

## TEACHER TRAINING IN THE DECOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE: CURRICULAR PROPOSALS FOR PEDAGOGY AT ABYA YALA



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### ABSTRACT

Teacher training is a complex and challenging topic. Decolonial curricula become the object of research, as a form of epistemological and cultural resistance, in colonized societies that reproduce principles and values that are foreign to community life and the culture of native peoples. With the objective of presenting, describing and reflecting on experiences of teacher training curricula in Pedagogy courses, the text organizes and systematizes, based on documents and data available on electronic sites, curricular proposals produced at Abya Yala. We conclude that there are possibilities to build decolonial curricula for teacher training.

**Keywords:** Pedagogy, Teacher training, Pedagogical proposal, Curriculum, Decoloniality.

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## INTRODUCTION

Teacher training is the object of investigation and dispute. Monocultural curricula seek to maintain hegemony over different realities and historical-cultural contexts. The curriculum is the result of choices, selections in which Eurocentric epistemology and worldview predominate, founded on Cartesian science linked to economic thinking that is structured on racial/ethnic superiority. There are, however, curricula that contemplate the cultural diversity, spaces and times of each ethnic group that lives in the context of Abya Yala, known as Latin America. These proposals for teacher training are the result of collective constructions that guarantee the continuity of life within social and cultural structures that are based on other epistemologies and worldviews. The curriculum, in this context, is understood as the central nucleus of the educational project and contemplates the interests, desires and social representations. In this sense, in decoloniality, there is no curriculum, but curricula that seek to represent understandings of being in the world as living beings.

Our research aimed to investigate instituting experiences of Pedagogy curricula in Higher Education Institutions from a decolonial perspective in the context of Abya Yala. (Fuchs, 2019). Our purpose was to develop subsidies and southern references for the construction of decolonial curricula for the training of pedagogues.

As for the methodology, we emphasize that in the decolonial perspective, the methodology does not precede, but is processed in the act of the experience itself. Thus, the instituting experiences of curricula of the Ixil University (Guatemala), the University of Antioquia (Colombia) and, in the Brazilian context, the Federal University of Recôncavo Baiano and the Bento Gonçalves Campus of the Federal Institute of Rio Grande do Sul – IFRS were investigated. The collection and production of data was carried out through information on websites and bibliographies, as well as in the author's experience in the Structuring Teaching Nucleus of the IFRS Pedagogy course. The participant research and the bibliographic research served as a methodological basis. Works by decolonial authors underpinned the research.

The data analysis indicated the following results: a) a decolonial training curriculum is based on the foundations and epistemological principles others produced through participatory research rooted in Mother Earth; b) this curriculum is composed of a flexible and intercultural dynamic, seeking the emancipation of the subjects through possible inter(trans)disciplinarity, with problematizing teaching action shared with the community and

the use of dialogical and horizontal methodologies. In this way, an "other", decolonial formation is sought, rooted in the experiences of peoples and cultures that (con)live in interculturality and pluriversality.

From the question "are there decolonial teacher training curricula?" we reflect on teacher training curricula in Pedagogy courses in the context of Abya Yala. The bibliographic, descriptive and qualitative research gathered documents and information available on the websites of educational institutions in three countries, Guatemala, Colombia and Brazil. The institutions were defined after investigation in different courses that are closer to decolonial thinking, even though this perspective is not explicit in the researched documents.

This text aims to reflect on experiences of teacher training in Pedagogy courses from a decolonial perspective.

## **DECOLONIAL THINKING AND THE CURRICULUM**

Teacher training is one of the central aspects in a perspective of social transformation based on and based on education. What education? The one that has been marked by colonial thinking that detaches the knowledge studied from reality? Or the one that incorporates the cultural elements and knowledge of the original peoples? What knowledge is made available in schools in order to build identities that relate history, territory, and the way of working and living? Is there only one way of being in the world? In response to these questions, we point to decoloniality.

Decolonial thought emerged in the context of Abya Yala, in the 1990s, with the participation of social leaders, researchers, who understood that decoloniality is not only a political manifestation, but a deeper and more comprehensive subversion, which manifests itself in "[...] all power relations implied in culture, knowledge, education, mentalities and socioeconomic organization." (Mota Neto, 2015, p. 16).

According to Fuchs (2019, p. 56), decoloniality "[...] presents itself as a movement that has peculiarities and specificities characteristic of each locality and community that carries its histories, cultures, sacred spaces, worldviews, forms of power and organization of work and life".

