

Spiritual, symbolic and affective elements in the construction of the mbyá-guarani school!^{*}

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Abstract

The school has historically been imposed on indigenous peoples, in some cases through violence. However, when school is included in villages' daily lives and does not go against the precepts of each community, it is in many ways suitable for these collectives. In the process of constructing a specific, differentiated and intercultural school, the Mbyá-Guarani people are going through a time of reflection regarding this educational institution. This article deepens reflections on the process of constructing the school based on observations and first-hand experiences in the Mbyá-Guarani villages of Rio Grande do Sul state. Dimensions of spirituality and affectivity in cognitive learning, skills development and internalization of values were observed through intense ethnography that involved recording experiences, dialogues and reflections inside and outside school. These elements are presented here in the form of a dialogue with the education proposed by the indigenous community paradigm of Living well, which are shown as possibilities for constructing a specific, differentiated and intercultural school. Mbyá-Guarani life involves complex existential elements that are present in their own educational processes and that consolidate an ancient continuity. However, they must also be a foundation for constructing the school, contributing to a cultural affirmation, along with access to the technology and knowledge of other cultures. Spirituality, sensitivity, symbolism, experience, and art are some of the elements that are being inserted into the construction of the Mbyá-Guarani school as essential aspects in the education of this people.

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Keywords

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Elementos espirituais, simbólicos e afetivos na construção da escola mbyá-guarani

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Resumo

Historicamente a escola foi imposta aos povos indígenas, por vezes de forma violenta. Porém, quando inserida ao cotidiano das aldeias e conduzida de acordo com os preceitos de cada povo, em muitos aspectos é apropriada por esses coletivos. No processo de construção da escola específica, diferenciada e intercultural, o povo Mbyá Guarani vive um momento de reflexão acerca dessa instituição educativa. Este artigo aprofunda reflexões sobre o processo de construção da escola a partir de observações e convivências realizadas em aldeias Mbyá Guarani do Rio Grande do Sul. Por meio de intensa etnografia que registrou vivências, diálogos e reflexões dentro e fora da escola, foram observadas as dimensões da espiritualidade e da afetividade na aprendizagem cognitiva, no desenvolvimento de habilidades e na internalização de valores. Estes elementos são aqui apresentados na forma de um diálogo com a educação proposta pelo paradigma indígena comunitário do Bem viver, mostrados como potencialidades para a construção da escola específica, diferenciada e intercultural. A vida mbyá guarani apresenta elementos vivenciais complexos, presentes nos processos educacionais próprios e consolidam uma continuidade milenar. No entanto, precisam também se constituir como fundamento na construção da escola diferenciada, contribuindo para uma afirmação cultural, junto ao acesso a tecnologias e conhecimentos de outras culturas. A espiritualidade, a sensibilidade, o simbolismo, a vivência e a arte constituem alguns elementos que estão se inserindo na construção da escola mbyá guarani por serem fundamentais na educação desse povo.

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Palavras-chave

Educação indígena – Escola mbyá guarani – Bem viver.

Introduction

The Mbyá-Guarani are currently going through a time of reflection regarding school education, namely the process of building a differentiated and intercultural indigenous school. This community of people has their own educational system based on cosmology, which has maintained a cultural continuity for thousands of years, despite the colonial pressure of the last few centuries, including the imposition of an integrationist educational vision aimed at assimilating the Amerindian peoples into national hegemonic culture.

These people fled to the forest regions in order to escape such pressure, where they stayed for a significant period, which was especially true in Paraguay. At the end of the 19th century, the economic, social and political changes also affected regions where, as a matter of priority, the Mbyá-Guarani live and produced movements for these people, who pursued other territories considered to be ancestral by them and made them more visible to the cities. However, these movements remained largely unrelated to school, or with localized and non-continuous educational adherence. In a more recent time, namely during the final decades of the 20th century, they began to accept and even demand schools.

In Brazil, based on the 1988 Federal Constitution, which includes referrals to the struggles experienced by organized indigenous people, legislation was written to encourage indigenous-specific schools that recognize their own learning processes, the use of indigenous languages at school, bilingualism and interculturalism. However, the process of implementing these schools, despite the advances made, is still difficult and brings challenges, some of these include the limitations placed in terms of recognizing the distinctive character of these institutions and the lack of autonomy for a management system that can accommodate changes consistent with Mbyá-Guarani lifestyle.

Nevertheless, the beginning of the 21st century saw a process of growth in the Mbyá-Guarani schools, which involved these indigenous collectives taking ownership of the institutions. In some situations, the school also becomes a platform for affirming identity and tradition, which is achieved by embracing historical, linguistic and cultural aspects. However, what they most look for is access to knowledge and technology from Western culture, the objectives being to strengthen their autonomy, move forward in their search for rights and build other types of relationships with national society, especially those with the State. They asked for the school because it is important to learn Portuguese, which includes being able to write and read.

