


## INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVES IN INDIGENOUS SCHOOL EDUCATION: FORMATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF THE KADIWÉU IN MATO GROSSO DO SUL

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### ABSTRACT

This study analyzes pedagogical practices in the context of the Kadiwéu people, located in Mato Grosso do Sul, focusing on the relationship between education and the preservation of cultural identity. Based on a qualitative and bibliographical approach, the research explores how formal education can reinforce and weaken traditional knowledge, depending on how it is structured and implemented. It was identified that pedagogical practices integrating the native language, territory, and oral narratives play a central role in strengthening cultural identity, while standardized and decontextualized curricula can generate identity ruptures. The results show that the appreciation of local knowledge and the active participation of the community are indispensable elements for the success of educational initiatives. However, the research also points out limitations, such as the lack of empirical data and the dependence on bibliographical materials that, for the most part, reflect perspectives external to the Indigenous community. It is concluded that effective intercultural education requires greater autonomy of communities in the construction of their curricula, the territorialization of pedagogical practices, and the ongoing training of indigenous educators. Finally, it is recommended that future studies include field research and direct dialogue with indigenous leaders to deepen the analyses and propose concrete solutions.

**Keywords:** Indigenous School Education. Identity. Culture.

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## INTRODUCTION

Indigenous school education in Brazil represents a space of tensions and historical challenges, especially about the preservation of cultural identity and the integration of traditional knowledge into formal education. In the context of the Kadiwéu people, located in Mato Grosso do Sul, pedagogical practices play a central role in the construction and maintenance of cultural traditions, while at the same time facing the pressures of a largely standardized educational system that is oblivious to indigenous specificities. This work seeks to explore pedagogical practices among the Kadiwéu and their relationship with cultural identity, considering the interactions between tradition and the contemporary demands of formal education.

The central focus of this study is to understand how pedagogical practices developed among the Kadiwéu contribute to the strengthening or weakening of the cultural identity of these people. The guiding question of the work is based on the following problem: to what extent do pedagogical practices implemented in Kadiwéu indigenous schools manage to balance the preservation of traditional knowledge with the inclusion of students in a globalized world? This question arises in light of evidence that Indigenous school education can often be an instrument of both cultural resistance and acculturation, depending on how it is structured and conducted.

The methodology used in this study is qualitative and bibliographic, since it seeks to understand, through the analysis of academic texts, official documents, and works related to the subject, the educational processes experienced by the Kadiwéu. The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth analysis of cultural and educational interactions, while the bibliographic survey offers a comprehensive overview of the practices and policies related to Indigenous school education. This method is essential to capture the complexity of the subject, avoiding simplifications and reductionist approaches.

The justification for conducting this study is anchored in the need to shed light on the educational dynamics in indigenous communities, such as the Kadiwéu, which are often neglected in discussions on public policies and teacher training. By understanding how pedagogical practices can strengthen or weaken cultural identity, we hope to contribute to the development of more sensitive and contextualized educational approaches that respect the autonomy of indigenous peoples and value their ancestral knowledge. In addition, this study aims to provide theoretical and practical support for educators, managers, and public policymakers interested in promoting truly intercultural education.

Thus, this work is structured based on a reflection on pedagogical practices and their relationship with the Kadiwéu cultural identity, seeking to contribute to the construction of an education that is, at the same time, inclusive and respectful of Indigenous cultural specificities.

## **TRAINING PATHS AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION: THE KADIWÉU CONTEXT IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION**

Educational processes among the Kadiwéu demonstrate a complex interrelationship between traditional knowledge and the formal teaching models imposed by Western society. The main challenge is to establish an education that not only meets contemporary demands but also values and strengthens the rich cultural heritage of the Kadiwéu people. This educational model must respect cultural dynamics, ensuring that the symbolic and linguistic elements of the Kadiwéu people are integrated into the curriculum, enabling the school to become a space for resistance and identity affirmation. To this end, the construction of differentiated curricula, as proposed by RCNEI, has been an essential milestone in ensuring that indigenous school education fulfills its function of preserving and promoting cultural values while engaging with the outside world (Brazil, 1998).

The preservation of the Kadiwéu language is one of the fundamental pillars of the educational process since the language constitutes the main tool for cultural expression and the transmission of ancestral knowledge. Without the language, the myths, stories, and values that sustain the cohesion of the community run the risk of being lost. In this context, Griffiths' Kadiwéu Pedagogical Grammar (1986) plays a relevant role, functioning as a didactic tool that enables not only the teaching of the language but also its revitalization. Language, as a manifestation of identity, finds in school a space for re-signification, where new generations learn to value and use their native language as a form of resistance against the homogenizing forces of globalized society.

