

Complexities of colonial and decolonial marks in a Xavante school

Complexidades de marcas coloniais e decoloniais em uma escola Xavante

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Abstract

With this text, we aim to carry out an analysis of the Pedagogical Political Project (Projeto Político Pedagógico) (PPP) of an Escola Municipal Indígena (Indigenous Municipal School) Santa Clara EMI with the intent of understanding how the curriculum established there is structured. For the development of this study, we relied on a qualitative methodology, with bibliographic and field research procedures. With the research, we were able to understand that the school is not a static environment, and the indigenous school is a constantly changing scenario, influenced by the social, political and cultural movements which surround it. Its evolution occurs parallel to the transformation of society, reflecting changes in paradigms, values and aspirations of the various actors involved in the educational process. In this sense, we believe that indigenous school is a space where access to the cultural universe is made possible/expanded, so that by becoming aware of it, children and young people can later establish relationships with the “worlds”. In this way, relationships with their culture will be maintained and strengthened, knowing and exploring surrounding cultures and exercising their protagonism.

Keywords: indigenous school; Pedagogical Political Project; curriculum; Xavante people.

Resumo

Pretendemos, com este texto, realizar uma análise do Projeto Político Pedagógico (PPP) da Escola Municipal Indígena (EMI) Santa Clara com o intuito de compreender como o currículo instituído nesta está estruturado. Para o desenvolvimento do estudo, amparamo-nos em uma metodologia qualitativa, com procedimento de pesquisa bibliográfica e de campo. Com a pesquisa foi possível compreender que a escola não é um ambiente estático, e a escola indígena é um cenário em constante mutação, influenciado pelos movimentos sociais, políticos e culturais que a circundam. Sua evolução ocorre paralelamente à transformação da sociedade, refletindo as mudanças de paradigmas, valores e aspirações dos diversos atores envolvidos no processo educacional. Neste sentido, acreditamos ser a escola indígena um espaço onde o acesso ao universo cultural é possibilitado/ampliado, para que, tomando consciência deste, as crianças e os jovens possam, posteriormente, estabelecer relações com os “mundos”. Deste modo, serão mantidas e fortalecidas as relações com a sua cultura, conhecendo-se e explorando-se culturas envoltas e exercendo o seu protagonismo.

Palavras-chave: escola indígena; Projeto Político Pedagógico; currículo; povo Xavante.

INTRODUCTION

According to the Instituto Socioambiental (2024) (Socio-environmental Institute), 99.13% of the Parabubure indigenous land belongs to the district of Campinápolis, in the state of Mato Grosso, Brazil. Currently, according to internal control data from the municipal indigenous advisory¹, there are 163 Xavante settlements, registered on the Fundação Nacional dos Povos Indígenas (National Foundation for Indigenous Peoples) (FUNAI).

¹ Research carried out verbally in the Assessoria Municipal Indígena (Municipal Indigenous Advisory), in March 2024. According to the same source, besides the official quantitative of registered settlements, it is expected that the number of settlements in Campinápolis surpasses 200, considering those which have yet to be officially registered.

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The territorial concentricity of the Xavante community directly reflects the demography of the district, where more than half² of the 15,347 inhabitants verified in the 2022 census³ are members of this ethnic group. These numbers reveal not only the magnitude of the Xavante population in Campinápolis, but also the vital importance of these people in the social, cultural and economic dynamic of the region.

In this sense, this article is a fragment of a broader research – academic Masters – developed in the Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação (Education Postgraduate Program) from the Universidade do Estado de Mato Grosso (State University of Mato Grosso) (PPGedu/Unemat), which had as a locus one of the 30 Escolas Municipais Indígenas (Indigenous Municipal School) (EMI) in Campinápolis/MT: Santa Clara EMI.

To carry out this work, we analyzed Santa Clara EMI's Pedagogical Political Project (Projeto Político Pedagógico) (PPP), with the intention of understanding how the curriculum established in it is structured. We understand that the contact with such documents subsidized the empirical research carried out in this school

In this analysis, we approach core concepts, such as: PPP (Veiga, 2009); school as “free time” (Masschelein; Simons, 2014); the renewing role of the school in each space-time (Arendt, 1957); coloniality and decoloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2008; Mignolo, 2008, 2010); structural racism (Almeida, 2018); curriculum (Silva, 2005; Bourdieu, 1999) education (Saviani, 2011; Freire, 1996) and specificities of indigenous peoples (Cunha, 2012).

METHOD

For the development of this study, we relied on a qualitative methodology, with bibliographic and field research procedures. We used documentary consultation of the Santa Clara EMI's PPP and of the school curriculum as an initial methodological instrument. Besides that, there were observations of an ethnographic nature of the middle school physical education class and the implementation of interviews with Santa Clara EMI's physical education teacher, coordinator and principal. To implement such instruments, we relied on the indispensable support of two instruments of data collection: the field journal and the voice recorder.

The documentary research took place between the years of 2022 and 2023. The field research took place throughout the 2023 school year (especially in the first semester), accompanying the middle school (morning period) teacher in his school activities. The observations took place in three classes: 6th grade, 7th grade, and a multi cycle class containing students from the 8th and 9th grades.

The interviews took place mainly at the end of the observations, and the subjects were interviewed individually, according to the availability of each one. It is worth highlighting that the interviewed principal and coordinator are not indigenous, and that only the physical education teacher is *A'uwe Uptabi* (Xavante). Their names were protected. To reach the results, content analysis was carried out with the obtained data and its consecutive interpretation, adhering to the following phases:

[...] (a) decomposing the material to be analyzed in parts (what is considered parts will depend of the unit of registry and the unit of context we choose); (b) distributing the parts in categories; (c) conducting a description of the results of the categorization (exposing the findings found in the analysis); (d) making inferences of the results (making use of the premisses done by the researchers); (e) interpreting the obtained results with the aid of the adopted theoretical framework⁴ (Minayo et al., 2016, p. 79).

² Data obtained by means of clashing of information between 2010 and 2022 census and from the study of Souza et al. (2016).

³ Data obtained through the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (2024) [Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics] (IBGE) website.

⁴ “[...] (a) decompor o material a ser analisado em partes (o que é parte vai depender da unidade de registro e da unidade de contexto que escolhermos); (b) distribuir as partes em categorias; (c) fazer uma descrição do resultado da categorização (expondo os achados encontrados na análise); (d) fazer inferências dos resultados (lançando-se mão de premissas feitas pelos pesquisadores); (e) interpretar os resultados obtidos com auxílio da fundamentação teórica adotada”.

