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# Between Resistance and Institutionalization: Black Educational Struggles and the School Penal System in Brazil

**Eron Fernandes**

eron.m.fernandes@hotmail.com

Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina

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## Abstract

Black populations in Brazil have produced educational practices, knowledge, and institutions while contesting exclusion from formal schooling. This article asks what happens when Black and Quilombola educational struggles become public rights and school arrangements. Drawing on the School Penal System (SPS), it combines historical and bibliographical review, documentary analysis, and an interpretive comparison of four experiences of Quilombola School Education (QSE): Caveira and Campinho da Independência, in Rio de Janeiro; João Surá, in Paraná; and Mocambo, in Sergipe. The comparison examines authority, institutional translation, material capacity, and belonging across educational trajectories, distinguishing documented changes from their interpretive implications. The cases show how communities dispute curriculum, professional selection, resources, and governance through different instruments and temporalities. Recognition can produce concrete changes while leaving other institutional relations unresolved or insufficiently documented. The article advances two connected propositions: institutional transformation is layered, and a transformed school is not necessarily a transformed trajectory. Campinho makes the second problem visible when students move from territorially grounded education to upper secondary schools elsewhere. These findings extend the SPS by treating authority itself as an object of collective struggle. School depenalization remains a research problem concerning whether changes in authority and contestation alter disciplinary judgments, durable labels, and students' belonging. The Brazilian configuration contributes to debates on liberatory schooling by showing how protest continues within public institutions shaped by community educational struggles.

## 1. Introduction

At the Dona Rosa Geralda Municipal Quilombola School, in the Caveira community of Rio de Janeiro, the initial problem was not an absence of Black content. The school already organized activities concerning Africa, racism, and Black identity. Community leaders objected that Caveira itself—its territorial memory, political history, and knowledge—remained insufficiently present. In 2019, a committee bringing together the school, municipal government, local leadership, Quilombola representation, and a university began developing a curriculum tied to the community's specificity (Soares et al., 2022). The distinction is small in wording but large analytically: a community can be represented in a curriculum without sharing authority over what the school recognizes as legitimate knowledge.

That distinction changes how the history of Black education in Brazil is narrated. Exclusion, restrictions on access, curricular racism, unequal conditions of persistence, discipline, and the production of the so-called problem student are decisive parts of that history, but they do not exhaust it. Black populations also created associations, newspapers, literacy spaces, political organizations, social clubs, training institutions, popular preparatory courses, intellectual repertoires, and educational practices of their own. They demanded not only admission to existing institutions but the power to dispute what should count as education, knowledge, and formation (Domingues, 2009; Gomes, 2017; Gonçalves & Silva, 2000).

Quilombola School Education (QSE) is a privileged site from which to observe what happens when this political and educational production crosses an institutional boundary. Brazil's 2012 National Curriculum Guidelines treat collective memory, territoriality, ancestry, orality, sociocultural practices, distinctive forms of knowledge, community participation, and specific professional training as structural elements of the modality rather than supplementary content (Brasil, 2012). The 2024 National Policy for Equity, Education for Ethnic-Racial Relations, and Quilombola School Education again placed QSE within a federal agenda of training, management, and racial equity (Brasil, 2024).

Recognition, however, creates a second problem. Claims built by communities and movements become rights, curricula, positions, funding lines, selection procedures, buildings, and administrative routines. State recognition can secure teachers, infrastructure, certification, resources, and continuity that should not depend on the private capacity of historically dispossessed communities. But institutionalization also requires translation into bureaucratic languages and preexisting school forms. Some demands acquire protection; others are modified, delayed, narrowed, or only partially incorporated. The central question is therefore: how do Black and Quilombola educational struggles become educational practices and institutions, and what happens when they enter into relation with the state and formal schooling?

Here, protest becomes institutional work: revising a political-pedagogical project, contesting who may teach, demanding transportation and infrastructure, building community-based curricula, and creating procedures through which public authority must answer to Quilombola communities. Resistance changes form when it seeks duration, resources, and binding public obligations. In this analysis, liberatory schooling names the struggle over who may define legitimate knowledge, exercise institutional authority, shape educational purposes, and sustain belonging within the institution. Institutionalization can preserve, transform, or narrow collective demands depending on how authority, resources, and decision-making are redistributed.

This is where the School Penal System (SPS) returns to the analysis. Developed in earlier research to examine how school practices may classify, mark, punish, and diminish Black students' belonging, the SPS directs attention to observable passages from institutional authority and interpretations of deviance to negative consequences, durable marking, and diminished belonging (Fernandes, 2026). Its functional and relational focus provides a vocabulary for examining how those relations are preserved, displaced, or reorganized within different educational arrangements.

The Quilombola cases trace documented redistributions of authority over knowledge, personnel, governance, and institutional purposes. Their implications for conflict, accountability, and belonging guide the comparison. Effects on sanctions and durable classifications require evidence of those processes themselves.

The article develops two propositions: institutional transformation is layered, and a transformed school is not necessarily a transformed trajectory. These findings extend the SPS by asking how historically classified subjects contest school authority. School depenalization emerges as a research problem concerning the consequences of that contestation.