Teacher training in a decolonial perspective develops research and produces "[...] knowledge in and with those involved in the investigative process in order to make them capable of understanding and transforming educational practices that simultaneously

involve education, scientific research and political action." (Fuchs, 2019, p. 30). From this perspective, such research is based on ancestral epistemology and on the "[...] organizations of work and community life based on a holistic horizontality" (Fuchs, 2019, p. 56).

Teacher training in the decolonial perspective presupposes knowledge – developed by unfinished human beings – that produces movements and meanings of life in the relationship between people and the world (Freire, 1997). But, training with what curriculum?

The curriculum of training for teaching, from the decolonial perspective, comprises

a dialectical, pluriversal and multicultural movement that involves the relationship with spaces, leaders and elders, bearers of knowledge that is not captured by the colonial formation of books, encyclopedias and classes developed in buildings and closed rooms in which daylight only penetrates through small windows that provide a reduced look at reality." (Fuchs, 2019, p. 109).

A decolonial curriculum must incorporate culture, work, ethos, and the relationships between knowledge, providing opportunities for horizontal dialogues between the different historical subjects who build the worlds according to their ways of being and being. Decolonial teacher training understands the human being as an unfinished, inconclusive subject, who develops knowledge and movements that produce meaning in life in the relationship with other human beings and their territory.

Among the instituting experiences of teacher training, we opted for four curricular experiences that point to a decolonial movement, considering that we do not live in another world, but in this one marked by colonizing capitalism that reduces the environment, nature and the human being to mere resources that generate capital for a few.

The institute curricular experiences analyzed located in the Amerindian territory are the University of Ixil, in Guatemala, the University of Antioquia, Colombia, the University of Recôncavo Baiano and the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Rio Grande do Sul, Bento Gonçalves Campus. In these institutions, we seek to mine curricular elements that are close to a decolonial movement that is characterized by a rescue of ancestral epistemology and the organizations of work and community life supported by a horizontal holistic relationship". (Fuchs, 2019).

Decoloniality seeks

[...] a self-organization of communities and the struggle for the maintenance of environmental structures that allow life in its entirety. An education is not sought to

separate, rupture, fragment the human being from the environment in which he is inserted, aiming at the interdependence of different forms of life. (Fuchs, 2019, p. 56).

This movement is opposed to the curriculum whose organization was designed from Europe, which "[...] considers itself the civilizing, superior, developed center. The others are considered primitive, underdeveloped, the periphery." (Fuchs, 2019, p. 60).

The curriculum, according to Elizabeth Macedo (2006, p. 290), "[...] it is a hybrid formed by oblique plots of power [that] both strengthen certain groups and strengthen resistance. In both movements, which are part of it, they allow the difference to appear in the negotiation with the structures of violence and violation that (they) have produced." The curriculum results from a negotiated construction between different social groups.

The decolonial curriculum will be a movement of epistemological and cultural resistance in opposition to the colonial ideology based on reason that is articulated with the relations of power, knowledge and being white, macho, European, Christian that exploits, destroys and kills nature and life in its different forms.

## **METHODOLOGICAL ADHERENCE TO DECOLONIAL THEORY**

Decoloniality has based its struggles on theoretical-methodological assumptions that seek to overcome the way of being in the colonial world. In terms of teacher training, are there experiences that point to a decolonial education? At this moment, we seek to point out instituting experiences of teacher training in the context of Abya Yala, based on curriculum documents and reports made available on websites.

Decoloniality should not be understood as a single movement, which emerged in the 90s of the twentieth century, but rather as a

a movement that has peculiarities and specificities characteristic of each locality and community that carries its histories, cultures, sacred spaces, cosmovisions, forms of power and organization of work and life. There is no form of decoloniality, but all decolonial movements seek to reintegrate the environment with life in its various forms of manifestation and expression linked to the land. (Fuchs, 2019, p. 56).

As it is a movement that seeks to reintegrate the environment of life with the earth, teacher training must reinvent its curriculum and methodologies in order to reconnect the human being with history, culture and the forms of organization of society based on work and economy.

In the research in question, we sought to "[...] a methodology with a decolonial perspective [that] is based on the history of subalternized peoples and cultures through power relations established under epistemological and scientific principles strongly identified with European modernity." (Fuchs, 2019, p. 29). In this perspective, we used research and literature review and autobiographical narrative with qualitative analysis, based on authors inserted in or linked to Abya Yala and documents and reports collected from electronic sites.