Through his ethnographic studies with the Guarani and the Kaingang, Bergamaschi (2010, p. 136) highlights this trajectory of appropriating the scholastic institution in the construction of differentiated educational projects. This author draws attention to the “contour mobility”, which concerns the existence of both traditional aspects and traces of Western educational influence, resulting in the occurrence of cracks through which indigenous culture manages to break pre-set institutional standards, expressing their ways of being and revitalizing traditional knowledge.

This process involves the complexity of bringing two cultures together, with the differences therein from the underlying cosmology, pedagogical approaches, with their predominant benchmarks, to the coverage of the curricular organization in their spaces and times. While monitoring the daily life at the Mbyá-Guarani school, the many difficulties that arise from the homogenizing force of the Western school are evident, established within the modern view, in which rational thinking predominates, along with the disciplinary division and hierarchy of knowledge. Values based on spirituality do not tend to be valued within this logic, nor are the affective, emotional and intuitive aspects of human beings.

On the other hand, researchers investigating traditional Amerindian education have shown the importance of the spiritual dimension and emotional benefits of passing on the knowledge and comprehensive education of indigenous people. Muñoz (2003, p. 288) highlights the importance of myths and dreams for passing on indigenous knowledge, which guide these people through spiritual messages and reveal the deeper meaning of its wisdom. Orality is covered by Silva (2010, p. 86), who identifies an integrated treatment of the various dimensions of life within the narratives of indigenous peoples, in which the mystic is inseparable from the apprehension process of the world. The author highlights that education, directed towards the collective, in this type of society, is an issue that refers to all, in a complete educational process that takes the affective aspect into account. In regards to research that directly addresses the Guarani educational processes, a study by Faustino (2010, p. 70) on the Guarani-Nhandewa people shows that education is understood as a sacred gift provided by Nhanderu¹, which contains complex rules for conduct and relationships with other beings, which must be exercised throughout one's entire life through the mediation of the elders.

Thus, there is a need for reflections that consider the complexity of the construction of the differentiated Mbyá-Guarani school², whose process requires an institution based on Western standards to interact with a culture that has a foundation based on another conception of the world. It is important to reach a greater level of knowledge regarding the fundamental elements of traditional education for these people, as it is in regards to how they can be inserted into the construction of their specific school, the objective being to deepen these reflections, which in turn could contribute to improved

dialogue between indigenous and Western cultures in terms of school construction.

This reflective proposal is outlined based on this question. This article was produced based on findings that were mainly results from master's level research³, in which, while seeking to identify the perceptions of the Mbyá-Guarani regarding environment and environmental education, the centrality of spirituality and the feeling that all dimensions of these people's lives are vital so that integration appears to be strong, which includes education. This understanding led to interest regarding how the dialogue of an education takes place, whose centrality is on spirituality and feeling, with the education proposed by the Western school, built with a vision that separates science and spiritual knowledge, mental and emotional aspects, theory and practice, and characterizes the rational dimension of the human being as a priority.

Therefore, this article brings together findings from this interactive and reflective process with the Mbyá, involving academic and non-academic education and creating dialogue with educational aspects addressed by other authors, especially with the *Community Paradigm of Living Well*, as shown by Mamani (2010). The text initially presents educational elements from the Mbyá-Guarani people that were identified during the research, followed by reflections in the form of a dialogue with the education proposed by the indigenous community paradigm. This reflection subsequently gives rise to possible intercultural constructions for the academic education of these people.

Method

This article combines elements registered during the period of the aforementioned master's (2011-2013), as well as those from other investigative movements that are here aggregated from ethnographies developed together with the Mbyá-Guarani schools, which

1- Nhanderu translates as "our father": Nhande (our); Ru (father).

2- We cite other research projects in order to understand the meanings attributed to the school and the recent educational processes that the Mbyá-Guarani have gone through (BERGAMASCHI, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2010).

3- Stumpf, 2014.

are founded not only in empirical data, but also in a set of reflections developed by the *Amerindian education and interculturality* research group, which also maintain a continuous relationship with the villages, schools, teachers and Mbyá-Guarani traditional leaders⁴. However, the substantive part of this investigation included a methodology consisting of two periods. The first was based on the fieldwork developed during their participation in the project

Air, water and earth: guarani life and culture: actions for environmental recovery and conservation and ethnodevelopment in indigenous guarani villages from RS, from 2011 and 2012. This act of environmental education is being implemented by the Institute for Cultural and Environmental Studies (*Instituto de Estudos Culturais e Ambientais - Iecam*)⁵, with sponsorship from the Petrobras Environmental Program, comprising eight Mbyá-Guarani villages in the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul, including activities to support the recovery of degraded areas, improvement of soil fertility and food production, collection and exchange of seeds, plant cultivation, composting, waste disposal, ethnotourism, and reforestation with native plant species chosen by the indigenous peoples.