## 2. Black Populations as Producers of Education

Beginning with Black educational struggles is an analytical choice. A history written only from exclusion risks granting the state a monopoly on action. Black populations also built instruction, associations, newspapers, and spaces of political formation, becoming producers of education under conditions of exclusion.

Gonçalves and Silva (2000) show that educational precarity was historically structured by exclusion and state abandonment while Black agency remained active. Domingues (2009) likewise identifies education as a recurring instrument of antiracist organization: the Frente Negra Brasileira maintained courses and training activities; the Black press became a space of political literacy; the Teatro Experimental do Negro joined culture, education, and antiracist struggle; and later popular preparatory courses contested access to higher education. These experiences appear across distinct periods and institutional forms. What connects them is the treatment of education as a field of collective production rather than simply a service received. In Gomes's (2017) formulation, the Black movement is itself an educator, producing knowledge that becomes social pedagogy, political pressure, and public policy.

This institutional creativity predates twentieth-century struggles for inclusion. In Niterói, the Club dos Libertos contra a Escravidão, founded in 1881, joined abolitionist action to a night school open to people excluded by the official educational order (Alves da Silva, 2018). Black social clubs likewise sustained memory, sociability, and collective organization where Black presence was restricted or erased (Escobar, 2018; Ribeiro, 2025).

Kênia Clube, in Joinville, makes this point concrete in a different time and place. Rhuan Carlos Fernandes's (2024) master's thesis reconstructs a club founded in 1960 by young Black people amid segregation in the city's White clubs. Its 1964 bylaws listed among its purposes the aim of raising the social and intellectual standard of Black people. Kênia functioned as Black infrastructure for sociability, memory, mutual support, cultural production, and formation, extending well beyond the leisure spaces denied elsewhere. Its history also cautions against artificially separating education from the associational and cultural spaces in which people learn to interpret racism, citizenship, and themselves.

A scene from a public school in Contagem clarifies why cultural recognition and institutional transformation must be distinguished. In a funk and physical-education project, a Black student routinely treated as someone who 'did not want anything' became the school DJ for a passinho battle, spent two weeks organizing the music with the teacher, and occupied a moment of visible protagonism. The same account reports that he had serious difficulties with writing and was failed by the school at the end of the year, even though he already earned income as a DJ and displayed strong communication and social skills (Gomes, 2018). The account supports a narrower institutional claim: an institution can recognize a student's cultural competence in one setting while its evaluative and classificatory relations continue to produce a different trajectory.

The Teatro Experimental do Negro makes another dimension of this dispute visible: the authority to know. Guerreiro Ramos's participation shifted attention from Black people as an object produced by scientific and institutional gazes to the social conditions that produced those gazes and to Black subjects' capacity to formulate interpretations of themselves and of Brazil (Barbosa, 2004). For this article, Ramos provides an antecedent to a question that reappears in the Quilombola cases: who is authorized to define legitimate knowledge about a community?

Brazil's 1988 Constitution changed the scale of this dispute. Democratization expanded the state as an arena in which rights could be claimed: the Constitution made human dignity a foundation of the Republic, defined education as a right and a public duty, and required equal conditions for access and persistence (Brasil, 1988). These promises were themselves products of struggle. The Black movement organized to intervene in the Constituent Assembly with demands concerning racism, education, Black history, and Quilombola rights. Some were incorporated; others were reduced or deferred, making 1988 both an antiracist achievement and an incomplete institutional promise (Gomes & Rodrigues, 2018).

Black struggles increasingly contested state architecture itself. This strategy reappeared in the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law, Law No. 10,639/2003, and the 2012 QSE Guidelines (Brasil, 1996, 2003, 2012). Turning struggle into a right created public obligations and new instruments through which communities could press educational claims.

QSE is therefore best understood as the institutional recognition of claims and capacities produced through longer histories of Black and Quilombola educational struggle. When the state recognizes territory, memory, community knowledge, and participation as educational principles, it institutionalizes those claims selectively. Law translates social relations into legal and administrative forms, giving some of them new durability, resources, and points of contestation. Drawing on the educational struggle of Conceição das Crioulas, Givânia Maria da Silva (2012) shows how differentiated schooling takes shape through collective political organization, community participation, and the educational purposes developed within Quilombola territory.

Paulina Alberto (2011) offers a useful key to this passage. Black intellectuals and organizations contested the terms of inclusion and demanded that abstract promises of equality acquire material form. Education can be read similarly: inclusion may mean entry into an existing institution, but it can also mean changing the terms through which the institution defines knowledge, authority, belonging, and the future.

The encounter between a Quilombola community and a public school brings together distinct sources of educational authority. The state holds legal recognition, funding, certification, professional careers, public personnel, and administrative capacity. Communities hold territory, memory, historical experience, knowledge, organizations, and forms of collective legitimacy rooted outside educational bureaucracy. QSE attempts to make these sources coexist within a public institution.

This coexistence involves school routines, assessment, professional careers, and student records, alongside differences among community generations, religions, leaders, and priorities. Institutionalization negotiates these existing social forms and their competing sources of authority.

