

# The Ethnodevelopment Course and differentiated and intercultural training: contributions in the educational, socio-political and cultural context of the Amazon<sup>1</sup>

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## *O Curso de Etnodesenvolvimento e a formação diferenciada e intercultural: contribuições no contexto educacional, sociopolítico e cultural da Amazônia*

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### ABSTRACT

This article analyzes how the Ethnodevelopment course offered by the *Universidade Federal do Pará* [Federal University of Pará]/Altamira University Campus has contributed to the academic, political and professional training of students belonging to indigenous peoples and traditional communities in the context of the Amazon. It provides a descriptive-analytical approach to their experiences, starting with the process of the creation and organization of the course, based on affirmative public policies undertaken in Brazil, as well the course methodology and the challenges faced for the course to be implemented in the light of institutional issues. The reflections put forward show that the Ethnodevelopment course has contributed to expanding possibilities of action and political negotiation by these social agents based on their spaces of collective belonging, as well contributing to differentiated training that enables and instrumentalizes their inclusion as professionals in the field of education in the different territories of the Amazon region.

*Keywords:* Ethnodevelopment. Differentiated Higher Education. Differentiated Training. Belonging.

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## RESUMO

O artigo analisa como o curso de Etnodesenvolvimento ofertado pela Universidade Federal do Pará/Campus Universitário de Altamira tem contribuído na formação acadêmica, política e profissional de estudantes advindos de povos indígenas e comunidades tradicionais no contexto da Amazônia. Situa por meio de uma abordagem descritiva-analítica das experiências vivenciadas desde o processo de criação e organização do curso, a partir das políticas públicas de ações afirmativas no território brasileiro, bem como sua metodologia e os desafios enfrentados para sua efetivação, em decorrência das questões institucionais. As reflexões elaboradas evidenciam que o curso de Etnodesenvolvimento tem contribuído para ampliar as possibilidades de atuação e negociação política desses agentes sociais a partir de seus lugares de pertença coletiva, assim como para uma formação diferenciada que possibilita e instrumentaliza sua inserção profissional no campo educacional nos diferentes territórios da região amazônica.

*Palavras-chave:* Etnodesenvolvimento. Educação superior diferenciada. Formação Diferenciada. Pertença.

### **Initial approaches - Ethnodevelopment: from building the notion to making the course available**

The Ethnodevelopment degree course at the Altamira Campus of the *Universidade Federal do Pará* [Federal University of Pará] (UFPA) is a pilot experience in Brazil and its guidelines are based on discussions established from the partnership between public universities, funding agencies and social movements. But before we move on to present the course itself, the meaning of the notion of ethnodevelopment that underlies the epistemological, philosophical and theoretical-practical assumptions of this course needs to be explained.

The notion of ethnodevelopment was defined between the 1970s and 1980s in response to the form of development proposed, and has as its main creators Rodolfo Stavenhagen and Guillermo Bonfil Batalla. However, according to Antonio Carlos de Souza Lima, Maria Barroso-Hoffmann and Sidnei Clemente Peres (2002), and Ricardo Verdum (2006), discussion on ethnodevelopment dates back to the post-World War II period, when the decolonization process of nations in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean was taking place and concern with development from an economic viewpoint arose.

For Stavenhagen (1984, p. 18, our translation), who was one of the main exponents in the discussion on ethnodevelopment, the term

[...] means that an indigenous ethnic group, tribal or otherwise, has control over its own land, resources, social organization and culture, and is free to negotiate with the State to establish relations according to its interests [...].

In this direction, Verdum (2006) considers that the notion of ethnodevelopment as proposed by Stavenhagen implies, as put forward by Bonfil Batalla (2006, p. 73, our translation), that

[...]communities are effectively managers of their own development, that they are guaranteed the right to train their technical staff (engineers, teachers, doctors, etc.) and to structure and manage the political-administrative units responsible for the management of their territories.

Ethnodevelopment is thus a tool for political struggle and for the conquest of differentiated rights to guarantee the cultural autonomy of these social subjects, with a view to realizing the future project they desire for their societies, which according to Little (2002, p. 40, our translation), is the “main guide for the establishment of the conditions necessary for the implementation of ethnodevelopment”. Autonomy, especially in the case of indigenous peoples, is in most cases seen by the State as a threat to national sovereignty, as highlighted by Bartolomé (2006, p. 41, our translation): “[...] the core of the autonomy issue lies in maintaining (or regaining, as the case may be) a high degree of control over decision making that affects the local ethnic group”.