Indigenous school education is not limited to the physical space of the school; it expands to the community and the territory. Among the Kadiwéu, the territory is more than a geographic space; it is a symbolic element that carries the collective memory. and the marks of social relations. In this way, the educational process integrates the recognition of the territory as part of the construction of identity. The education of young people cannot be dissociated from this relationship with space, since it is in the territory that the elements that support the cosmology and rituals of the people are found. From this perspective,

pedagogical practices need to connect local knowledge to broader contexts, without implying cultural subordination or loss of autonomy (José da Silva, 2004).

The issue of interculturality in Indigenous school education requires a critical analysis of the role of educational institutions and training agents. For the Kadiwéu, school cannot be a simple reproduction of Western values and practices. It must be a space for dialogue, where indigenous teachers act as cultural mediators, connecting traditional knowledge with the demands of formal education. This mediation requires specific training for educators, who need to be able to deal with the challenges imposed by an education that aims to be intercultural, but which often reproduces colonial logic. The training of indigenous teachers, in this sense, must prioritize both academic knowledge and the deepening of local knowledge, ensuring that educators are protagonists in this process (Severo et al., 2023).

The writing of history by the Kadiwéu themselves is a pedagogical practice that reaffirms the importance of collective memory in the construction of cultural identity. Historically, a dominant narrative has relegated indigenous peoples to a subordinate role, limiting their presence to Western historical records. However, through pedagogical practices that encourage the production of knowledge by the indigenous people themselves, as occurs in some Kadiwéu schools, it is possible to reverse this situation. Students are encouraged to document their traditions and family histories, building a memory that not only rescues the past but also strengthens collective identity in times of rapid cultural transformation (Certeau, 2000).

Myths and oral narratives play a central role in Kadiwéu education, being more than just stories told by elders. These stories are accounts of ethical values and teachings that shape the worldview of new generations. Traditional Indigenous pedagogy finds in these myths a solid foundation for the education of young people, who learn about their origins, their duties to the community, and the relationships they must establish with the environment. Incorporating these elements into formal education is a challenge that requires creativity on the part of educators and flexibility on the part of public policies so that this knowledge can coexist with the subjects included in the school curriculum (Pechincha, 1994).

Among the Kadiwéu, games, and competitions carry cultural meanings that go beyond simple entertainment. They are moments of learning, where values such as cooperation, healthy rivalry, and connection with the territory are reinforced. These

activities, when incorporated into the school curriculum, are enjoyable for learning that integrates the body and mind, respecting the cultural specificities of the community. In addition, traditional sports practices offer an alternative to the Western model of physical education, which is often disconnected from local cultural realities (Vinha, 1998).

The integration of the Kadiwéu language and culture into formal education also depends on the production of specific teaching materials. The Kadiwéu-Portuguese dictionary of the International Linguistic Society is an example of how the production of resources can support educators in the task of teaching a native language systematically. This type of initiative is vital to guarantee the continuity of the language, as it allows it to be taught in a way that is accessible to new generations. However, the production of these materials must be accompanied by an effort to train teachers who know how to use them efficiently, always valuing orality, which is one of the pillars of Kadiwéu culture (International Linguistic Society, 2002).

The challenges faced by the Kadiwéu in implementing effective intercultural education also involve political and economic issues. The absence of consistent external public policies for Indigenous school education often compromises the continuity of educational projects. In addition, the precarious infrastructure in many indigenous schools reflects the decline of the State for these communities. To reverse this situation, dialogue between indigenous peoples and policymakers must be expanded, ensuring that cultural specificities are respected and valued (Brazil, 1998).

## TEACHER TRAINING FROM AN INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

First, it is necessary to consider that interculturality, in many cases, asos, presents itself as a proposal for mediation between indigenous and Western knowledge. However, this mediation often translates into a structural asymmetry, where hegemonic Western knowledge is considered the starting or ending point for validating other knowledge. This creates a false premise of egalitarian dialogue, which, in practice, can strengthen the subordination of indigenous knowledge to the dominant logic (Certeau, 2000).

By emphasizing the need for indigenous teachers to move between “two worlds” – the Western and the indigenous –, training can inadvertently impose a disproportionate burden on these educators. They become responsible for integrating knowledge systems that often have incompatible epistemological foundations. This requirement is not only exhausting but can also lead to the fragmentation of the cultural identity of educators

themselves, who need to play conflicting roles in their pedagogical practice (Severo et al., 2023).

