’s ok as well.”*

Teacher 1: *But I see it like that: if you want to fight for some kind of ideal, or if you have a personal argument, that is one thing. But when it is about social issues or about color… I do not understand it, because I do not see…*

Teacher 2: *But that’s the point! In fact, we never fight directly about social issues or about color. We fight for other things… But we put these issues in the “cake” as well, you see? For example, I enter a shop and the girl does not attend me. She will just say that she did not help me because she did not see me “Oh… I’m sorry, there was another person before you…” It was simply not my turn. You see? She won’t say that she did not want to attend me. Won’t she? In that way humans really lie to themselves because they think up motives that do not exist just to justify their own attitudes. (S10-09092009)*

This quote is an example of two teachers having two different approaches to working with ethnicity/race issues. As shown in earlier quotes, one of them (Teacher 2), based on her

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themselves as white, 3 percent as yellow, and 3 percent as indigenous. The remainder did not identify their ethnic/racial identity. All the professionals who openly expressed a negative opinion about the law identified themselves as white. Of those professionals that expressed having an ambivalent opinion regarding the law, 63 percent identified themselves as white, 13 percent as black, and 25 percent as brown.
understanding of (and experience with) racist and other exclusionary practices, advocates the deconstruction of certain exclusionary attitudes, thereby making good use of daily interactions between people. Teacher 1, in turn, seems not to get the point. Based on her principle of “amor ao proximo,” she says not to understand how she should work with ethnicity/race issues. As this last quote also illustrates, it is a fact that, at these moments in the debate, the members that expressed a more critical understanding of Law 10.639 and related issues often shared experiences with racism that they themselves or close relatives had gone through.

The theoretical framework highlighted, however, that, even without personal experience of an issue, it is possible to change beliefs, and to become conscious about and reflect on them. However, this process needs both agency and contextual support. While the political, structural, and institutional responsibilities for support should be highlighted – for example in providing teacher training in which knowledge is offered that somehow links up or resonates with already existing beliefs, here too individual (and professional) responsibility also in part exists; within the structural limits offered by contexts actors themselves are also responsible for (the development of) their thinking and acting. While recognizing the factors identified by the professional actors in the school – such as difficulty in accessing material, information, support, and training – the acquisition of new knowledge and the formation and transformation of beliefs and practices to great extent also depends on individuals and their willingness to reflect on their own thinking and acting (Essed, 1991).

Based on the findings, a third obstacle for implementation of Law 10.639 was identified: a lack of room for knowledge construction in which voices of “minorities in power” are included. The fact that most critical views were expressed in individual interviews – or in the focus groups when the official meeting had ended and a small group of professionals remained – could also be a sign that the more critical team members hesitated to express themselves and share their views and experiences with all their colleagues. Although I did not witness dynamics of exclusion between colleagues in School 10, the marginalization of critical team members in the school context was a recurrent issue among teachers from other schools with whom I had the opportunity to speak during my fieldwork period. In some cases the constant battle these individuals had to wage to get their issues on the institutional agenda even had them deciding to resign and apply for a position at another school. However, considering many teachers’ and team members’ positive evaluation of the discussions taking place in the context of this research, it may be expected that the creation of more room for and stimulation of input, also from actors outside the school such as local social movements, would help to develop the conceptualizations concerning ethnicity/race and racism, and consequently strengthen implementation related to Law 10.639 in the school context.

This expectation is connected to the last main obstacle, which was already extensively discussed in Chapter 5: the lack of support and input from and monitoring by actors outside the institutional space of the school regarding the implementation of Law 10.639. A few past initiatives of state and municipal institutions linked to the official political arena were mentioned in School 10, but these were experienced as irregular and depending on enthusiastic individuals.

6.4 Concluding

The intention of this chapter was to shed light on the question of how the new policy discourse is received and recontextualized at the school level, and what conditions contribute to its effective implementation. In order to answer this question, the main focus was on the discussion of data
collected on one school (School 10). Three issues were highlighted: the contextual factors that affect the enactments related to Law 10.639 and the Curriculum Directive 003/2004 (empirical question b1); the ways in which members of the pedagogical/management team and teachers acknowledge and translate the content of these two legal instruments (empirical question b2); and the influence of personal background on the ways teachers approach ethnicity/race issues in the school context (empirical question b3).

