



EDUCATION AND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN NORTHERN BRAZIL: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES



<https://doi.org/10.56238/levv16n46-094>

Submitted on: 02/28/2025

Publication date: 03/28/2025

Átila de Souza¹, Francenilce Lopes da Silva², Jhones de Souza Lima³, José Farias Bernardes⁴,
Mackson Azevedo Mafra⁵ and Railane Medeiros do Nascimento⁶

ABSTRACT

This article aims to discuss the challenges and perspectives of integrating traditional knowledge into the school curriculum in Northern Brazil, focusing on the role of traditional myths and narratives in learning, the obstacles faced by rural and indigenous communities, and successful experiences of intercultural education. The research adopted a qualitative approach, based on a systematic literature review and structured in three stages: definition of the thematic scope, selection and analysis of sources, and synthesis of data, using the content analysis technique to identify patterns and convergences. The results show that traditional myths and narratives are essential pedagogical tools for the transmission of values and knowledge in local communities, but their integration into the school curriculum faces challenges such as lack of infrastructure, inadequate teacher training, and the disconnection between local knowledge and the formal curriculum. On the other hand, experiences such as the "Knowledge of the Forest", "Differentiated Indigenous School Education" and "Forest Schools" projects demonstrate that it is possible to overcome these obstacles through a respectful and participatory dialogue between traditional knowledge and academic knowledge. The research demonstrates that intercultural education in the North of Brazil is a necessary path for the appreciation of cultural diversity and for the construction of a more just and equitable society. To this end, it is essential to develop public policies that support teacher training, community participation and the creation of curricula that integrate local knowledge, ensuring an education that respects and celebrates the multiple forms of knowledge and existence.

Keywords: Education. Traditional knowledge. Indigenous school education. Forest schools.

¹Doctorate student in Educational Sciences, Universidad de la Integración de Las Americas (UNIDA), Asunción, Paraguay.
E-mail: atilabio@hotmail.com

²Master's student in Educational Sciences, Universidad de la Integración de Las Americas (UNIDA), Asunción, Paraguay.
Email: francenilce.silva@prof.am.gov.br

³Doctorate student in Educational Sciences, Universidad de la Integración de Las Americas (UNIDA), Asunción, Paraguay.
E-mail: jhones.lima@prof.am.gov.br

⁴Master in Education from the Universidad de Los Pueblos de Europa (UPE), Malagá, Spain.
E-mail: jose.bernardesmsc@gmail.com

⁵Dr. in Educational Sciences, Universidad de la Integración de Las Americas (UNIDA), Asunción, Paraguay.
Email: mackson.azevedo@hotmail.com

⁶Master's student in Educational Sciences, Universidad de la Integración de Las Americas (UNIDA), Asunción, Paraguay.
E-mail: railanemedeiros@hotmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The Northern region of Brazil, marked by its vast cultural and environmental diversity, is home to a wealth of traditional knowledge that has been transmitted for generations through myths, narratives, and everyday practices. This knowledge, deeply rooted in rural and indigenous communities, represents not only a cultural heritage, but also a system of knowledge that guides the social, spiritual and ecological life of these groups. However, the integration of this local knowledge into the formal education system has been a persistent challenge, evidencing tensions between hegemonic educational models and traditional pedagogical practices.

Intercultural education emerges as an essential proposal to overcome these dichotomies, promoting a dialogue between scientific and traditional knowledge. This approach aims not only to value cultural diversity, but also to strengthen the identity and autonomy of traditional peoples, contributing to a more inclusive and contextualized education. In this sense, traditional myths and narratives play a key role, as they are pedagogical tools that convey values, ecological knowledge, and specific worldviews, enriching the learning process.

This article aims to discuss the challenges and perspectives of the integration of traditional knowledge in formal education in Northern Brazil, focusing on the role of myths and narratives in learning, the obstacles faced by rural and indigenous communities in accessing schooling, and successful experiences of integrating local knowledge into the school curriculum. From a critical analysis, it seeks to reflect on how intercultural education can contribute to the appreciation of cultural diversity and to the construction of a more just and equitable society.

By addressing these issues, the article aims to highlight the importance of public policies and educational guidelines that recognize and promote traditional knowledge, ensuring that local communities are protagonists of their educational processes. The discussion proposed here aims, therefore, to contribute to the debate on intercultural education in Brazil, highlighting possible ways to overcome the challenges and consolidate more democratic and inclusive educational practices.