International parallels illuminate the question while preserving the specificity of the Brazilian configuration. U.S. scholarship on Black community control, Freedom Schools, Black-founded institutions, and Black-led community-based education spaces shows how authority over educational priorities, institutional relationships, and decisions becomes central to racial justice (Byndloss, 2001; Miller, 2025; Scott & Johnston, 2025; Willis & Gaither, 2026). QSE poses a

distinct institutional problem: community-produced educational claims have been recognized as a modality of the public education system itself. The Brazilian cases therefore make visible a problem of institutional translation that is often less explicit in international debates: what happens to community authority when a struggle becomes a public obligation administered through the state?

## 3. The School Penal System: What Is Being Contested?

The School Penal System emerged from a different problem: how school practices can produce punishment and marginalization through specifically educational means. The concept locates punitive processes in institutional function rather than architectural resemblance to a prison. What matters is how school practices organize deviance, negative consequences, durable marking, and diminished belonging in racially significant ways (Fernandes, 2026).

The term penal is therefore functional. It applies where evidence shows a passage from norm to interpretation and imputation, from imputation to a negative institutional consequence, and from that consequence to accumulated effects on recognition, participation, rights, or persistence. This evidentiary sequence distinguishes ordinary institutional regulation from a penal relation.

The mark may be formal, but it may also exist in reputations, teacher expectations, referrals, and classifications through which later conduct is read against an identity already produced. The racial problem is not limited to explicitly racial rules. 'Aggressiveness,' 'lack of interest,' 'indiscipline,' 'inadequacy,' 'risk,' and 'problem student' are not facts that classify themselves. Institutions turn conduct into meaning through agents, histories, documents, and social expectations. The relevant question is whether similar conduct is interpreted and sanctioned differently and what consequences those interpretations produce.

I remember an occasion in primary school, perhaps in the second or third grade, when the teacher assigned a short piece of writing involving animals. I wrote about a cockroach. I enjoyed the activity. Concentration was usually difficult for me, but that afternoon I stayed with the task into the evening and wrote two or three paragraphs. I knew I had done good work. The next day, I went to school proud of what I was taking to the teacher.

I put my work on her desk, as everyone else did. She would correct it while we did another classroom activity. I waited anxiously. This time I had concentrated, made an effort, and produced something I liked. When she called me, I thought I might receive praise, some recognition. Instead, she asked: “Who did this work?” I remember the questions that followed in flashes: where I had copied it from, whether I had copied someone else's work, who had done it for me. I tried to explain. I was a child trying to convince the teacher that I had written my own text. I left feeling that she still did not believe me.

This and other experiences changed how I participated in school. I became less willing to create or show my abilities, afraid of another interrogation or of being misunderstood. By the fourth grade, I had repeated two school years. I was a repeater, and that designation weighed heavily. I was certain I was stupid. From how I was treated, it seemed that others were certain too. When we formed pairs or groups, nobody wanted to work with me. I felt ashamed before anyone refused, anticipating exclusion or humiliation. Some teachers shouted and humiliated students over unfinished work. I wanted to be invisible, sitting alone at the back, neither seen nor called upon. I went because my mother made me. I came to hate that place.

Gonzalez (1979, pp. 12–13) locates judgments of Black children's intelligence and conduct within school practices that reproduce racial hierarchy. Her analysis connects teaching materials and educators' conduct to the devaluation of Black identity. Reading my memories alongside hers, I ask how institutional judgments entered my understanding of what I could do. The school encounter ended, but anticipating disbelief continued to shape my participation. Years before police questioning, I had already experienced having to defend my credibility before school authorities. The institutional powers differ; the experience directs attention to who may question, interpret, and judge another person's account.

Research on anti-Black disciplinary regimes and carceral logics in U.S. schooling clarifies how punishment may be sustained through educational authority (Hale & Livingston, 2023; Wiley, 2026). In the Brazilian formulation, the SPS traces these dynamics through everyday classifications, reputations, institutional consequences, and their effects on belonging (Fernandes, 2026). QSE brings the organization of that authority into focus: who interprets conflict, participates in decisions, and contests institutional judgments?

Fanon helps shift the analysis from the institution in the abstract to the mediations through which power becomes experience. In The Wretched of the Earth, he identifies the police officer and soldier as official and immediate intermediaries of colonial order. Yet, in contrasting colonial and capitalist societies, he also includes the educational system, moral teachers, and counselors among the mediations that produce submission and reduce the need for direct police coercion (Fanon, 1968). The move made here treats the intermediary as an institutional position rather than transferring the police officer’s role to the teacher: it is the point at which norms, forms of knowledge, classifications, and procedures become concrete decisions about subjects.

This position structures possibilities without mechanically determining the conduct of the person who occupies it. Teachers, school leaders, staff, and education officials may reproduce, negotiate, reinterpret, or interrupt institutional expectations. The position offers resources and limitations; agency alters how they are mobilized. The intermediary therefore names a relationship among structure, position, interpretation, and responsibility. This distinction becomes decisive in Caveira, Mocambo, and João Surá, where racial or territorial identity alone does not explain the institutional differences observed.