The study's village participants were as follows: Tekoa Anhetengua, Lomba do Pinheiro, Porto Alegre; Tekoa Yriapu, Granja Vargas, Palmares do Sul; Tekoa Nhundy, Estiva, Viamão; Tekoa Pindo Miri, Itapuã, Viamão; Tekoa Nhuu Porã, Barra do Ouro, Maquiné, Riozinho e Caraã; Tekoa Itapoty, Tekoa Pindoty, Riozinho and Teko aKa'aguy, Caraá, all of which are located in the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul. The project was designed and

4- The research group, coordinated by Dr. Maria Aparecida Bergamaschi (PPGEDU/UFRGS), was often asked to monitor the educational process, especially when the Mbyá-Guarani leaders themselves felt the need to create dialogue with external agents to improve their understanding of schooling. This also occurs with other groups and/or organizations that, in specific situations, are required to develop specific projects, including those that directly or indirectly involve academic education.

5- The Institute for Cultural and Environmental Studies (*Instituto de Estudos Culturais e Ambientais - Iecam*) is a non-profit civil society organization, founded in 1991, whose objective is the study and development of actions related to social and environmental sustainability, which primarily seeks to revitalize traditional knowledge and biodiversity.

implemented based on the demands and ideas provided by the Mbyá people, according to the specificities of each village, involving a listening and dialogue process during which they could express their perceptions on various issues, such as the environment, culture, education, health, food, agriculture and economy.

During this period, the actions performed simultaneously with environmental education and research made it possible to obtain records based on participant observation and ethnographic, which were achieved through observations, listening sessions, dialogues, experiences and joint actions. The field diaries were used to gather information on Mbyá sayings, situational observations, impressions and questions about the ecological vision of the people who make up these indigenous collectives, in the sense proposed by Guattari (1990), which covers three dimensions: human subjectivity, the relationships between the people and the environment.

Participant observation was considered to be extremely important for building a collective methodology between the Iecam team and the Mbyá, which included meetings regarding evaluation, planning, appointments, ecological practices, trails, exchange visits and activities with schools; in addition to being involved in everyday activities, such as meals, conversations and sharing *chimarrão* (mate) around the fire.

This observation was accompanied with an ethnographic analysis, which was consistent with participant observation and performed in order to better understand these environmental perceptions that came up in the daily life of the villages and the way of life for this ethnicity. This choice was imposed due to this method's characteristic, which involves addressing the human phenomena and behavior in its context, seeking to understand the group's point of view with which they are working, including their own meanings, thereby making it possible to identify the relationships between certain cultural behaviors and the specificity of its view of the world.

The research included the observation of a practical, collective, participatory and intercultural educational process, absorbing the perceptions that arose naturally during its course; but also observing the everyday coexistence, namely moments when we were together, sharing food, *chimarrão*, talking and simply spending time in silence. Observing the villages' children, in regards to their relationships with each other, with adults and with the environment, was done through games, hiking, songs and dances, permeated by the exchange of caresses, glances and laughter, which provided important elements for reflection on aspects concerning learning and value internalization. Secondly, in subsequent visits to villages, the recorded perceptions were presented during informal conversations, with the comments made by the villagers about these considerations being listened to, all referring to new dialogues and reflections, which even included the ethnographic observation and field diary records

We also had the opportunity to conduct activities together with the research group, especially during meetings at the Tekoa Anhetengua village, Porto Alegre, with the objective of constructing the school's Pedagogical Political Plan, as well as continuing training meetings in regards to the the action *Network of indigenous knowledge in school – UFRGS*⁶. These participatory actions also made it possible to prepare records, some of which are presented in this study in order to supplement the development of reflection.

Spirituality and sentiment in Mbyá-Guaraní education and learning

Learning is action that is highly valued by the Mbyá-Guaraní, which is a constant

⁶- Created by means of Ordinance No. 98 from December 2013, Secadi/MEC, aiming to develop continued training for indigenous teachers, an action that becomes effective, with the presence of Guarani and Kaingang professors and intellectuals, for conducting training, along with researchers from the academy.

occurrence that is not separated from life. Learning is one of the aspects highlighted by many individuals belonging to these indigenous collectives during the development of the research, as is shown in the following statements recorded during the fieldwork: "Learning is the most important thing." (Tiago, Pindoty, 2012). "The meetings are essential, it is hard to express and estimate their value. The participation of the elders is very important to learning." (Eloir, Nhundy, 2012).

