

**THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGIONS ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF CULTURAL
IDENTITY: IN DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS IN SOCIETY**

**A INFLUÊNCIA DAS RELIGIÕES NA CONSTRUÇÃO DA IDENTIDADE
CULTURAL: EM DIFERENTES TRADIÇÕES RELIGIOSAS NA SOCIEDADE**

**LA INFLUENCIA DE LAS RELIGIONES EN LA CONSTRUCCIÓN DE LA
IDENTIDAD CULTURAL: EN LAS DIFERENTES TRADICIONES RELIGIOSAS
DE LA SOCIEDAD**

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ABSTRACT

Religion is presented as a fundamental element in the construction of behaviors, social norms and values, shaping the academic trajectory and social interactions of students. The article explores the influence of religion on the cultural identity and educational experience of students taking professional education courses in the QualificarES Program. It highlights the importance of understanding religious diversity in the educational context, promoting a more inclusive and respectful environment. Qualitative research, based on content analysis, reveals that religiosity can be a motivational factor, but it also presents challenges in contexts of diversity. The conclusion emphasizes the need for a careful look at cultural differences and the importance of educational policies that respect religious plurality, promoting intercultural dialogue and harmonious coexistence among students. The study seeks to contribute to a more humanized and equitable education, recognizing the relevance of religious diversity in the training of students.

Keywords: Professional Education. Sociology. Religious Diversity.

RESUMO

A religião é apresentada como um elemento fundamental na construção de comportamentos, normas sociais e valores, moldando a trajetória acadêmica e as interações sociais dos alunos. O artigo explora a influência da religião na identidade cultural e na experiência educacional dos estudantes, dos cursos de educação profissional do Programa QualificarES. Destaca a importância de compreender a diversidade religiosa no contexto educacional, promovendo um ambiente mais inclusivo e respeitoso. A pesquisa qualitativa, baseada na análise de conteúdo, revela que a religiosidade pode ser um fator motivacional, mas também

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apresenta desafios em contextos de diversidade. A conclusão enfatiza a necessidade de um olhar atento, às diferenças culturais e a importância de políticas educacionais que respeitem a pluralidade religiosa, promovendo o diálogo intercultural e a convivência harmoniosa entre os estudantes. O estudo busca contribuir para um ensino mais humanizado e equitativo, reconhecendo a relevância da diversidade religiosa na formação dos alunos.

Palavras-chave: Educação Profissional. Sociologia. Diversidade Religiosa.

RESUMEN

La religión se presenta como un elemento fundamental en la construcción de comportamientos, normas sociales y valores, moldeando las trayectorias académicas y las interacciones sociales de los estudiantes. Este artículo explora la influencia de la religión en la identidad cultural y la experiencia educativa de los estudiantes matriculados en los programas de formación profesional del Programa QualificarES. Destaca la importancia de comprender la diversidad religiosa en el contexto educativo, fomentando un entorno más inclusivo y respetuoso. Una investigación cualitativa, basada en el análisis de contenido, revela que la religiosidad puede ser un factor motivador, pero también presenta desafíos en diversos contextos. La conclusión enfatiza la necesidad de una cuidadosa consideración de las diferencias culturales y la importancia de políticas educativas que respeten la pluralidad religiosa, promoviendo el diálogo intercultural y la convivencia armoniosa entre los estudiantes. El estudio busca contribuir a una educación más humana y equitativa, reconociendo la relevancia de la diversidad religiosa en el desarrollo estudiantil.

Palabras clave: Formación Profesional. Sociología. Diversidad Religiosa.

1 INTRODUCTION

Religion plays a fundamental role in the formation of the cultural identity of communities, and in the formation of values, beliefs and behaviors of individuals, influencing various aspects of social and educational life. Through convictions, ceremonies, representations, and stories, the various religious practices define actions, social rules, and principles transmitted through time⁴. In this way, cultural identity, seen as something in constant change and socially constructed⁵, is directly affected by religious practices, which serve to unite and distinguish different groups within society.

In the context of professional training, this mark can arise in several ways, from the selection of the course to the interaction with colleagues and professors. Religion has a considerable weight in the construction of people and in the formation of cultural and social identities. Within the universe of education, its action can be seen, both in interpersonal relationships and in the values and ideas that guide the conduct of students. In view of this situation, this research seeks, in a comprehensive way, to examine how the various religious beliefs are practiced by students of the face-to-face professional education courses of the QualificarES Program.