The exercise of authority also takes place under conditions teachers do not control. Low pay, crowded classrooms, scarce resources, and administrative demands can leave one professional responsible for students with very different needs while limiting the time available to understand their circumstances. The funding context matters: in 2023, government expenditure per student from primary through tertiary education was USD 4,133 in Brazil, compared with USD 13,601 across the OECD, in dollars adjusted for purchasing power, although Brazil devoted a higher share of GDP to education (OECD, 2026). These aggregate figures describe a national funding context, not the resources available to any particular school in the comparison. Educators may also face political intimidation and pressure over what they teach (Human Rights Watch, 2025). Teachers thus exercise authority over students while being subject to

decisions about staffing, budgets, curriculum, and oversight. These constraints do not erase their responsibility for institutional decisions; they shape the conditions in which those decisions are made.

Quilombola School Education brings this contradictory position into sharper focus: to whom are educational agents accountable? Only to departments of education and school leaders, or also to the community? When a community participates in selecting, evaluating, or training professionals, it does more than add cultural content to the school. It intervenes in the mediation through which the state becomes an everyday presence in the territory.

## 4. From Black Struggle to a Quilombola Educational Right

Resolution CNE/CEB No. 8 of November 20, 2012 established the National Curriculum Guidelines for Quilombola School Education in Basic Education. Its importance lies not only in formally recognizing a modality. The Guidelines require Quilombola specificity to traverse territory, memory, ancestry, cultural practices, local knowledge, pedagogical organization, teacher preparation, and community participation (Brasil, 2012). Research in Minas Gerais traces the formation of Quilombola schooling through disputes over recognition, school–community relations, and the institutional conditions of differentiated education (Miranda, 2012, 2016).

A substantively Quilombola school requires changes in who defines its political-pedagogical project, produces legitimate knowledge, and participates in recruitment, training, and accountability. Location and Afro-Brazilian content alone do not settle these relations.

Recognition also depends on trained teachers, stable personnel, transportation, infrastructure, materials, and administrative continuity. The distance between right and capacity determines what pedagogy can do.

An instructive contextual counterpoint comes from Belo Horizonte's Núcleos de Estudos das Relações Étnico-Raciais (NERER). The initiative organized continuing, in-service formation through regular study groups coordinated across the municipality's nine regional education structures; its authors emphasize monthly meetings, dialogic coordination, and shared management as conditions for sustaining work toward implementation of Laws No. 10,639/2003 and 11,645/2008 (Santos et al., 2018). NERER illustrates a narrower institutional point that the four Quilombola cases later make visible in different ways: antiracist recognition becomes more durable when it acquires time, personnel, coordination, and procedures.

Institutionalization can protect achievements from dependence on exceptional individuals or favorable administrators. Its durability depends on decision-making power, material support, and the instruments through which communities can press their claims.

Translation into curricula, positions, criteria, and budgets can protect some demands while narrowing or postponing others. The analysis follows these changes from collective claim to institutional arrangement.

## 5. Education as a Field of Institutional Conflict

Almeida (2018) situates Brazilian schooling within a broader history of racial power. Here, institutional conflict is examined through disagreements among educators, communities, and public authorities over the rules and resources on which educational change depends.

The state must likewise be opened as an institutional chain rather than treated as a single actor. Brazilian education is distributed across federal, state, municipal, school, and professional responsibilities (Brasil, 1988, 1996). A community claim can therefore change as it moves through regulation, funding, management, recruitment, and classroom practice. Levinson and Berumen (2007) make a convergent point for Latin American educational reform: announced curricula do not by themselves reveal what changes in teaching, governance, or school-community relations. For QSE, 'implementation' is an empirical question: where does a claim acquire capacity, lose force, or redistribute authority?

Participation itself requires negotiation: Caveira records family and religious disagreements; João Surá exposes disputes over who may deliberate and by which criteria. The question is who can propose, contest, veto, or monitor school decisions.

Lélia Gonzalez (2020) showed how Brazilian culture can incorporate Black elements while disavowing the racial relations of power that organize that incorporation. Camargo and Benite (2021) specify an epistemic dimension of the problem: school curricula can silence, disqualify, or exclude Black histories and forms of knowledge while presenting a Eurocentric selection as universal. Together, these arguments sharpen the distinction at issue here. Cultural presence does not automatically become epistemic or institutional authority.

## 6. Method and Comparative Strategy

This article combines historical and bibliographical review, documentary analysis, and an interpretive comparison of published research on Quilombola School Education. Its focus is the passage through which collective educational claims enter public schooling: who advances them, which institutional arrangements receive them, and how authority, resources, and educational trajectories are reorganized in the process.

The four territories form a purposive selection for an interpretive comparison, rather than a representative sample of Brazilian QSE or the outcome of a systematic review. They bring together published accounts of community educational claims, identifiable school or administrative instruments, and contrasting institutional configurations. Their analytical value lies in the relations that can be reconstructed from those accounts, including negotiation, interruption, and concrete public responses. Each case foregrounds some relations more clearly than others: Caveira, curricular authority; João Surá, professional legitimacy; Mocambo, recognition and capacity; and Campinho, educational continuity. These emphases do not exhaust the cases or establish

equivalent evidence across all four dimensions. Research on Black associations, the NERER experience, and the Contagem school scene provides historical and analytical counterpoints, not additional cases.