So that we may scrutinize the results found and discuss them, we present an understanding of what the PPP may be, its objectives and aims. Thereafter we wrote how the school, presently analyzed, is presented in the PPP, the contributions of decoloniality to rethink it, as well as the advancements and gaps left in the curriculum of the aforementioned institution.

RESULTS

From the power relations verified in the PPP, it was found that there is not a sole stance/way of looking at the world, especially for the indigenous school. Instead, there are plural and contradictory versions, which also suggests that it is necessary to make Santa Clara EMI go through constant (re)formulations. By understanding school (specifically indigenous school) as a place of ideological tensions and struggles and by considering it a locus of resistance and transformation, a broader analysis of the educational dynamics and the outline of effective strategies for the promotion of educational equity becomes essential. It is noticeable that the power relations are not found merely written in paper, but they are materialized in the day to day of the school and its relation with the external environment, be that in the indigenous community or even in the non-indigenous society.

The Xavante community of the Santa Clara EMI highlights the importance of contents of general and corporal indigenous culture also being taught at school, with the aim of granting them autonomy. Thereby, such acquired knowledge act as fundamental tools so that the Xavante may position themselves more assertively in face of social, political and judicial issues that affect their communities and help them ensure the respect for their collective and individual rights.

However, the knowledge offered by the school, that is, the world of the non-indigenous culture is notably secondary to the Xavante. When they are involved in a demand for their customs and collectivity to be placed at the forefront, we verified the primacy of caring for the culture, and that is foundational at the heart of this society. Knowing that Santa Clara EMI is the place of another culture assures the Xavante of the conscience to discern what school has best to offer: the teaching of portuguese language and other knowledges so that they connect them with the surrounding society, in such a way they have more autonomy in their coming and going.

DISCUSSION

It is the school's job to reflect, develop, redact, analyze and reformulate, when necessary, the document which adopts the worldview and philosophy of the institution, this document being the Projeto Político Pedagógico (Political Pedagogy project) (PPP). The PPP of the school must be tied to a democratic management, for, according to Veiga (2009), only if both parties are well articulated will we have a quality education.

We understand that, for the indigenous school to operate according to the legislation – for instance, the 201/04-Cee/MT Resolution⁵, which guarantees “[...] specific and differentiated characteristics with their own legal norms and systems, geared towards the full cultural appreciation and ethnic and linguistic affirmation of the indigenous societies”⁶ –, the conditions pointed out by Veiga (2009), of constant re-evaluation and formulation, are of key importance and must be contemplated in practice to ensure such rights/duties.

Furthermore, collective construction becomes even more indispensable in indigenous schools, so as to contemplate the active and priority action of the community of the settlement in which the school is inserted, so that, thereby, the possibilities of a PPP redacted through an intercultural bias are heightened. Thus, a PPP formulated under an intercultural orientation will have better conditions of sustaining school practices carried out also under this perspective.

In her interview, Santa Clara EMI's coordinator reports the difficulty of updating the documents and materials for indigenous education due to the lack of time/availability amongst the

⁵ This resolution sets state norms for the structure, functioning and organization of indigenous schools in the Mato Grosso Educational State System and provides other measures (Mato Grosso, 2004).

⁶ “[...] características específicas e diferenciadas e com normas e ordenamento jurídicos próprios, voltada à plena valorização cultural e afirmação étnica e linguística das sociedades indígenas”.

responsible employees assigned to the Secretaria de Educação (Secretary of Education) and the members of the indigenous community (employees assigned to the EMI):

But like, these are the skills that they [indigenous people] have and that are contemplated, right? In the BNCC in the DRC, those state skills, because each state has their own, which can be complemented and also we add those of our district, right? I think that's the way. So, there needs to be more time, sit down, talk to them [indigenous people], discuss these things that they [indigenous people] think can be added, right? They [indigenous people] do have a lot to enrich with. It's just we lack this time to sit down and discuss. Because it takes time, it can take long⁷ (Interview with the Coordinator, 2023).

Despite the coordinator's report on the presence of the Xavante culture and its knowledge and abilities in Santa Clara EMI's PPP, undoubtedly the dynamic of contemplating such knowledge was carried out through an external vision. The main role of the Xavante does not occur in the herein analyzed documents from this school.

The coordinator points out that, in the more recent mobilizations to update the documents of indigenous schools, the Xavante teachers were heard, that is, the latest versions of such documents were written only by non-indigenous people. There is, however, a recognition, in their part, that the PPP and the curriculum must be reviewed periodically, and she even suggests that these be reviewed annually.

The PPP is not a static document, on the contrary, it is dynamic, and only its dynamicity allows for the school to be as close to reality as possible and be able to, thereby, reach their objectives. This means that the PPP needs to be a functional document. Besides the content, methodologies, objectives, skills and the technological resources to be employed in each curricular component of the PPP, for the created political-pedagogical guidelines to be fulfilled, the particularities of the school must be incorporated.

Despite of what was exposed, in the Santa Clara EMI's PPP, it is reported that "[...] the political pedagogical project allows for the managing and pedagogical re-planning which guarantees the effective participation of the involved segments, in the pursuit of a quality indigenous education in our district"⁸ (Campinópolis, 2022, p. 4). Here it is possible to verify that those responsible for organizing the PPP, besides versing on the importance of the constant reformulation of the document, indicate the participation of the whole community in its (re)construction.

Despite this, the document did not bring any other key points. In addition to this aforementioned acknowledgement, it is necessary to consider that:

[...] for school to be a space and time of innovation and investigation and to become autonomous, the option for a theoretical-methodological reference which allows the creation of one's identity and exerts their right to difference, singularity, transference, solidarity and participation is essential⁹ (Veiga, 2009, p. 165).

In August 2023, when soliciting the updated PPP, we realized that it was found incomplete. Furthermore, in an interview, the coordinator reported that matters of instability in the workforce, both in the management of the Secretaria Municipal de Educação (Municipal Secretary of Education) and in relation to the school staff, hinder the continuity of the works, which many times are initiated, but not continued:

⁷ "Mas assim essas são habilidades que eles [indígenas] têm e que estão contempladas, né? Na BNCC na DRC, aquelas habilidades do estado, porque cada estado também tem as suas, que pode complementar e também nós acrescentamos as do nosso município, né? Eu acho que o caminho é esse daí. Assim, precisa ter mais tempo, sentar, conversar mais com eles [indígenas], discutir essas coisas que eles [indígenas] acham que pode ser acrescentado, né? Eles [indígenas] têm muita coisa, sim, a enriquecer. Só que falta esse tempo de sentar e discutir. Porque leva tempo, demora".

