

Amazonian Education And Its Challenges In Educating The Diversity Of Traditional Peoples.

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Abstract

Riverside education is a topic of extreme relevance in the Brazilian educational context, presenting a series of challenges and perspectives that deserve to be discussed. In the context of this debate, multicultural education emerges as a fundamental element for a more inclusive school education adapted to the cultural diversity present in riverside communities. Thus, this article intends to discuss riverine education, considering the challenges and perspectives of those involved. To do so, it uses several bibliographies on the subject. Therefore, after the analyses, it was evidenced that multicultural education presents itself as a relevant and necessary pedagogical approach for the promotion of quality education in riverside communities, helping to face the existing educational challenges and in the construction of more egalitarian and inclusive perspectives for all students.

Keywords: *Pedagogical approach Education of traditional people; Multiculturalism*

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I. Introduction

The challenges faced by riverside education are diverse and complex. Among them, the lack of adequate infrastructure in schools, the scarcity of pedagogical resources and the poor training of education professionals working in these regions stand out. In addition, geographical distance and difficulties in access make the teaching and learning process even more complex for riverside students.

Given this challenging scenario, the implementation of multicultural education presents itself as a promising alternative to overcome such obstacles. Multicultural education proposes the appreciation of the cultural diversity present in riverside communities, recognizing and respecting the different traditions, knowledge and practices of these populations.

In this sense, the inclusion of content that addresses local history, culture and traditions in pedagogical practices can contribute significantly to the construction of a more inclusive and contextualized education.

Furthermore, training teachers who are sensitive to the cultural specificities of riverside communities is essential to promote a welcoming school environment that respects diversity. Thus, this study aims to discuss riverside education, considering the challenges and perspectives of those involved.

II. Theoretical Framework

The Amazon Context

In this text, we start from the understanding that the Amazon is a region that is difficult to define due to the multiple interpretations that can be attributed to this term, which can refer to a hydrographic basin, a botanical area or a political-economic space. Depending on the criteria used for definition (geodesic, botanical or physiographic), its territorial extension can vary, increasing or decreasing according to the focus of interest, study or consideration (MOREIRA, 1960).

According to the hydrographic concept, Moreira (1960) highlights that the Amazon is represented by the river basin known as the Amazon basin, occupying approximately 7,000,000 km², being the largest group of rivers not only in South America, but also in the world. This region stands out for: a) the extension and volume of water in its basin; b) asymmetry in the distribution of tributaries, with the tributaries of the Amazon in the south being much larger than those in the north; c) presence of several political entities that directly participate in the region (nine political units in Brazil and seven on the continent); d) excellent navigability conditions, being of great economic, social and historical importance (MOREIRA, 1960).

Regarding the botanical concept, the author mentions that, due to the natural connection between fauna and flora, the Hylaea represents both a botanical and a faunal space. According to Moreira (1960), it is with its fauna and flora that the Amazon has aroused the greatest scientific interest, due to the large quantity of materials and possibilities for study in this territory. Some important characteristics of the Hylaea are: a) great diversity and richness of its fauna, in terms of shapes and colors; b) marked predominance of arboreal and aquatic species, differentiating itself in variety and quantity of individuals from other regions; c) perceptible homogeneity in the composition and distribution of species, from a geographical point of view.

According to Moreira (1960), the Amazon region is one of the natural regions of Brazil. This region is known as the Northern Region because it is part of the Brazilian North. Due to its rich vegetation, diverse fauna, large number of rivers and beautiful landscapes, the Amazon arouses great geographical interest in the country. However, the territorial delimitation of this region was due more to political than geographical issues. However, according to Moreira (1960), the Amazon is not only a region with specific geographical characteristics, but also a great economic potential to be explored in a technical and rational way. Many public policies in the Amazon are therefore adopted from an economic perspective. According to Chaves (2001), the public policies implemented in the region are influenced by the interests and strategies of capitalist expansion, directly affecting the way of life of traditional communities. For Chaves (2001), public policies in the Amazon follow logics that run counter to the interests of many local inhabitants, and are justified by the need to "develop" and "integrate" the region into the economic centers of the country and the world.