The source studies draw on ethnography, action research, interviews, observation, documentary analysis, and educational trajectories. Public regulations and administrative records are read alongside them to trace what acquired formal recognition or material support. The comparison distinguishes those documented arrangements from the negotiations and experiences reported by the researchers: a regulation records an institutional commitment, while the studies illuminate how it is contested and enacted.

I write as a Black Brazilian researcher whose trajectory includes repeated grade retention, Aceleração, leaving school, incarceration, and a later return to education and university. Elements of this trajectory informed the School Penal System (Fernandes, 2026). Here, returning to experiences of humiliation and suspicion makes them objects of inquiry: how did institutional judgments shape my relation to learning, and how did I begin to question them? This autoethnographic thread connects remembered encounters to present interpretation. Approximate dates and recalled speech retain their uncertainty; third parties are not identified. These accounts develop the analytical questions without becoming additional territorial cases. The comparison remains grounded in published studies and public documents.

For Mocambo, Santos (2021) compares the 2019 and 2020 political-pedagogical projects (PPPs). Later administrative records extend the chronology through responses on personnel and infrastructure, without continuous observation of school practice.

For Caveira, Soares, Maroun, and Soares (2022) examine school, community, and municipal relations between 2017 and 2019, distinguishing antiracist content from community authority.

For João Surá, action research in 2018–2020 examines the Letter of Consent, used since 2011 for community participation in professional selection (Cruz et al., 2022).

For Campinho, Carvalho and Cirqueira (2019) reconstruct community pedagogy and institutional disputes; Paraty (2020) records municipal recognition; Salgado (2025) follows the 2022 and 2023 graduating cohorts into upper secondary education through preliminary participant research. These sources cover distinct periods and forms of evidence.

The comparison is organized around four common dimensions. Authority concerns who may define knowledge, professionals, curriculum, and institutional decisions. Institutional translation concerns what changes when a collective claim acquires legal, administrative, and school form. Capacity refers to the material and organizational conditions required to turn recognition into practice: personnel, preparation, funding, infrastructure, transportation, and continuity. Belonging and trajectory concern how institutional arrangements relate to recognition, persistence, repetition, dropout, and continuation of study. These dimensions provide a common analytical grid across heterogeneous studies by directing the same institutional questions to different configurations. The dimensions organize the questions asked of each case; the institutional layers discussed in the findings refer to the particular relations that change, such as curriculum, personnel, resources, and educational continuity.

The comparison reconstructs each case before drawing connections across them. It identifies the community claim, the instrument through which it enters schooling, the change reported by the source, and the limits of that report. It then asks the same four institutional questions across the cases, distinguishing documented arrangements from the interpretations developed here. Table 1 makes the principal source-to-inference connections explicit. A dimension insufficiently documented in a source remains an evidentiary gap, not proof that the relation is absent or unchanged. The comparison also attends to findings that complicate a uniform account of transformation: internal disagreement, interruption of pedagogical work, public responses to demands, and difficulties after educational transitions. Layered institutional transformation is developed from these contrasts, not calculated as an implementation score.

Table 1
Sources, institutional changes, and limits of the comparison

| Case | Principal sources and period | Documented arrangement and analytical focus | Limit of the inference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Caveira | Soares et al. (2022); fieldwork, 2017–2019. | 2019 curricular committee and teacher formation: authority over knowledge and translation of territorial claims. | Participation is documented; subsequent durability and effects on disciplinary classifications are not established. |
| João Surá | Cruz et al. (2022, pp. 4–5, 18–19); action research, 2018–2020. | Consent and renewal through community deliberation, alongside state recruitment: professional legitimacy and rules of participation. | Community authority includes internal disagreement. Its existence does not establish changes in student sanctions or trajectories. |
| Mocambo | Santos (2021), PPPs of 2019–2020; Sergipe (2025); MPF (2025, p. 6). | PPP changes, infrastructure delivery, and acceptance of a recruitment recommendation: translation and distinct forms of capacity. | Later records concern specific responses; they do not demonstrate whether earlier training limitations persisted or were resolved. |
| Campinho | Carvalho & Cirqueira (2019, pp. 95–97); Paraty (2020); Salgado (2025). | Community workshops, authorization and interruption, policy recognition, and transitions to upper secondary education. | Pedagogical accounts are not measured learning effects; transition findings are preliminary and do not isolate causality. |

Note. The four dimensions are common questions, not equally documented variables. MPF denotes Ministério Público Federal. Missing evidence does not establish an unchanged relation.

This comparative movement also sharpens the questions posed to the School Penal System. Changes in institutional authority may affect who interprets conflict, which decisions can be contested, and whether classifications follow students across educational settings. The cases identify arrangements in

which these relations can be investigated; establishing their effects on sanctions, durable labels, or belonging requires evidence of those processes themselves.