⁸ "[...] o projeto político pedagógico permite o replanejamento administrativo e pedagógico e garante a efetiva participação de todos os segmentos envolvidos, na busca de uma educação indígena de qualidade em nosso município".

⁹ "[...] para que a escola seja espaço e tempo de inovação e investigação e se torne autônoma é fundamental a opção por um referencial teórico-metodológico que permita a construção de sua identidade e exerça seu direito à diferença, à singularidade, à transparência, à solidariedade e à participação".

It is from the community, the faculty, because it varies a lot. This year the teacher is João¹⁰, next year will be some else, so it's not something set, right? You are from this group, you are from that area, no! It depends. It depends on how the next year is going to be¹¹ (Interview with the coordinator, 2023).

She reported on the difficulty of switching managers in the municipal secretary of education, for there to be a sequence of people in charge of the articulation not only of the specific curriculum, but of the plannings, the activities etc. of the indigenous schools. She points out that the job of developing specific materials had already begun, but that a lot of effort was necessary to keep it current/valid, and reported that a discussion and the permanent effort for the development of these materials to be continuous and functional are of utmost importance. It is precisely this that does not occur, there is no sector or person responsible at long term to take care of this department¹² (Field Journal, 2023).

One may realize that, even though the indigenous school has the right to educational differentiation protected, it has been recurrently treated as a school managed by non-indigenous people to serve indigenous people. In this context, many problems of conventional school are merely transplanted to indigenous school, in our judgment, with an aggravating factor: indigenous society operates in a social, political and economic system different to that which has substantiated their formal teaching (Brasil, 2002).

Nevertheless, school is also a space of struggle. It is not born ready and is never found completely done, given that it is a place of constant transformation, just as the environment which surrounds it: society. By studying Santa Clara EMI's PPP, some epistemological inconsistencies are brought to our attention. In various parts, we encounter the defense of an education guided by the decolonial movement, which appears in the constant reaffirmations of preservation of the mother language – favoring bilingualism –, in the exposure of the term interculturality and by adopting a diversified calendar.

In fact, there is the presence of the mother language and Portuguese language (in addition to the English language) curricular components. However, it is worth analyzing if merely the fact of containing these subjects in the curriculum ensures that the school is bilingual as is demanded. It may be that the dynamic of bilingualism as the school presents only masks the priority use of the Portuguese language. Thus, we have:

[...] books, texts, subjects, contents basically presented in the Portuguese language. However, as expected, the dialogues, the explanations, the conversations and any kind of oral communication are carried out in the mother language [...] The teacher “read” the text by translating it directly to the mother language and made explanations also in that language, but some words which probably do not have a direct translation were said in the Portuguese language, such as the word ‘gymnastics’¹³ (Field Journal, 2023).

In some speeches present in the PPP text, it is possible to notice the colonial epistemology, which treats the indigenous person as inferior, incapable, and not autonomous to speak for themselves. We know that coloniality refers to the “[...] lived experience of colonization and its

¹⁰Fictional name.

¹¹“É da comunidade, do corpo docente, porque também varia muito. Esse ano o professor é o João, o ano que vem é outro, então não tem essa coisa fixa, né? Você é daquele grupo ali, você é daquela área, não! depende. Depende de como é que vai ser o ano que vem”.

¹²“Relatou da dificuldade da troca de gestores na secretaria municipal de educação, para que se tenha uma sequência de pessoas encarregadas a articulação não só do currículo específico, mas dos planejamentos, das atividades etc. das escolas indígenas. Aponta que o trabalho de desenvolver materiais específicos já foi iniciado, mas que é necessário muito esforço para mantê-lo vigente, relatou que é de suma importância uma discussão e empenho permanente para que o desenvolvimento desses materiais seja contínuo e funcional. É justamente isso que não acontece, não há um setor ou pessoas responsáveis a longo prazo para tomarem conta desse departamento”.

¹³“[...] livros, textos, matéria, conteúdos basicamente apresentados em língua portuguesa. Entretanto, como esperado, os diálogos, as explicações, as conversas e qualquer tipo de comunicação oral são feitos em língua materna [...] O professor “leu” o texto traduzindo-o diretamente para a língua materna e teceu explicações também na língua, mas algumas palavras que provavelmente não tem tradução preferiu em língua portuguesa, como a palavra ginástica”.

impact”¹⁴ (Maldonado-Torres, 2008, p. 38). That is, it refers to the way in which the colonization process will reflect on the subjectivity of the being and their lived experience, given that the subalternized peoples are seen as inferiors, and have their intellect, rationality and abilities negated, as opposed to the standard of the European, white, bourgeois, “rational and civil” man.

Coloniality is directly related to the inferiority attributed to subalternized peoples, that is, to those groups which were silenced, oppressed and placed at the margin of society, such as black people, indigenous people, women, LGBTQia+ people, amongst others (Alcântara; Serra; Miranda, 2017). Today, we are allowed to notice advancements on the part of the non-indigenous society by recognizing native peoples. There is, in the assumptions of decoloniality, aims of emancipation in relation to the colonialist ideals of subjectivity, by means of forming a new thought with local knowledge. Under this perspective, coloniality appears as a theory, a historical concept and political positioning (Mignolo, 2010).

Composed of a thought which detaches itself from the logic of a single possible world, decoloniality is a project of social, political, cultural and economic liberation, which aims for the respect and autonomy of individuals and social groups. That is, supported by epistemological conceptions of decoloniality, we sought freedom so that the Xavante could be who they are, have autonomy and establish the school according to their principles, therefore, being protagonists, and not having supporting roles (Mignolo, 2008).

Meanwhile, the topic titled “school history” in the PPP deserves attention in this analysis. By being present in four lines, it was notoriously redacted with superficial information by the non-indigenous team of the Secretaria de Educação (Secretary of Education). This refers back to how much the document still is colonial. This epistemic vision is intensely materialized when it is the non-indigenous people who bring the school creation background in the document, wherein this institution is a part of a Xavante indigenous settlement. The text says:

The idea of creating the school was implemented in the settlement by Celestino, who was the cacique at the time, he requested the creation of the school in the Parabubure Indigenous Land in the Santa Clara Settlement to the District Mayor. The cacique himself and the community built the school, giving the name Santa Clara, the same as the settlement, chosen by the community¹⁵ (Campinópolis, 2022, p. 5).