In line with this reasoning, Reis (1997) argues that, throughout the entire process of formation and development, the Amazon region was constantly considered a vast reserve of raw materials:

From the period in which the English, Dutch, French, Spanish and Portuguese, in military dispute and commercial competition, launched themselves into the great enterprise of discovering, penetrating and politically dominating the region, imposing European sovereignty on it and creating the emporium of raw materials that would satisfy the demands of the consumer markets of the Old World, to the present day, when Brazil itself sees the Amazon as its immense reserve of primary products essential to its journey in the field of industrialization (REIS, 1997, p. 13).

Reis (1997) also emphasizes that the Amazon has contributed to the material and spiritual well-being of the world, but adequate existential conditions have not been established for Amazonian communities to the same extent. Based on the aforementioned authors, it is possible to state that, from the colonial period to the present day, implemented public policies have addressed the Amazonian space without taking into account the ways of life and knowledge historically constructed.

This reveals a profound disrespect for the sociocultural mosaics that give life to the region. Thus, the Amazon should not be interpreted only as a physical, natural or human environment, but rather as a complex totality that encompasses natural, political, ideological and sociocultural dimensions, all intrinsically linked to the social relations between human beings and between them and nature.

III. Traditional Communities: Aspects For Discussion

The concept of community has been widely discussed in the Social Sciences, together with the notion of society, thus forming the most complex units in Sociology. They bring together social agents, combining and including institutions, groups and different segments. Weber (1973), when examining the concept of social

action, observes in detail the meanings of "social relationship". The author explains how a social relationship is called a "community relationship" and when it is called an "associative relationship":

A social relationship is called a "community relationship" when and to the extent that the attitude in social action - in the particular case or on average or in the pure type - rests on the subjective feeling of the participants of belonging (affectively or traditionally) to the same group.

A relationship is called an "associative relationship" when and to the extent that the attitude in social action rests on an adjustment or union of rationally motivated interests (with reference to values or ends). The associative relationship, as in the typical case, can rest especially (but not solely) on a rational agreement, by reciprocal declaration. Then the corresponding action, when it is rational, is oriented: a) in a rational manner with reference to values, by the belief in one's own commitment; b) in a rational manner with reference to ends, by the expectation of the loyalty of the other party (WEBER, 1973, p. 25).

Weber's statement confirms the inherent trait of all social interaction: the tension between opposing values and ideas that intertwine and are the basis for the formation of the ethos and worldview of a specific social group.

Tönnies (1947) created a theory that differentiates two types of social relations: *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, which we can understand as community and society. For Tönnies (1947), *Gemeinschaft* represents old, homogeneous societies with local and intimate relationships. On the other hand, *Gesellschaft* represents urban societies, with impersonal and pragmatic relationships. These distinctions are seen as ideal types and can coexist, but *Gemeinschaft* is more common in rural areas.

According to Tönnies (1947), community is distinct from society, being characterized by the "real and organic life" that unites people in a reciprocal way. The bonds formed are based on kinship, neighborhood and friendship. Everything that is shared, intimate and experienced together is considered community life. In his analysis of the concept of community, Gusfield (1975) identified two main uses: a) referring to territory and b) referring to relationships. The author highlights qualitative and character aspects of social relations, without mentioning location. Gusfield (1975) highlights, as a central point of his analysis, the relational perspective of community. For the author, community represents a fundamental analytical tool in understanding social transformations both in Western societies and in "new nations". His approach to Gusfield's (1975) studies is essential, since the author defines a community not by its geographic location, but rather by the social interactions that develop within the community context.

Based on the authors cited, it is understood that traditional communities in the Amazon have their own way of caring for nature and organizing themselves socially. Thus, the community is seen as a place where social identities and shared projects are constructed, and where diversity is valued. It is in this environment that social relationships, particular lifestyles and appropriate ways of managing local resources are consolidated, highlighting the importance of culture.

Discussions about culture have been fundamental in anthropological studies over the last century. This topic has been the frequent subject of scientific analysis, justifying the vast bibliographic production aimed at deepening its concept. According to Laraia (1999), Edward Tylor was the first to define the concept of culture at the end of the 19th century.