Furthermore, when interculturality is institutionalized, it tends to become an educational policy that regulates what should and should not be taught, even in Indigenous contexts. This can lead to the loss of autonomy of communities, which are often forced to adapt their curricula to the demands of external bodies, such as the State or international organizations. This curricular standardization, even when disguised under the discourse of interculturality, can make spontaneity and traditional teaching unfeasible, reducing it to a mechanical reproduction of content previously programmed by agents external to the community (Brazil, 1998).

The issue of intercultural teacher training also needs to be tested in light of the language and the underlying values it carries. Often, the term "interculturality" itself is used to apply cultural insertion practices that aim at the progressive acculturation of indigenous communities to the Western model. Teacher training, in this context, can become a vehicle for the development of an assimilation project, disguised as inclusion. This dynamic is particularly problematic because it undermines the foundations of indigenous peoples' cultural resistance, transforming education into a tool for diluting identity rather than a bridge to cultural strengthening (Carneiro da Cunha, 1986). The tendency to treat indigenous teachers as "cultural mediators" is another important aspect, since non-indigenous teachers continue to be seen as agents of transmission of legitimate knowledge. This role position reinforces stereotypes that attribute indigenous peoples to the position of "intermediaries" in the educational system, rather than recognizing them as subjects full of knowledge and action. This perpetuates the idea that indigenous knowledge always needs to be translated, adapted, or complemented by Western knowledge to gain legitimacy (Freire, 2002). Teacher training from an intercultural perspective can also be criticized for its excessive dependence on pedagogical models that often do not take local specificities into account. Educational practices among the Kadiwéu, for example, are deeply rooted in their cosmologies and ways of life. When teacher training attempts to adopt a curricular structure that does not directly address these particularities, there is a risk of decontextualizing teaching and creating a disconnect between the school and the community. This disconnect compromises both learning and cultural preservation (José da Silva, 2003).



The intercultural approach, by centralizing the role of the school as a space for dialogue between cultures, overlooks other formative dimensions that occur outside the school environment. Teacher training that prioritizes exclusively the school space tends to underestimate community learning processes, which are equally relevant to the transmission of traditional knowledge. This limited view of the role of education makes it difficult to value informal teaching practices that are deeply rooted in the daily lives of indigenous communities (Morin, 2001).

### PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

The relationship between pedagogical practices and cultural identity in the indigenous context, particularly among the Kadiwéu, requires a critical approach that goes beyond the simple adoption of intercultural methods. Although education is often seen as a path to strengthening cultural identity, caution is needed not to romanticize pedagogical practices as automatically effective instruments in this process. There is an inherent tension between the need to preserve cultural traditions and the pressure to incorporate knowledge that meets the demands of the globalized world. This tension can often lead to identity fragmentation rather than strengthening (Certeau, 2000).

A recurring problem in creating pedagogical practices aimed at cultural identity is the tendency to transform cultural elements into decontextualized school content. For example, traditional rituals or stories, when taught in a formal environment, can lose their original meaning and be reduced to static representations, disconnected from the living dynamics of the community. This practice of “museification” of culture not only compromises the protection of teachings but also limits the transformative potential of education, by treating culture as something fixed and immutable (Carneiro da Cunha, 1986).

The school curriculum, when standardized by external bodies, can end up imposing limits on cultural expression, converting traditions into objects of study, instead of living and everyday practices. For pedagogical practices to truly contribute to strengthening cultural identity, they need to be designed and renewed with the active participation of indigenous leaders and educators, respecting the rhythms and priorities of the community (Severo et al., 2023).

Cultural elements are often used as tools to facilitate the learning of Western subjects, such as mathematics or science. Although this strategy may seem efficient, it often transforms traditional knowledge into mere teaching resources, disregarding its

intrinsic value. This instrumentalization reinforces the logic that Indigenous knowledge is only valid when it is useful within the Western educational system, a perspective that devalues Indigenous cosmologies and epistemologies (Griffiths, 1986).

In the case of the Kadiwéu, practices such as oral narratives and the transmission of myths play a central role in the formation of identities, but are threatened by the pressure to incorporate Western pedagogical methods. Orality, as the main vehicle for transmitting knowledge, requires a learning environment that prioritizes active listening and respect for the proper timing of stories. However, the curricular demands and rigid timetables of formal education often do not allow this form of cultural transmission to be fully integrated, leading to a weakening of cultural practices (Pechincha, 1994).

