Interculturality, Decolonization and Indigenous Higher Education in Brazil

Interculturalidade, Descolonização e a Educação Superior Indígena no Brasil

Interculturalidad, Descolonización Y La Educación Superior Indígena En Brasil

Interculturalité, décolonisation et enseignement supérieur autochtone au Brésil

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ABSTRACT: Objectives and methods. *The present study, proposes reflect theoretically how the intercultural construction occurs in higher education institutions, also including a decolonization perspective in this spaces.* **Background**. *In education, historic impositions of ethnocentric perspective from European culture on others, of accepted social knowledge's, including languages oppose interculturality. In Brazil, indigenous higher education happened by affirmative policies, offering limited places in universities according racial and social parameters.* **Conclusions.** *In the sense of change power structures, indigenous empowerment can also contribute to these new perspectives in educational sector, in meeting and common agreement, new* world's *construction through interculturality.*
DECOLONIZATION. HUMAN RIGHTS. EMPOWERMENT. INTERCULTURALITY. INDIGENOUS.

RESUMO: *Objetivo e método.* Este trabalho se propôs reflexionar teoricamente como ocorreu e como ocorre a construção intercultural nas Instituições de Ensino Superior, também em uma abordagem da descolonização do saber nesses espaços. **Referencial teórico.** Em educação, a perspectiva etnocêntrica de imposições históricas da cultura europeia sobre outras, de saberes validados socialmente, inclusive se tratando de linguagens se contrapõe à interculturalidade. No Brasil, a formação superior indígena se deu por meio de políticas afirmativas, no provimento de vagas que englobassem aspectos raciais e sociais. **Conclusões.** No sentido de modificar estruturas de poder, o empoderamento indígena pode ser utilizado também com relação à construção dessas novas perspectivas no setor da educação, na forma do encontro e de um acordo comum, na construção de novos mundos por meio da interculturalidade.
DESCOLONIZAÇÃO. DIREITOS HUMANOS. EMPODERAMENTO. INTERCULTURALIDADE. POVOS INDÍGENAS.

RESUMEN: objetivo y métodos. *Este trabajo tuvo como objetivo reflexionar teóricamente sobre cómo se produjo esta construcción intercultural en las instituciones de educación superior, también en un enfoque para la descolonización del conocimiento en estos espacios.* **Referencias teóricas.** *Em educación, la perspectiva teocéntrica de las imposiciones históricas de la cultura europea sobre otros, del conocimiento socialmente validado, incluso en el caso de las lenguas, se opone a la interculturalidad. En Brasil, la educación superior indígena se llevó a cabo a través de políticas afirmativas, al proporcionar vacantes que incluían aspectos raciales y sociales.* **Conclusión.** *En el sentido de modificar las estructuras de poder, el empoderamiento indígena también se puede utilizar en relación con la construcción de estas nuevas perspectivas en el sector educativo, en forma de una reunión y un acuerdo común, en la construcción de nuevos mundos a través de la interculturalidad.*
DESCOLONIZACIÓN. DERECHOS HUMANOS. EMPODERAMIENTO. INTERCULTURALIDAD. PUEBLOS INDÍGENAS.

RÉSUMÉ: objectif et méthode. *Ce travail vise à refléter théoriquement comment cela s'est passé et comment se déroule la construction interculturelle dans les établissements d'enseignement supérieur, également dans une approche de la décolonisation des connaissances dans ces espaces.* **Référence théorique.** *Dans l'éducation, la perspective ethnocentrique des impositions historiques de la culture européenne aux autres, des connaissances socialement validées, même dans le cas des langues, s'oppose à l'interculturalité. Au Brésil, l'enseignement supérieur autochtone s'effectuait dans le cadre de politiques positives, en offrant des postes vacants comportant des aspects raciaux et sociaux.* **Conclusions.** *Afin de modifier les structures de pouvoir, l'autonomisation autochtone peut également être utilisée en relation avec la construction de ces nouvelles perspectives dans le secteur de l'éducation, sous la forme d'une rencontre et d'un accord commun, dans la construction de nouveaux mondes par l'interculturalité.*
DESOLONISATION. DROITS DE L'HOMME. AUTORISATION. INTERCULTURALITÉ. PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES.

Introduction

Starting from the intercultural "encounter" as an event that does not happen without unequal forces, one can consider that the perspective of power in the context of the context of Brazilian indigenous peoples has always placed them as "minorities", considered as "ideologically less powerful groups" (ACSELRAD, 2006).