In this sense, they complement each other: implementation of policies from the ethnodevelopment perspective expands the possibilities for autonomy of ethnic collectives, while autonomy also allows the consolidation of ethnodevelopment for peoples and communities who have been made vulnerable. Although the notion of ethnodevelopment in Brazil is associated with indigenous peoples, the discussion as a whole on the international scene shows that it can be applied to traditional peoples in general. As such, proposing educational policies based on this latter perception goes against the universalistic and monocultural educational models currently observed in the Brazilian scenario, which bring in themselves selective and focused designs that contribute to consolidate inequality and social exclusion (BONETI, 2006; CANDAU, 2011).

In the 1990s, the discussion on ethnodevelopment was taken over by World Bank staff, marking another characteristic of the process of building ethnodevelopment of an indigenous people, namely partnerships with national and/or international development agencies, as highlighted by Souza Lima, Barroso-Hoffman and Peres (2002). The direction taken on the international level about this debate had repercussions on the Brazilian indigenist scenario, as a result of the establishment of partnerships between organizations, indigenous associations and public universities, and began to influence a new model of academic training, especially through the creation of postgraduate programs brought into being through resources provided by the Ford Foundation and Brazilian agencies such as the *Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento do Pessoal do Ensino Superior* [Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel] (CAPES), the *Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico* [National Council for Scientific and Technological Development] (CNPq), and the *Financiadora de Estudos e Projetos* [Financing Agency for Studies and Projects] (FINEP). In addition to these national and/or international funding agencies and professionals trained to work with ethnodevelopment, the indigenous peoples also counted on the work of ethnodevelopment professionals belonging to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) focused on the indigenist field.

This was what gave rise to the initiative to offer an Ethnodevelopment course at the *Universidade Federal do Pará* [Federal University of Pará] (UFPA). This article is about the process of articulating and implementing the course and the political achievements of its coming into being as a proposal for the inclusion of traditional peoples and communities at UFPA and the affirmation of their collective belonging. We, the authors, have lived this experience very closely, as we were part of the group of teachers who worked directly on proposing the course, as well working to this day to implement and develop it, through teaching, research and/or extension, as part of the teams that undertook the selection process and, later, worked actively in the course.

By adopting a descriptive-analytical approach of the experiences we have lived as teachers of the course, right from the process of its creation, organization and operationalization based on affirmative action policies, we seek to contextualize, beyond linear perceptions, the sociocultural and institutional processes that impacted decision-making, in the sense of elucidating the practices that emerged, both with regard to the pedagogical proposal and also in the process of the solid relationships built between the different collective subjects (institution, teachers, students, social movements and groups) that, directly and indirectly, became a reference for the course. That is, we seek to manifest a descriptive-analytical portrait in keeping with the dense and above all interpretative description advocated by Geertz (1989), considering social actors as producers and products of culture woven through social relations.

The Ethnodevelopment Bachelor and Licentiate Degree course has certain specificities and challenges: thus far it is the only undergraduate course in Brazil with these characteristics; it brings together different social groups in a single class; it has a different methodology; it is the result of the political action of social movements and internal political discussion at UFPA; and it arose in the midst of a series of discussions about affirmative policies at UFPA, in mid-2007 and early 2008, stimulated by the debate at the national level about affirmative action, resulting from the Durban Conference in 2001, which promoted significant moves forward in the public debate on the subject (PIOVESAN, 2006). This aspect mobilized university teachers at the Altamira, Belém and Marabá *campi* who had been undertaking teaching, research and extension activities with differentiated peoples and communities, such as farmers, indigenous peoples and quilombola communities.

The creation of this undergraduate course was part of the plan to expand UFPA via the *Programa de Apoio a Planos de Reestruturação e Expansão das Universidades Federais* [Federal University Restructuring and Expansion Plan Support Program] (REUNI). It was developed based on discussions within the *Programa de Políticas Afirmativas para Povos Indígenas e Populações Tradicionais* [Indigenous Peoples and Traditional Populations Affirmative Policy Program] (PAPIT) created in 2008. It is important to highlight that REUNI is a federal government program created by Decree No. 6096, dated April 24, 2007 (BRASIL, 2007), and aims to favor the expansion of access and permanence in higher education, creating conditions for federal universities to promote the physical, academic and pedagogical expansion of the federal higher education network.

The Ethnodevelopment course was approved in 2009, as per CONSEPE/UFPA Resolution No 3860, dated May 22, 2009 (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PARÁ, 2009), and included in UFPA's affirmative policies as a Special Class<sup>2</sup>. Like so many other courses aimed at socially differentiated audiences and offered by Brazilian universities, this involved establishing partnerships with institutions that foster these types of initiatives. The actions necessary for preparing the Course Teaching Project and implementing the Ethnodevelopment course at UFPA received financial support from the Ford Foundation (FFORD), which funded the PAPIT for two years (2008-2010). The PAPIT supported the formation of a Pro-Ethnodevelopment Course Working Group (WG), comprised of faculty representatives from the UFPA Altamira Campus, the institutional space where the course would be offered, as well as the PAPIT team.