Furthermore, these few lines make us notice the historic reduction of the events which are not presented in the text, but which certainly took place in the construction of Santa Clara EMI. The presumed cover up of the struggles, the possible bureaucracies experienced and the procedures which made part of the construction of this place of teaching are only some questions which we evaluated as having been lost with the concealment of the real history.

Concurrently, some points of the text convey the idea that the participation of the indigenous community took place (at most) secondarily in the document, that is, that the community participated in the construction of the PPP in an advisory capacity. Sentences such as “[...] during the study moments, the indigenous community was heard to subsidize all steps of this project”¹⁶ (Campinópolis, 2022, p. 4) reinforce that the school community of the Santa Clara settlement had no significant role when the document was being developed, just as in not telling the history of the school itself.

Later, in the topic “settlement data”, indigenous people are presented stereotypically, revealing the structural racism of Brazilian society in regard to the ethnic-cultural dimension. We know that racism is always structural when dealing with our contemporary society, because it is “[...] an element which integrates the economic and political organization of the society”¹⁷ (Almeida, 2018, p. 15).

The description of the habits of the members of the Santa Clara settlement thus states:

¹⁴[...] experiência vivida da colonização e o seu impacto”.

¹⁵“A ideia de criar a escola foi implantada na aldeia pelo Celestino que era Cacique na época solicitou ao Prefeito Municipal, a criação da escola na Terra Indígena Parabubure na Aldeia Santa Clara. O próprio cacique e a comunidade construíram a escola, dando o nome de Santa Clara, mesmo nome da aldeia, escolhido pela comunidade”.

¹⁶[...] durante os momentos de estudo a comunidade indígena foi ouvida para subsidiar todas as etapas deste projeto”.

¹⁷[...] um elemento que integra a organização econômica e política da sociedade”.

[...] the community maintains their customs and tradition, working in rice, corn, banana, cassava, papaya, watermelon etc. agriculture. They still collect native fruits, hunt and fish. They raise chickens, dogs, and consume industrialized products¹⁸ (Campinópolis, 2022, p. 6).

The transposition of the terms “maintains their customs and traditions” to “consume industrialized projects” indicates to us a series of reflections surrounding the idea of native people idealized by the responsables for the writing of the PPP: 1) That the indigenous people would be more “advanced” as they switch from a natural diet to something more “sophisticated” and “complex”, which would be the processed/ultra processed food items; 2) The impression of surprise, which reveals a conception of privation of indigenous people of being influenced by – as all of national society – the industrialization/globalization process initiated worldwide in the Eighteenth Century, and 3) The ideological attribution that the indigenous dietary habits must be maintained as organically as possible, bringing them closer to natural and salvage/animalizing customs.

The need to write that indigenous people continue, still, to undertake certain activities suggests we reflect on the possible attribution of such practices as outdated in the view of the surrounding society, at the same time that the discourse of consuming industrialized products is amenable to highlight.

Another important point to highlight are the contradictions between what is registered on the PPP and what we observed throughout our socialization (around a year) with the indigenous school community of the Santa Clara EMI. The document states that the management of the indigenous school is organized so as to:

[...] take into consideration the sociocultural and economic practices of the respective communities, as well as their forms of production of knowledge, their own processes of teaching and learning and societal projects, strengthening the regime of collaboration and recuperation of their historical memories, the reaffirmation of their ethnic identities, and the appreciation of their languages and sciences¹⁹ (Campinópolis, 2022, p. 8-9).

By observing a history class, we realized that the presented content dealt with the colonization of Brazil. This moment would be opportune for the indigenous people to be encouraged by the managing team to tell their stories, their struggles, their views and versions on the fact. However, the Xavante teacher, supported by a conventional didactic book, copied part of a text in this material so that the students would re-copy it in their notebooks (**Photography 1**).

The text reads the following message:

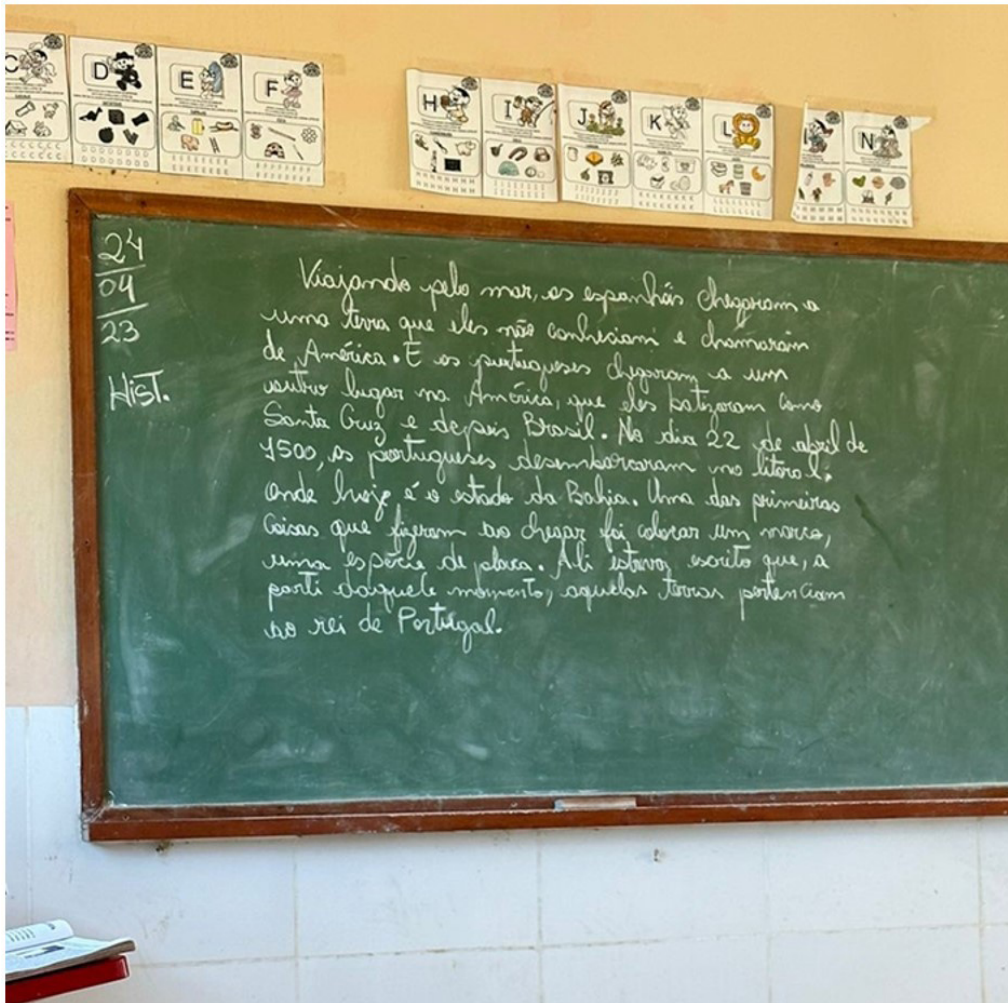
Traveling through the sea, the Spanish arrived in a land which they didn't know and called it America. And the Portuguese arrived at a different place in America, which they named Santa Cruz, and later, Brazil. On the date of April 22nd, 1500, the Portuguese landed on the shore where today is the state of Bahia. One of the first things they did once arriving was placing a mark, a sort of sign. There it was written that, from that moment on, those lands belonged to the king of Portugal.²⁰ (Field journal, 2023).