Tylor used the Germanic term *Kultur* (which expressed all the spiritual aspects of a community) and the French word *Civilization* (referring to the material achievements of a people) to create the English term *Culture*. According to Laraia (1999), from a comprehensive ethnographic perspective, culture consists of a complex of knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs and skills or habits acquired by individuals as part of a society. Laraia (1999) emphasizes that the definition of culture proposed by Tylor encompassed in a single word all the potentialities of human achievement, highlighting the aspect of cultural learning as opposed to the idea of innate acquisition through biological mechanisms. Boas (1896 apud LARAIA, 1999) made an important contribution to the expansion of the concept of culture by highlighting historical research. According to this author, each culture follows its own trajectories due to the different historical events it faces. Laraia (1999, p. 46) clarifies that:

Man is the result of the cultural environment in which he was socialized. He is the heir of a long cumulative process, which reflects the knowledge and experience acquired by the numerous generations that preceded him. The appropriate and creative manipulation of this cultural heritage allows for innovations and inventions. These are not, therefore, the product of an isolated action of a genius, but the result of the effort of an entire community (LARAIA, 1999, p. 46).

Clifford Geertz (1989) analyzes culture as symbolic systems, which he considers not as a set of concrete behaviors, but as a set of control mechanisms to guide people's behavior. According to Geertz (1989), all human beings have the innate capacity to receive a program, and this program is what we call culture. This led the author to conclude that although we are born with the capacity to live several lives, we end up living only one. According to Geertz (1989), humanity can be considered and understood as a symbolic being. Thus, human behavior is also seen as symbolic action. For the author, the specific codes that guide the actions of

certain groups or communities, as well as the interpretations of nature made by these populations, may not be understood by other groups or by society in general.

Therefore, it is essential to seek meaning, explanation or understanding of social expressions that seem enigmatic at first glance. Ruth Benedict (apud LARAIA, 1999) follows the same line of thought, stating that culture functions as a lens through which people see the world. For her, individuals from different cultures use different lenses and, consequently, have different views of things. Based on the authors' discussion, it is understood that worldviews, moral values, social relationships and behaviors are shaped by the cultural heritage of a given society. Analyzing the culture of traditional Amazonian communities is essential, since they have a cultural system that integrates man with nature, allowing the sustainable management of natural resources through ethnoknowledge. Regarding the culture of Amazonian communities, Morán (1990) says that it represents the synthesis of knowledge produced and assimilated by society about the environment in which it lives, being mediated by the relationship between men and their interactions with nature. Thus, the relationships between man and nature are influenced by culture.

To understand how traditional communities use natural resources, it is important not only to know the classifications and categories that represent knowledge about plants and animals, but also a whole set of beliefs, myths and rituals that shape lifestyle based on the perception and use of resources, since these forms of meaning are deeply linked to cultural organization. Regarding the importance of the culture of traditional communities for the preservation of biodiversity, Posey (1980) argues that:

[...] traditional peoples (Indians, caboclos, riverside dwellers, rubber tappers, quilombolas) have vast experience in the use and conservation of biological and ecological diversity that is currently being destroyed [...]. Traditional peoples, in general, affirm that, for them, 'nature' is not only an inventory of natural resources, but represents the spiritual and cosmic forces that make life what it is (POSEY, 1980, p. 149-150).

According to Leff (2000), these traditional resource management practices continue to be passed on in different ethnic and geographic contexts as real strategies for cultural survival and sustainable development. In traditional communities, it is possible to observe a strong cultural component, in which men construct their symbolic representations, their mental maps that guide their actions. These representations are means by which men, when establishing connections, recreate their world, strengthening or transforming the worlds of their ancestors (GEERTZ, 1989).