During some classes given at the Tekoa Anhetengua village, in which the teacher provided activities at the school, we observed the children's behavior, interest and how easy it was for the them to develop the proposed dynamics, where characteristics such as curiosity, attention, joy, desire, concentration and lightness were obvious. Moraes (2013, p. 292) confirms the finding of such qualities and compares them with the difficulties faced in the children's performance in non-indigenous schools, such as discouragement, disrespect and *unlearning*.

The research showed a possible relationship between the qualities of the Mbyá children and the people's own pedagogy, which connects them with ecology, spirituality, symbolism, art and sentiment. These aspects were found to be fundamental to their learning, as was also cited by Kusch (2009), based on his research with the Quechua people, as important elements of indigenous and popular American thought. The author highlights the prospect of learning with the heart and an emotional state of mind. According to this author, for the indigenous people, solving their problems involved more affectivity and, in this perspective, intelligent decisions are related to the heart, which is understood as that body as a whole that belongs to the inner state of the spirit: the heart elevated to a level of psychic ability.

Some statements made by the Mbyá expressed the relationship among the dimensions of spirituality and sentiment with learning, wisdom and memory. During a conversation with Mr Adolfo, spiritual leader

of the Tekoa Ka'aguy village, he explained that sentiment is a fundamental element for memory and knowledge, highlighting the importance of words spoken with the heart and listened to with the heart, which therefore makes it possible to learn from the heart. Sentiment enables memory, and thus strengthens and provides continuity to the wisdom of this people. Sentiment is part of their life, their relationship with nature and among their people, it allows them to integrate through values such as respect, forgiveness, brotherhood and joy (STUMPF, 2014, p. 57).

The relevance of spiritual, emotional and affective elements has already been highlighted in other research on the Mbyá-Guarani. Menezes (2006a, 2006b) points to the experiential aspect of everyday learning for the Mbyá children, which is characterized by affectivity, body contact and vital and creative movement, bodily integration, sentiment, affection and spirituality. According to Bergamaschi (2005), traditional Guarani education features aspects such as orality, respect, curiosity, observation, imitation and autonomy. It is a comprehensive education that happens everywhere, so that learning occurs by "being in the world and giving oneself to the world".

Friedrich (2012, p. 177) notes the importance of counseling in the transmission of traditional values in pedagogy of this people, the example being repetition, the silence and word from the heart, expressing truth with respect and intensity. Guarani spirituality is not separate from life, body or mind, from being as a whole, from cosmology. The spirituality that is integrated into everyday experience is a great strength in traditional Mbyá-Guarani education, with it being ever present and alive in its form of being and in its discourse, permeating all spaces and times, while the *opy* (prayer house) is considered to be the main component of their education.

Elda Vasquez Aquino, Guarani researcher of the Kaiowá in Mato Grosso do Sul, while developing her master's research on the education of children in their native land, highlights the spiritual component. The

author uses numerous examples, to highlight the vital nature of the sacred spirits, the spirits of ancestors in the educational processes of the Kaiowá children, since these are the spirits who prevent or deter the spirits of disobedience. In the words of this author, "the Nhanderu says that children clearly need to go through rituals to give them direction, that is, to open paths in front of them towards knowledge in life" (AQUINO, 2012, p. 61). It is this kind of data that make reflection on the educational processes possible, showing the extent and complexity of elements present in the teaching of a person, including the spiritual dimension.

References of dreams were also often present during the research, showing their key role in decisions, planning and everyday life, providing a clear and profound contribution towards human education. Bergamaschi and Menezes (2009) refer to the collective system of rituals, including ceremonies, appointments, prayers, songs and dances, as being intensely related to wisdom, memory and Mbyá learning. These elements characterize this people's cultural religiousness, who identify them as a unified community that substantiates their lifestyle, the Nhande Reko (the way of being Guarani). Imagination and sensitivity are related to an intelligence derived from this spiritual connection, which allows the Mbyá to act while following intuition and affection, with the heart being considered the foundation of its action, expression and learning. Words are sacred, inspired by the heart, emotion is a path to integrate their culture, and dreams have great spiritual strength as a mediator between the earthly and supernatural world.

Memory was highlighted as a relevant element for learning and Mbyá wisdom, with it being connected to sentiment, as was explained by Mr Adolfo. Memory is part of a person, not manifesting itself on paper or in writing, thereby giving orality its importance, with the sincerity and depth the words spoken from the heart. In many instances, the Mbyá referred to having learned from their parents, grandparents

and ancestors. Carrara (2002) highlights the importance of Xavante education, listening to their myths, stories that are told to children by elders, which are full of meanings and natural elements, in a comfortable, cozy atmosphere, with joy and with themes that arouse attention and curiosity.