The date of the class in which this task was assigned (verified in the top left corner of the photograph), 04/24/23, in contrast to the date in which the text reports that the Portuguese landed on the Brazilian shore, 04/22/1500, reveals to us that for almost exactly 523 years,

¹⁸ “[...] a comunidade continua com seus costumes e tradições, trabalham com agricultura do arroz, milho, banana, mandioca, mamão, melancia etc. Ainda coletam frutos nativos, caçam e pescam. Criam galinhas, cachorros, consomem produtos industrializados”.

¹⁹ “[...] leve em consideração as práticas socioculturais e econômicas das respectivas comunidades, bem como suas formas de produção de conhecimento, processos próprios de ensino e de aprendizagem e projetos societários, fortalecendo o regime de colaboração a recuperação de suas memórias históricas; a reafirmação de suas identidades étnicas; a valorização de suas línguas e ciências”.

²⁰ “Viajando pelo mar, os espanhóis chegaram a uma terra que eles não conheciam e chamaram de América. E os portugueses chegaram a um outro lugar na América, que eles batizaram como Santa Cruz e depois Brasil. No dia 22 de abril de 1500, os portugueses desembarcaram no litoral onde hoje é o estado da Bahia. Uma das primeiras coisas que fizeram ao chegar foi colocar um marco, uma espécie de placa. Ali estava escrito que, a partir daquele momento, aquelas terras pertenciam ao rei de Portugal”.



Photography 1. Photograph of the blackboard in a history class in Santa Clara EMI. Source: Personal collection (2023).

history continues to be told though the colonial perspective. Observing that this text was presented in an indigenous school raises many questions for us.

We ponder that this is not about matters of alienation of the Xavante, but, by reproducing the content of the book (produced by non-indigenous peoples), the Xavante teachers are teaching the students the history which is told by the white man since 1500, and that it is necessary to re-tell this history, teaching, above all, to resist.

Nevertheless, when we deal with the didactic material – the same book in all public schools in the state of Mato Grosso –, the coordinator of Santa Clara EMI vents:

Firstly, it is a great waste of money that the government employs in the production of these books that gets tossed aside. When it arrives there (at the indigenous school), it really is tossed aside. I don't know, it doesn't work, it doesn't. According to the legislation, they have the right to an intercultural, bilingual education, to specific materials, right? But, in practice, we know that doesn't happen. Firstly because there's a lack of capacitated people to make that. Yeah, people who know the language, people who know the culture, people who are interested in doing it. For the government, I think that is another expense, investing in this, it isn't. It's easier to take what goes there [to urban schools] and throw it here [at indigenous schools] anyways, knowing it's not going anywhere. And things go on like this²¹ (Interview with the coordinator, 2023).

²¹Primeiramente, é um grande desperdício de dinheiro que o governo faz na produção desses livros que vão para o lixo. Que chega lá (escola indígena), vai realmente para o lixo. Não sei, não serve, não serve. Segundo a legislação, eles têm, o direito a uma educação intercultural, bilíngue, material específico, né? Mas, na prática, a gente sabe que isso não acontece. Primeiro porque faltam pessoas capacitadas para fazer isso daí. É, pessoas que conhecem a língua, pessoas que conhecem a cultura, pessoas que estão interessadas em fazer. Para o

We do not want to hold the indigenous community of the Santa Clara settlement responsible for the inconsistencies here analyzed. On the contrary, our aim is to encourage the managers at federal, state and municipal levels to comply with the current legislation, as well as appreciate the strengthening of their ties with the educational institution, so that it becomes a place of teaching-learning of quality, ethics and respect. It is also necessary to defend the idea that it is possible to advance to an indigenous school not only carried out by the Xavante, but idealized, created and backed by their ideals. For this purpose, indigenous teachers must have access to adequate training to enhance such demands.

We know that, in the state of Mato Grosso, the project coordinated by the Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso (Federal University of Mato Grosso) (UFMT) with the participation of the Universidade do Estado de Mato Grosso (State University of Mato grosso) (Unemat) and the Universidade Federal de Rondonópolis (Federal University of Rondonópolis) (UFR), named Rede Ação Saberes Indígenas na Escola (Indigenous Knowledge at School Network Action) (Rede ASIE²²), is concerned with issues such as that. In addition, these universities develop specific materials in mother languages to cater to several ethnicities (Apiaká, Bororo, Bakairi, Chiquitano, Kayabi, Kayapó, Munduruku, Terena, Umutina, Xavante) and are articulated to the public higher education institutions (instituições de ensino superior) (IES) of the state to develop studies on alphabetization on indigenous languages, thus qualifying indigenous school teachers and other people involved in indigenous education of the several districts in Mato Grosso.

According to the analysis of the PPP, despite pointing out the constructivism as a teaching method in it, a definition which is generic and little enlightening of in what ways constructivism may contribute to the process of teaching-learning in that educational environment was pointed out. In the first instance because, culturally, the Xavante pass on their knowledge through the elderly, for the ancient are the “holders of knowledge” and teach the youngest by means of orality and example. Secondly, the observed school dynamic, just as culture in general, is based on orality. So, the teacher verbalizes a lot and students listen, which directs us to a dissent with the constructivist teaching method developed by Jean Piaget.