Throughout history these original peoples have gone from a high number to less significant numbers in the total population, and who have also been in a condition of less value in power relations, an aspect that may justify their current weakened social profiles (RIBEIRO, 2006).

In addition to the issues of domination and colonization towards these peoples, it is also necessary to address other perspectives, and to counter the meaning of "encounter", approaching it from the perspective of interculturality. Interculturality, as a dynamic interaction between groups considered culturally diverse, to be effective also shows the desire for communication from both parties, and why not say a common agreement. Monteiro (2006, p. 26), regarding the contact between missionaries and

indigenous people in the country, reports: "In view of the fact that contrasting versions of the world are irreducible to each other, an inter-relational world construction takes place in the games of language".

Historically, it appears that, precisely through these movements of common adjustments, experiences and languages, the diverse Brazilian indigenous people remain present, unlike other colonizing models. Interculturality, configured as a form of resistance, exemplifying the way in which the different indigenous peoples appropriated and appropriated representations that are not their own, configuring new perspectives (MONTEIRO, 2006).

Wittgenstein, described interculturality and the production of this agreement with a disposition for communication in 1975, as the sharing of common experiences, in familiarities, amid cultural contrast. Thinking of the national history, in a space of constant territorial dispute between different actors, it is possible to verify this field of need for communication and common experiences, between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, which would produce the current territorial configuration, in a continuous construction of "new -worlds "from 1500 to the present day.

In the same sense, one can understand the intercultural encounter in the educational context as a communicative modality. In education, interculturality presented in the form of the meeting, and has the perspective of the historical impositions of European culture on native culture, of sovereign and socially validated knowledge, including in terms of languages and languages.

> Language is the spirit and vehicle of the affective dimension of cultures. To recognize that "others" also have knowledge is to admit the value and relevance of their cultures and to grant them a position of interlocutors. All of these are fundamental premises for building intercultural dialogue as a democratic foundation of education (MARIN, 2009, p. 17).

New conformations established from the opening for these peoples to the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Currently, the indigenous population represents 0.42% of the country's population and is distributed among 305 ethnic groups and speakers of 274 languages, with about 315 thousand individuals living in cities and 502 thousand in villages, with individuals that permeate diverse social spaces, including in HEIs, producing agreements and questioning powers, in a living and new dynamic (ISA, 2018).

Objectives

In dialogue with Monteiro (2006), intercultural dynamics presumes a continuous construction and deconstruction of communicative codes, based on local cultures, in different social instances. This work proposes to reflect theoretically how this intercultural construction occurred and how it occurs in the education sector, more specifically in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in an approach to the decolonization of knowledge in these spaces.

1. Theoretical Foundation

According to IBGE (2010), in HEIs, the difference between Brazilians aged 25 and over with higher education was 4.7% black and 5.3% brown compared to 15.0% white, the categorization being non-existent indigenous. Federal Law No. 12,711 enacted in 2012, reserves vacancies at universities, combining attendance at public schools, income and color (ethnicity), which enabled an intercultural meeting and also resistance of knowledge in the educational environment of HEIs in Brazil. This search for access to the education sector means, in a way, the realization of rights, in response to the historical debt of exclusion and discrimination of native peoples, and of a need for "communication" and "agreement".

Putting interculturality as a perspective for deconstructing a historical hierarchy, the involvement of those involved in the construction of "new worlds" can also occur constantly in the academic environment. The epistemological challenge is to recognize the existence of other worldviews, the validity of other knowledge and other ways of building knowledge. Communication and resignification of "traditions" make this meeting a new and dynamic way of building new knowledge, both for groups of students, also for HEIs and society, in the exercise of respect, citizenship and democracy. However, the tensions of dealing with Western knowledge, already consecrated socially in dialogue with the ancient knowledge existing in the traditional cultures of the diverse indigenous peoples of Brazil, exacerbate the process in which colonization took place (MONTEIRO, 2006; MARIN, 2009).