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## 7. Comparative Findings I: From Content to Authority

The opening Caveira episode can now be read more closely. The Dona Rosa Geralda Municipal Quilombola School emerged from a local demand for education within the territory, where distance to the nearest school had made daily access difficult. Community certification as Quilombola strengthened the demand, but research conducted between 2017 and 2019 shows that the school's creation and designation did not settle what Quilombola education would mean (Soares et al., 2022).

The school initially developed numerous activities concerning Africa, Blackness, racism, and Black identity. Community leaders objected not to an absence of Black content but to the insufficient presence of Caveira's own history, territorial memory, and political experience. This distinction is central: a school may be antiracist while working with a generic idea of Blackness; it may teach about quilombos while the quilombo in which it is located remains primarily an object of representation rather than a producer of curriculum.

Changes in municipal and school leadership contributed to a different configuration in 2019. The Department of Education became more directly involved, and a technical committee for curricular collaboration was published in the municipal official journal on September 27. Alongside school and municipal personnel, it included a community leader, Quilombola movement representation, and a university researcher. The participants contributed to teacher formation and planning directed toward Caveira's history and specificity (Soares et al., 2022). This documents community participation in curricular construction; it does not establish how far that participation acquired durable decision-making power beyond the period studied.

Caveira further shows that institutional arrangement cannot be reduced to the racial identity of individual agents. The first school leader observed was a Black woman substantially engaged with race relations, yet deeper territorial grounding emerged later under another arrangement of leadership and support. Individual racial identity matters alongside institutional knowledge, shared decision-making, and mechanisms that connect school authority to the community.

Community participation also institutionalizes disagreement. The research records resistance among some families, including on religious grounds, to activities connected to African heritage. Internal tensions therefore become matters that educational governance must negotiate within the institutional field.

João Surá moves the dispute from curricular authority to the composition of institutional authority. At the Diogo Ramos State Quilombola School, the Letter of Consent has been used since 2011 to enable community participation in selecting professionals. The research describes applications to the community association, deliberation in an assembly, and renewal for subsequent periods; community consent does not exempt applicants from state qualification and recruitment requirements (Cruz et al., 2022, pp. 4–5). Action research conducted between 2018 and 2020 found that the community appropriated the instrument to influence its school. At the same school, Nunes (2024) traces negotiations between territorial demands and wider curricular frameworks, including the BNCC.

The community thus acquires a role in determining who may occupy institutional positions. State credentials, public career structures, administrative selection, and legal responsibilities remain, while bureaucracy is no longer the only source of legitimacy. I interpret this arrangement as dual authorization: administrative qualification and community recognition of a professional's relationship to the territorial educational project operate together. The term describes the relation examined here, rather than naming a separate formal legal category.

This arrangement changes the institutional intermediary. Rocha (2020) shows that becoming a teacher at Diogo Ramos involves relations with the territory, community participation, and commitment to the Quilombola project—criteria that carry less weight in conventional bureaucratic recruitment. The professional remains an agent of a public institution, but the sources to which that authority must answer are pluralized.

The Letter institutionalizes conflict around participation itself. Its exercise requires decisions about who may deliberate, the criteria for granting consent, and its renewal and relation to state recruitment. Cruz et al. (2022, pp. 18–19) describe tensions involving pedagogical expectations, kinship, friendship, and employment, followed by work to formalize criteria. Community participation therefore creates obligations within the community as well as claims upon the state. When administrative changes move the point at which the Letter enters hiring, the rule organizing participation becomes an object of dispute.

João Surá also shows why institutional authority cannot be reduced to identity or origin. Rocha (2020) describes teachers from the community and professionals from outside it whose practices changed through their relationship with the territory. Origin matters alongside the knowledge an agent recognizes, the authorities to whom that agent is accountable, and the mechanisms through which the community can evaluate institutional power.

Research on Black educators' formative trajectories documents racism, material deprivation, and the ways educational experience shapes professional practice (Fialho et al., 2022). These findings make professional preparation and institutional accountability relevant alongside representation and participatory mechanisms.

Mocambo presents the problem from the relation between normative change and institutional capacity. Santos (2021) identifies major limits in the 2019 PPP of the 27 de Maio State Quilombola School and later changes connected to the Sergipe Forum on Quilombola School Education. Mobilization by the Forum—

bringing together the Quilombola movement and a university—helped alter the 2020 document, demonstrating that institutional text itself can become an object of struggle.

A revised PPP changed the formal architecture while enactment remained dependent on personnel, preparation, material resources, and school-community relations in the period examined by Santos (2021). Later, concerns over hiring Quilombola professionals prompted Federal Public Prosecutor's Office action. The minutes of its 6th Coordination and Review Chamber record, on December 3, 2025, the homologation of the closure of proceeding No. 1.35.000.000223/2025-62, citing acceptance of Recommendation No. 10/2025 (Ministério Público Federal, 2025, p. 6). This documents a response concerning personnel; the summary record does not establish the subsequent composition of staff or the resolution of every earlier educational demand.

