

## University Outreach, Indigenous Knowledge, and Education: A Project with the Pataxó in Brazil

**Francisco COSTA**

*Instituto Federal da Bahia – campus Porto Seguro, Brazil  
francisco@ifba.edu.br*

**Samuel FIGUEIRA-CARDOSO**

*Uniwersytet Warszawski, Poland  
s.figueira-ca2@uw.edu.pl*

### **Abstract**

*University outreach in Brazil is a way of inserting external society into the procedures and activities developed in the academic field. The objective of this study was to investigate the interaction between the Pataxó indigenous community and a Brazilian higher education institution for the implementation of a university outreach action. This action aimed to promote the training of teachers of this indigenous group to work in multigrade classrooms. The project's construction began in 2018 through an institutional partnership involving the city hall of Porto Seguro, the Pataxó community, and the Federal Institute of Bahia. Based on the protagonism of the indigenous groups, the role of the higher education institution in programs involving traditional communities is discussed. The result indicates that the protagonism of the traditional community does not take away the powers of the institution that will offer the training but adds quality to an equitable relationship with the different sectors of Brazilian society.*

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### **1. Introduction**

It is challenging to involve society at large in discussions about the school. It has become common to hear from teachers that the presence of the school community in public schools is reduced to the moment of mandatory meetings with the student's guardians. Still, this participation of parents and guardians does not meet the expectations of teachers and school managers. Consequently, the struggle to make the school environment space for the involvement of society presents itself as a challenge to be overcome. Even talking about formal primary education under the responsibility of the State, one can assume that partnerships are needed to strengthen the link with the external community.

These partnerships provide educators with more study opportunities, reflect personal and professional importance, and support their collective renewal efforts (Bullough Jr, Baugh, 2008). Thus, a family social capital is built, capable of bringing essential contributions to the permanence of students in school, strengthening the teaching-learning process (Israel, Beaulieu 2004). Based on the research questions focusing on the Brazilian context, the

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following questions are proposed: How can indigenous knowledge, when it enters a higher education institution, contribute to transforming the offer of teacher education? Is there a place for the protagonism of indigenous peoples in academic centers? This study analyzes the interaction and the process between the indigenous Pataxó community and a Brazilian higher education institution to implement a university outreach project. This action aimed to promote the teachers' education from this indigenous group to work in multigrade classrooms. We defend the hypothesis that the valorization of traditional communities, using their experiences and knowledge to construct the curriculum and courses offered in university outreach projects, tends to incorporate new epistemes in the socio-educational praxis.

The theoretical discussion will foster new debates on interculturality and teacher education in teacher education centers. On the other hand, reflecting on our experience as participants in the project's construction will strengthen the participatory methodological approach to building partnerships in academic proposals. Thus, we discuss a proposal for a teacher education action, integrating the knowledge of the indigenous community Pataxó and the training structure of the Federal Institute of Bahia through an extension project. Implementing an outreach project to develop education in traditional societies is also presented.

Finally, it is considered that the centrality of the study is the involvement of communities in the construction of partnerships to propose and carry out actions of integral formation. Nevertheless, the objective of this article is to go through the context that made possible the elaboration of a university outreach project for the continuing education of teachers in multi-serial schools of the Pataxó communities. We seek to reflect on the still tense interaction between the indigenous community and Brazilian academic institutions based on this situation.

The article is divided as follows: i) literature review on the importance of local knowledge, the relationship between higher education institutions and indigenous and traditional communities, and university extension, focusing on the Brazilian context; ii) the method of the study; iii) discussion of the results, a university extension project with Pataxó villages, highlighting the protagonism of the indigenous people in the construction of knowledge while emphasizing the challenges of primary education in these communities; and, iv) final remarks pointing to the defence of university outreach and local knowledge in the construction of teacher training projects in intercultural contexts.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

### **2.1. Education beyond walls: (in)visible knowledge**

The interaction maintained by Higher Education Institutions and society, in general, has been maintained a lot through teaching. Teaching that takes place within the institutions, such a finding is quite significant and logically brought successes for both sides. However, this intertwining was intensified through research developed in large centers involving the most diverse subjects. In this case, the factor of bringing higher education institutions closer to the communities became more intense.

It is relevant to note that, despite being successful and quite influential, the sum of the teaching and learning process with research was not enough to bring the group's knowledge

and practices to universities in the same way that the opposite did not happen, institutions did not go to social groups. Thus, creating other overlapping strategies became a demand so that university education could harmonize with social practices (Sá, 2012). In this way, bringing university education closer to communities occupied a central space in debates on university education (Bralich, 2007; Peacock, Sellar, & Lingard, 2014; Stefanelli-Silva *et al.*, 2019; Figueiredo *et al.*, 2022). And for work in traditional communities, this approach has become even more required. Monfredini (2016) stated that inserting students into a relationship with the demands of traditional communities greatly enriches training, making it more qualified, much more humane, and culturally localized.