According to Mota Neto (2015, p. 6), the decolonial methodology expresses a subversion of "[...] all power relations implied in culture, knowledge, education, mentalities and socioeconomic organization". Thus, from this perspective, the methodology seeks to overcome the dichotomy between academic and popular knowledge, as it introduces other ways of relating knowledge, powers and beings, outside the Cartesian and colonial paradigm. In this sense, the research sought to reflect on epistemological, methodological and gnosiological aspects that point to the production of knowledge that leads to teacher training, especially pedagogues.

Next, we briefly present four experiences of teacher training in Pedagogy courses at universities in Abya Yala.

## **INSTITUTING EXPERIENCES OF DECOLONIAL FORMATIVE CURRICULA**

As previously mentioned, the experiences of teacher training curricula in the decolonial perspective investigated are those of the Ixil University (Guatemala), the University of Antioquia (Colombia), the Federal University of Recôncavo Baiano and the Federal Institute of Rio Grande do Sul (IFRS) Bento Gonçalves Campus.

### **UNIVERSITY OF IXIL**

The University of Ixil, in Guatemala, founded in 2011 by indigenous peoples and community leaders in the Maya Ixil territory, is characterized as a non-state formation, not recognized by the State. (UIxil, [2014]). The curriculum, defined through the participation of elders and the indigenous community, aims to train professionals who work in reality, considering the collective knowledge and experiences related to the land (Fuchs, 2019).

The University seeks to train young people who have "[...] Proud peasants and demonstrating to their priests that they can take a responsible position of their patrimony of land, collaborate mutually in their agricultural initiatives through the 'Xula'." (Sabas, 2016,

s.p.). "Xula" is "[...] an ancestral tradition in which community members exchange agricultural work with each other. The "Xula" takes place whenever a project is undertaken [...] A personal initiative is embraced as a collective responsibility" (Sabas, 2016, s.p.). The training curriculum includes three themes, namely: "Administración de recursos naturales (manejo comunitario de los bienes comunes de la población), comida – la agricultura como base material de la civilización maya, y jóvenes con con ogimiento derecho Maya Ixil y Leyes nacionales e internacionales." (Sabas, 2016, s.p.).

This training aims to include men and women who do not have access to higher education due to economic conditions and the absence of public education, as well as to meet the principles and foundations of the Ixil worldview that are not studied in university curricula (Fuchs, 2019).

#### UNIVERSITY OF ANTIOCH

The course "Pedagogía de la Madre Tierra", from the University of Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia, was approved in 2011, with the participation of ancestral leaders and contemplates the ways of being in the world that are based on relationships with Mother Earth. The course aims to train "[...] maestros and maestras líderes de los pueblos y a la vez, líderes maestros y maestras con pedagogía y corazón bueno." (UdeA, 2018, s.p.).

The training curriculum is based on a methodology based on critical analysis and creative, participatory and intercultural resolution of difficulties. It proposes a broad dialogue, with intelligence and a sincere heart, within communities, neighbors, family, until it reaches the articulation of a worldwide movement in defense of the earth as a mother and allows new generations to bring new generations closer to other ways of seeing the world. In this way, decolonizing thought to find the roots, one's own face and in one's own marks and starting from the deep knowledge of the memory of ancestors to talk and feel the heartbeat and at the same time continue walking with good dreams for all the children of mother earth (UdeA, 2018).

Trained professionals must have a "[...] integral, intercultural and community vision that participates in the construction of public policies and strategies for local development of indigenous communities and society in general always in defense of Mother Land" (UdeA, 2018, s.p.).



## FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF RECÔNCAVO BAIANO

The Pedagogy course at the Federal University of Recôncavo Baiano presents a curriculum focused on local cultural characteristics and seeks to develop "methodological and curricular actions and articulations that do not fit into scientific and academic standards and paradigms in a traditional and conventional way" (Fuchs, 2019, p. 32).

The context, in terms of training, requires a curricular proposal that dialogues with the reality and local and regional needs. To this end, the curriculum considers

pedagogical work as a meaning of training; the emphasis on a solid theoretical training; research as a form of knowledge and intervention in social reality; shared and collective work through shared teaching; interdisciplinary work; the theory-practice articulation and curricular flexibility (UFRB, 2008, p. 4).