> "The revolutionary effort of radical transformation of these structures cannot have, in the leadership, men of what to do and, in the oppressed masses, men reduced to pure doing.
> This is a point that should be demanding from all those who are really committed to the oppressed, with the cause of their liberation, a permanent and courageous reflection.
> If the true commitment to them, implying the transformation of the reality in which they are oppressed, calls for a theory of transformative action, the latter cannot fail to recognize a fundamental role in the process of transformation.
> It is not possible for the leadership to take the oppressed as less making or executing their determinations; as less activists who deny reflection on their own doing. The oppressed, having the illusion that they act, in the performance of leadership, continue to be manipulated exactly by those who, by their very nature, cannot do so.
> For this reason, insofar as the leadership denies true practice to the oppressed, it consequently empties into its own.
> In this way, he tends to impose his word on them, thus making it a false word, of a dominating character.
> With this procedure, he installs a contradiction between his way of acting and the objectives he intends, by not understanding that, without dialogue with the oppressed, authentic praxis are not possible, neither for them nor for her.
> Your action, reflection action, cannot take place without the action and reflection of others, if your commitment is liberation" (FREIRE, 1974, p. 70).

In order to modify power structures, promoting the social and political participation of these people, the term indigenous empowerment can also be used in relation to the construction of new perspectives in the education sector. In a dynamic, cognitive, affective and conductive process for the different peoples involved, and as a final product of the HEIs, in order to transform perverse structures historically built, and work on the decolonization of knowledge (BUSS, 2000; OLIVEIRA, 2016).

The participation of these peoples in the construction of the academic pedagogical process itself, in dialogue with Freire, 1974, is a sine qua non condition for the colonizing processes not to be perpetuated also in the HEI, and affirmative policies are truly transforming the reality found in its premises. In this sense, indigenous empowerment, through the awareness of their oppressed condition

and exclusion in the academic directive construction and the resumption of these spaces through what to do, making them actors, can favor interculturality.

Roso & Romanini, in their theoretical essay on individual empowerment, community empowerment and awareness, brought a parallel between these concepts and the pedagogy of liberation (ROSO; ROMANINI, 2014). Dialoguing with the proposal of indigenous higher education in the sense that this it can be a tool to promote the social act of liberation and social transformation, through individual and collective steps in the process of awareness raising. Empowerment and interculturality, if present in the HEI environment, can promote indigenous social and political participation through the strengthening of subjects at the three levels: psychological or individual, group or organizational and structural or political (FREIRE; GADOTTI; GUIMARÃES, 1995; KLEBA; WENDAUSEN, 2009; BUSS, 2010).

Social Psychology, Education, Social Sciences and Health include the term community empowerment as an unfolding of the first concept, valuing the group level in the process of seeking social transformation. It needs considerations when proposing to work with indigenous inclusion in higher education, due to the cultural aspects of these groups in decision-making and collective life (RIBEIRO, 2006; ROSO; ROMANINI, 2014).

Thus, from a cultural mediation theory perspective, the question of power, implicit in educational work, cannot be reduced to colonial domination, since it generates "cultural production". Empowerment, in this sense, occurs in the interlocution of groups, with a political-ideological dimension of individuals and indigenous groups, who seek training, in addition to the claim of rights and recognition. In this theory, there is a transformation of these peoples themselves, also in a resignification of their own culture and of otherness, not being categorized as loss of the original culture, or imposition of Western values (MONTEIRO, 2006).

> In the search for an intercultural perspective that admits equality of knowledge, in addition to all the categorization and hierarchization imposed on us by the ethnocentrism of Western cultural domination, the intercultural perspective can allow us to revalue local knowledge and create conditions to share a perspective of complementarity. It goes beyond the petty reality of the logic of knowledge, translated as power and domination. It is a matter of associating the knowledge produced by the West, with the knowledge produced by traditional, local or regional cultures, considering their production contexts (MARIN, 2009, p. 20).

Considering broader contexts, the norms resulting from the global movements for human rights education, with principles of respect for diversity and socio-environmental sustainability, overcoming educational inequalities, promoting citizenship and eradicating discrimination. It is also the current commitments assumed by Brazil, together with different nations, in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030, and corroborate these facets of indigenous higher education (ONUB, 2018).

Fundamental human rights, and the possibility of this association of knowledge, building a "new world", or a third perspective, is an indisputable justification for the social / racial quota, as reserving a number of vacancies in educational institutions with the objective of equality through equity. However, more than the provision of vacancies, the indigenous higher education process and the results of it for individuals, their communities, and historically constructed social structures, reveal a horizon of needs and possibilities (FRIAS, 2013).

2. Argumentation

In 2009, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with the report entitled "Investing in cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue", highlighted the complexity of this proposal, not establishing a solution simply by political will, but in the adoption of common

guidelines in different areas of society. Since 2003, through affirmative policies, Brazil started to include the diverse indigenous peoples in policies for access to HEIs and, more recently, has aligned itself with a global perspective in the commitment assumed through Agenda 2030, of respect for diversity and overcoming educational inequalities (FRIAS, 2013; ONUB, 2018).