Armstrong (2005), while referring to the Okanagan, indigenous people in Canada, highlights the relationship between learning and the community, with the full realization of the human potential being each individual result of their physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual well-being in its relationship with the collective. In the Okanagan ancestral system, education was as natural as learning to speak and walk, as this activity was as a natural part of everyday life in the family and the community, with collaboration and sharing being highly valued. The influence of community life is also visible in the Mbyá education system. Children observe and copy other children, young people and adults depending on their diverse actions, which in turn develops their skills and knowledge. Thus, the children actively participate and spontaneously learn from the activities of the *lecam* team, how they deal with plants, manage the compost and handle tools, which shows that they acquire new knowledge, even without being able to communicate in Portuguese.

Muñoz (2003), while living with the Maya-Tzeltal people in Altos de Chiapas, highlights this indigenous everyday learning, with the community environment representing an ideal for element for education, involving emotions, sensitivity, talents, dreams and silence, sharing a diversity of experiences from orally transferring knowledge from the ancients, in myth, in a coexistence of exchanging knowledge, and in the various areas of potential for pedagogical experiences. Natural processes are observed in detail, to assign name, differentiate and recognize the species and use them, whenever necessary, in the ethics of respect and care.

The fundamental role of nature in the development and learning of the Mbyá became evident during our observations, especially in childhood, revealing themselves in various ways, such as in the experience of children playing with natural elements, watching the older community members undertake their activities related to nature, and actively participating in the tasks with joy, enthusiasm and curiosity. The drawings that the children produced during the research displayed the intensity of the presence of natural elements, such as fire, water, trees and animals, as well as of components that represent social interactions, such as sharing food, conversation and music.

Joy, both in adults, adolescents and children, was another clearly evident aspect while observing and coexisting with the Mbyá people. The study developed by Menezes (2006) refers to joy as a part of Guarani learning, which brings together sensory, reflective and emotional aspects, through experience, creativity, affectivity and art. Joy is related to facility and to the fluidity of the physical and cognitive development process.

Carrara (2002) points out that indigenous learning does not primarily occur through the mind, but covers the body and all the senses. Living with the Guarani showed the importance of an education that takes place through comprehensive activities, by using all the senses and different methods of learning, how to listen, look, smell, touch, feel, do, imitate, dream, relate, create, build, plant etc.

Dialogue between Mbyá-Guaraní education and education of the indigenous community paradigm of *Living well*

According to Mamani (2010), native peoples, with their ethnic diversity, from Alaska to Patagonia, have a unique paradigm, the community, which reflects a sense of a respectful relationship with everything that exists based on a conception that everything

is interconnected, in an integrating community thought, not only human, but with the entire universe. The foundation for these indigenous peoples' point of view is in the *Living well* paradigm, which is a balance that includes the relationship between the elements and nature beings, not in the form of subject to object, but in subject to subject. Human beings, in their desire to survive and enjoy nature, distanced themselves from this feeling and, from an anthropocentric perspective, consider themselves as the most important species on the planet. However, it becomes more and more evident each day that only a complementary relationship can generate and maintain life. Revitalizing community life constitutes a return to collective memory, namely a life of existing in harmony and balance. Education is seen as a way to strengthen this notion of community brought by the worldview of native indigenous peoples, in their ancestral structure, which enables them to have a full life, aware of each living moment, the *sintipacha*, which in the Aymara language means intense time.

Education for *Living well*, from the indigenous community paradigm, is based on this concept of an integrative and complementary world among all beings, which allows learning related to the fullness of life. The results of this research reveal the importance of dialogue in the process of constructing the Mbyá-Guarani school with the *Living well* community education paradigm, based on elements such as the ecological vision, sentiment, the collective, reciprocity, art and symbolism, which demonstrated their relevance throughout the study.

According to Mamani (2010), in the Aymara language the first word taught is *jiwasa*, which means us, the feeling of a set that covers all the elements and beings from nature. It is necessary to awaken community conscience in order to experience this set of beings. Life flourishes when there is complementarity and reciprocity, which means generating integrative spaces between the different capacities.

The daily life and discourse of the Mbyá-Guarani lines also reflect the essentiality of this manifestation in individual capabilities and their integration into the collective, with reciprocity and cooperation.

Mamani (2005) explains that, in cosmology of the Andean indigenous peoples, reciprocity and complementarity make up the foundation of existence in their various manifestations, from the connection between two converging forces, derived from the cosmic universe, from heaven; and from land-based sources, which comes from Earth. The connection of these two energies is expressed in all vital processes, generating and maintaining life forms, which, in the Amerindian view of the world, include organic and inorganic processes.