Castorino (2019) argues that traditional communities present their time and ways of doing and learning, elements that are not taught in higher education courses but that can be understood through the immersion of student practices in traditional communities. In this way, teacher training with communities (traditional and others) brings gains to social movements and expands the spectrum of action of graduates of training centers.

In this direction, involving traditional and indigenous communities, such as the project to be described later, brings a bias of integral formation (Calazans *et al.*, 2019), with an additional gain: the training also approaches traditional peoples and communities that were kept away from higher education institutions. It is about accepting the protagonism of local knowledge (Geertz, 1997), with its epistemologies that are not in another space and that often do not want this other space either, even if it is a higher education institution. This way of looking at learning is much more socially significant; the training offered at universities and institutes, even if they provide superior quality, cannot encompass the many diverse forms of knowledge. Thus, the direction is to maintain the dialogue beyond the walls of the institutions and reach the groups, even in the most distant ones.

The relationship between higher education institutions and traditional communities, which takes place outside institutional walls, has a central role in changing how students from these institutions position themselves in terms of social debates. However, it will also affect the same relationship within the institution. Santos *et al.* (2020) show an unfavourable picture of indigenous people within a Brazilian university. The authors show that indigenous students find discourses, actions, pedagogical practices, and institutional policies in classes that do not dialogue with the culture of indigenous peoples. These factors make learning processes extremely difficult.

In the same way, the authors show that teachers who work with indigenous people show a significant lack of knowledge about the epistemologies of these groups. This re maladjusted relationship can be narrowed as the institutions move to indigenous territories. Action that will bring benefits to indigenous and non-indigenous people.

Group identities represent boundaries, as they are recognizably different. They bring limitations not generally crossed by classes centered on urban buildings in large cities. Thus, it is necessary to problematize these relationships, as Barth (2011) specified. Borders will continue to exist and are usually positive. Meanwhile, they cannot be impediments to the action of educational institutions; they should only be elements that mark spaces and contribute to a training that cannot be acquired except within traditional peoples and communities. They are not welfare relations but are committed to social changes (Nogueira, 2005) with the working classes, communities, and traditional peoples. A commitment that prioritizes external protagonism to universities and institutes.

Thus, the community to be served by the institution will participate in a critical and constructive dialogue. The subjects involved are positioned critically and with ample right

to a voice. This way of setting the subjects' relationship, which Freire (1988) clarified, is recommended so that institutional spaces are occupied and taken outside the institution and maintain a place of power for the knowledge named after westerners. In other words, it is not enough for Higher Education Institutions to reach communities and traditional peoples; it is necessary to reformulate the practices traditionally adopted by these institutions, thus opening a frank dialogue carried out by others and not by study centers.

## **2.2. University outreach in the triad of the Brazilian public higher education institutions**

If the relationship between school and community has been frankly precarious in primary education, it is no different in public higher education institutions. In other words, bringing society into institutions and organizations are two paths that complement each other and can go together or separately. If put together, cooperation may demonstrate a fuller, more popular, and more democratic interaction. If separated, this maintains the interaction and non-stagnation of the relationship with not in universities and institutes.

It should be noted that Leu (2005), based on Adam *et al.* (1995), already warned that the change in the role of central educational institutions is associated with a reconceptualization of the educational change planning process. An emerging vision needs to be left among educators that require texturing to "technicist" approaches to change that emphasize traditional linear planning sequences. This vision requires redefining the process of initiating and sustaining educational change as an iterative and participatory process that involves criticism. Finally, this author argues that the difference in the orientation of top-down, mechanistic, or "technicist" thinking about education is vital in discussing the quality of education. Moreover, there should be a process-oriented approach and collaboration that emphasizes partnerships between the school and the community on the one hand and a variety of more central supporting institutions on the other. This path takes two positions; one would be two-way, in which society enters the walls of institutions and institutions leave their monitored spaces. It would be a fluid movement. The other works in only one direction, but the entry of society or the institution's exit indicates transit, consequently, the possibility of change.

The university outreach, throughout history, has gone through several moments, ranging from religious assistance to dialogic interaction (Oliveira & Goulart, 2015). In Brazil, university outreach appears as another way to insert society into the procedures and activities developed in the academic scope. University outreach can also be interdisciplinary, as we can see in the work of Willison, Davidson & Scott (2020). They provided teachers with the opportunity to develop investigative skills through involvement with experiments in their classrooms, where they could engage with accurate data; and other areas of knowledge, such as the medical and technology areas, to name a few (Sáez, Serrano and Collado, 2019; Figueiredo *et al.*, 2022), favoring the relationship between society and the university, since the projects have responded to the demands and favored the democratization of academic knowledge, becoming a fundamental activity for dialogue, development, and training inside and outside the university.