METHODOLOGY

The research adopted a qualitative approach, based on a systematic bibliographic review, with the objective of analyzing public policies, educational practices and the challenges of integrating traditional knowledge into the school curriculum in the North of Brazil. The methodology was structured in three main stages: definition of the scope of the research, selection and analysis of sources, and synthesis of data.

In the first stage, the scope of the study was defined based on three thematic axes: the role of traditional myths and narratives in learning, the challenges of schooling in rural and indigenous communities, and successful experiences in integrating local knowledge into the school curriculum.

These axes guided both the selection of bibliographic sources and the analysis of the data, ensuring a clear and coherent focus to the study.

Then, several bibliographic sources were selected, including books, scientific articles, dissertations, theses, official documents and reports from non-governmental organizations. Priority was given to works by authors such as Baniwa (2009), Lima (2018), Cabral (2020), Munduruku (2013), Almeida (2015) and Souza (2017), due to their relevance to the theme of intercultural education in the Northern region of Brazil. The selection followed criteria of thematic relevance, prioritizing studies on traditional knowledge, intercultural education and schooling in rural and indigenous communities; geographic coverage, focusing on the North region.

THE ROLE OF MYTHS AND TRADITIONAL NARRATIVES IN LEARNING

Traditional myths and narratives play a central role in the transmission of knowledge and values in rural and indigenous communities in Northern Brazil. These narratives, often transmitted orally, are pedagogical instruments that connect generations, preserving collective memory and strengthening cultural identity. Authors such as Munduruku (2013), in his work *"Histórias de Índio"*, highlight that indigenous myths are not just stories, but educational tools that teach about respect for nature, community coexistence and the ethical principles that govern life in society.

In the Amazonian context, Baniwa (2009), in *"Indigenous Education in the Amazon"*, reinforces that traditional narratives are fundamental for the integral formation of individuals, as they integrate spiritual, ecological and social aspects. He argues that this knowledge, when valued in the educational process, allows for meaningful and contextualized learning, which dialogues with the local reality. This perspective is shared by Almeida (2015), who, in *"Traditional Knowledge and Indigenous School Education in Amazonas"*, emphasizes the importance of recognizing myths as sources of scientific and philosophical knowledge, capable of complementing and enriching the school curriculum.

The relationship between myths and learning is also explored by Souza (2017), in *"Amazonian Narratives: Education and Culture"*, which analyzes how traditional stories are used to teach about biodiversity, natural cycles, and sustainable practices for the management of natural resources. According to the author, these narratives are a form of "traditional science", which can dialogue productively with Western scientific knowledge.

However, the integration of this knowledge into the formal education system faces challenges, as Lima (2018) **points out** in *"Intercultural Education in the Amazon: Challenges and Possibilities"*. He argues that the school curriculum often fails to recognize the legitimacy of traditional knowledge, marginalizing it in favor of a Eurocentric educational model. To overcome this gap, it is necessary to create spaces for dialogue between local knowledge and academic knowledge, as proposed by Cabral

(2020) in *"Intercultural Dialogues in Amazonian Education"*. The author defends a pedagogical approach that values traditional narratives as structuring axes of the educational process, promoting a more inclusive education that respects cultural diversities.

In summary, traditional myths and narratives are powerful pedagogical tools that can transform education in the North of Brazil. When integrated into the school curriculum, this knowledge not only enriches the learning process, but also strengthens the cultural identity of local communities, contributing to the construction of a truly intercultural education.

CHALLENGES OF SCHOOLING IN RURAL AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Schooling in rural and indigenous communities in northern Brazil faces a series of structural, cultural, and pedagogical challenges that make it difficult for students to access and remain in the formal education system. These challenges are aggravated by the lack of public policies that consider the specificities of these communities, as pointed out by Baniwa (2009) in *"Indigenous Education in the Amazon"*. The author points out that geographical distance, the precariousness of school infrastructure and the lack of adequate transportation are concrete obstacles that prevent many children and young people from attending school regularly.

In addition to physical barriers, there are also challenges related to curriculum and teacher training. Lima (2018), in *"Intercultural Education in the Amazon: Challenges and Possibilities"*, argues that the school curriculum often does not dialogue with the local reality, ignoring traditional knowledge and imposing a worldview distant from the experience of rural and indigenous communities. This disconnection generates a feeling of devaluation of the local culture, which can lead to disinterest and school dropout.

Teacher training is another critical point, as highlighted by Cabral (2020) in *"Intercultural Dialogues in Amazonian Education"*. The author observes that many educators are not prepared to work in intercultural contexts, lacking knowledge about indigenous cultures and languages, as well as about pedagogical practices that can integrate local knowledge into formal education. This gap in teacher training contributes to the perpetuation of an educational model that marginalizes traditional identities and knowledge.