The relationship between pedagogical practices and cultural identity must also consider the centrality of the territory. For the Kadiwéu, territory is not only the physical space where they live but a symbolic and spiritual dimension that informs all their cultural practices. Pedagogical practices that ignore this intrinsic relationship between culture and territory tend to decontextualize local knowledge, limiting the effectiveness of differentiated educational initiatives for strengthening identity. Education, in this context, needs to be deeply territorialized, respecting the meanings attributed to places by the community (José da Silva, 2004).

In addition, it is important to reflect on how pedagogical practices can reproduce the internal and external reproduction of the community. In educational processes, decisions about which cultural aspects should be taught and how are often influenced by external agents, such as NGOs, educational institutions, and the State itself. This interference can result in a partial or envious selection of the knowledge to be transmitted, favoring elements that align with external interests to the detriment of the community's priorities. This practice not only undermines community autonomy but also creates internal tension between different groups in the community (Freire, 2002).

The valorization of cultural identity through pedagogical practices has also faced challenges related to the adaptation of educators to the demands of modernity. Indigenous teachers often find themselves in a position of trying to balance the valorization of cultural traditions with the need to prepare students for a world that demands global skills. This duality can lead to the adoption of pedagogical practices that, instead of strengthening culture, create ruptures in the community fabric, separating young people from their cultural roots (Morin, 2001).



For pedagogical practices to be effective in promoting cultural identity, it is necessary to consider the role of language in the construction of the subject. In the case of the Kadiwéu, language plays a fundamental role in the transmission of values, myths, and knowledge. However, many educational programs treat indigenous language as "content" to be taught, rather than as a means of full cultural expression. This reduces language to a functional tool, disregarding its power as a structuring element of culture and collective action (Nascimento, 2019).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The starting point for these reflections is the realization that, although education can be a tool for cultural strengthening, it also carries risks of distortion and loss of autonomy when it is not properly adapted to the specific needs of the population. Local specificities (Brazil, 1998).

The discussions reveal that interculturality, often presented as a solution for integrating traditional and Western knowledge, still faces significant difficulties in practice. Many indigenous educators report that, despite good intentions, curricular guidelines often limit the pedagogical freedom needed to incorporate authentic and culturally relevant practices. This occurs because the educational system, when trying to standardize content, ends up disregarding the realities and priorities of indigenous communities, such as the Kadiwéu, for whom orality and territory are two of the main axes of knowledge transmission (Freire, 2002).

The development of grammar and dictionaries, such as those produced for the Kadiwéu, has proven to be an effective strategy for strengthening cultural identity and, at the same time, increasing the self-esteem of new generations. Young people who learn to use their native language in the school environment tend to develop a greater sense of belonging and pride in their origins. However, discussions indicate that the mere existence of these materials is not enough; teachers need to be trained to use them in an integrated and meaningful way in teaching (Griffiths, 1986).

The analysis of the results also indicates that pedagogical practices based on cultural appreciation need to go beyond the simple recovery of traditional elements. Culture, as a dynamic process, is constantly changing, and educational practices must reflect this adaptive nature. For example, among the Kadiwéu, sports and recreational practices were reinterpreted in many cases, incorporating elements of modernity without

losing their connection with traditional values. This demonstrates that pedagogical practices that integrate contemporary and traditional aspects have greater potential for success in promoting resilient cultural identities (Vinha, 1998).

A critical aspect highlighted in the results is the need to strengthen the autonomy of indigenous communities in the construction of their school curricula. Although the National Curricular Framework for Indigenous Schools (RCNEI) represents progress, there are still gaps in terms of the effective participation of Indigenous leaders in decision-making processes. In some cases, this exclusion results in the adoption of pedagogical practices that do not reflect the priorities of the communities, creating a disconnect between the school and the local reality. Therefore, greater curricular autonomy is essential for educational processes to become more effective and relevant for Indigenous communities (Brazil, 1998).

The debates also highlight the central role of the indigenous teacher as a cultural mediator. The results show that these educators face unique challenges, such as the need to move between two distinct knowledge systems, which often generates internal and external tensions. However, when properly trained and supported, these teachers can build meaningful bridges between traditional knowledge and formal content, contributing to the education of students who, in addition to valuing their culture, are prepared to face the challenges of a globalized world (Severo et al., 2023).