By observing the Mbyá way of life, along with listening to their discourse, a view of the world becomes evident, with their ethics and conduct, in which spirituality represents great strength and deep meaning, which is reflected in all areas of their life, history and tradition. Sayings such as the following were frequent: "The Mbyá-Guarani strength comes from Nhanderu", showing that spirituality is something that spurs on movements in favor of their rights, keeping up their traditions, as well as everyday activities, integrating the diverse knowledge of all areas necessary for community life, such as health, education, economy, politics, culture and art. Education is a process that is connected to these areas, providing full development for every human being and the community as a whole, so that each person can develop and express their gifts in an articulated way with the collective, thereby feeding reciprocity and complementarity, which contributes to the health of every being and the collective, as well as to the economy of every family and community.

Teaching and learning are ongoing, dynamic and collective processes in community education, involving all members of the village in the different spaces and times. According to Mamani (2010), community education is

permanent and dynamic, it does not start or finish in class, activities outside the classroom are also essential, representing education for all by involving various village members, making it possible to make decisions and take responsibility in a shared fashion. This is implied in the community's intervention, based on the understanding that the teacher is not the sole/main contributor to education, but rather the entire community. This education is cyclical in nature, where each participant takes on a certain role at some point, rotating, which contributes to each person's capabilities being expressed and allowing the potential of all to be explored, as well as that of the collective work.

The importance of this joint creation, based on respect for different forms of knowledge, for all ages, was also present at the Mbyá school and during its construction process. At the meetings in which we participated, in order to construct the pedagogical proposal for the Indigenous State School for Anhetengua Elementary Education, there was an observed encouragement for participation and expression, with great appreciation of discourse from women and their knowledge on education, due to their important role concerning pregnancy and caring for children during their first years of life. While monitoring the activities at the school, the deep respect of the teacher was clear, the dedication to each child, each young person, whom are always heard and considered as individuals: the teacher, even in the classroom, is always driven towards each one.

During conversations with the Mbyá representatives, they voiced their opinion that the Western system is not beneficial to learning, because it relies on charging, competition and standardization, with a requirement of for students to reach a certain level in a preset system, with no respect given to differences, the various forms of understanding or learning processes. Mamani (2010) also agrees with this idea, saying that the system for evaluating education for *Living well* is community, which does not mean denying the importance of

individual assessment, but rather providing evaluation within a dynamic understanding that students are integrated entities, forming the basic links of community life, which is like a fabric where everything is inter-related. Within this concept, the community foundation of educational planning, teaching and assessment return sensitivity and responsibility to every human being and to life. The entire community is responsible for educating, both directly and indirectly, while the community's balance is also the responsibility of each student.

Based on this perspective, Mamani (2010) highlights the importance of education that transcends the format of the Western schools, with their standardized physical structure, division in closed times, compartmentalized dynamic curriculum, hierarchy of knowledge and predominantly theoretical teaching. Mamani advocates teaching directed to the full development of human beings and society, resulting in people who can boost life, in a balanced relationship with themselves and their surroundings. To achieve this, it is important that the teaching does not reduce reason, but that it integrates all human dimensions: physical, mental, intuitive, symbolic, emotional, relational and spiritual, covering practical, experiential (with all the senses), artistic, creative and reflective activities.

Intercultural constructions for Mbyá-Guarani academic education

Martins (2013) draws attention to the fact that the Guarani school can be designed based on its traditional education, which is the main learning system for this people, involving the necessity to consider indigenous cosmology, with its wisdom, and reach an understanding of how the Mbyá student learns, so that there could be a contribution to the construction of a specific school that makes sense. Moraes (2013, p. 291) reinforces this idea by noting that the process of "seeking meaning of a differentiated

Guarani school is walking the path of spirituality for this people". This author states, "the voice of Nhanderú will go hand-in-hand with the school's traditional guarani education".

Based on the presence of elements such as spirituality, sentiment, experience, symbolism and art in Mbyá-Guarani life, which entirely comprises their daily life and therefore in regards to their learning, memory and knowledge, we stress that it is vital to consider these aspects in the construction of the school, despite the known challenges in creating dialogue with the Western school model, which did not originally prioritize these dimensions.

The differences between Western and Amerindian thought have a conflictual presence in indigenous schools, where there is need to engage in constructive intercultural processes. During meetings at the Tekoá Anhetengua village, whose purpose was to prepare the pedagogical political project of the school, as well as during meetings of the *Network of indigenous knowledge in school - UFRGS*, the discourse made the difficulty of integrating the two realities clear. The contradictions that exist between indigenous and Western education are very evident, namely regarding the comparison with the predominance given to rationality, objectivity, knowledge division, timetable rigidity and deadlines in the Western model, compared with a strong presence of elements related to imagination, intuition, spirituality and affectivity that exist in indigenous education.