However, despite the implementation of these regulations, it is necessary to characterize the spaces of HEIs and formal education, as facets of a colonialism made mainly by these diverse peoples. Colonialism, with its political end, remained as colonialism, characterized by the predominance of Eurocentric standards, in different sectors, such as the economic, sociocultural and epistemic, denying independence to other ways of thinking and living, mainly of the historically subjugated peoples, without ending inequalities and hegemonies generated in the past (FARIAS; FALEIROS, 2018).

About indigenous access to these spaces, it is necessary to recognize that colonialism, together with the movements of globalization and neoliberal policies, reinforce ethnocentric ways of existing, thinking and conceiving reality. It is necessary to consider it from its perspective of power, legitimizing the formal locus of learning, and at the same time not legitimizing (even characterizing as inferior) traditional indigenous knowledge. This Eurocentric epistemology is transformed, therefore, into a colonialism of Knowledge and Being, discrediting diverse cultural matrices and their produced knowledge, as well as their powers as political, social, cultural and rights groups (FARIAS; FALEIROS, 2018).

Formal education, in this sense, even guaranteeing access, may have a dehumanizing and instrumental character, despite the sector's public policies, emphasizing the development of intercultural competences and the dialogue between cultures and civilizations as a priority (UNESCO, 2009).

The reality of indigenous populations on an academic trajectory is still complex, and needs not only other affirmative policies, but structural social changes, which could and should be worked on even in the sector. The inclusion of this public to HEIs is not enough and guarantees the permanence, conclusion and even inclusion of future indigenous professionals in the job market, as there is greater barriers that leads many indigenous students to evade HEIs (HERBETTA; NAZARENO, 2020).

> In the academic environment, their ontologies, their knowledge and their languages are not even imagined, because for most professors of undergraduate and graduate courses, these dimensions when dealing with indigenous students are not considered. In this context, in most cases, Portuguese is the second language of indigenous students and, as they belong to peoples of oral tradition, they usually have difficulty in dealing with writing (HERBETTA; NAZARENO, 2020, p. 16).

The approach to diversity and plurality in academic institutions needs to rethought, since they can even sharpen historical cultural structures and colonization.

> [...] there was a need for native youths to grasp concepts and theories that do not fit into the holistic and circular thinking of their peoples. This aggression against the indigenous mental system, the result of a history for which we are not guilty, but for which we are responsible, ends up perpetuating itself in the new inclusive policies carried out by governments in the three spheres. Conclusion: our young people find themselves [sic] obliged to accept as inevitable the [sic] need to read and write codes from [sic] that they would prefer not to learn and they not receive the right to refuse on charges of laziness or neglect of the "goodwill" of governments and governments (MUNDURUKU, 2017 apud HERBETTA; NAZARENO, 2020. p. 3-4).

Mignolo (2007) considered decoloniality as that energy of not letting oneself be handled by this logic of Colonialism, which, when inserted in education, involves the act of thinking and the search for

alternatives for the construction of new social paths, which run away from dichotomies and strengthen interculturality.

UNESCO, in its second World Report, highlighted the need for investments in cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, emphasizing, in this sense, the need to look, under intercultural perspectives, at differences between cultures, also emphasizing the existence of permeability cultural boundaries and the creative potential that contact has in groups and individuals. Throughout the history of mankind it was precisely dialogue and communication, also worked on by Monteiro (2006), which resulted in several current cultural forms and practices, including in extreme cases such as slavery, generating exchanges and processes of reverse acculturation or assimilation of aspects also for the dominant culture (UNESCO, 2009).

Interculturality thus presents itself as a challenge and a possibility to change a rigid structure consolidated in the HEIs. Carvalho and Segato (2002 apud HERBETTA; NAZARENO, 2020. p. 9) exemplified that, although the university is one of the few strongholds for the exercise of critical thinking, in our country, the ignorance and indifference of the academic world to the perspective of racial justice and exclusion have been constant since their origin. Considering no discussion about the elite composition of law, medicine, pharmacy and engineering courses.

According to Sastre (2009), the school and the teaching-learning process do not occur independently of society; on the contrary, they present themselves as a part of it, which reproduces the whole of social relations. It is, therefore, the role of educational institutions to work on social injustices and to redefine social and power relations.