To achieve this general objective, the following specific objectives were outlined: To identify the religions professed by the students of the professional education courses of the QualificarES Program; To analyze how religiosity influences the values, attitudes and perspectives of students in their professional and personal training; To investigate the students' perception of the interaction between their religious belief and the educational environment; To examine the relationship between religious practices and the development of socio-emotional skills in the school context.

In order to achieve this objective, perspectives from sociology, anthropology and philosophy were used, with emphasis on thinkers such as Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, Clifford Geertz and Stuart Hall. The importance of this research lies in the pressing need to understand how religious experience influences the educational journey of students, fostering the creation of a learning space that is more inclusive and that values mutual respect. In this sense, the theoretical basis will be based on the works of authors such as Pierre Bourdieu, who examines the connection between culture, education and the way society perpetuates

⁴ GEERTZ, Clifford. *The interpretation of cultures*. Rio de Janeiro: LTC, 1989, p. 45.

⁵ HALL, Stuart. *Cultural identity in post-modernity*. Rio de Janeiro: DP&A, 2006, p. 14.

itself⁶, and Durkheim investigates the function of religion in social union and in the development of ethics⁷.

The reason behind this is to understand how faith can affect students' school and professional progress. In a progressively more varied teaching scenario, it is crucial to take into account the cultural and religious effects on student instruction, in order to promote a more comprehensive and attentive learning. Furthermore, by examining this connection, the study can help in the creation of teaching methods that value religious plurality and stimulate harmony in the school space.

The methodology adopted is qualitative and descriptive in nature. In the context of the study, qualitative research is adequate, as it allows exploring the different religious traditions professed by the students, from the professional education courses, QualificarES Program. The content analysis will be carried out based on the content analysis technique, as proposed by Bardin, allowing the identification of the main perceptions, patterns, discourses and narratives, which reveal how religious aspects impact the educational experience of these students, and students' experiences, in relation to religious influences in the educational environment⁸.

It is hoped that the results of this research will contribute to the understanding of the dynamics between religion and professional education, providing subsidies for future discussions and educational policies, which consider religious diversity as a relevant factor in the formation of students. In this way, it seeks to foster a more inclusive and sensitive educational environment to the various cultural and religious manifestations present in contemporary society.

2 RELIGION, RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND EDUCATION IN CULTURAL FORMATION AND IDENTITY IN BRAZIL

Religion develops social capital, as it favors the participation of people in joint activities, which involves prayer meetings, religious festivities and volunteer practices. This participation not only strengthens social cohesion, but also acts in the creation of support networks in situations of difficulty.

⁶ BOURDIEU, Pierre. *Reproduction: elements for a theory of the education system*. 7. ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2014, p. 67.

⁷ DURKHEIM, Émile. *The elementary forms of religious life*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2003, p. 123.

⁸ BARDIN, Laurence. *Content analysis*. Rio de Janeiro: Edições 70, 2015, p. 89.

Religion, by promoting participation in community activities such as prayer meetings, religious festivities, and volunteer practices, strengthens social capital. These activities not only reinforce social cohesion but also create essential support networks in times of difficulty. Through these interactions, individuals develop a sense of belonging and solidarity, which is crucial for building a more integrated and resilient society. In addition, religion plays a key role in transmitting social values and norms, contributing to the formation of a collective identity and the maintenance of lasting social bonds⁹.

In the same line of reasoning, Clifford Geertz argues that to understand a religion would be to understand a cultural system, that is, the meanings that direct the lives of individuals and societies¹⁰. Geertz explains that religion configures a frame of reference, for the organization of the reality of the social world with daily practices and even the social norms themselves.

The relationship between religion and education in cultural development is a multifaceted subject, as it encompasses the dissemination of principles, convictions and customs that shape the individuality of people and communities. In the Brazilian context, the mark of religion in education has deep roots and has been revealed since the colonial era, when Catholic indoctrination served as a pedagogical tool. Despite the distinction established between Church and State, the participation of religion in education remains a crucial aspect in the formation of the cultural values of the population¹¹.