As was found in Chapter 5, many actors in the official political arena ultimately held actors in the school responsible for implementation of the law. The intention of this chapter was to gain insight into how in the school discourses concerning ethnicity/race were constructed, shared, and used in the development of individual and joint strategies of actors regarding the implementation of Law 10.639 and Curriculum Directive 003/2004. Based on the analysis of collected data, I argue that instead of one joint response, within the case school, several responses to Law 10.639 existed. Working with ethnicity/race issues was clearly not integrated in the daily agenda of the professional team. Besides the school-wide project in November (the celebration of National Black Consciousness Day), only a few team members said they took the contents of the law into account in planning their daily activities. Data analysis shows that the processes whereby the law was translated into problems and issues at School 10 had a non-systematic, non-integrated, irregular, and individual character. This analysis corresponds with observations made by some actors outside the school context (Chapter 5).

Different interpretations of the law were also salient at the school level. In that sense, fieldwork in the schools was marked by similar observations made in the official political arena and in the civil society arena (discussed in Chapters 4 and 5). While although in a few cases the sociopolitical aspects involved in (working with) ethnicity/race issues were sometimes considered in implementing the law, problematizing dominant ideas, attitudes, and educational contents, and recognizing the need of revision of these, the majority of the interpretations of the law had a non-critical, cultural character. When referring to the daily practices in the school, inequalities, lived realities of racism, and underlying power issues were recognized only by a few staff members. A majority of interpretations emphasized the cultural elements of Law 10.639, building on a restricted understanding of the concepts culture, ethnicity, race, and racism. In these approaches, the root of the “conflict” was viewed as a misunderstanding of differences, based on a lack of knowledge – something that in the view of the actors could be overcome by teaching about “them” (African and Afro-Brazilian related culture and history). It was perceived that in the school the “respect for differences” approach was often accompanied by a depoliticization of educational contexts, actors, and processes. Education institutions and processes were considered “neutral,” meaning not linked to power structures and struggles in Brazilian society. In sum, the core of the problem (and essence of the rationale behind Law 10.639 as described in the Curriculum Directives), which is the existence of racism in education and in broader society, often went unrecognized.

When questioning how members of the pedagogical/management team and teachers in the school acknowledge and translate Law 10.639 and the Curriculum Directive 003/2004, it can be concluded that a lot of (direct and indirect) contestation with regard to the legal instruments exists among the professionals. Contestation lay mainly in the non-critical and superficial interpretation of the proposal. Preference was given to a hierarchical understanding of knowledge and the more instrumental parts of the curriculum. Moreover, a majority of those actors who confirmed the transformative potential of the legal instruments seemed to be cautious to go against the mainstream. The frame of Law 10.639 was expressed by some individuals only in the discussions in
small groups, and in some of the surveys. This perceived “caution” to touch on the issue in the context of the team meetings could be linked to the structural factors identified such as, the poor working conditions experienced by teachers – resulting in the need for professionals to “secure” their position within the institution (resorting to self-censorship and avoiding conflict). However, when expressed, support of the legal instrument was characterized by providing evidence on the existence of the problem of racism. Both situations in the school and individual experiences were mentioned, and these were related to broader processes of exclusion in society. Based on this evidence, explanation of the rationale and need for Law 10.639 and its possible value in the school context was given.

Like in the official political arena, in the school only a few actors seemed to also know about the history and struggle behind Law 10.639. This relates to the point made in Chapter 4 that it is not always possible for individuals to understand the complexity of socially constructed inequalities (related to for example ethnicity/race, class, and/or gender) when these are inserted in immediate experiences within institutions (see Soares 2009: 86). This is partly due to ideological influences, present within these institutions, and discursive processes through which inequalities are legitimated (and others censored). In the case of School 10, the dominance of a non-critical cultural approach to ethnicity/race issues was characterized by, among other things, the dominant idea of non-discrimination, an understanding of ethnicity/race issues as extracurricular supplementary contents, a focus on “the other,” and whiteness as norm. Accordingly, most contestations were (maybe even unconsciously) reproducing (elements of) the dominant discourse on Brazil as a racial democracy, characterized by the non-recognition of racism. These ideological influences made the translation to pedagogical and/or political organization, difficult. When reflecting on the factors frustrating the implementation of Law 10.639, actors within the school predominantly identified factors lying outside their ability to change. On the one hand many actors pointed to structural factors such as lack of institutional support, lack of training, material and educational contents that elaborate on the issue, while others problematized prejudice, racism, and a low self-esteem among black pupils. Hence, a strong tendency to “blame the victim” was perceived.