The curriculum is composed of two axes, namely, 1) Research, New Technologies and 2) Pedagogical Praxis. This is because "[...] teacher training in contemporary times has demanded a differential that permeates the involvement of research as the axis of the teaching and learning process in the constitution of the curricular matrices of the Teaching Degree courses" (UFRB, 2008, p. 2).

These two axes transversalize the curriculum and provide opportunities for the experience of research and teaching action, seeking to connect the "world of the subjects, their desires, limits and potentialities" (UFRB, 2008, p. 7). The research seeks to overcome colonial relations and structures that materialize through knowledge produced by men, Europeans, whites, heterosexuals, Christians and that brings, as a consequence, "a decontextualized, superficial education, which tries to find hooks to connect and establish a monologue about the past, the present and the future" (Fuchs, 2019, p. 130).

## FEDERAL INSTITUTE OF RIO GRANDE DO SUL

The Pedagogy course at the Bento Gonçalves Campus of IFRS, in turn, starts from the understanding of the human being as a "[...] unfinished, socio-historical subject, guided by labor relations, in permanent construction, immersed in the diversity and complexity of society and cultures". (IFRS, 2018, p. 22).

The curriculum is based on an ethically committed and inclusive education that respects differences, defends interculturality, guarantees public, free and quality education for all and integration with the school community (IFRS, 2018).



Interculturality, according to Silva (2006, p. 145), "[...] potentially reveals itself as an intervention project to be built intentionally". It is a strategy, an action and a permanent process of tension between political, social, ethical and epistemic projects and the power devices that maintain "[...] inequality, inferiorization, racialization and discrimination". (Walsh, 2012, p. 66).

The curriculum of this course presents some challenging curricular components for teacher training in a decolonial perspective, such as: Education and Ethnic-Racial Relations, Education, Gender and Sexuality, Integrative Project: Integral Education, Health and Body, Guided Reading and Seminar.

The interdisciplinary activity is included in the syllabus of each curricular component. Interdisciplinarity, according to Fazenda (2013, p. 21), becomes an act of "[...] boldness of searching, of research: it is the transformation of insecurity into an exercise of thinking, into building".

Teacher education requires a collective and intentional effort to build curricula and methodologies with other epistemological bases in which lives are interconnected and interdependent.

Having presented the experiences, we ask: what can we infer from these four decolonial theoretical-methodological proposals?

## **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS**

Castro-Gómez (2007), when analyzing the role of the university, points to two main functions, namely: the epistemological and the vigilant of the legitimacy of knowledge. In the first function, it is up to the university to demarcate the difference between legitimate knowledge and other knowledge. In the second, to monitor and guarantee the limits between useful (doxa) and useless (episteme) knowledge. This useful knowledge is related to "[...] industry, [the] mechanical, automated, robotized work, which makes the human being an appendage of the machine." (Fuchs, 2019, 156). In the studies carried out, we point to ruptures in this colonial conception of university.

The Ixil University, located in the Maya Ixil indigenous territory, is an institution not recognized by the Guatemalan State, as it does not adapt to the colonial requirements and standards of training. The institution does not train pedagogues, but offers courses "[...] focused on the insertion and transformation of reality based on original knowledge and community leaders". (Fuchs, 2019, p. 84).

The training curriculum is based on

in the wisdom of the elders, religious leaders, community leaders, in the economy, in religiosity, in social organization, in the participation of the community in the process of initial formation until the final one, when an academic work is presented with a proposal for a solution to a social problem in the presence of leaders and other members of the community. (Fuchs, 2019, p. 85).

The University of Antioquia, in the Pedagogical Project of the course "Pedagogía de la Madre Tierra", in addition to having had the participation of representatives of the indigenous communities, emphasizes research, intervention in reality and aims to form "[...] maestros y maestras líderes de los pueblos y a la vez, líderes maestros y maestras con pedagogía y corazón bueno". (UdeA, 2018, [p.s.n.]). This course understands that human beings and all forms of life are part of the creation of "Madre Tierra", "[...] The planets, the stars, the animals, the trees, the rivers, the air, the lluvia, because she is the mother protector of all the soñado and all the creado, we live in her and for her." (UdeA, 2018, [p.s.n.]). The course aims to train professionals with "[...] integral, intercultural and community vision that participates in the construction of public policies and strategies for local development of indigenous communities and society in general always in defense of Mother Land". (UdeA, 2018, [p.s.n.]).