<sup>2</sup> This is the specific affirmative policy for courses aimed exclusively at indigenous and traditional peoples, such as Ethnodevelopment and Rural Education, at UFPA.

The actions of this WG were also supported by organic intellectuals active in indigenous social movements and other traditional peoples representing the course target audience. The WG also had the task of discussing plans for competitive examinations to select teachers for the course, with vacancies initially opened for four subjects: Linguistics, Anthropology, Archeology and Human Rights. The teachers who were successful in the examinations became part of the WG and were included in the discussions about its implementation. After several meetings of the WG in Altamira and Belém, as well as discussions via e-mail, the curricular design of the course was prepared with the objective of fomenting the preparation of: “human resources belonging to indigenous peoples and traditional populations endowed with the capacity to manage information and contacts with the possibility of intervening socially based on systematic self-reflection” (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PARÁ, 2010, p. 9, our translation).

Admission to the course takes place every two years. It takes place through the Special Selection Process, with a public notice calling for candidates that differs from the universal public application notice used by the university. The course is held in intensive periods. In order to locate candidates for the first class, PAPIT took action in the Xingu and Araguaia-Tocantins river basins to make an inventory of the traditional peoples and communities that are found in these regions; after this mapping, visits were organized to the course’s target communities to present the course and ask community leaders to nominate candidates.

The first Special Selection Process for the Ethnodevelopment course took place in 2010/2011, with places for students at the Altamira and Belém *campi*. Forty-five places were made available and all were filled. The other classes opened in 2013, 2014 and 2015 in Altamira, and in 2016 a flexible class was made available at the UFPA Soure Campus in Marajó as both a bachelor and a licentiate degree course. In 2019, based on curricular reorganization as per *Conselho Nacional de Educação* [National Education Council] Resolution No. 02/2015 (BRASIL, 2015), the course became a licentiate degree course and a new class was made available at Altamira (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PARÁ, 2019). The classes, in general, are formed by quilombolas, indigenous people, family farmers, people from the Black movement, riverside dwellers, extractivists and fishermen, with a varying number of students from each of these groups. Students belonging to these different groups attend classes 8 hours a day during two two-month blocks (January/February and July/August).

## **Different, but equal? Building possibilities of interaction between groups of belonging and deconstructing prejudice at UFPA**

The Ethnodevelopment Course is a dialogical network between knowledge and subjects from different groups of belonging, and was proposed in order to overcome the Cartesian model of most educational policies which, according to Boneti (2006), evoke a set of guidelines, objectives and goals planned and regulated by a correlation of complex forces that include local, national and international interests, based on a homogenizing pattern of collective constructs, thus characterized by the absence of different identity voices in the formulation of public policies on education.

As a counter-hegemonic proposition, its pedagogical project guided by a curriculum referenced by interculturality allowed us to rethink and re-signify different aspects and components of school culture and of the entire educational system, based on a permanent dialectical movement of communication and learning between culture, identities, knowledge, wisdom and practices, with feedback from symmetrical and interactive dialog between different sociocultural groups, placing itself, therefore, as “a social and political task that questions society as a whole, which starts from concrete and conscious social practices and actions and attempts to create modes of responsibility and solidarity; as well as a goal to be reached” (WALSH, 2001 *apud* CANDAU, 2008, p. 11, our translation); without losing sight of the need to consider, in the materiality of this curriculum, interchange between traditional and official knowledge.

We understand affirmative action policies to be a set of special and temporary measures that seek to address historical inequalities arising from discrimination against certain peoples, communities, groups within a society, without acting on the right to equality. According to Flávia Piovesan (2006, p. 40-41, our translation), affirmative action allows us to remedy discriminatory processes, while at the same time

[...] fulfilling a public purpose that is decisive to the democratic project, which is to ensure diversity and social plurality. They constitute concrete measures that make the right to equality viable, with the belief that equality must be shaped by respect for difference and diversity.

It is, above all, an attempt to achieve the ideal of redistributive justice with recognition of identities; in other words, equality that recognizes differences and

difference that does not (re)produce inequalities, as indicated by Boaventura de Souza Santos in his belief as to the realization of equality (SANTOS, 2003), and that restores “equality that was broken or that never existed”, as Sabrina Moehlecke (2002, p. 201, our translation) informs us, which can be constituted in different ways, depending on local inequalities. In the case of UFPA, one of the paths found was the guarantee of education for indigenous peoples and traditional communities through affirmative action policies.