There were some examples of discourse recorded during these activities that showed concern for the prevailing ideals of the Ministry and the State Education Secretariats, in addition to the difficulties that arose from administrative and management issues that are incompatible with the Amerindian proposal. The *school with a white face* was cited as an expression of this obstacle, with pedagogical proposals drawn up by non-indigenous individuals, with ready rules and dominant conceptions, as well as the lack of autonomy for the school to create, think about their own ideas, such as having

a differentiated calendar, for example. These incidents demonstrated the importance that the school is a space where the people can recognize, affirm and enhance their identity. Some of the Mbyá teachers expressed the relevance of cultural events that occur during their training with even greater strength, including ceremonies attended by the elders, so that their *spirits are more empowered*.

One emblematic design developed by Guarani professor Alberto Sandro Ortega, cited by Bergamaschi and Menezes (2009, p. 175), represents the school at the boundary between the two worlds, showing the ambiguity in which these people live, *squeezed* between two different cultures. The school, in the design of professor Alberto, appears to be an interface, a border region, a walkway or bridge between the *Guarani World and the white man's world*. This metaphor symbolizes a space for meeting, a circulation of knowledge between two cultures, with the idea of allowing dialogue, exchange and complementarity. Looking at this situation makes it becomes more apparent that a bridge is being built, but this needs to be crafted very carefully so as not to cause disruption, so that it is not a *foreign body* inside the village, which would strengthen the dichotomy between two worlds.

Even if the school is an institution act as a vehicle of knowledge from the outside world, to be specific to the Mbyá Guarani people it needs to somehow include aspects that are relevant to this culture, the objective being for there not to be a break formed between the two types of education. The difficult aspect of constructing a differentiated school is a finding that is repeated in the reflections that the Mbyá-Guarani collectives develop when thinking about the school that they need. However, despite the great misunderstandings that persist in the processes of implementing schools in the villages, it had already been found that in making a diary, the small but powerful acts of the school meant that the objective of being differentiated was reached, "by taking ownership of an educational tool

that was not born within its ancient traditions, but that, by bringing it into the village, their own values and meanings were bestowed upon it” (BERGAMASCHI , 2005, p. 227).

The presence of spiritual, symbolic, artistic and ludic elements was noted at the school and in the process of its construction, which probably contributed to behavioral aspects and learning, and to the link between traditional education and school. However, there are difficulties for these dimensions to be more comprehensively included, which is due to the strength of the institution’s previously consolidated structure. These tradition elements were observed to manifest spontaneously creatively and intuitively during events of blessings, tributes and expressions of gratitude. In addition, joy, not only felt by the children, but by people of many ages, occurred with the spontaneity of play, laughing, telling jokes; and creativity, interest and skill in the various forms of artistic expression and development of maps.

However, the Guarani say that these elements need to be better explored, with the objective of the school being able to integrate learning about intercultural knowledge with continuing the internalization of their values, with the philosophy of this people, their own rhythms and educational processes, in the form of community learning in different spaces and times, while respecting the time required to discover the gift of each child and integrate different ages, so that their own way of learning is not lost. In this sense, it is very common for young children to observe their older siblings, adults and other beings from nature, through which their particular behaviors are build using imitation.

Nevertheless, initiatives are required in order to transform the fragmentation of content and areas of knowledge that permeate Western education, so that the school can have its foundations grounded based on the Mbyá-Guaraní view of the world. Research has shown, according to Stumpf (2014, p. 51), a way of Mbyá living that reflects the interwoven nature between culture and environment, with the

complementation and the interdependence of all natural, cultural and spiritual elements, thereby providing integration between the various aspects that make up their organizational system, so that economy, health, education, among other aspects, can integrate.

The systemic concept of education provides a way to give value to the potential connection between different wisdom and areas of knowledge, which provide learning contexts that can be leveraged into an associative character, so that different types of content can be assimilated in a practical way that is related to everyday life. In this sense, interdisciplinarity occurs in a movement of dialogue and interaction among different forms of knowledge.

Understanding a given phenomenon from different points of view, as well as using knowledge from various areas to solve a given problem, is an approach that can contribute to a reflexive action in connection with reality. The integration between the school and the community can encourage this transdisciplinarity. Abbonizio (2013), based on a case study from the Khumuno Wu’u Indigenous School, located in the territory of the Kotiria (Wonano) people, in the flood zone of the River Uaupés, municipality of São Gabriel da Cachoeira, identifies this perspective in the Kotiria reflection on what they want from school education. Their plans are developed based on a vision of the school being an important community meeting space, a place for debate and action regarding the local reality, not only for the current context, but also for future generations. This view provides an education that integrates theory and practice, while taking the knowledge and skills of students in their actions and collective goals into account.