In Brazil, the concept of Outreach was built as a historical process and brought as the initial moment of its implementation the actions carried out in English universities in the 19th century.

University outreach appeared in England in the second half of the 19th century, linked to the idea of CONTINUING EDUCATION, aimed at the less favored layers and the adult

population in general, who was not at university. A few years later, outreach activities were registered in American Universities, characterized by providing services in rural and urban areas. (Nogueira, 2001: 58, emphasis by the author).

It cannot be denied that teaching and research also represent spaces that should be explored for this interaction, considering that organized groups of society served by universities carry training experiences acquired in the practices and in community experiences, a fact that is important for the establishment of the triad of higher education teaching, research, and outreach with local knowledge. This triad was even established by the Federal Constitution of Brazil, published in 1988. In this document, in article 207, it is recorded that higher education institutions must integrate these three elements: teaching, research, and outreach. This new concept brings the university a novelty that requires new ways of developing academic activities, urging new forms of organization, and establishing this inseparability.

This constitutional principle was reinforced by the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB) of 1996 (Law 9,394/96). However, the outreach praxis remained disconnected from the academic function:

*“Historically, what happens within the scope of the Brazilian university and is not characterized as regular teaching or research is defined as an outreach. Thus, we have outreach as a non-regular course, outreach as a service and provision of service, ephemeral extension as assistance, extension as social responsibility, and outreach as political action”* (Assumpção & Leonardi, 2016: 462).

The university outreach acts as a guideline for teachers and students, directing the quality of professional practice with human training. Furthermore, it integrates and expands students' communication skills in the context of information about current human life (Almeida, Araújo & Guerreiro (2012). De Medeiros (2017: 14) states that outreach activities can exercise an *“interactive praxis that combines academic knowledge, education, and popular knowledge.”* We agree that this alliance is very productive and should be encouraged, as it will bring significant gains to the entities involved. However, this relationship needs to be based on a critical-reflective view, as everyone involved must access the chain of command in the projects. If there is a hierarchy in support of the supporting bases of the actions, there will be a qualitative loss in the project.

Thus, academic knowledge should not assume the position of defining the space for education and, even less, defining how popular indigenous knowledge should be used. Potentially, folk/popular wisdom is a potent channel for building new knowledge; however, it cannot be seen as a stepping stone to reaching this new knowledge.

Knowledge not conceived in university centers is usually treated with little respect and underestimated. Furthermore, as Serrano (2006) states, actions were placed vertically in Brazil's history of outreach policies. In this relationship, peripheral (marginalized) communities had little space, and students did not exercise their real contribution potential. Ignoring communities or involving few students are still factors present in outreach activities. Unfortunately, this practice of abandoning subjects treated as the target audience in teaching and research is also recurrent.

When considering the participation of other agents in proposing outreach actions, prerogatives are opened for traditional communities to be included not only as the proposals' target audience but also as partners in the development of activities and with an active voice in defining the themes to be met. In this sense, university outreach is a strategic space to promote integrated practices between various areas of knowledge. However, it is necessary to create mechanisms that favor the approach of different subjects, preferring

multidisciplinarity, so that, in the contact of several individuals, a citizen and human conscience can be developed, and thus there is “*the formation of subjects of change, capable of placing themselves in the world with a more active and critical posture. Outreach works towards social transformation.*” (Castro, 2004: 14)

Paulo Freire (2011: 112) helps us in this commitment, “*there is no dialogue if there is not an intense faith in men. Faith in your power to make and redo. From creating and recreating. Faith in the vocation to be more is not the privilege of some chosen ones, but the right of men*”. Trusting in the possibility of partnership accepts the dialogue, which will come with contributions from other participants.

### **3. Method**

The theoretical discussion joins our experience as participants in the project’s construction concerning the methodological approach. The proposal for a teacher training action is discussed, integrating the knowledge of the Pataxó indigenous community and the training structure of the Federal Institute of Bahia through an outreach project. The processes for implementing an outreach project to develop education in traditional societies are also presented. It is considered that the centrality of the study is the involvement of communities in building partnerships to propose and carry out comprehensive training actions. Nevertheless, the objective of this text is to go through the context that allowed the elaboration of an outreach project for the continuing education of teachers in multigrade schools in the Pataxó communities. From this situation, we seek to weave reflections on the interaction, still tense, between the indigenous community and academic institutions.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

#### **4.1. A university outreach project with the Pataxó people**

The outreach action, *A sala multisseriada de escola indígena Pataxó em foco: formação docente*, began its activities in 2018. However, the interaction between the Pataxó community and the Federal Institute of Bahia (IFBA) started with activities carried out in 2009. Multigrade became a focus of study, within the IFBA, in the year 2013. In that year, work began with teaching material for multigrade classrooms. With the positive results of this first stage, the Pataxó indigenous teachers requested continuing education, including all teachers who deal with multigrade schools.