Indigenous people traditionally have a strong oral tradition, in which knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation by means of spoken language and cultural practices. This means that much information and knowledge may not be formally registered at the PPP and the school’s curriculum. However, even without this formal registry, school may work effectively and significantly for the indigenous community – so long as they are the protagonists of the elaboration of the documents and the practical actions.

This is made possible because education in indigenous communities is often based on a holistic and communitarian approach, on which knowledge is integrated to the cultural and environmental context of the community. In addition, indigenous educational practices frequently value the active participation of the community, practical learning, and the connection to the land and natural resources.

On the other hand, in Santa Clara EMI’s PPP, the section “Conceptions of School” brings the following definition, quoting Miguel Arroyo:

Arroyo (2004) describes school as a place of appropriation of the conceptual instruments for the understanding of reality. As a social institution, it is part of a larger, broader and more complex system, society, of which it relies and is reliant, to the same extent as it serves it and influences it²³ (Campinópolis, 2022, p. 15).

If, in the perception of the managers, school establishes a relation of dependency and servitude to society, it is essential that there is awareness of what, in fact, society is associating with this school. Would this be the Xavante society or the non-indigenous society to which they

governo, acho que seria mais gasto não é, investir nisso daí. É mais fácil pegar o que vai pra lá [escola urbana] e jogar lá mesmo [escola indígena] sabendo que isso não vai dar em nada. E a coisa continua desse jeito”.

²²Information taken from ASIE network project website (Universidade do Estado de Mato Grosso, 2023).

²³“Arroyo (2004), define a escola como local de apropriação dos instrumentos conceituais para a compreensão da realidade. Como instituição social, é parte de um sistema maior, mais amplo e complexo a sociedade, da qual depende e é dependente, na mesma medida em que a serve e influência”.

belong? This questioning is crucial for us to understand the reality of the Santa Clara EMI, its challenges, limits and possibilities.

To Jan Masschelein and Maarten Simons, school is the most favorable place within a society for equality to be created: equality of time, social equality, equality of opportunities. In that way, school makes it possible to put everyone on a same level, the level of possibility (Masschelein; Simons, 2014). That is, what is essential (or should be) are not the familial or socioeconomic precedents of those subjects, because at school everyone is the same thing: students.

According to Hannah Arendt (1957, p. 8), “[...] education is one of the most elementary and most needed activities of human society, which does not ever remain as it is, but rather renews itself incessantly through birth, through the arrival of new humans”²⁴. In this sense, the possibility of learning (term used by Paulo Freire) the world, problematizing it without the socioeconomic order, the family, the state, the church and the community being determinant to one’s perceptions is the priority role of the school towards the subjects. Through this, each generation resignifies the world according to their own judgment.

Masschelein and Simons (2014) point out that, during the space-time of school, the manifestation of the “suspensions” (another essential characteristic of the schools) makes it so that the influence of social dictates, of family and the expectations which the community attributes to children are dissipated. Through this, they have the possibility of writing their own futures (and that of the world) with no predetermination. Therefore, school and teachers act as “[...] agents capable of helping the students escape their world of life and their (apparently predestined) place and position in the social order”²⁵ (Masschelein; Simons, 2014, p. 35).

Meanwhile, we believe indigenous education to be a place where access to the cultural universe is made possible/expanded, so that, by becoming conscious of it, children and youth may later establish relationships with the “worlds”. In this way, relationships to their culture will be maintained and strengthened, knowing and exploring the surrounding cultures. In the scenario of indigenous school, we are able to envision pedagogic practices supported by interculturality, given that they allow for ‘another’ place, ‘another’ experience, which can be created and (re)invented at each new moment.

Cunha (2012, p. 112) reports that “[...] the rights to the specificity of indigenous school and intercultural education are essential elements for the promotion of educational justice and the strengthening of the cultural identities of the indigenous people”²⁶. The rights to specificity of indigenous schools are intrinsically tied to the concept of intercultural education in the indigenous communities, for intercultural education is an approach which recognizes and values cultural and linguistic diversity, promoting the dialogue between different forms of knowledge and wisdom. In indigenous schools, this approach is manifested in the valuing of the local traditions, languages and cultural practices, ensuring that the educational process is sensitive to the specific needs and realities of the indigenous communities.

Consequently, by means of intercultural education, indigenous schools may offer a learning space which values and strengthens the cultural identities of the students, at the same time as it prepares them to actively participate in broader society. In this way, the rights of indigenous schools to specificity and intercultural education complement one another, contributing to the strengthening of indigenous communities, to the promotion of social justice and educational inclusion.

In an interview with the middle school physical education teacher, he points out to us the importance of, in the Santa Clara EMI, students learning contents referring to Xavante and non-indigenous cultures:

It would be like this, learning everything, this way is better when you go out, out there, you already understand that content, because you already know it from when you studied here,

²⁴[...] a educação é uma das atividades mais elementares e mais necessárias da sociedade humana a qual não permanece nunca tal como é, mas antes se renova sem cessar pelo nascimento, pela chegada de novos seres humanos”.

²⁵[...] como agentes capazes de ajudar os alunos a escaparem de seu mundo da vida e de seu (aparentemente predestinado) lugar e posição na ordem social”.

²⁶[...] os direitos da especificidade da escola indígena e a educação intercultural são elementos fundamentais para a promoção da justiça educacional e o fortalecimento das identidades culturais dos povos indígenas”.

*you already learned it, it's better this way. And then you get there, when you study out there, you already understand this here. If I teach this content, this Xavante content, when you get out there, you are lost like this, it's better to learn everything mixed this way*²⁷ (Interview with the teacher, 2023).

The teacher deems it important for the students to be in touch with the contents of non-indigenous culture so that, when they “leave” the settlement and are “out there”, to have a minimal understanding of them and may, in this way, interact with their environment. Thus, they believe that, if the indigenous students learned contents of non-indigenous matrix, this grants them a greater autonomy in society as a whole. The teacher believed that, by acquiring these knowledge, indigenous students would have better conditions of participating more actively in society in general, having greater autonomy and security to claim and defend their rights. This autonomy is seen as an essential tool for the Xavante to position themselves more assertively in the face of social, political and judicial issues which affect their communities and ensure the respect to their collective and individual rights.

On the same note, in the interview with the principal of the Santa Clara EMI, she reveals the importance of the contents of non-indigenous corporal culture also being taught at school. She reports that:

*So, we see that our school was first-place in women's futsal, second place in volleyball, without ever having played volleyball in their lives, without knowing the rules, the techniques, right? We were second place in volleyball. [...] There's athleticism, right? Footrace because it's super important, just like there's going to be this competition, my students are coming [to the city] with only what they know, what they have, because we've never practiced*²⁸ (Interview with the principal, 2023).