On June 10, 2025, the school received renovations and a new sports court through a state investment of BRL 1,567,144.89 (Sergipe, 2025). This is a concrete material response to a longstanding community demand. Read alongside the earlier PPP analysis and the later personnel-related record, it shows why changes must be followed by relation and date. The infrastructure announcement does not report whether the professional-development limitations identified in Santos's earlier study persisted or were resolved. Documentary recognition, material delivery, and a response concerning recruitment are evidenced separately; their combined effects on everyday pedagogy and students' experience are not established by these records.

These cases show distinct points of entry for institutional change: curricular construction in Caveira, professional selection in João Surá, and documentary, personnel, and material responses in Mocambo.

## 8. Comparative Findings II: Institutional Translation, Capacity, and Trajectory

Campinho da Independência makes it possible to follow a longer arc: from community educational production, through conflict and state recognition, to student trajectory. A school existed in the territory before municipal QSE policy was consolidated, but for years it did not correspond to the differentiated education envisioned by community leaders. Research formulates the tension as the difference between a school in the quilombo and a school of the quilombo: physical presence did not guarantee organic connection to the community's political, cultural, and epistemological life (Carvalho & Cirqueira, 2019).

The community already produced educational experiences involving jongo, capoeira, ceramics, memory, and territory. Through Educando com Arte, workshops connected these practices to school learning and brought teachers, students, griôs, artisans, and leaders into a proposed horizontal exchange of knowledge. Carvalho and Cirqueira (2019, pp. 95–97) describe the contrast that motivated the project: children participated actively in community workshops while school accounts characterized them through disinterest and learning difficulties. In a leadership account reproduced by the authors, meaningful practical activity became a basis for asking children to write about what they had done. This is a reported pedagogical connection, not a measured literacy outcome. It makes visible the dispute over whether knowledge acquired in community life can organize school learning. Struggle began from that mismatch, before recognition of a public modality.

Bringing that educational proposal into the public school required another struggle. Community leaders appealed directly to the Municipal Department of Education after encountering resistance. Authorization enabled incorporation, and school and community meetings planned the workshop themes in relation to school content (Carvalho & Cirqueira, 2019, p. 96). Pedagogical collaboration thus depended on access to administrative authority: possessing an educational practice did not itself confer the power to make it part of schooling.

The arrangement proved vulnerable to a change in municipal education management. Carvalho and Cirqueira (2019, p. 97) report that the project was removed at the school leadership's request without prior communication to the community. The subsequent claim reached beyond retaining a project: it concerned who could organize the school and determine its relationship to the community educational project. The movement toward policy was a search for duration, arising from a documented interruption of pedagogical work.

Beginning in 2017, continuing education joined community members, the school, a university, and the education department around ethnic-racial relations, the national Guidelines, sociocultural diagnosis, and curricular reorientation. In August 2020, Municipal Resolution No. 04 formally instituted QSE in Campinho da Independência and another municipal school, assigning public responsibility for professional training and curricular reorientation (Paraty, 2020).

Some proposals—such as community monitoring of school professionals and the permanent presence of a community popular educator—achieved a lower degree of formalization or implementation. Policy emerged as a provisional result of negotiation among demands, political relations, administrative rules, and capacity.

The dispute remained open. In 2025, the Campinho Quilombo Residents' Association obtained support through a Fundo Casa Socioambiental call for a project explicitly devoted to constructing the school's PPP in dialogue with other Quilombola communities (Fundo Casa Socioambiental, 2025). A differentiated regulation and curriculum did not eliminate the need to keep contesting the institution's own definition.

Campinho also adds a territorial dimension. Expanding the final years of elementary education within the territory followed family and community mobilization around transportation difficulties faced by students who had to leave the quilombo to continue studying (Bezerra, 2023). Distance, safety, travel time, and transport are therefore educational capacities, not external logistical details.

The limit becomes sharper when students leave territorially grounded QSE for upper secondary schools elsewhere. Salgado (2025) follows the first cohorts graduating in 2022 and 2023 and reports problems involving commuting, entry into the labor market, schedule conflicts, larger and more anonymous schools, weaker relational proximity, teacher absences, racism, and prejudice.

In the first two years of upper secondary education, Salgado (2025) reports a combined indicator of abandonment and grade repetition exceeding 50% among the observed cohorts. The published expanded abstract does not provide the denominator, separate outcome counts, or enough information to establish overlap between outcomes. The figure is therefore retained as a preliminary finding attributed to that research, not a recalculated rate or an estimate for Quilombola students nationally. The argument about educational transitions rests on the reported institutional difficulties as well as this bounded indicator.

The transition changes school size, commuting, community relationships, and recognition of students' knowledge. Belonging may support persistence, but work, poverty, racism, teacher availability, and provision across educational stages also shape trajectories. Campinho therefore challenges a simple symmetry between SPS as exclusion and QSE as persistence: a localized transformation may be real and still fail to travel with the student.

## 9. Discussion: Layered Institutional Transformation and the Problem of School Depenalization

The comparison yields a clear finding: institutional transformation is layered and asynchronous. Different relations inside schooling change at different rates, through different instruments, and with different degrees of durability.

Caveira's curricular participation, João Surá's recruitment arrangements, Mocambo's responses at different dates, and Campinho's interrupted pedagogy and later transitions reveal distinct depths and durations of change. Their unevenness grounds the proposition of layered institutional transformation.