The Pataxó community was, then, the proponent of this outreach project proposal and defined some requirements for the implementation of the project, namely: the theme, the school/multigrade classroom, the involvement of all teachers in these spaces, and also the participation of the Municipal Secretariat of Education of Porto Seguro, Bahia, in the developed activities.

The proponent and beneficiary group of the action was made up of teachers from Pataxó Group, Instituto Federal da Bahia, and Porto Seguro Municipal Education Secretariat. In this way, the protagonism of the indigenous people was also present in the Constitution of the team and not only as passive subjects to be trained. The next step was to invite the

section of the respective secretariat responsible for indigenous coordination to participate in writing the project.

This initial negotiation took place in 2018, in the second half of the year. The project was written following the administrative and pedagogical procedures of the Federal Institute of Bahia. It would have to be formally registered with federal higher education institution certification. This act was considered relevant by the other partners, and they concluded that there would be an appropriation of the academic system to benefit training. The certificate was necessary for some social practices that indigenous people are also subjected to.

At the beginning of the first half of 2019, the three partners approved the project and submitted it to the institute's outreach projects system. The participation of the indigenous movement was mixed with the involvement of the municipal education department. This mix happened because the indigenous movement appointed a Pataxó to coordinate indigenous education in the municipality of Porto Seguro. So, he represents the secretariat but mainly represents the indigenous movement. Respect for this indication is fundamental for the progress of activities and this integrative perspective, which is the foundation of this project.

Before approval, however, there was a need to define when and where the training would take place. The municipality of Porto Seguro has an extensive territory, and most indigenous schools with multigrade classrooms are far from the urban area and each other. Thus, finding an adequate methodology should consider some specificities, such as the distance between schools, the distance between schools to the Municipal Department of Education, training participants working in the classroom, municipal secretariat asking that there be no dismissal of students so that teachers could participate in the training, the municipal administration requested time during training to discuss the official documents of indigenous education (both those that are completed by teachers, as well as municipal educational guidelines), food, accommodation, and transport. The justification for the last three was that the activities would take place far from the homes of indigenous teachers. This survey was carried out by the three entities participating in the project.

It was defined that the training would take place on a rotating basis, alternating between three villages. These three communities were chosen considering the administrative organization designated by the municipality to group the Pataxó schools. These schools were grouped into nuclei based on their geographic locations in this structuring. The relay then took place between the NUCLEIs—each meeting in a school of one of the cores. The last meeting should take place at the IFBA. Promoting the activities in different centers would make travel expenses easier, as for every three meetings, one would be in a community close to the students' homes. It was also defined that there would be ten meetings of two days each. The meetings would be monthly and would start in August 2019.

As the teachers could not dismiss their students, the activities would take place on Fridays and Saturdays, with this Saturday being considered a teaching Saturday (workday). In addition, there should be at least one teacher in each school outside the training. This would function to stay with the students in an interdisciplinary and collective program. Thus, students would not be harmed, and teachers would participate in the training.

The municipal secretariat would have four hours on the first day for all meetings. This time would be used to expose the administrative demands of this body and raise the needs of indigenous teachers. It would also be responsible for feeding, and transport would be at the

expense of each training participant. On the other hand, hosting would be up to each community that received the group.

This sum of efforts occurred as there were no available funds at the IFBA or the municipal secretariat. However, this effort reinforces the need for training. The professors were unanimous in affirming the unprecedented nature of this teacher education, and they repeated that a multigrade room was not included in the formations that arrived.

The trainers would be IFBA professors and municipal secretariat managers. The course participants would also be protagonists, bringing their experiences and contributing to the construction of new practices and reflection on teaching and learning in multilingual contexts.

The defined themes excelled in literacy, numeracy, and specific methodologies for the multigrade classroom. The chosen content should be on these themes and be applied in workshops. The teachers did not only want theory, but they expected to debate methodologies, culminating in a proposal for new pedagogical practices. Finally, the project was approved, and teachers were able to apply. Enrollment was responsible for the municipal secretariat's indigenous school education coordination section.

Of the four meetings scheduled for 2019, three took place, and it was not possible to maintain the goal of one per month. Many factors influenced the maintenance of the planned activities, and all obstacles came from ethnic issues or climate-imposed difficulties. Bad weather is not predictable when working with social movements, but it must be considered so that actions are not interrupted for other reasons that will undoubtedly arise.