The University of Recôncavo Baiano has campuses in different areas of the Bahian territory. The Pedagogy course analyzed is located at the Amargosa Campus, 140 km from Salvador. This course presents research and pedagogical praxis as founding principles of education, articulating itself in thematic axes that

will transversalize the entire curriculum, enabling the graduate of this course to experience the practice of research and teaching action in its various modalities (teaching and learning in early childhood education, initial grades of elementary school, teaching and learning of pedagogical subjects, education management, performance in social movements). (UFRB, 2008, p. 2).

Through this articulation, trained professionals will be able to question their reality and – dissatisfied with it, linked to research and teaching – collectively produce and systematize knowledge through the experience of the processes of action-reflection-action, providing opportunities for the transformation of reality. (UFRB, 2008).

The Pedagogy course at IFRS, Bento Gonçalves Campus, in its Pedagogical Project, presents a proposal for interdisciplinary training, involving the different curricular components of each class in each semester. It also presents in its curriculum, themes such as gender, sexuality, ethnic-racial relations, guided readings and seminars that provide

opportunities for studies and reflections that seek to overcome the colonial thought marked by being white, European, sexist that "[...] that produces a world that exploits, destroys and kills nature and the human being that is not equal to that one." (Fuchs, 2019, p. 19).

The analysis of the curricular proposals of the Pedagogy Course of the four higher education institutions at Abya Yala provided the opportunity to elaborate a decolonial framework in order to systematize some elements that lead to a Pedagogy curriculum, seeking to overcome the colonial paradigm of education. Fuchs (2019, p. 183) states:

The decolonial teacher training curriculum involves community organization, participant research, interculturality, trans/inter/disciplinarity, teaching, and horizontal dialogic methodology. This curriculum is open to new creations. It is not closed and not entirely predictable. There is no beginning or an end in this curriculum, but a wheel, an intertwined and interconnected thread that moves specific training in the area of pedagogy.

In this sense, a teacher training project in the decolonial perspective implies finding possible paths and gaps in the instituted curriculum, making it instituting, with the insertion of inter/trans/disciplinary curricular components. Thus, our reflection includes "[...] the teacher training process, the articulations between the curricular components and the educational practices and their respective methodologies with a view to another training of pedagogues." (Fuchs, 2019, p. 181).

From the above, we can affirm that the curricular proposals for teacher training analyzed seek to implement a training path that values knowledge and practices based on local historical knowledge. Despite the limitations and challenges faced, the institutions seek to "[...] to provoke epistemological and methodological ruptures that point to the South and its multicultural and intercultural diversities and pluriversities." (Fuchs, 2019, p. 159-160).

## **CONSIDERATIONS IN PERSPECTIVE**

We have reached the end. An inconclusive ending, because we continue to think; Because unfinished is the process of transforming reality and because incompleteness seems to be the trademark in the DNA of humans. We continue to look to the future – with a perspective!

From the analyses we can perceive movements that seek to follow other paths for teacher training, decolonial, utopian, fed by hope and faith in the capacity of human beings to produce living conditions and solidary forms of education and economy. There is

knowledge that leads to a society of autonomous subjects, free and at the same time interdependent and interconnected with cultural diversity.

Teacher training based on the decolonial movement becomes feasible and overcomes the Eurocentric curricular monoculture that links the capitalist economic model that seeks to impose an organization of society constituted from the race/ethnicity conception.

The analysis of the proposals points out the following main results: a) the construction of decolonial pedagogical projects requires a critical, intercultural and participatory attitude; b) proposals for decolonial teacher training imply community organization, participant research, interculturality, trans/inter/disciplinarity, teaching and horizontal dialogic methodology; and c) decolonial pedagogical proposals prepare subjects to understand, intervene, transform and change the reality in which they live.

In fact, we conclude that: a) a decolonial teacher training curriculum starts from the foundations and other epistemological principles produced through participatory research rooted in Mother Earth; b) the decolonial curriculum seeks the emancipation of the subjects, through a different education based on the experiences of peoples and cultures that coexist in interculturality and pluriversality; c) decolonial pedagogical proposals provide opportunities for the formation of critical citizens and activists in search of a world of good, dignified and fair life for all; and d) there are possibilities to build teacher training curricula that are interrelated and interconnected with the socio-historical reality within the cultural diversity that characterizes Abya Yala.

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