The fact that socially and ethnically different people form a single degree course class at UFPA represents a challenge in several fields: administratively; for teaching itself; for the other students at the university, and especially for the course students, who found themselves in a common arena of education, negotiation of interests and construction of dialogues. This is because the students’ profiles are considerably varied.

Not all of them are political leaders in their groups of belonging, and some, especially the indigenous people, who mostly live in the city of Altamira, speak shyly about the ethnic identity to which they belong. As for the farmers, they have been through political training promoted by Catholic *Comunidades Eclesiais de Base* [Ecclesial Base Communities] (CEBs) and through militancy in rural or women’s movements and express themselves according to what they are fighting for; other students have also experienced differentiated education in *Casas Familiares Rurais* [Rural Family Houses] (CFRs) and through the *Programa Nacional de Educação na Reforma Agrária* [National Program for Education in Agrarian Reform] (PRONERA) run by the *Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária* [National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform] (INCRA), which in a way indicates the relative success of such trainings, at least with regard to the continuity of the schooling of people from rural areas, who reach the university in different ways.

The quilombolas, on the other hand, form a mixed group of people with recognized political leadership and others with great potential for training, especially with regard to gender issues within their ethnic group. Riverside dwellers and fishermen speak with authority about their identities and political actions; and representatives of the Black movement demand from the course discussions about the problems they face in their experiences in the urban area of Altamira and living alongside other movements and identities.

The diversified profile of the students, the different collective subjects and their groups of belonging constitute an intercultural mosaic marked by interactions, conflicts, dissensions, which materialize within the university, constituting challenges for us, teachers and students; but, at the same time, they give us a perspective of infinite learning provided in these dialogic clashes of empowerment, re-signification, (re)construction and identity affirmation. This

manipulation of ethnic belonging and identities must be understood as a strategy of resistance to different social situations experienced throughout individual and collective trajectories, as well as to universalistic policies of the State in relation to the subjects in question and their collectives (SANTOS, 2003).

This dynamic based on interculturality promotes a dialogical education based on the recognition of the “other”, affirming horizontal relations between the different collective subjects involved in the educational act, since, as Candau points out (2008), education from an intercultural perspective, as cultural negotiation, by enabling the confrontation of conflicts caused by the asymmetry of power between different collectives, may be able to

[...] favor the construction of a common project, through which differences are dialectically integrated. The intercultural perspective is oriented to the construction of a democratic, plural, and human society that articulates equality and identity policies (CANDAU, 2008, p. 52, our translation).

On the first day of class, when they are introduced to the group, the surprise on the students’ faces is perceptible, particularly in relation to the indigenous people and quilombolas. There is still an expectation of finding the indigenous and quilombola people as portrayed by textbooks and television networks; homogeneously “depicted” and reified as an image of ethnic purity. Even more interesting is that this representation is associated with the image of the *other*, not with self. The reference to self, most of the time, is that “I am indigenous, quilombola, or a farmer”, while questioning the identity of the *other*, which can generate a series of conflicts; as well as the political positioning in relation to certain real issues or situations that afflict them as a collective. One of the challenges is to make them understand that this is/was the representation that “White”/Western culture ideologically puts/put forward of them as a strategy to deny their identities and rights; assimilating and reproducing this discourse is to take on their position of superiority, relegating the ethnically differentiated to an inferior position in social relations. Perceiving that negation of one of the differentiated collectives also affected the identities of other groups, since despite being different they are/were seen, in the eyes of those who propose homogenization in the name of the nation’s growth, as obstacles to progress.

If in the classroom the group is strengthened, outside the classroom the situation is more complex, since students from different social backgrounds are placed in a common arena of academic training (and trainers), negotiation of interests, especially in relation to the student movement that fails to incorporate the demands of differentiated students, such as places to stay in the student hall

of residence, extension of deadlines for enrollment in scholarship programs (which require documentation that students often do not have, such as proof of income and residence).

These are documents that are also necessary for the Special Selection Process and which, due to lack of articulation and communication problems between the student movement and the differentiated students, end up making unfeasible both registration for the selection process and final approval of those who pass, demanding of students and teachers the construction of dialogues in different spaces in order for these students to be able to remain and for the course to continue in the institution.

It is common for students to comment that “in the *Etno* classroom things happened one way, outside the classroom people did not acknowledge them”; in the classroom they are acknowledged as differentiated collectives and have their ethnic identity positively affirmed; outside the classroom, mistrust and disputes are activated, either due to their entrance into the university through affirmative policies, via the Special Selection Process, seen as making things easier for these groups that, for this reason, are considered not to be worthy of being at the university under equal conditions, because they did not have the merit of “passing” the universal entrance exam, or because their ethnic identities were not/are not acknowledged outside the geographically and socially established spaces for recognition of identity conformity.