In Brazil, and in the sector, the mandatory study of indigenous history and culture, through Federal Law No. 11,645, of March 10, 2008, in public and private educational establishments across the country, was an attempt to transform historical patterns of colonization and Eurocentrism. This social political framework represents only one part of several actions, in different policies, to work on the ethnic question, prejudice and racial differences in the country. More specifically, in the case of the access of the indigenous population to the HEIs, the affirmative action registered in draft Federal Law No. 180/2008, approved in 2012 in the form of Federal Law No. 12,711 / 2012, resulted in the possibility of reserving places in the universities for indigenous people, combining attendance at public schools, income and color (ethnicity).

Despite these advances, it is seen that much still needs to be reconsidered so that indigenous academic training in HEIs is in a decolonizing perspective, and that a genuine intercultural proposal is reached. The indigenous context, of struggle and resistance throughout history, brought great clues to the capacity of community organization, cultural valorization and ways of claiming rights, in addition to its own way of organization in the face of intercultural contact (KLEBA; WENDAUSEN, 2009).

Farias e Faleiros, addressing the issue of rural education, which involves rural workers in general, including indigenous people and the various wage earners, emphasize that inclusion in education is not far from class struggles.

> [...] it is worth remembering that Rural Education, which was related to economic development. In the early 1930s it was established and enhanced during the industrialization process in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, ironically associated with Agrarian Reform, with the intention of the State providing schooling and technical-professional training to train qualified labor and act in the process of industrialization and modernization of the field. It ensured that the development of capitalism in the field could occur more intensely and quickly [...] this conception of teaching was linked to the interests of the elite and the agrarian oligarchies, under a project that tended to intensify the submission of labor to capital, opposing the formulation of education as an emancipation process. [...] causing an educational exclusion of these subjects, nullifying their conditions of existence, their struggles and their ways of life and alienating functions and education to generate work forces (FARIAS; FALEIROS, 2018, p. 8).

Interculturality, therefore, as resistance, exemplified in the way in which the different indigenous peoples appropriated and appropriated representations that are not their own, configures new perspectives including empowerment, predominantly of collective and political characteristics. This indigenous community empowerment, in respect and mutual support between groups and ethnic groups, thus promotes the feeling of belonging, solidary practices and reciprocity; it favors and makes possible the co-responsibility and social participation of different peoples in the perspective of citizenship (BUSS, 2000; MONTEIRO, 2006).

The counterpart or even an inverse acculturation is still a great barrier for the indigenous also for the educational sector, which even continues to perpetuate perverse structures of society. The cultural issue still permeates the space of HEIs in the country, with regard to access and indigenous permanence, but it is can be favored by interculturality, if institutionally allowed. "It is possible that the dynamics of cultural events can bring vitality to public spaces, reconciling perspectives, giving voice to groups and associations, even if heterogeneous. In intercultural dialogues, therefore, there are zones of intermediation, which can favor personal and social rearrangements"(DANTAS, 2012, p. 67).

It can be seen, that the inclusion of different indigenous peoples in HEI reveals deeper issues, in a need for institutional transformation, in order to provide higher education based on the problematization of indigenous experiences inside and outside academia. In a criticism and awareness of reality and of banking, capitalist or Eurocentric education itself, including the transformation of academic spaces themselves into new forms of knowledge construction (FARIAS; FALEIROS, 2018).

> The genealogy of decolonial thought is pluriversal (not universal). Thus, each node in the network of this genealogy is a starting point and opening that reintroduces languages, memories, economies, social organizations, subjectivities, splendors and miseries of the imperial legacies. Today, there is a demand for decolonial thinking that articulates genealogies spread across the planet (MIGNOLO, 2007 apud HERBETTA; NAZARENO, 2020, p. 21).

Final Considerations

Higher indigenous education comes up against aspects of the colonialism of Knowledge and Being, even 1500 years later, discrediting diverse indigenous cultural matrices and their knowledge, as well as their powers as political, social, cultural and rights groups. Interculturality, as a dynamic interaction, in the desire for communication and agreement of both parties, favors the consolidation of the proposal for inclusion, human rights and payment of historical debts to these peoples, in an emancipatory movement.

The topic of access and permanence of indigenous populations at the university is quite new in academic discussions and probably follows the obstacles of this more expressive contact in the education sector. It is necessary to discuss deeply and in a critical perspective, giving indigenous university students and communities a voice and empowerment, revealing and making possible the needs for institutional transformation for the practice of interculturality.

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