In Brazil, religious education has provoked discussions, especially about its mandatory nature and how it is taught. According to Amaral, religious instruction needs to occur without attempts at conversion, valuing plurality and stimulating debate between different beliefs¹². However, in several educational institutions, there is a predominance of Christian doctrine, raising doubts about the justice in the way the various religions are presented.

In Barbosa's view, religious education has the potential to be a valuable tool in combating religious intolerance, encouraging appreciation for cultural variety¹³. However, its application must be done in a way that ensures the neutrality of the government and the consideration of a wide range of religious and philosophical views.

⁹ SOUZA, Jessé. *The social construction of subcitizenship: towards a political sociology of peripheral modernity*. Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2003, p. 124.

¹⁰ GEERTZ, 1989, p. 141-142.

¹¹ SAVIANI, D. *History of pedagogical ideas in Brazil*. Campinas: Autores Associados, 2008, p. 50.

¹² AMARAL, R. *Religious education in Brazil: history, challenges and perspectives*. Rio de Janeiro: PUC-Rio, 2015, p. 87.

¹³ BARBOSA, M. *Religious education and the construction of pluralistic citizenship*. Brasília: UnB, 2020, p. 8.

Religious education plays a significant role in cultural formation, as it contributes to the construction of individuals' identity and the transmission of ethical and moral values. According to Almeida, religious education can act as a means of promoting respect for religious and cultural diversity, as long as it does not privilege a single tradition¹⁴.

For Silva, the influence of religion on the educational scenario in Brazil manifests itself in several ways¹⁵:

In public schools, religion is supported by article 210 of the Federal Constitution of 1988, is optional for students and must guarantee respect for all beliefs¹⁶.

Religious education in private schools: institutions associated with various religions provide instruction based on their theological dogmas; The impact of religious principles on the school culture: even in non-religious places, moral and ethical values are widespread in schools, as they have religious origins.

According to Gauthier, religious education can contribute to the formation of more critical citizens, as long as it is guided by respect for pluralism and the secularity of the State¹⁷.

Moreira points out that the challenge is the need for adequate teacher training for religious education. Many teachers do not have specific training to deal with religious diversity in the classroom, which can result in exclusionary or biased practices¹⁸.

The culture that defines us is always changing, it is never something static. Stuart Hall argues that our identity is not something immutable, but a continuous creation, shaped by various elements, such as faith¹⁹. According to him, "cultural identity is born from the union between the traditions we have inherited and the novelties that emerge in society over the years".²⁰

The strength of social connections drives collaboration and mutual credibility between people. In Brazil, the study of social capital is vast, with in-depth analyses of its causes and effects on economic and social progress²¹. Religious entities in the country are pillars of social

¹⁴ ALMEIDA, J. A. *Religious education and cultural diversity in Brazil*. São Paulo: Loyola, 2010, p. 58-66.

¹⁵ SILVA, V. G. *Religious education and cultural identity: challenges and perspectives*. Salvador: EDUFBA, 2017, p. 01.

¹⁶ BRAZIL. *Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil of 1988*. Available at: <https://www.planalto.gov.br/>. Accessed on: 15 mar. 2025, p. 125.

¹⁷ GAUTHIER, F. *Religious pluralism and education in contemporary Brazil*. Porto Alegre: Sulina, 2012, p. 45.

¹⁸ MOREIRA, A. C. *Teacher training and religious education: challenges for a pluralistic education*. Belo Horizonte: UFMG, 2018, p. 79-80.

¹⁹ HALL, 2006, p. 9.

²⁰ HALL, 2006, p. 70.

²¹ RIBEIRO, Lilian Lopes; BOTO, Lucas Tomaz; MAYORGA, Fernando Daniel de Oliveira. *Social capital in Brazil: an analysis of its determinants*. Interactions, Campo Grande, MS, v. 4, p. 801-815, Oct./Dec. 2020, p. 85.

capital, encouraging citizen participation and solidifying the bonds between community members²².

Despite the increase in globalization and the decrease in religious influence, religions persist as key elements in the formation of cultural identity, albeit in a new way. Even in scenarios where religion loses space, its importance in the public scenario remains, impacting discussions about ethics, rights, and political decisions.