In view of this, teaching is always challenging with a diverse class that has orality as the highlight of the debates. On the other hand, writing is something to be worked on among these people. The option for the quality of reading, discussion and writing, to the detriment of the quantity of material presumably worked on, has shown itself to be the balance for the class, which varies according to the composition of each class. These practices are adopted as strategies to involve the collective in a dynamic in which the intersubjective and cultural relations between teachers and students are woven much more by an epistemological reflection that effectively impacts life beyond the school and the classroom, thus transposing abstract and Cartesian knowledge (SANTOS, 2008). This proposition of educational praxis based on the political-epistemological dimension does not set a pre-established curricular order; on the contrary, it enables the production of the curriculum during the flow of events and experiences of the concrete life of those people.

## **Admission to the Ethnodevelopment course through the special selection process**

As the academic activities of the course progress, the initial scenario of shyness increasingly gives way to affirmation and argumentation of socially differentiated identities. Curricular activities that problematize the issue of identity help students to reflect on the construction of their individual and collective identities, strengthening the groups within the room, but in a way that dialogues and not so much disputes between each other. At the same time as the different collective identities gain greater clarity, the dynamics of the process of their construction shows that this clarity does not correspond to fixed and rigid borders, but rather to fluid ones, as stated by Hall (2000). And in the course this fluidity also occurs in the sense of being able to “transit” between two groups of belonging, as was the case of a student who entered the course as a farmer, whose mother was indigenous and whose father was a farmer, and who now declares herself to be indigenous.

One of the battles fought internally from the institutional point of view at UFPA was, and still is, the fight against the idea that the universal public application notice is suitable for ethnically differentiated candidates. The Pro-Ethnodevelopment Course Working Group (WG) invested in discussions with the sectors of UFPA responsible for preparing the public application notices about what meeting the needs of socially differentiated candidates was all about, including legal advice from teachers forming part of the WG. Some of the teachers who are members of the WG took part in meetings with members of the UFPA *Comissão Permanente de Processos Seletivos* [Permanent Commission on Selection Processes] (COPERPS/UFPA) in order to discuss the draft selection notice proposed by the WG and thus build the final document. COPERPS members expressed many concerns in these meetings, including about the legality of the differentiated selection process, while some of the opinions expressed contributed to the process of preparing the public application notice for Special Selection Process, according to Parente (2014), showing that higher education institutions still need to advance significantly in putting affirmative public policies into place and taking difference into account (OLIVEIRA; PARENTE; DOMINGUES, 2017).

It is important to highlight that because it is a course aligned with affirmative public policies developed in Brazil, with effect from 2013 its dynamics and differentiated and intercultural organization (PIOVESAN, 2006; CANDAU, 2011) led to changes in the way of carrying out the Special Selection

Process for affirmative policies with places reserved for indigenous peoples and quilombolas, as well as special classes. These changes met the demands of both the Ethnodevelopment Course and the Licentiate Course in Rural Education, which are part of the UFPA Faculty of Ethnodiversity at the Altamira Campus. All candidates went through a first stage of the process consisting of an objective and written test, followed by an interview. Until the most recent selection process, held in 2019, the objective test was only applied to rural education courses, which have specific audiences and differentiated dynamics from other courses in the affirmative policy program.

Another discussion developed with COPERPS concerns the content to be required for the Special Selection Process for the Ethnodevelopment course, as orality among indigenous and traditional peoples would need to be taken into consideration and valued in the process. Some COPERPS members defended the idea of applying a general knowledge test to the candidates, as occurs in the universal entrance exam, but this was debated by members of the WG as not being an adequate way of meeting the specificities of the candidates for the course. After a great deal of dialogue, the setting up of a commission appointed by COPERPS was approved with the objective of conducting the Special Selection Process for the Ethnodevelopment course. The stages of the Special Selection Process for this course consist of an essay on themes related to the reality of the target audience and an interview with a script also developed by the commission. Once the first group had been selected for the course, the challenges for the course's daily operation began<sup>3</sup>.

In relation to our difficulties in materializing the proposed course, which at the beginning ranged from classrooms that could hold 45 students to teachers with an academic profile of political activity, coming up against the question every semester "is there a teacher at the [Altamira] Campus who can teach the subject?" The dialogue with the Campus coordination and with the UFPA Chancellor's office was always to emphasize the commitments made by UFPA itself when the course was approved, and that were part of its 2001-2010 Institutional Development Plan (IDP) and for the 2011-2015 four-year period<sup>4</sup>, which defined as an institutional principle the restructuring of its teaching model, outlining that the panorama of poverty and vulnerability of regional social groups must be taken on as a social debt; respect for ethics and ethnic,

3 These examples are provided in order to visualize and measure the importance of the transformative impacts of differentiated courses and/or specific policies for indigenous peoples and traditional communities in the institution, insofar as, among other things, they question universalizing policies and contribute to the process of building a fairer, more participative and inclusive university.