IV. Traditional Communities: Knowledge And Skills

The Amazon is home to several ethnic groups and traditional communities that have developed over time as a result of the various processes of colonization and miscegenation that have occurred in the region. It can be said that the Amazonian people are the result of cultural exchanges between different groups and ethnicities. This interaction has provided a heritage that is reflected in different ways in the daily lives of the Amazonian people, influencing work relations, education, religion, legends, eating habits and family structure. Among the various social agents that make up the Amazonian diversity, the most notable are indigenous peoples, riverside communities, fishermen, extractivists, quilombolas, migrants, among others. According to Chaves (2009), each of these groups has its own sociocultural and political identity, with specific forms of survival and political organization, which are related to: a) their ethnic origins, through the adoption and adaptation of knowledge and techniques according to their needs; b) the complex patterns of organization of production and management of natural resources; c) the struggle to guarantee survival and access to social goods and services; d) the activities carried out, such as agriculture, hunting, fishing, gathering and extraction, carried out according to their demands and the available natural resources.

In this context, it is argued that the *modus vivendi* and political structure of traditional riverside communities are characterized and guided by an identity based on sociocultural values and the socio-historical dynamics of the Amazon region. The predominant knowledge in traditional communities is inherited from the indigenous populations that inhabit the region, dating back to periods prior to the colonization process. The influence of other groups, especially the Portuguese, was responsible for the emergence of the caboclo culture (MORÁN, 1990).

According to Morán (1990), caboclo culture began with the arrival of the Portuguese (1500 to 1850), followed by a period of cultural and economic mixing based on rubber extraction (1850 to 1970). Morán's study (1990) shows that the caboclo can be a riverside dweller, rubber or nut collector, farmer, canoeist and fisherman, generally supporting themselves with these activities. According to Chaves (2001), the riverside inhabitants of the Amazon are recognized as a traditional population, mainly through their communication and representations of places and times of life in relation to nature. The relationship with water and their systems of classification of fauna and flora make up a significant cultural heritage. The author emphasizes that these individuals are socially identified as riverside dwellers.

[...] they live in community groups with several families, located, as the term itself suggests, along the rivers and their tributaries (lakes). The spatial location in the floodplain areas, in the ravines, the socio-historical

knowledge that determines the singular mode of production, the way of life within the riverside communities, contribute to determining the sociocultural identity of these actors (CHAVES, 2001, p. 78).

In this way, traditional riverside communities represent the locus in which riverside dwellers establish their social relationships, perceiving a deep meaning in the river, which presents itself as an essential complement to their lives, or even as their very essence, as described by Cruz (1999, p. 04).

[...] River and riverside dweller are parts of a whole. If the river provides its food, it fertilizes its banks as the waters rise and fall. The riverside dweller offers its protection, through its representations (its myths) such as the mother of waters, the great snake that eats the unwary (who do not respect nature) and so many others, which are born from this humanization of nature and naturalization of man (CRUZ, 1999, p. 4).

The river even influences the construction of riverside dwellers' homes, which always face the riverbank, making it possible for them to be seen by boats traveling on the Amazon rivers. This shows that the river holds a significant symbolic meaning for riverside dwellers.

Riverside communities also have a unique way of life in several aspects, including the use of the land, the collective management of local resources guided by local knowledge, in a communicative and cooperative approach. This way of life is reflected in social work relations and in ties of comradeship and kinship. In the Amazonian reality, these aspects take on specific regional singularities (CHAVES, 2001).

Traditional communities ensure their social and physical reproduction through the management of local resources, developing community organization strategies to face the difficulties arising from the lack of social goods and services, which constitutes an intrinsic capacity of these communities.

These strategies are established through solidarity and mutual cooperation among community members, based on traditional knowledge that allows disease to be treated using medicinal plants, replace a doctor with a midwife, and overcome the lack of equipment. In this way, collective activities represent the consolidation of kinship and compadrio ties, a distinctive feature of traditional communities. Such practices aim to strengthen the social, political, and cultural organization of traditional populations.

V. Education Carried Out With Traditional Peoples

Riverside education is an extremely important topic when it comes to valuing and preserving the cultures and traditions of the traditional peoples who inhabit the riverside regions of Brazil. This population group, historically marginalized and often forgotten, has a cultural wealth and ancestral knowledge that deserves to be recognized and respected. Thus, the implementation of education among riverside peoples is presented as an essential way to promote the sustainable development and social inclusion of these communities.