The project is still in operation in 2020, suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it is intended to continue the project, accepting that the social practices of indigenous communities also require adjustments to the calendar. All the decisions adopted passed through the scrutiny of the three partners. However, the function of this care was to respect the leading role and build a project that respected the specificities of the Pataxó. These specifics, when not appreciated, reduce the probability of success.

Given the above, the training is happening more slowly than planned, but it has not had to be abandoned. The collective proposition deserves credit for sustaining the movement with the three entities participating.

#### **4.2. The weight of indigenous protagonism**

The leading role in the production of knowledge in Brazil is exercised, in general, by universities, institutes, and research centers. These places are responsible for formulating theories, debates, concepts, and the knowledge that gain space in society. However, they gain freedom and suffocate others thinking and building knowledge. These institutions can even rank expertise and experiences, making them negligible and unreliable. Our discussion develops reflections on traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge based on Cunha (2007) and Santos (2006). We believe that the unequal positioning of these two categories contributes to weakening the epistemologies of minority groups.

It is important to remember that being a protagonist has decision-making power, and it is to determine what should and deserves to be taught and learned. Institutions and individuals with social authorization to build knowledge are also holders of licenses to question prescribed wisdom and propose changes for others.



Several social groups are not within these decision spaces. Due to historical and social aspects, the indigenous are part of these ethnic groups in the Brazilian scenario. With this, they see their knowledge and their ways of transmitting knowledge minimized, made invisible, and disregarded. When this practice of hierarchization becomes naturalized, the criticality that should question this way of organizing science and expertise is lost. Within the traditional communities themselves, in their schools, the practice of scaling which content deserves to be taught and learned uses judgments that had their bases defined by the surrounding communities. This leveling confirms the leading role of specific Western groups, which continue to determine who has a voice. Costa (2012: 127) shows that the indigenous people arrived at the training centers but continue to face the structural 'systems' that keep them silenced and without decision-making power.

Indigenous communities have always produced their epistemologies and ways of transmitting this knowledge/knowledge to younger generations. However, it is not difficult to find a sharp separation between knowledge (usually placed for authorized groups) and knowledge (attributed to groups with less symbolic power). Costa (2019: 30) shows that the construction of an intercultural school only has a chance of being carried out through the protagonism of the participating indigenous group. In this way, the relationship between centers of production of Western academic knowledge and indigenous communities always runs the risk of being verticalized. Two sides are created: the imposition side, commanded by those who speak and make themselves heard, the academies; the discredited side, which is forced to listen and not talk, traditional communities.

Resistant, the national Indigenous Movement does not accept this space that was historically imposed on it. After decades of a political movement, Brazilian indigenous peoples gained respect for their protagonism. Prominence won through confrontations, which placed rights for these peoples in the Brazilian Constitution. In the Federal Constitution of 1988, articles 231 and 232 indigenous peoples have constitutional guarantees. However, this comes because of a strong movement of demands on the part of the indigenous people themselves, who pressured the State for their rights and support from researchers and non-governmental organizations in favor of indigenous causes; indigenous schooling now has differentiated and material curricula specific didactics that started to consider the reality of the ethnic groups.

With the new constitutional precepts, indigenous peoples were assured respect for their social organization, customs, languages, beliefs, and traditions. For the first time, they are recognized as having the right to be different; that is: "*Indigenous peoples are recognized for their social organization, customs, languages, beliefs, and traditions, and for their original rights over the lands they traditionally occupy, and it is up to the Union to demarcate them, protect and ensure respect for all their assets*" (BRASIL, 1988). It is important to emphasize that the right to be different does not imply fewer rights or privileges. In the educational context, the Constitution assured indigenous peoples the right to use their languages and learning processes in primary education, as seen in article 210, 2).

This protagonism is expressed, and it is mandatory to make use of this legislation as a basis for social and educational relations for dialogue with indigenous peoples. It is no longer possible to think about the relationships that involve these communities, ignoring that the centrality of the issues to be tackled must be indicated by the indigenous peoples participating in this process.

Thus, recognizing that traditional knowledge is also knowledge deserving of the same space offered to scientific knowledge is not an anomaly in this historical moment; on the contrary,

it is becoming a way of rethinking social groups. We emphasize that this new paradigm does not deserve to be seen as a grant given by groups with hegemonic powers to other groups. On the contrary, it is an achievement of ethnic groups. However, this stance is still a minority one. Ranking, placing so-called Western knowledge as superior to others, is still the most widespread and acceptable alternative. This statement comes from experiences with social movements in the Brazilian Northeast.