4 Period when the course was becoming consolidated in the institution.

cultural and biological diversity; pluralism of ideas and thought; public and free education; defense of human rights and preservation of the environment (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PARÁ, 2002, 2011).

Although respect for ethnic, cultural and biological diversity was present as part of the inclusion of those treated as being different since the beginning of the process, when we used this argument to guarantee differentiated rights we were, and still are, reminded that “the university belongs to everyone” and treats everyone differently, which we understood much more as the universalization and homogenization of difference in order to avoid privileges (PARENTE, 2014). This is because respect for the institutional principles mentioned above implies not only promotion of affirmative policies for the entrance and inclusion of indigenous peoples, quilombolas, farmers, Black people and other differentiated peoples and communities in the university, but above all the guarantee of their permanence there, through scholarships and institutional support for housing. To give an idea of the difficulties arising from a partially implemented affirmative action policy, we take the case of Altamira, Pará (PA).

Since 2010, affirmative actions for indigenous peoples and traditional communities became a concrete reality in the institution. In the same period, the third largest hydroelectric dam in the world, Belo Monte, was built in the region of Altamira, State of Pará. Not only did the population almost tripled over the years, but real estate speculation also increased dramatically in the municipality and the region. In turn, the Altamira Campus Hall of Residence is unable to accommodate the number of students who need it<sup>5</sup>. In the face of this, the situation has been quite stressful, because with every semester that starts old problems are revived without any progress being seen as to solving them.

It is clear that this fact generates a series of inconveniences as a result of the students making a great effort to have a place to stay and not go hungry. Depending on the semester, and the situation found, they stay at the Hall of Residence, scattered over vacant spaces in the institution, which has improved over the years, but still lacks articulation, including by the course coordination and the faculty administration, aimed at guaranteeing the right to education. At times the need arises to rent spaces outside the institution, with the help of teachers, so that students can be housed during the face-to-face part of the course. Inclusion does not just mean access to higher education. These situations highlight the need to guarantee the entrance and permanence of students in higher education, with housing, scholarships and academic guidance, especially in the

<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, even if it did have room, the regulatory text of the Altamira Campus Student Hall of Residence clearly privileges full-time students at UFPA (i.e. attending from March to June and August to December).

first years of the policy's implementation, given the importance of unifying the understanding of what it means and its repercussions, otherwise one becomes subject to the subjective and prejudiced viewpoints of academic bureaucracy.

However, it must be said that the student assistance policy has improved over this time because of the actions of indigenous peoples and traditional communities, especially those who accessed the university through affirmative action policies for special classes, such as those taking the Ethnodevelopment course, who pressured the institution to change the criteria for access to the scholarships, as well as the selection and payment schedule for students taking intensive courses at UFPA (OLIVEIRA; PARENTE; DOMINGUES, 2017).

Undoubtedly, the inclusion of indigenous peoples and traditional communities in the university has provided excellent spaces for struggling and dialoguing to achieve de facto welcoming of diversity in university bureaucracy. But, regardless of the conditions under which the course is held, its success can be affirmed with regard to the academic training of ethnically differentiated people, who today are working in different municipalities of the Xingu and Transamazon region, Marajó Island, Tapajós, Tocantina region, Bragantina and Salgado Paraense; in quilombos, indigenous villages, settlement projects and rural communities, *Casas Familiares Rurais* [Rural Family Houses] (CFRs), urban areas of municipalities; in teaching, research, extension, in different spaces, as technical staff of the city halls of their respective cities and in the social and indigenous movements from which they come.

Furthermore, among the teachers who have worked and still work in the course, one hears that the methodology employed in Ethnodevelopment instigates them to rethink the didactic and pedagogical actions used for the classes that enter UFPA via the conventional universal public application notice, especially with regard to making teaching something closer to the reality of the students' lives. Those actions have promoted differentiated action in their groups of belonging and have enabled them to circulate in the university, which is beginning to be seen by them as a future to be realized. An important step towards this was the course being given its own building, which occurred in July 2013. The course having its own building and a differentiated audience constitutes a political strategy for the social movements and for the maintenance of the course at UFPA.

We recognize that the current demand for the course is also a consequence of the success of the first classes (today we are finishing the fourth class out of the total of five offered so far), which have been standing out in political action in the region, participating in a qualified way in discussions about the problems that affect their groups and society in general, even if this action takes place in different ways. There have also been significant results arising from the struggle

for their inclusion and qualification at UFPA, such as their holding positions in municipal governments, whether as employees in elementary education, which is the case of many of the students who work in teaching, or the inclusion of subjects on the school curriculum so that students trained in Ethnodevelopment are competent to teach, as happened among the quilombolas of Marajó Island and farmers in the Transamazon region, which shows the potential of the course for the Amazon region.