One of the challenges faced in promoting riverside education is related to the precarious infrastructure of schools located in riverside regions, which often lack basic resources such as electricity, internet and adequate teaching materials. In addition, geographical distance and difficulty in accessing these communities also represent obstacles to be overcome in order to guarantee full access to quality education. One of the challenges faced in promoting riverside education is related to the precarious infrastructure of schools located in riverside regions, which often lack basic resources such as electricity, internet and adequate teaching materials. In addition, geographical distance and difficulty in accessing these communities also represent obstacles to be overcome in order to guarantee full access to quality education.

To overcome these challenges, it is essential to implement public policies specifically aimed at valuing riverside education, considering the cultural and social particularities of these communities. In this sense, training teachers who are capable of working effectively with riverside peoples, respecting and integrating their traditional knowledge into the school curriculum, is essential to guarantee an inclusive and quality education.

Chaves (2001) highlights the importance of education as a tool for social transformation when implemented with riverside peoples. According to the author, valuing the culture and traditional knowledge of these communities is essential for the development of more inclusive and effective educational practices. Riverside education, when considering the local specificities and needs of these peoples, can contribute significantly to the promotion of citizenship and improvement of the quality of life.

Reis (1997) complements this view by emphasizing the importance of the active participation of riverside communities in the educational process. For the author, the construction of a truly transformative education requires the involvement of local residents, valuing their knowledge, traditions and ways of life. In this way, riverside education becomes more meaningful and aligned with the realities and aspirations of these populations.

In turn, Laraia (1999) emphasizes the need for more inclusive public education policies that are sensitive to the demands of traditional peoples, such as riverside communities. The author highlights the importance of overcoming paternalistic and stereotypical views regarding these communities, promoting an education that respects and values their cultural identity. Riverside education, in this sense, should be based on intercultural dialogue and the promotion of respect for diversity.

In addition, the use of innovative educational technologies, such as distance learning and the use of interactive teaching materials, can expand access to knowledge and facilitate the learning process in riverside communities. Through partnerships between educational institutions, non-governmental organizations and public agencies, it is possible to promote joint actions that aim to strengthen riverside education and empower these communities.

Thus, providing education to riverside communities not only contributes to the preservation of local traditions and knowledge, but also represents an important instrument for promoting social inclusion, sustainable development and the appreciation of cultural diversity. It is necessary to recognize the importance of riverside education as a fundamental right of all Brazilian citizens, ensuring equal access to education and respect for the cultural plurality that characterizes our country.

In short, the approach to education implemented among riverside peoples, based on the reflections of Chaves (2001), Reis (1999) and Laraia (1999), highlights the importance of contextualized, participatory and inclusive educational practices. By valuing local knowledge, promoting community participation and respecting cultural diversity, riverside education can become a powerful instrument of empowerment and sustainable development for these traditional populations.

VI. CONCLUSION

In the riverside communities of the Amazon, a relationship of respect between man and nature can be observed, since the riverside communities do not separate man from the natural environment. This approach enables the sustainable management of natural resources, through traditional knowledge, without degrading the ecosystem. The cultural structure of these communities presents a particular logic that deserves to be investigated in more depth in future studies, given the inestimable value it carries with it. Each social group reflects the uniqueness of its own culture, and cannot be attributed to geographic, genetic or ecological determinisms.

It is, therefore, a socio-historical construction that carries with it symbolic systems, meanings and modes of appropriation unique to each community. It is important to emphasize that the observations made in this analysis do not endorse, at any time, the romantic notion of the "noble savage".

This conception portrays such agents as helpless victims or as ardent defenders of nature, exempt from any impact on it. The position adopted here concerns the understanding that the protection of nature should not be done to the detriment of the communities living in conservation areas, since, just like the environment, the knowledge of traditional populations also deserves to be valued. Based on the concept of Chaves et al (2009), it is understood that ecologically viable development is only achievable when it is socially equitable.

In the context of traditional communities in the Amazon, there is an urgent need to expand research that prioritizes the understanding of the *modus vivendi* of these groups, so that the analyses lead to the adoption of public policies aimed at promoting socio-environmental sustainability, while respecting the right of these populations to preserve their territories with socio-cultural and political autonomy

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