From the perspective of the strategic-relational approach, I argue that, in order to understand the actions of agents, we need to understand the relationship between the agents as political actors and the environment (structure) in which they find themselves. The school was understood as part of a broader societal context. Two important aspects of this broader context are the struggles in the official political arena regarding the exact contents of Law 10.639, and the lack of institutionalization in the bodies linked to the official political arena at different levels, resulting on the one hand in a final legal instrument that is not very specific and easy to interpret in various ways and on the other in a lack of initiative from the official institutions regarding the implementation of the legal instruments. A legal instrument that is more specific on goals regarding its implementation – for example concerning subjects in which the issues should be worked on and provision of support and in-service training of teachers – could help in guiding recontextualization and translation processes of these instruments within schools.

Various structural or contextual limiting factors were identified (see right-hand side of the model in Figure 6.6). A lack of or poor access to (quality) information, material, and training, and poor working conditions (for example due to time pressure, low salaries, and double shifts) was perceived. Professional actors in the school are part of a social structure in which certain practices are more difficult to realize, and where, through discursive selectivity, certain beliefs are shaped, supported, and/or given meaning, while others are not. The school is also a context characterized
by a density of (inter)actions in which individual professionals (such as those in the management team, the pedagogical coordination team, and teachers) often have to develop pedagogical practices ad hoc, responding to actual situations in the institution or in the classroom. A striking example is the teacher who experienced that certain activities in the classroom reveal pupils’ low self-esteem. She admitted to not knowing how to deal with this within the (busy) context of the classroom, where she is also confronted with many other demands. Moreover, it should be remembered that besides the day-to-day material conditions and varying resources present in institutions, most schools have hundreds of policies in circulation, of different status and reach, sometimes colliding or overlapping, producing contradictions, incoherence, and confusion (Ball et al., 2012: 7).

However, as actors within the school also argued, these structural/contextual factors are also linked to an agency dimension (see left-hand side of the model in Figure 6.6). A majority of actors in the school do not interpret the legal instrument the way it was framed in the first instance. This lack of understanding the frame seems to be caused by a lack of (access to and search for) knowledge that resonates with already existing beliefs of the individual professionals, and social beliefs or ideologies dominant within the institution and society more broadly. In the often chaotic contexts of schools it is easy to rely or fall back on personal beliefs, even more so if certain beliefs also reside in the social belief systems and are propagated through processes of discursive selectivity within the institution (see Chapter 2). The outcomes of this case study confirm the assumption that beliefs play an important role in shaping pedagogical practices, and in structuring knowledge and information necessary to create these practices (see Fullan, 2007; Hay, 2002a; Nespor, 1989). Consequently, the alteration of beliefs is an important component of educational change (Fullan, 2007; Nespor, 1989). However, the lack of structural support combined with the complexity of the issues covered by Law 10.639, and the lack of experience and training most actors have with the theme, created space for ambiguity and “zones of escape of meaning” (Lopes, 2005, 2006).

Discursive selective processes within the school, through which certain knowledge was given value, while other knowledge was neglected, combined with a lack of contextual support (such as access to a clearly defined and complete legal framework, training, material, information, time, and financial reward for the profession), and a lack of personal experience and understanding of the issue, resulted in a dominant reproduction of educational practices.

However, the data show as well that it is indeed possible to, step by step, “break the circle,” come to strategic action and to change practice. Hay argues that even when actors act intuitively, and/or out of habit, they are assumed to be able to explicitly render their intentions and motivations, and come to strategic learning (2002a: 131-133). The fact that I witnessed some actors (during discussions, interviews, and feedback meetings), listening to other actors relating the (latent) problem at the root of their daily experiences in the school, shows that opportunities for change exist. It also demonstrates that beliefs and perceptions related to the issue can change, and that ambivalence regarding the issue can become the basis for developing a more critical implementation of Law 10.639. In this sense, these moments were perceived as the possible starting point for new enactment, offering confrontation with the “zones of escape of meaning” related to Law 10.639 (Lopes 2005, 2006).
Figure 6.6  Actor-related factors and structure-related factors and their dialectical relation in the process of receiving and translation of Law 10.639 in the school context

*OPA=official political arena

Source: Hay 2002a: 212, adapted by author