## **The Alternating Cycle Methodology: course possibilities and limits**

The methodology that guides the didactic and pedagogical actions employed in the classroom differs from that adopted in conventional classes in some aspects: the amount of material used for reading and discussion; the discussion of texts is based on the relationship between these texts and the students' life experiences and political actions inside and outside the places to which they belong; the course disciplines are shared with teachers from different areas of knowledge and that dialogue between each other; the students' experiences are the raw material for the development of the curricular activities; during the classes, scripts are built for what the students are to develop in their time in the community; their time spent in the community is monitored by course teachers and the reports the students deliver serve as material for the opening seminar of the next period spent at university, as well as in the course disciplines; the research carried out in the time spent in the community is used as input for building their end-of-course assignments (OLIVEIRA; PARENTE; DOMINGUES, 2017).

As can be seen, the Ethnodevelopment course teachers face the challenge of accompanying the students' educational process throughout the course and not just at specific moments. This limits the number of teachers who can dedicate themselves to the course, but this has been overcome by the teamwork of teachers who work at the Altamira Campus and at other UFPA *campi*.

We also emphasize that the formative actions that represent a differentiated and intercultural pedagogy, understood as a theoretical-practical process in dialogue with the collective subjects and the territories to which they belong (CANDAU, 2008; ARROYO, 2012), overcome the Cartesian model of knowledge and have the Alternating Cycle education method as the structuring foundation of the curricular and pedagogical path, which has as its basic principle a socio-pedagogical practice that articulates learning times and spaces,

seeking to mobilize experiential and theoretical knowledge that expresses and acquires meaning in the territories to which the students belong through concrete pedagogical experiences (PARENTE; LOPES; MILÉO, 2020).

The alternating cycle education methodology was adopted in the 1960s, based on French education experiences with children of farmers, who did not identify with regular schooling because it distanced them from the work on their parents' farms; work and study were seen by the regular education of the time as spaces and times that were incompatible. The first experiences in the Brazilian context occurred initially in *Escolas Famílias Agrícolas* [Farming Family Schools] (EFAs) and *Casas Familiares Rurais* [Rural Family Houses] (CFRs). Organized in the form of face-to-face curricular activities during what is called school time (ST) and also in the form of activities carried out in time spent in the community (CT) to which the course students course belong, the alternating cycle education method has shown itself to be an indispensable tool in the conjugation of different formative experiences, where different subjects (based on the identity that has brought them together, teachers and students), occupy different social roles, dialogue about the diverse experiences that constitute them and shape who they are (PARENTE; LOPES; MILÉO, 2020; OLIVEIRA; PARENTE; DOMINGUES, 2017).

Although we are talking about a teaching methodology, it does not materialize in the same way in all places and at all times. In the Ethnodevelopment course, the methodology is interwoven with regard to the ways of educating and producing knowledge, to the extent that the training process takes place in differentiated times and spaces that dialogue between themselves; an experience that trains both students and teachers at the same time. The course is divided into two periods of time: university time (UT) and time in the community (CT) and the course disciplines follow this time schedule in that most of the course work takes place during UT and the remainder during CT. UT covers the periods January/February and July/August, following UFPA's academic calendar. At the end of these periods, the students are given activities to be carried out in their places of origin with accompaniment by the course teachers, who monitor their actions during a certain period of time. This stage ends when students hand in documents, which are generally reports.

As a result, the time that the students spend at university is sometimes less than that spent by other students taking intensive courses, because they also have to do the CT stage of the course. This is not always taken into consideration by people who make comments such as "the *Ethno* students don't spend as much time at university as they should" or "everything is made easier for them". People who make these comments or think this way are unaware that activities undertaken using the alternating cycle method do not follow the same academic

calendar as the other courses, which means that for *Ethno* students the semester does not end at the end of term, but rather extends into the following term while they conclude that semester's activities<sup>6</sup>.

Monitoring CT activities in the communities is an opportunity to dialogue with other members of the communities, both during evening meetings and during other moments of sociocultural interaction. It is a time for exchange of information between the university and the communities, but above all, a time for dialogue about their previous experiences with the university, when they felt they were merely recipients of the university's interns which it sent to their communities and denied the traditional knowledge of these people.