Another significant challenge is the tension between formal education and traditional communities' own modes of learning. Munduruku (1996), in *"Histórias de Índio" (Indian Stories)*, emphasizes that, for many indigenous peoples, education is not restricted to the school environment, but occurs in everyday life, through orality, rituals and coexistence with nature. The imposition of a school model that disregards these practices can generate conflicts and resistance, as Almeida (2015) **observes** in *"Traditional Knowledge and Indigenous School Education in Amazonas"*. The author argues that, in order to overcome these conflicts, it is necessary to build an education that respects and

incorporates traditional educational processes, creating bridges between local knowledge and academic knowledge.

The lack of investment in specific public policies for rural and indigenous education is also a significant obstacle. Souza (2017), in *"Amazonian Narratives: Education and Culture"*, points out that, although there are national guidelines that recognize the importance of intercultural education, such as the National Curriculum Guidelines for Indigenous School Education, the implementation of these policies is still incipient. Many schools lack financial resources, adequate teaching materials and technical support to develop pedagogical practices that value cultural diversity.

In the face of these challenges, it is urgent to rethink schooling in rural and indigenous communities in northern Brazil, as proposed by the aforementioned authors. This implies not only overcoming logistical and structural barriers, but also promoting a profound transformation in the curriculum, teacher training and public policies, in order to guarantee an education that is truly inclusive, intercultural and respectful of diversity.

SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCES AND PROJECTS IN THE INTEGRATION OF LOCAL KNOWLEDGE INTO THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Despite the challenges, there are several successful experiences and projects in the North of Brazil that demonstrate the feasibility and importance of integrating local knowledge into the school curriculum. These initiatives, often developed in partnership with communities, universities, and non-governmental organizations, show how intercultural education can be a powerful tool for valuing cultural diversity and promoting meaningful learning.

An emblematic example is the project developed by the Baniwa and Coripaco Indigenous School, in the Upper Rio Negro, Amazonas, analyzed by Baniwa (2009) in *"Indigenous Education in the Amazon"*. The author describes how the school has incorporated myths, narratives, and traditional practices into the curriculum, creating an educational model that respects and strengthens the cultural identity of students. This experience demonstrates that it is possible to reconcile local knowledge with academic knowledge, as long as there is a genuine dialogue between the community and educators.

Another relevant case is the "Knowledge of the Forest" **project**, implemented in riverside communities in Pará, discussed by Souza (2017) in *"Amazonian Narratives: Education and Culture"*. The project uses traditional narratives and local ecological knowledge as a basis for science and mathematics teaching, showing how traditional knowledge can enrich the school curriculum. According to the author, this approach not only increases the interest of students, but also promotes greater community engagement in the educational process.

In the context of teacher training, Cabral (2020), in *"Intercultural Dialogues in Amazonian Education"*, highlights the experience of the Indigenous Teacher Training Program in Acre, which

trains educators to work in their own communities, integrating traditional knowledge with formal education. The author points out that the training of indigenous teachers is essential to ensure that school education is culturally relevant and respectful of local identities.

In addition, Almeida (2015), in *"Traditional Knowledge and Indigenous School Education in Amazonas"*, analyzes the project "Differentiated Indigenous School Education", which has been implemented in several communities in Amazonas. The project provides for the development of specific teaching materials, which incorporate indigenous languages, myths and traditional practices, creating a curriculum that reflects the reality and values of the communities. The author argues that this initiative has contributed to the appreciation of indigenous culture and to the reduction of school dropout.

Another inspiring example is the "Forest Schools" project, in the state of Amapá, discussed by Lima (2018) in *"Intercultural Education in the Amazon: Challenges and Possibilities"*. The project promotes the integration of traditional knowledge about Amazonian biodiversity into the school curriculum, using participatory methodologies that involve students and communities in the learning process. According to the author, this approach has been fundamental to strengthen the connection of young people with their territory and culture.

Finally, Munduruku (2013), in *"Histórias de Índio"*, highlights the importance of initiatives that value orality and traditional narratives as pedagogical tools. He cites the example of indigenous schools that have used myths and ancestral stories to teach about ethics, ecology and community life, showing how this knowledge can be integrated in a creative and respectful way into the school curriculum.