In this sense, the school can become a space of indigenous revitalization, contributing in terms of strengthening the culture passed down through the family and community life. In their actions, the Mbyá-Guarani show that they do not aspire to convert tradition into school content.

However, they feel that building a differentiated pedagogical proposal needs to go hand-in-hand with wisdom from the elders, the tradition of their ancestors, and the complementarity between the school and community.

Daily life in the village can be used as a connection for learning different subjects and content, and it is in this daily life that issues of great depth and wisdom appear, which are related to cosmology, in addition to allowing the nature and the resolution of practical issues together with adults to be observed. We observed that this experiential learning can be integrated with school education, which can be achieved through reflection, development of records, illustrations, calculations, measurements etc., all of which being connected to various contents and areas of knowledge.

The school can therefore also be seen as a cultural space, with education hinged with life, along with the issues of the village, the cycles, the calendar itself. These experiences and reflections can lead to the collective construction of calendars, which will allow natural changes throughout the year to be identified. It is in this way that the importance of the lunar calendar for the harvests, plantations and crops is internalized; the role of the sun's path, not only in plantations, but for the construction site of the opy, for example. This calendar can serve as a basis for educational programming, because the Western school time is an imposition of the societal rhythm, separated and disconnected from nature and the various indigenous traditions and specificities of each village. Highlighting and enhancing Mbyá-Guarani knowledge are methods to create interculturalism at school and learn what comes from outside the village based on affirming their own ways.

It is still worth highlighting the role of the school in keeping their own language alive, in its organic sense, as a living organism, going through continuous creation and transformation. For all the villages in which research has taken place, the Guaraní language

is predominate, Portuguese is not spoken by all, in most cases only by the children, which only happens due to the existence of school education. In this sense, language can be seen in its political aspect, as an instrument of power, as something that cannot be controlled by others, in addition to memory and imagination. However, this society does not disregard the importance of keeping records. During a meeting held at the Riozinho village, we showed drawing by Guarani professor Alberto Sandro Ortega (BERGAMASCHI; MENEZES, 2009, p. 175). A teacher from the village then began speaking and referred to the fact that the drawing's author had already died, but that the drawing was still alive, highlighting the importance of records, through drawing and writing, so that memory stays alive.

Final considerations

Mbyá-Guarani life involves complex existential elements that exist in their non-academic educational processes. These elements consolidate a millennial continuity, however they also constitute a foundation for constructing a differentiated and specific school for this people, which contributes towards a cultural affirmation, along with access to technology and knowledge from other cultures. Spirituality, sensitivity, symbolism, the experience and art are some of these elements.

Sensitivity proved to be an essential dimension for constructing a Mbyá-Guarani school, in which culture can continue in a robust manner, with all its energy and strength. Sentiment is also integrated with symbolism, as a way to produce a spiritual connection, access to intuitive aspects, such as messages derived from dreams. Art is a living expression of sentiment and symbolism; it is the link with other dimensions of learning.

Experiential learning, involving all the senses, whose importance is manifested in non-academic Mbyá education, is also important in academic education, including its value as a

means of articulation with other village issues. The Mbyá school can be seen as a facility for continuous collective creation, in a celebrative way, with an aim of constructing a building permeated by joy. The school, integrated into the daily life of the village, but in a way related to learning about other content, can help the Mbyá establish contact with the Western world. The school must be delicately organized, as the Guarani say, providing an opening for the new, accessing knowledge and technologies in addition to other cultures by encouraging intercultural potential, without forgetting to critically discuss historical colonization, oppression and manipulation, as well as their consequences in terms of ethnic, social, and environmental degradation.

In this regard, we stress the importance of performing research to achieve greater knowledge of how the dimensions of spirituality, symbolism of sentiment and art are inserted into the school's construction, because these are important elements for these people

that unfortunately tend not to be covered in the prevailing method of Western education. As professor Jerônimo stated during a meeting at the Anhetengua School: "At school the children must be spoken too calmly and gently. This is the differentiated school for the Guarani. It seems the same, but is different in term of the spiritual dimension, which respects each child and their will. You cannot speak in a loud voice, you must treat the child delicately".

By understanding how the dimensions of spirituality, symbolism, sentiment and art are treated in the constructive process of indigenous schools, and acknowledging the difficulties that can be faced upon implementing these, they can contribute to developing appropriate public policies for this type of education, as well as to constructing a means to implement educational policies and management processes in ways that meet the specific demands of this people. This also provides elements for broader reflection on education and school beyond the borders of the Mbyá-Guarani.

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