Following the adoption of the alternating cycle method, we can now see a much closer relationship between the university and the communities, as they see themselves as partners in the formative processes of the university students, welcoming the teachers when they come to tutor relatives and/or friends who are now recognized as "university students", since as Parente, Lopes and Miléo (2020) recall, the alternating cycle method enables

[...] a horizontal form of didactic-pedagogical organization that values the experience lived by the diversity of popular collectives, translated into a network of representations and meanings in relation to the building of knowledge (PARENTE; LOPES; MILÉO, 2020, p. 67, our translation).

The expectations that people (based on the communities visited during CT monitoring) have about their participation in the university makes those involved (meaning us, the university) rethink the role of the university in society, which minimally demonstrates that the institution needs to continue on the path of inclusion through policies that differentiate access to the university, increasingly improving the tools to enable students to continue there; the experiences in this regard have been extremely successful, as the above example and many others can attest, although the system needs improvement to meet the specificity of the course(s) and students (PARENTE, 2014).

6 UFPA works with two semesters: the first runs from January to June, while the second runs from August to December. As the university has several *campi* and it has intensive and extensive courses, the year is divided into four periods: 1) January and February; 2) February to June; 3) July and August; 4) July to December; where periods 1 and 3 are intensive; and periods 2 and 4 are extensive.

## **A few considerations...**

Ethnodevelopment, as a course, is the possibility found by professionals from different fields of knowledge and traditional peoples and communities to respond to a historical and still urgent demand for higher and differentiated education, in accordance with the needs of these subjects and their groups of belonging for autonomy to exercise their right to be free, with health, education and territorial management aimed at strengthening and enhancing their forms of organization and political representation to strengthen their communities, precisely in the sense of the term/concept coined in the 1980s (LUCIANO, 2006).

Initially, the idea was to expand the training of differentiated subjects who could have access to the Ethnodevelopment Bachelor and Licentiate Degree course, envisaged based on the premise of cultural diversity, centered on discussions of anthropology, archeology, human rights, health, and the environment, to guide their plans and actions for the management of their territories and their lives. Having both qualifications also favored the building of tools for acting in different social spaces, broadening the possibilities of acting inside the territories to which they belong or outside them, directly in government institutions, such as schools or health clinics, or in local organizations, in dialogue with or on behalf of the State.

However, providing differentiated education also brings with it the challenge of having to rethink things in view of universalizing State policies, such as the mandatory separation of bachelor degrees and licentiate degrees, which affected us more directly in 2015, with the need to restructure the Course Teaching Project. This restructuring also allowed us to rethink the differentiated education proposal through dialogue with the students taking the course, with those who had already graduated to analyze their trajectories after graduation, their collectives and the demands for higher education, as well as dialogue with university professionals, partners in the implementation and maintenance of the course.

In all the consultations made in this regard, the evaluation was that the licentiate degree would provide a broader and more effective response to the demands of the communities, which lack professionals to build and execute differentiated education, focused on the autonomy of traditional peoples and communities in their territories, in addition to contributing to their planning and management.

But, above all, we emphasize that being in schools, or more precisely being a teacher or manager of official State institutions in the community, such as schools, allows us to rethink educational policy and educational practices from within, deconstructing the colonial perspective, positivizing ethnic and differentiated identities, and implementing other perspectives, knowledge and actions that come together in the school/school education for the autonomy of the communities, valuing local knowledge and the dialogue between related subjects, regardless of their place, for the production of other knowledge, and the school and its actors can be the mediators of this process, including and especially with the State.

In this sense, schooling based on the alternating cycle education method has been perceived as one of the important means of achieving the consonance of this differentiated dialogical and collective education project, building other schooling experiences for people, which allows the exchange of knowledge and its valuing at the university and in the communities, and contributes to local and non-local sociocultural organization insofar as they verify the viability of education aimed at the affirmation of ethnic and differentiated cultures and identities, truly inclusive, based on their own teaching experiences during the course and at the university.

This is the current stage of Ethnodevelopment education at UFPA. With effect from 2019, the University began to offer the licentiate degree course that was approved by CONSEPE/UFPA Resolution No. 5124, dated January 23, 2019 (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PARÁ, 2019), with the same epistemological assumptions, based on the alternating cycle education method, with the goal of training educators qualified as “Agents of ethnodevelopment and/or Ethnoeducators, who meet the needs of traditional peoples and communities in the Amazon, with possibilities of intervening socially” (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PARÁ, 2019, p. 10, our translation), based on educational actions that establish dialogue between traditional and scientific knowledge.

Regardless of which university course, the challenges for a differentiated education that moves against a universalizing schooling countercurrent remain, and it is in the dialogue with the traditional peoples and communities, their collectives, and the union of professionals from different fields of knowledge that we have sought to respond to the most urgent demands of the communities in order to address educational inequalities, and these subjects have taken up their places in their schools, health centers and collective organizations, making a difference in these places, which are circumscribed in the territories to which they belong.

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