Candomblé and Umbanda play an essential role in the cohesion of Afro-Brazilian communities, providing spiritual and social support for their members²³. These religious systems function as spaces of cultural resistance, promoting identity and belonging among practitioners.

3 RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND SYNCRETISM IN BRAZIL

Brazil's religious diversity has always exhibited a wide range of beliefs, where the religions of native peoples are intertwined with Christianity, Afro-Brazilian traditions, spiritualism, Islam, Judaism, and other new forms of spirituality. This religious diversity creates both moments of harmonious interaction and situations of conflict between different religious groups.

The mixture of different religions is a fundamental part of the Brazilian cultural essence. As Bastide noted in 1960, Afro-Brazilian religions, such as Candomblé and Umbanda, arose from the union of African, indigenous, and Christian elements. This transformation was more than just a cultural adaptation; It was also a way for enslaved Africans to resist, using the fusion of beliefs as a means of protecting their own traditions under the rule of Catholicism.

"Afro-Brazilian religious syncretism as a cultural aspect was - and continues to be - a transnational survival strategy, as it had its origin in the mixture of African, indigenous and European traditions".²⁴

4 RELIGION, POLITICS AND SOCIETY: RELIGION AS A FACTOR OF SOCIAL COHESION

In the Brazilian context, the link between religion and politics shows how religion can unite society. Pierucci (2006) already noted that the greater presence of religious people in

²² OLIVEIRA, P. R. *Religion, society and social capital in Brazil*. Recife: UFPE, 2021, 55.

²³ PRANDI, Reginaldo. *The Candomblés of São Paulo*. São Paulo: Hucitec, 2004, p. 150.

²⁴ VALENTE, W. *Afro-Brazilian religious syncretism*. 3. ed. São Paulo: Nacional, 1977, p. 45.

politics comes from the search to defend their values and what they consider important. The Evangelical Caucus is an example, fighting for moral and social issues that represent the thinking of those who elected them²⁵.

On the other hand, religion can end up separating and creating exclusion. When certain religious groups want everyone to follow their beliefs, society can become more divided and religious intolerance increases²⁶. For religion to continue to unite people, it is essential to balance faith with respect for different cultures and beliefs.

For sociology, Émile Durkheim believed that religion is crucial to unite society and create a sense of belonging. In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, he explains how religious rituals and symbols strengthen the bonds between people, generating a common identity²⁷.

Max Weber pointed out that religious faith not only defines culture, but also impacts economic and political actions. In *"The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism"*, Weber investigates how Protestant religious precepts, such as the valorization of work and economic reasoning, were crucial in shaping Western culture²⁸.

Pierre Bourdieu enriches this discussion with the concept of habitus, which would be the attitudes that people learn within a social group²⁹. For the same author, religion is where habitus is reproduced, passing on principles and rules that mark people's identity and affect what they do in society.

Religion is very important in the structure of communities, acting as a social link by creating values, rules and customs that guide people's behavior and create a feeling of ³⁰togetherness. In Brazil, the variety of religions has a great influence on social relations, helping both to maintain order and to generate conflicts.

According to Costa, religion is historically used as an instrument of social unification, strengthening community ties and promoting solidarity among the members of a group³¹. Religious practices provide a space for coexistence and interaction, which reinforces

²⁵ PIERUCCI, Antônio Flávio. *The politics of the religious and the religion of the politicians*. São Paulo: Paulus, 2006, p. 46.

²⁶ SOUZA, J. *Religious intolerance and social conflicts in Brazil*. São Paulo: Paulus, 2016, p. 78.

²⁷ DURKHEIM, 2003, p. 234.

²⁸ WEBER, Max. *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2004, p. 121.

²⁹ BOURDIEU, Pierre. *The practical sense*. 3 ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2012, p. 85.

³⁰ DURKHEIM, 2003, p. 155.

³¹ COSTA, M. L. *Religion and society: community ties and cultural identity*. Belo Horizonte: UFMG, 2015, p. 67.

collective identities, being especially important in times of crisis, such as natural disasters, political instability, and economic challenges.