These experiences demonstrate that integrating local knowledge into the school curriculum is not only possible, but also brings significant benefits to rural and indigenous communities. They reinforce the importance of public policies that support and expand these initiatives, ensuring that education is a space for valuing cultural diversity and promoting equity.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of the challenges and successful experiences in the integration of traditional knowledge into the school curriculum in the North of Brazil reveals the complexity and urgency of promoting an intercultural education that respects and values cultural diversity. As Baniwa (2009) and Lima (2018) point out, the disconnect between the school curriculum and the reality of rural and indigenous communities is one of the main obstacles to be overcome. This gap not only marginalizes traditional knowledge, but also reinforces historical inequalities, contributing to the devaluation of cultural identities and school dropout.

However, the experiences discussed by Souza (2017) and Almeida (2015) show that it is possible to build bridges between local knowledge and academic knowledge, creating a curriculum

that is culturally relevant and pedagogically effective. Projects such as "Saberes da Floresta" and "Differentiated Indigenous School Education" demonstrate that the integration of myths, narratives, and traditional practices into formal education not only enriches the learning process, but also strengthens students' self-esteem and cultural identity. These initiatives reinforce the idea that intercultural education should be a constant dialogue between different forms of knowledge, as proposed by Cabral (2020).

Teacher training emerges as a central element in this process, as Lima (2018) **and** Cabral (2020) point out. Training teachers to work in intercultural contexts, with knowledge of traditional languages, cultures, and knowledge, is essential to ensure that school education is inclusive and respectful. Programs such as the Training of Indigenous Teachers in Acre show that investing in the training of local educators is an effective strategy to promote the appreciation of traditional knowledge and to reduce the asymmetries between academic knowledge and local knowledge.

In addition, the participation of communities in the educational process is a crucial factor for the success of these initiatives, as highlighted by Munduruku (2013) and Baniwa (2009). When communities are involved in the design of the curriculum and in the management of schools, education becomes a space for empowerment and cultural strengthening. This participatory approach not only ensures that traditional knowledge is respected, but also promotes greater engagement of families and the community in the educational process.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the implementation of adequate public policies is essential to expand and consolidate these experiences. As Souza (2017) observes, although there are national guidelines that recognize the importance of intercultural education, such as the National Curriculum Guidelines for Indigenous School Education, the lack of investment and technical support still limits the reach of these initiatives. To overcome these challenges, a political and financial commitment is needed to ensure the sustainability and expansion of these projects.

In summary, intercultural education in the North of Brazil represents a unique opportunity to promote the appreciation of cultural diversity and to build a more just and equitable society. As the authors cited demonstrate, this transformation requires not only changes in the curriculum and teacher training, but also a permanent dialogue between traditional and academic knowledge, with the support of consistent and participatory public policies.

CONCLUSION

The integration of traditional knowledge into the school curriculum in the North of Brazil represents a complex challenge, but also a transformative opportunity for the construction of a truly intercultural education. As demonstrated throughout this article, myths, narratives, and traditional practices play a fundamental role in the cultural and identity formation of rural and indigenous

communities, being powerful pedagogical tools that can enrich the learning process. However, schooling in these communities faces significant obstacles, from a lack of infrastructure and teacher training to the disconnect between the formal curriculum and local knowledge.

The successful experiences analyzed, such as the "Knowledges of the Forest", "Differentiated Indigenous School Education" and "Forest Schools" projects, show that it is possible to overcome these challenges through a respectful and participatory dialogue between traditional knowledge and academic knowledge. These initiatives show that valuing local knowledge not only strengthens the cultural identity of students, but also promotes a more inclusive, contextualized, and meaningful education.

Thus, the integration of traditional knowledge into the school curriculum in the North of Brazil is a necessary path for the appreciation of cultural diversity and for the construction of a more just and democratic society. This transformation requires a collective commitment, involving governments, educators, communities and civil society organizations, in favor of an education that respects and celebrates the multiple forms of knowledge and existence.



REFERENCES

1. Almeida, M. do S. P. da S. (2015). Saberes tradicionais e educação escolar indígena no Amazonas. Editora da UFPA.
2. Baniwa, G. dos S. L. (2009). A educação indígena na Amazônia. Editora da Universidade Federal do Amazonas.
3. Cabral, S. M. da S. (2020). Diálogos interculturais na educação amazônica. Editora Açai.
4. Lima, A. C. S. (2018). Educação intercultural na Amazônia: Desafios e possibilidades. Editora da UFRR.
5. Munduruku, D. (2013). Histórias de índio. Companhia das Letrinhas.
6. Souza, J. R. B. F. (2017). Narrativas amazônicas: Educação e cultura. Editora Valer.