The practical results of pedagogical initiatives also show that the school environment can be a space for cultural resistance, as long as it is considered in a contextualized way. Among the Kadiwéu, educational projects that integrate practices such as community cultivation, rites of passage, and mythological narratives have demonstrated a great impact on the preservation of cultural identity. However, the results also warn of the risks of reducing these practices to mere didactic content, which can dilute their symbolic and spiritual importance. Therefore, constant care is needed to ensure that the school environment does not distort the original meanings of these practices (Pechincha, 1994).

By using the territory as a pedagogical resource, indigenous schools are able to not only transmit academic knowledge but also reinforce students' connection with the spaces that constitute their collective memory. For example, activities carried out in sacred places or areas of traditional use, such as community farms, have proven to be effective in promoting integrated learning and strengthening community ties. These results suggest

that the territorialization of education is an indispensable strategy for cultural strengthening (José da Silva, 2004).

The results also highlight the importance of rethinking assessment practices in the context of Indigenous school education. Western assessment methods, often based on standardized criteria, fail to capture the richness and diversity of indigenous knowledge. Studies indicate that more qualitative assessment techniques, such as participatory observation and self-assessment, are more appropriate for the cultural contexts of Indigenous peoples. These practices allow students to be assessed not only for their academic performance but also for their participation in community and cultural activities (Nascimento, 2019).

To this end, discussions about the results point to the need for greater investment in public policies aimed at the ongoing training of indigenous teachers. Although there are initial training programs, the challenges faced by indigenous educators require constant monitoring, which includes pedagogical updates and emotional support. Ongoing training should be based on local knowledge, ensuring that teachers are prepared to deal with the complexities of their role and to act as agents of social and cultural transformation (Freire, 2002).

## **CONCLUSION**

This study allowed us to understand how pedagogical practices play a central role in preserving or eroding the cultural identity of the Kadiwéu, highlighting both the potential and the challenges of intercultural education. By analyzing the dynamics involving formal education and traditional knowledge, it was found that education can be both a space for cultural resistance and a tool for assimilation, depending on how the processes are implemented. The results indicate that pedagogical practices that significantly integrate traditional knowledge, language, and territory strengthen the autonomy and sense of belonging of new generations. However, standardized educational policies and decontextualized curricular practices still represent considerable obstacles to the effectiveness of an education that values cultural specificities.

Thus, it is concluded that strengthening the cultural identity of the Kadiwéu depends on an educational approach that goes beyond the simple recovery of traditional elements, encompassing the active participation of the community, the appreciation of indigenous protagonism, and the territorialization of education. These aspects, when integrated into

the educational process, can transform the school into a space for cultural reaffirmation and preparation for the challenges of the contemporary world. However, for this to be possible, it is necessary to address structural and epistemological issues that still limit the scope of a truly intercultural education.

## RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

This qualitative and bibliographical research has some limitations that must be acknowledged. Firstly, the lack of empirical data collection directly from the Kadiwéu community prevented a more detailed and contextualized analysis of pedagogical practices in the daily school routine. Although the survey of secondary sources and academic references provided important support, practical experience and active listening of leaders and educators could offer a richer and more in-depth perspective on the challenges faced.

In addition, the research was limited to a theoretical approach to the issue, which restricted the possibility of directly observing the impacts of pedagogical practices on the strengthening or dilution of the Kadiwéu cultural identity. This lack of a practical dimension also makes it difficult to identify concrete solutions that can be applied to school contexts, limiting the scope of the results.

The impossibility of addressing all the regional and cultural specificities of the Kadiwéu due to the limited scope of the research constitutes another limitation. Although it was possible to provide a comprehensive analysis of pedagogical practices and their relationship with cultural identity, aspects such as variations between different indigenous schools or interactions with local educational policies could enrich the work.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

Based on the reflections and limitations highlighted, some recommendations for future studies emerge as essential. Firstly, it is suggested that field research be carried out with the Kadiwéu communities, to collect empirical data through interviews, participatory observations, and case studies. This approach can provide a more in-depth view of pedagogical practices in everyday life and of the perceptions of indigenous educators and students themselves regarding educational processes.

It is recommended that comparative studies be developed to analyze pedagogical practices in different indigenous communities, with the aim of identifying educational models that are more effective in promoting interculturality and strengthening identity. This

approach can help to formulate broader guidelines for indigenous school education in Brazil, considering the cultural diversity that exists among indigenous peoples.

Furthermore, future research could explore the impact of public policies aimed at Indigenous school education, evaluating the effectiveness of programs such as RCNEI in practice and proposing adjustments based on empirical evidence. Studies aimed at teacher training are also crucial, especially with regard to training indigenous educators to act as cultural mediators.

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