Consequently, transforming the manifestations of corporal culture into contents to be taught at Santa Clara EMI seems to us like a proposition well-liked by the school. It is worth remembering what Masschelein and Simons (2014) say about the subject: it is the language of school, and not occasionally, it is it to which everyone democratically has access. This is because the teacher presents the subject to the student, without providing it a final objective, that is, he presents the world, but does not tell the students what to do with it. In this sense, the teacher:

[...] provides material to use and is precisely this provision which makes things public, present, presented, shared [...] therefore, school is a place which transforms something into an object of study (knowledge for the sake of knowledge) and into an object of practice (skill for the sake of skill)²⁹ (Masschelein; Simons, 2014, p. 35-36).

Despite all of the analyses here exposed, the text of Santa Clara EMI's PPP presents important discussions, pointing out that, amidst the still colonial view, advancements are conquered. In the topic of school aims, something really caught our attention: the objective of “[...] equality of conditions for the access to and permanence at school”³⁰ converses with the works of the authors here referenced.

Equality of opportunities for students of indigenous schools is an imperative to tackle historical inequalities and promote social justice in Brazil. Besides ensuring access to education, indigenous schools play a crucial role by offering free time, equality of conditions and opportunities so that the indigenous children have the conditions to overcome social barriers which have historically marginalized them.

²⁷ Seria assim, aprender todos, assim é melhor quando sair, lá fora já entende aquele conteúdo, porque já sabe que quando estudava lá, ele já aprendeu, melhor assim. Aí chega lá no, quando estuda lá fora, ele já entende esse aqui. Se eu passar esse tipo, conteúdo de Xavante quando sair lá fora e fica perdido assim, melhor é aprender misturado assim.

²⁸ E aí, a gente vê aqui que a nossa escola ficou em primeiro lugar no futsal feminino, segundo lugar vôlei, sem nunca ter jogado um vôlei na vida, sem saber as regras, as técnicas, né? Ganhou o segundo lugar no vôlei. [...] Tem atletismo, né? Prova de corrida porque é super importante, igual vai ter essa competição, meus alunos vão vir [para cidade] com o que eles sabem mesmo, com o que eles têm, porque a gente nunca treinou.

²⁹ [...] libera material para o uso e é precisamente essa liberação que torna as coisas públicas, presentes, apresentadas, partilhadas. [...] a escola é, portanto, um lugar que transforma algo em um objeto de estudo (o conhecimento pelo bem do conhecimento) e em um objeto de prática (a habilidade pelo bem da habilidade).

³⁰ “[...] igualdade de condições para o acesso e permanência na escola”.

In this context, indigenous school emerges as an educational space which is inclusive and sensitive to the specific needs of indigenous communities, contributing to social transformation and the empowerment of the students. Public policies and educational practices must be directed to ensure the equality of opportunities and the recognition of the ethnic and cultural diversity of the country, aiming to build a fairer and more egalitarian society for all, especially for those who historically have been and still are marginalized and excluded from the access to quality education.

In addition, in face of the structural racism which permeates our society, it is essential for the schools to play a more active and critical role in the education of the students. This means that they must not only teach contents, but also promote a deeper reflection on the social relations and injustices present in society, both in indigenous and urban schools. By approaching issues related to coloniality and racial discrimination, schools have the opportunity of capacitating the students to understand and confront these power structures, preparing them to be citizens more conscious and engaged in the construction of a fairer and more egalitarian society.

Critical theories reveal to us that the curriculum is a political territory, a space in which social power relations are manifested. In this context, the curriculum reproduces the social structure and, therefore, in our society, it is also capitalistic. Evidently, it is an ideological apparatus which transmits conceptions of the ruling class and learns its roles in society by means of the ideology put in the curriculum (Silva, 2005).

It is evident that critical theories have a discourse centered in social classes and the search for autonomy and liberation of the working class through the recognition of their socio-economic space, which is constituted in the relations of power with the class which holds the means of production. Tomas Tadeu da Silva (2005, p. 149) points out that “[...] with the post-critical theories, the map of power is expanded to include the processes of domination centered in race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality”³¹.

Silva (2005) reveals to us that the curriculum is indispensable at school due to being an identity document. In Santa Clara EMI's PPP, curriculum appears very discreetly and even covertly. Incidentally, in the topic “curricular matrix” there is no written text. As per the curricular pedagogical proposal, the document cites the Resolution 05/2012/CNE, opting to defend indigenous school in such a way:

[...] ensuring that, in the curriculum, the curricular matrix, the differentiated calendar and other documents which instruct these records, the principles and characteristics: of specificity, of bilingualism/multilingualism, of communitarian organization and interculturality, valuing their traditional languages and knowledge and oversees that the right to differentiated school education is ensured to indigenous communities with social quality and pedagogical, cultural, linguistic, environmental and territorial pertinence, respecting the logics, knowledge and perspectives of the own Xavante, *A`uwe uptabi*, indigenous people³² (Campinópolis, 2022, p. 7-8).

Thus, although this proposition discusses the valuing of the autonomy of the Santa Clara EMI, there is, later, a discourse according to which it is important to question: “[...] the pedagogical aspect encompasses the conceptions of the real and imaginary world of the Xavante *A`uwe uptabi* culture”³³. Here we certainly come upon contrasting ideas of what is “true” and what is “false” in the judgment of the PPP editors.

In this sense, we agree with the reflection that the imaginary world is actually part of the own and unique lived world such as we produce it, from the experiences, significations and beliefs of each individual and people. As such, to speak of an imaginary world may lead us to misleading interpretations that these manifestations are part of something nonexistent,

³¹ “[...] com as teorias pós críticas, o mapa do poder é ampliado para incluir os processos de dominação centrados na raça, etnia, no gênero e na sexualidade”.

³² “[...] garantindo no currículo, a matriz Curricular, o calendário diferenciado e demais documentos que instruem estes autos, os princípios e características: da especificidade, do bilinguismo / multilinguismo, da organização comunitária e da interculturalidade, valorizando suas línguas e conhecimentos tradicionais e zela para que o direito à educação escolar diferenciada seja garantido às comunidades indígenas com qualidade social e pertinência pedagógica, cultural, linguística, ambiental e territorial, respeitando as lógicas, saberes e perspectivas do próprio povo indígena Xavante, *A`uwe uptabi*.”