We can, however, say that we are in a moment of transition. The alternatives are to move towards a paradigm shift or slide towards maintaining the primarily in-force models. Depending on indigenous movements, change is the only possibility. There is other good news: institutions that research Brazil is joining forces with traditional communities (indigenous people, quilombolas, riparians), even though it is not yet a partnership as desired by social movements and increasingly conjoined blunt and progressive. For Paulo Freire, in the book organized by Ana Maria Araújo Freire (2018: 56), *“it is not by fighting pedagogically that I will change pedagogy. It is not the philosophers of education who change pedagogy. The politicians under our pressure will do it if we put pressure on them”*. The indigenous community exerts pressure on public and political institutions and agents to change.

Higher Education Institutions are gradually assuming a position of recognizing the importance of actions involving indigenous peoples. For example, they realize that the leading role in these actions should not be taken by institutions but by indigenous people. Thus, it is not enough to offer a service. Even if requested, it is necessary to realize that the action must be inserted within the claims of the indigenous community. For Kayapó (2019: 70), *“it is necessary to know who the indigenous peoples are, how many they are, where they live and how they currently relate to the State.”* Thus, only with this information about indigenous peoples will we build and maintain fruitful relationships with these groups.

The protagonism of the indigenous community will govern the relationship with the institution that will offer action aimed at ethnic groups, any other form of action will be weakened. As defended by Baniwa (2013), the presence of indigenous teachers and technicians in indigenous schools represents a shift towards protagonism. It is in the attempt to establish this protagonism that the object of study of this article fits. In other words, the number of non-indigenous teachers in Pataxó schools in the Porto Seguro region is minimal. Considering this presence and the political movement it represents, the protagonism of indigenous communities is becoming a reality.

### **4.3. Challenges for the indigenous in multigrade schools and continuing education**

In 2018, teachers from the Pataxó community requested continuing education for a multigrade classroom. This was expected, as the number of multigrade classrooms in indigenous schools in Porto Seguro is much higher than the number of graded classrooms. However, the entire organization of these schools follows the pattern of non-indigenous public schools, which are primarily serial. By taking the reins of the request for training, teachers confirm the importance of action that must be developed in favor of the school community. They are the subjects who *“urgently need to recontextualize themselves in their professional identity and responsibilities”* (Alarcão, 2010: 34). These workers are indeed occupying a new space – at the university and the indigenous school, and it certainly means a strengthened identity.

The standard that is maintained in teaching is a series of classrooms. This is a common strategy for the multigrade room since the term ‘multigrade’ carries ‘serial’ (Pereira,

Macedo, 2018: 158). The organization of the pedagogical journey of indigenous schools, an event that takes place once a year, usually at the beginning of the school year, does not prioritize multigrade classes. Even if this event takes place separate from the journey of non-indigenous schools, the serial model prevails, even for the initial grades of elementary school. At this teaching stage, the number of multigrade classrooms in indigenous schools is greater than that of graded classrooms. Hage (2014) shows the reality of a rural school with multigrade, which we can compare with the one we debate here. It is evident in this author's speech that the devaluation of rural schools progresses to the devaluation of teaching practices and subjects who study in non-urban schools. This reality exists in indigenous schools because they face countless challenges and see their efforts undervalued.

Thus, the paradigm that remains in the continuing education of teachers is the serial classroom. It is not uncommon to see training aimed at indigenous teachers. However, it is noticeable that these workers are trained for ranking. When a social practice is ignored, alternatives for change are also ignored. The quality of teaching is proportional to good initial and continuing teacher training. Participating in courses prepared for reality, a specific social context (room with a grade/year), but transposing them to another fact, another context, indicates possible school failure. In this scenario, the educators are responsible for solving a complex transposition: adopting a guideline built for a specific audience and adapting it to another group.

For many educators, the complexity of this transposition ends up becoming a reason for anguish; that is, in conducting the pedagogical process, decisions taken from a multigrade view entail a higher workload since the teachers, who are subordinate to the ordinances of the municipal or state secretariats need to propose strategies and pedagogical methods that meet the needs of the classes (Hage, 2006).

The textbook is one of the most used instruments in teaching-learning, whether in a graded classroom or a multigrade classroom. However, it is produced to serve serial rooms only. Teachers need to adapt the textbook and build practices based on a book made for a single-grade classroom and usually considered a non-indigenous and urban reality. It should also be considered that even with a high load of activities and a lack of investment in education, these subjects must prepare their work materials. There are many variants for a process that needs to achieve many goals, as it faces the expectations of an audience that believes in the school. Nevertheless, much of the success that these schools achieve must be credited to the efforts of this dedicated group of workers.

The pattern that remains in pedagogical practices is also one of seriation. Without adequate training, without appropriate materials, with a school that believes that seriation is the best path, pedagogical practices look for models in seriation. For Zabala (1998: 15), pedagogical knowledge should receive special attention, as it will directly influence the teaching and learning process. When only the educators' life experiences are used, combined with the lack of dialogues that propose alternatives to what was historically offered to these workers, the methodologies that gain space are not specific. They are typically aimed at other educational structures. Teaching practices confirm the acceptance of models already imposed.