The question of whether transformation accompanies a student also enters through my trajectory. In an Aceleração (accelerated-learning) program, I performed well and completed ensino fundamental. Back in regular schooling, difficulties returned and I eventually left. Years later, I became involved in crime and experienced repeated imprisonment. When I returned to education, I still believed I was stupid, although I could read, write, calculate, and learn practical skills. I had discounted my achievement in Aceleração because I considered it less legitimate than regular schooling. In 2018, I completed secondary education through ENCCEJA, a national certification examination, with good results and a high writing score. I began to question that belief, but doubt remained.

When I was admitted to a federal university, I cried. I had rarely cried since prison, perhaps not at all. Passing the institution's own selection process made me revisit the years in which I had believed myself incapable. Why had recognition come so late? What had happened along that path? Those questions began the inquiry that became my research. They also exposed the distance between demonstrating ability and being able to recognize it in myself.

Gonzalez's (1979, pp. 15–16) defense of emotion and subjectivity addresses the dismissal of Black women's denunciations as merely emotional. I draw on that argument from my own location: the tears brought years of self-doubt into the questions I was beginning to formulate. Writing this and other texts is therefore also a struggle against the effects of dehumanization on Black children, including the judgments I had learned to make about myself.

This trajectory is read alongside Campinho through the question of institutional continuity. Conditions that support learning and belonging in one arrangement may lose force in the next; their effects may also persist in a student's relation to knowledge. Institutional portability asks how far supportive relations accompany students across these boundaries.

The comparison makes the questions concrete. Which relationship changed, through what instrument, with what material support, for how long, and with what reach? Did a community move from an object of curriculum to a producer of knowledge? From consultation to decision? Could it influence who works in the school? Would these changes survive a new administration or follow students into the next stage of education?

These questions return to the SPS from another direction. Its initial concern was how schools turn interpretations of conduct into consequences, durable classifications, and diminished belonging. The cases bring a political question into that analysis: what happens when subjects historically administered by schooling acquire some power to dispute the administration of schooling itself? This changes the questions asked of the concept: alongside the consequences of classification, analysis must follow who gains the authority to interpret conduct, make decisions, and contest them.

School depenalization emerges here as a research problem: under what institutional arrangements can a school respond to conflict without turning it into a lasting identity of deviance? The answer calls for attention to actual decisions, records, opportunities for contestation, and subsequent educational trajectories. It also asks whose account of an event prevails, what consequences endure, and whether the student continues to belong.

Belonging cannot be inferred from the absence of overt punishment alone. A school may enforce demanding rules while allowing participation and the review of decisions; another may impose few visible sanctions yet leave students or communities without a meaningful voice in institutional life. Authority, accountability, and belonging must be read together, but they are not interchangeable.

## 10. Conclusion

This article began by changing who appears as an educational actor. Black populations are both historical producers of education and collective subjects who dispute who may exercise authority over schooling itself. From this standpoint, QSE emerges from struggles that transformed claims into rights and relocated part of the conflict inside public institutions, where community-produced educational projects encounter state resources, procedures, and authority.

The cases establish two connected propositions: institutional transformation is layered, and a transformed school is not necessarily a transformed trajectory. Changes in curriculum, professional legitimacy, resources, and educational continuity can be real while differing in pace, durability, and reach.

There is also a reflexive dimension to that distinction. I have occupied, at different moments, two positions within the classificatory relation examined in this research: I was a student repeatedly defined through school failure, and I now study the institutional processes through which schools produce classifications, consequences, and belonging. What matters here is the movement between those positions. It returns to the article's opening claim about Black people as producers of education and knowledge: subjects historically classified by educational institutions may also become producers of concepts through which those institutions are interpreted, contested, and transformed.

When resistance becomes institution, protest changes form. Communities acquire instruments for pressing claims while continuing to contest the rules governing curriculum, recruitment, provision, and educational transitions.

For the School Penal System, the comparative advance is the recognition that institutional authority can itself be reorganized through collective struggle. Whether such reorganization changes disciplinary judgments, persistent labels, and students' belonging is a concrete research agenda extending across schools and educational transitions.

These findings contribute to the Brazil–Colombia dialogue on Black educational struggles (Miranda & Lozano, 2018) and to debates on Black community authority in U.S. schooling discussed above.

QSE brings community-produced claims into a recognized modality of public education. State resources, certification, and procedures become part of the terrain of dispute. What matters next is who exercises authority, with what support, and whether the resulting arrangements accompany students through the educational system. The struggle continues inside the institutions it has helped create.

## Declarations

**Funding:**

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**Data availability:**

The comparative analysis uses published literature, public documents, and regulations identified in the references. Autobiographical passages draw on the author's retrospective memories. No interview or participant-level dataset was produced.

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**Competing interests:**

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**Ethics statement:**

The article analyzes published literature and public documents and includes retrospective accounts of the author's own experience. No interviews, participant recruitment, or field observation were conducted for this manuscript. Recollections omit identifying details about teachers, schools, and classmates.

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