In his classic work, Émile Durkheim states that religion plays a fundamental role in maintaining social order, as it establishes a set of beliefs and rituals that strengthen collective identity and guarantee social solidarity³². In Brazil, this perspective can be observed in the influence of religions, community practices, festivities and social movements³³.

Catholicism, for example, has played a fundamental role in the organization of Brazilian society since the colonial period, functioning as a structuring element of social relations and moral norms³⁴. Liberation Theology, developed in Latin America from the 1960s onwards, is an example of how religion can act as a factor of social cohesion, by engaging in struggles for social justice and human rights³⁵.

Protestantism, especially in its Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal branch, has also promoted community ties, creating networks of mutual support among believers and reinforcing moral values that guide daily life³⁶. Evangelical churches have played an increasingly active role in social assistance, offering services such as psychological support, recovery programs for drug addicts, and food distribution.

Religion also stands out as a factor of social cohesion in times of crisis. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many faith-based institutions have taken an active role in social assistance, distributing food, offering emotional support, and promoting blood donation campaigns³⁷.

Silva argues that religion strengthens social resilience, as it provides meaning and purpose in the face of adversity. In Brazil, churches and religious organizations were essential to mitigate the impacts of the crisis, organizing solidarity networks and offering psychological and material support to vulnerable populations³⁸.

³² DURKHEIM, 2003, p. 238.

³³ SILVA, 2017, p. 155.

³⁴ CUNHA, L. A. *Education and laicity: challenges in contemporary Brazil*. São Paulo: Cortez, 2014, p. 80.

³⁵ BETTO, Frei. *Faith and commitment: liberation theology in Latin America*. São Paulo: Vozes, 2019, 71.

³⁶ MARIANO, R. *Neopentecostais: sociology of the new Pentecostalism in Brazil*. São Paulo: Loyola, 2010, p. 140.

³⁷ NUNES, P. *Pandemic and religion: the role of churches in social assistance during the health crisis*. Brasília: UnB, 2021, p. 41.

³⁸ SILVA, 2017, p. 70.

5 THE SECULARITY OF THE STATE AND EDUCATION

According to Cunha, the idea of a secular state in Brazil implies that the education offered to the public should not favor any religion, ensuring the freedom of each one to believe what they want and the richness of different cultures. However, Fonseca observes that there is a constant conflict between this secularism and the weight of religions in the way they are taught³⁹.

Within what the BNCC (National Common Curricular Base) proposes, teaching about religions needs to be seen as something that shows the value of the variety of beliefs and philosophies, without giving more importance to one of them⁴⁰. Oliveira believes that teaching religion in an open and plural way can help create an environment of peace and respect among people⁴¹.

6 CHRISTIANITY AND WESTERN CULTURAL IDENTITY

Christianity was one of the main agents in the formation of Western cultural identity, especially in Europe and the Americas. Since the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church has exerted great influence on morality, education, and politics. Christianity has shaped not only the religious sphere, but also the public sphere, being a determining factor in the construction of values such as charity, justice and the concept of human dignity.

In the medieval period, religion was deeply intertwined with power structures. The concept of the divine right of kings, for example, consolidated monarchies based on the belief that the power of rulers came directly from God. In addition, the Catholic Church played a key role in the preservation of classical knowledge, through the monasteries and universities that emerged from the twelfth century onwards.

In the sixteenth century, the Protestant Reformation gave rise to new ways for people to identify themselves culturally. Max Weber argues that Protestantism, notably Calvinism, established a morality of hard work and self-discipline that helped propel modern capitalism forward⁴². The idea of vocation as a call from God, to work and the importance given to moderation shaped the way Protestant societies saw themselves, such as in Germany, England and the USA.

³⁹ FONSECA, T. *Religion and the state in Brazil: between secularism and religious influence*. São Paulo: Hucitec, 2019, p. 55.

⁴⁰ BRAZIL. *National Common Curricular Base – BNCC*. Brasília: MEC, 2017, p. 140.

⁴¹ OLIVEIRA, 2021, p. 61.

⁴² WEBER, 2004, p. 125.

In America, Christianity also played a key role in the construction of the cultural identity of European settlers and in the idea of manifest destiny, which served to justify the territorial expansion of the United States. In Brazil, Portuguese colonization introduced Catholicism as the official religion, impacting from the political structure to popular celebrations, such as Carnival and the June festivals, which combine religious and cultural elements.