Logically, there is a fundamental problem in serially understanding teaching organizations. The default is seriation. Thus, multiserial becomes a structure treated as transitory, ephemeral. The most suitable policy for this class type is its struggle to cease existence, replaced by seriation. In conversations with teachers, the desire to end this form of organizing the school becomes apparent. It is clear the conception that it is enough to

become a series that there will be no more difficulties, that the quality of education will improve. A collective imagination considers that the rural population will become extinct over time and, consequently, rural schools will cease to exist (Druzian, Meurer, 2013). This belief seems to be extended to indigenous schools and even more so to multigrade classrooms.

Do the grade schools have a higher quality standard than the multigrade classrooms? It is challenging to consider that the answer to this question is a homogeneous finding. It seems to be common sense that several serial schools fail to maintain, or achieve, the expected quality. However, is there a quality multigrade school? With the framework described so far, there is much more chance that the serial rooms will achieve the desired success because the support, even the slightest one when it happens, comes in the style of the series. So, logically, if the serial classes are not achieving the desired goals, they are at least with more help to reach them.

There is another decisive factor. There is no defined horizon for the end of multigrade classes. The number of students per grade, which ends up being the primary justification of public administrators for not hiring other professionals, does not tend to reach a level that looks to change. So, most multi today's schools tend to stay that way for a long time. The desire to move to the ranks collides with hiring professors or lacking professionals with minimal training to carry out teaching activities. This justification tends to be vital even for maintaining the standard grade in schools that are not graded.

With all these disadvantages, seeking support to change this picture becomes the only alternative. However, another problem arises, the act of accepting training aimed at the specificity of multigrade tends to be treated by managers of education departments as a problem, as it is seen as if such managers were accepting a type of classroom or class that will not reach the expected quality. In other words, training that considers this specificity will struggle with changing pedagogical practices and teaching materials and changing the common sense built around this type of school. A reason that tends to feel as wrong is any way of organizing the school that is different from the series. A concept that has support in the education departments, school society, teachers, and communities. Parente (2014) shows the reality that compromises the contributions of a multigrade school:

"The misunderstanding is that the multigrade school would go through an evolutionary process, culminating in grade, the school institution's most advanced organization stage. If we think about the political options in which multigrade was born, this approach has a certain logic. However, if we think about the crisis of the serial model itself, wanting the fallacious evolutionary process of the school to take place is going back and denying the same opportunities that arise daily in multigrade schools, despite the nominal burden they carry, despite the absence of public policies for the rural populations, despite the delay in treating the subjects of these schools as agents in the social construction of the school" (Parente, 2014: 58).

Changing people's view of the multigrade groups seems the only way to change this reality. The teacher's classroom view must first be transformed for this to happen. The quality of teaching, type of classroom, didactic material, teaching practices, and knowledge in the contents all need to be part of indigenous schools' political and pedagogical projects. For D'Angelis (1999), only a transformative political and pedagogical project will lead to the autonomy of indigenous societies. Thus, we defend that this project should include indications for teacher training, production of teaching material, community participation in the school, and composition of multigrade classrooms. All these elements will contribute to building the school that the community desires.

The justification for the multigrade classrooms of indigenous schools is not limited to hiring teachers; even if this is the strongest, there is also the issue of the distance between schools

concerning the families' housing. Children are not old enough to go places far from their homes in compulsory early childhood education (4 and 5 years old) and the lower elementary school grades (6 to 10 years old). Thus, building schools closer to these communities is the best way forward.

To understand the meaning of distance in indigenous communities, it must be understood that the territories of Brazilian indigenous communities are vast, with unpaved roads. For the children to arrive at school without delay, they would have to leave home early and face precarious school transport. These factors force parents to ask for closer classrooms for their young children. However, there is not a high number of children close to each other, not reaching a number considered sufficient by public administrators to justify hiring more teachers.

We notice that the community assisted by multigrade defends the continuity of this way of organizing education. Exposure to daily commuting is not a safe option for the country and the student's response. It is in taking a position to build partnerships – an indigenous community with institutions that offer training – that indigenous protagonism takes place.

On the other hand, indigenous communities have had successful experiences with multigrade schools. Many of your students, most certainly, have gone through classes with this structure. Moreover, several managed to complete the literacy and numeracy processes and continued their studies and social interactions. There are success stories based on non-serial classes. This success is another justification for building teacher education and seeking a partnership.