³³ “[...] o aspecto pedagógico engloba as concepções do mundo real e imaginário da cultura Xavante *A`uwe uptabi*”.

when actually, they are fundamental aspects of the concrete life of these subjects. This interpretation leads us to believe that the mysticism present in other cultures tends to be seen as something unreal, precisely because of the difficulty of understanding on the part of those who are not part of such society.

The elaboration of the school curriculum and its implantation in practice are based on the reference assumption of which world they want to present to the students. Bourdieu (1999) points out that the current curriculum of schools is still based in erudite culture, for it is through the curriculum that the dominant classes reinforce their cultural capital. So, besides favoring the maintenance of class society, it causes difficulties to the dominated classes in understanding the knowledge which are not natural/familiar to them.

We can observe this situation in indigenous schools when the contents determined by the Secretaria de Educação (Secretary of Education) to be taught are not carefully selected to meet the specific needs of that public. It does not seem to be a concern, on the part of the (non-indigenous) managers in choosing objectives and contents which are relevant to the indigenous students, nor establishing a clear connection between the school and the context in which they are inserted.

Although we recognize the inclusion of themes of non-indigenous origin in Santa Clara EMI, it is essential that we highlight the importance of a careful approach, especially on the part of the-indigenous people, when integrating these contents in the school curriculum. We should not simply transfer them from urban schools without considering the specific context and needs of the Xavante community. It is crucial that the protagonist in the definition of the contents and pedagogical practices be the Xavante people, thus ensuring a contextualized education respectful of their culture and identity, in synthesis with an education which enhances decoloniality.

Notwithstanding the highlighted considerations on the presence of non-indigenous people and our culture in the Santa Clara EMI, we notice a deep effort in the viability of the intercultural perspective when it is the indigenous teachers who lead the educational initiatives. This matter incites a reflection on the impact of the presence of this community in the educational environment. Furthermore, by considering the prominent presence of Xavante cultural elements in the school curriculum and calendar, the complexity of the coexistence of these cultural traits with the imposition of eurocentric knowledge emerges.

We would also like to point out that the indigenous school is a space for the reconstruction of repressed subjectivities, subalternized languages and knowledge, and erased histories. Santa Clara EMI's PPP contains the following statement on the objectives of the component Xavante family farming:

[...] present to the students all of the part of Xavante - *A'uwê uptabi* family farming, always valuing their ancestral cultures. Fishing, hunting, traditional diet: edible and non-edible traditional fruit, traditional medicine³⁴ (Campinápolis, 2022, p. 14).

Paulo Freire calls our attention to ideology as a fundamental factor for educational practice. According to the author, "[...] the existence of objects, contents to be taught and learned; involve the employment of methods, techniques, materials; it implies, due to its directive nature, aims, dreams, utopias, ideals"³⁵ (Freire, 1996, p. 28).

Saviani (2011) alerts us to the dualism of school, stating that there are two schools, one per each existing social class. Due to issues such as this, the author alerts us on the importance of objective knowledge, stating that education "[...] is the act of producing, directly and intentionally, in each singular human, the humanity which is produced historically and collectively by the set of men"³⁶ (Saviani, 2011, p. 6).

³⁴[...] apresentar aos alunos toda a parte da agricultura familiar Xavante - *A'uwê uptabi*, sempre valorizando as suas culturas ancestrais. Pescaçaria, caçada, alimentação tradicional: fruta nativa comestível e não comestível, medicina tradicional.

³⁵"[...] a existência de objetos, conteúdos a serem ensinados e aprendidos; envolve o uso de métodos, de técnicas, de materiais; implica, em função de seu caráter diretivo, objetivo, sonhos, utopias, ideais".

³⁶"[...] é o ato de produzir, direta e intencionalmente, em cada indivíduo singular, a humanidade que é produzida histórica e coletivamente pelo conjunto dos homens".

Paulo Freire and Dermeval Saviani are two important thinkers on education who, despite having distinct approaches, converge in their preoccupation with the relation between ideology and educational practice. Both of the authors highlight the need for an education which promotes the humanization and emancipation of the subjects, recognizing the fundamental role of education in the construction of historical and collective humanity.

In addition, the authors attribute the due emphasis on the political and transformative dimension of education, considering that both recognize that education is not a neutral process, but it is charged with meanings and influenced by dominating ideologies. Both Freire and Saviani highlight the importance of an educational practice which promotes the conscientization and criticism of unjust social structures, seeking the transformation of reality towards a fairer and more egalitarian society. They also emphasize the key role of education in the formation of the subjects as agents of change, capable of contributing to the construction of a more human and compassionate world.

CONCLUSION

It is indispensable to recognize Santa Clara EMI as a dynamic and multifaceted space, permeated by continuous struggles and challenges. Far from being a static environment, indigenous school is a constantly changing scenario, influenced by the social, political and cultural movements which surround it. Its evolution occurs in parallel with society's transformations, reflecting changes in paradigms, the values and aspirations of the several actors involved in the educational process.

However, it is important to recognize that, even in face of these influences, there is a latent resistance and a process of accepting and un-accepting, characterized by the search for 'cracks' and spaces of decoloniality within the educational system. These moments of rupture and resistance represent an opportunity to promote a truly intercultural education, in which the experience and main role of the Xavante people of the Santa Clara EMI are respected and valued.

Considering that, in order to obtain a quality indigenous education, it is necessary to find in the PPP a text in which the Xavante identity is predominant. In addition, it is essential that the document incorporates pedagogical practices which value orality, traditional knowledge and cultural practices, and the Xavante people, contributing to the preservation and strengthening of their ethnic and cultural identity. It is also necessary to ensure adequate resources, such as bilingual didactic materials and contextualized learning spaces, which meet the specificities of the indigenous community and promote quality education. To this end, the indigenous school community, especially the non-indigenous people interwoven in this modality of education, must clearly understand the role and objectives of this school.

We defend the idea of moving forward to an indigenous school which is not only carried out by the Xavante, but idealized, created and supported by their ideals. To this end, it is essential that the teaching in indigenous schools respect and value the own cultural traditions of each community, providing an educational environment which strengthens the self-esteem, identity and autonomy of the indigenous teachers and students. This includes the recognition and promotion of their languages, songs, corporal practices and other forms of cultural expressions which are essential to their integrity and social wellbeing. Any educational approach which ignores or belittles these traditions is at risk of perpetuating historical injustices and reinforcing unequal power structures.

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Authors contribution

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