Christianity played a major role in shaping Western cultural identity. Since the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church has exerted a strong influence on the social organization, education, and morality of European societies. In addition, with the Protestant Reformation, new values, such as individualism and discipline at work, began to shape modern Western culture⁴³.

7 ISLAM, ISLAMIC CULTURE AND AFRO-BRAZILIAN RELIGIONS AND BRAZILIAN CULTURAL IDENTITY

Islam, in addition to being a religion, is a system of life that encompasses social, political and cultural aspects, shaping the identity of Muslims around the world. Sharia, for example, is not only identified as a legal code, but a complete guide to daily life, influencing everything from personal morality to the organization of society⁴⁴.

In the period of the Golden Age of Islam, Muslims acted bravely, with the advancement of science, philosophy and art. Cities such as Baghdad and Córdoba became centers of knowledge, where scholars from different backgrounds gathered, to exchange ideas and develop new technologies. This era was marked by advances in areas such as mathematics, medicine and astronomy, which greatly influenced the cultural development of the Western world⁴⁵.

European colonization brought significant challenges to Islamic identity, leading to movements of resistance and cultural reaffirmation in various regions of the Muslim world. The imposition of Western values and economic exploitation caused a reaction among Muslims, who sought to reaffirm their traditions and cultural values as a form of resistance to foreign domination⁴⁶.

Afro-Brazilian religions, such as Candomblé and Umbanda, were essential for the preservation of African cultural identity in Brazil, especially in relations with the black population,

⁴³ WEBER, 2004, p. 121.

⁴⁴ SILVA, Rafael Alves. *Islamism and modernity*. São Paulo: Unesp, 2010, p. 35-36.

⁴⁵ FERREIRA, Jorge. *History of Islam*. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2008, p. 92.

⁴⁶ OLIVEIRA, Maria das Graças. *Islamism and colonialism*. Brasília: University of Brasília, 2012, p. 123.

during the period of slavery. They were a means of cultural resistance and spiritual resistance, since Afro-Brazilian religions allowed slaves to maintain their traditions and ancestors in a context of oppression and violence. Contributing to these religions emerged, while resisting slavery and cultural detachment, imposed by the Portuguese colonial period. Bastide describes that Candomblé served as a way to preserve African traditions in a context of oppression and violence⁴⁷.

Afro-Brazilian religions have not only preserved African traditions but have also profoundly influenced the formation of Brazilian cultural identity, contributing to the diversity and richness of the country's cultural heritage⁴⁸. Corroborating, Sodré highlights elements such as music, dance, cuisine, and popular festivities were deeply influenced by Afro-Brazilian religions, which became an integral part of national culture⁴⁹.

Religious syncretism in Brazil, which combines elements of Catholicism with African religions, has resulted in the creation of a unique and rich culture, which manifests itself in various cultural expressions, such as music, dance, and carnival. This process of syncretism allowed the continuity of African traditions, under the guise of Christian practices, enabling the survival and adaptation of African beliefs in the Brazilian context⁵⁰.

Syncretism combines with the elements of Catholicism, with African religions and has resulted in the creation of a unique and rich culture, which manifests itself in various cultural expressions, such as music, dance and carnival⁵¹.

The combination of Catholicism and African religions, that is, syncretism, made it possible to create a culture of its own. An example is the combination of African Orishas with Catholic Saints, Oxalá and Jesus, Iemanjá and Our Lady, Ogum and Saint George. This made it possible for African leaders to continue under the Christian disguise or religiosity, a strategy adopted to avoid persecution. In addition, Afro-Brazilian religions influenced various cultural manifestations, such as music (samba, maracatu), dance and cuisine. Carnival, one of the greatest expressions of Brazilian cultural identity, has roots in both Catholic traditions and African festivals that celebrate ancestry and resistance.

However, Afro-Brazilian religions still face prejudice and religious intolerance, especially in contexts where Christian hegemony seeks to impose a single vision of religious

⁴⁷ BASTIDE, Roger. *African religions in Brazil*. São Paulo: Pioneira, 1995, p. 120.

⁴⁸ PRANDI, Reginaldo. *Mythology of the orixás*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2001, p. 60.