The Pataxó community in southern Bahia has many multigrade schools, and their teachers have articulated the training for themselves. From this articulation, coming from the community, the outreach activities for a multigrade classroom were built. When the teaching group defined the movement they wanted to receive, they also explained how this could be articulated and what content should be explored. They focused on understanding multigrade and building a teaching practice that encompassed characteristics beyond the grade standard in constructing an action-oriented reflection.

The protagonism is well designed, and the project format contemplates an integrative and cooperative way of the construction of knowledge and actions in an intercultural relationship. The number of schools in this region makes us reflect on the heterogeneous picture that will be unveiled. As D'Angelis (2006: 159) clarifies, “[...] *an indigenous school [may] be, in extreme cases, very different even from another indigenous school less than 20 km away*”.

At the other end of the training, during the writing of the project, the Federal Institute was also a protagonist. The difference was the role to be played. The IFBA would not have the task of defining the training to be offered. The function of this institution was to format scientific debates, respecting traditional knowledge so that the focus could remain on demand already defined. This factor is quite exciting and does not take away the protagonism of anyone.

The educational institution's responsibility to maintain this partnership is healthy on an isonomic basis. However, the mismatch of differentiated treatment present in the relationship between traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge remains. The literate society tends to remain firm in considering what has been tested and proven within the authorized centers. In this way, the continuing education of indigenous teachers still collides with the rancidity of scientificity versus devalued knowledge.

Thus, how knowledge will be treated within the institution is the main obstacle to maintaining a leading role. Therefore, the traditional community must accompany the formation from its conception to its offer, holding a moment of evaluation. This assessment should even think about how the role of the community was considered. In other words, participating in training along the lines presented in this article is not merit for the scientific institution. It reaches this level based on the result achieved and proven through the evaluation of the action. This assessment must be undertaken in conjunction with the community. We emphasize, however, that the institution's goal must be to strengthen the role of communities.

A new policy for a multigrade classroom can already be built with these premises. Schools that treat the multigrade classroom as an ally to change the way of teaching exist. It should be emphasized that none of the Pataxó indigenous schools is multigrade by choice; it was imposed based on adaptations to the requirements of the city halls. This fact makes the task of making multigrade a viable option more laborious.

Teachers, then, when asking for specific training for this type of school/classroom, disagree with subjects who do not see this type of school as a viable option. They consider that there is in them the opportunity to build specific pedagogical-didactic models. This is also the direction that the training institution must adopt. In this case, the institution must fully understand its role in this relationship through a reflective process. Nobre (2009) argues that the school is positioned in a very external space within the community. It is part of the community but not as central as the rituals or other cultural practices that are integral to the knowledge defended in this work.

On the other hand, it is prepared for contact with foreigners. The institution that has chosen to participate in the training, in this case, the IFBA, is this foreigner. This fact defines a lot about how to position yourself.

Thus, it is a fact that there are schools that have chosen to be multigrade. In this group, the SummerHill school in England, the Ponte School in Portugal, the UFRGS School of Application in Porto Alegre (RS), and the Zeferino Lopes de Castro school in Viamão (RS) are typically mentioned. If they are considered good schools, then there is the possibility of building a teaching and learning process that brings quality to the maintenance of the structures created in many indigenous schools in the extreme south of Bahia.

During the first meetings of the outreach project, the teachers cited success stories from their multigrade classrooms. Introducing graduates' courses in higher education, postgraduate courses were leaders in the people and could interact in an intercultural way with the surrounding community. More than solving training issues, this outreach action opened lines of action so that the IFBA could be present with the Pataxó. It also showed the importance of having listening lines to build other activities. Finally, the most relevant lesson was to show that the role of the traditional community does not remove powers from the institution that will offer the training but adds quality to an equitable relationship with the various sectors of Brazilian society.

## 5. Final Remarks

Partnerships between universities and federal institutes with indigenous communities benefit both sides. The gains are undeniable for the experience described in this text, part of a larger project. The number of indigenous students entering undergraduate courses meant new requirements for higher education institutions, and positive requirements meant more humanized practices and concern with the public served (Costa, 2012). Communities also made gains. For example, indigenous teachers returned from training with more technical knowledge and were prepared to build an intercultural, bilingual, and specific school for their community of origin.

The role of institutions must be in a constant process of construction. Thus, they will be new educational models to serve new subjects. This is valid for the teaching, research, and outreach process, a triad of Brazilian higher education institutions. These new models consider that the protagonism of indigenous communities represents a gain for institutions, which have not yet managed to be a space for all social groups. Thinking, then, of indigenous protagonism is to unveil the protagonism of other communities, be they quilombolas, riparians, or gypsies, among others.

In this way, an institutional posture that attends to the plurality of group information includes plural formations. Everyone will benefit from training that considers the specificities of all social groups. To conclude, it is not just a case of helping indigenous groups but learning from/in interaction, in this case with the Pataxó, to change institutional praxis.

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