⁴⁹ SODRÉ, Muniz. *The terreiro and the city: the African presence in the carnival of Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1995, p. 80.

⁵⁰ PRANDI, 2001, p. 63.

⁵¹ SODRÉ, 1995, p. 83.

and cultural identity. The struggle for the valorization of these traditions continues to be a relevant theme in the construction of contemporary Brazilian identity.

8 CONCLUSION

Each religious tradition presented demonstrates that cultural identity is not an isolated phenomenon, but a continuous process of construction and reconstruction, influenced by historical, social and political factors. Religions shape not only the spirituality of individuals, but also their behaviors, norms, and belonging to social groups.

It was observed with the research that religiosity exerts an influence on the educational trajectory of students in professional education courses, of the QualificarES Program, manifesting itself both in the choice of the course and in the interaction with colleagues and teachers. It was observed that religious beliefs can act as a motivating factor for the continuity of studies, at the same time that they can generate challenges in academic life, especially in contexts of religious diversity.

Religion plays a relevant role in the formation of students, influencing their perspectives, values, and attitudes within the educational environment. The religious diversity present in the professional education courses of the QualificarES Program demonstrates the need for a careful look at cultural differences and individual particularities in the teaching-learning process. From the qualitative approach, it was possible to identify how religiosity manifests itself in the educational experience, impacting from academic choices to social interactions in the school environment.

Religion plays a central role in the construction of the cultural identity of societies, influencing everything from individual values to social and political structures. As discussed throughout the article, different religious traditions shape how individuals perceive themselves and interact with the world.

Stuart Hall, Clifford Geertz and Émile Durkheim were important for us to understand religion as a force that unites society and shapes who we are. When analyzing various religions, we realize that culture is not fixed, changing with society, politics, and the economy. Thus, it is crucial to continue studying the link between religion and culture, even more so in a global world, where beliefs and customs mix and transform.

The mutual influence of faith and learning on cultural development presents a complex panorama, full of conflicts and dilemmas, although it provides chances to consolidate pluralism and the appreciation of difference. By including the understanding of religiosity and

the variety of beliefs, education plays a crucial role in encouraging dialogue between cultures and building more equitable and understanding communities. However, it is essential that this perspective observes the separation between state and church and refrains from forcing particular religious beliefs, ensuring that education is an environment of acceptance and thoughtful analysis.

Faith has a significant impact on bringing people together, encouraging mutual help, a sense of belonging, and connections between individuals. In Brazil, we notice this strength in the social support offered by religious groups, in the way communities organize themselves and in the impulse they give to our cultures. For religion to continue contributing to social unity, it is crucial that it embraces everyone with respect, celebrating diversity and the rights of each one.

Nowadays, the way faith and culture meet is full of nuances. While the loss of power of some religions is remarkable, we see the emergence of new ways of living faith, which strengthen the role of religion in the way we see ourselves and identify ourselves culturally.

In the Brazilian context, the wide range of religious beliefs profoundly shapes the essence of the country, although the struggle against intolerance and the growing religious activity in the political sphere persists. Against this background, it is crucial to consider methods to foster appreciation for the diversity of faith and to intensify communication between different religions. In addition, it became obvious the urgency of an education system that praises and values religious variety, encouraging intercultural conversation and acceptance. The in-depth analysis of these interactions can contribute to the creation of more comprehensive pedagogical guidelines, ensuring that the school environment is established as a meeting point of knowledge, respect and peaceful coexistence between the various religious visions.

It is essential to create a learning scenario that welcomes the various religions, encouraging open debate and unity. It is hoped that this study will help to create school rules that take into account the wide range of beliefs, ensuring a friendlier and fairer place of study for each student.

The data revealed that faith can be a source of emotional strength and encouragement for students, supporting them to overcome the challenges of school and work. However, it is crucial to create teaching methods that certify a school environment that involves everyone, where different beliefs are respected and a good relationship between students is allowed.

Thus, it is emphasized that this analysis stimulates the discussion on the relationship between faith and education for work, motivating new research and the adoption of actions that exalt religious diversity in the academic and professional world, and promote a constant analysis of the relevance of religious diversity in the school environment. Understanding how religion shapes the education of students is essential to build a more humane and egalitarian education.

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