

**THE INDIGENOUS SCHOOL IN BRAZILIAN LAW: GOVERNING PRINCIPLES OF THE INDIGENOUS SCHOOL**

## THE INDIGENOUS SCHOOL IN BRAZILIAN LAW: GOVERNING PRINCIPLES OF THE INDIGENOUS SCHOOL

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## SUMMARY

This article presents an excerpt from the Doctoral Thesis that investigates HIGHER EDUCATION: THE TRAINING OF INDIGENOUS TEACHERS IN THE PEDAGOGY COURSE – NATIONAL BASIC EDUCATION TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM (PARFOR), IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SANTO ANTÔNIO DO IÇÁ – AMAZONAS. The study addresses the insertion of the school in the Brazilian indigenous space where the school among indigenous communities acquires a new meaning, starting to be considered as a means of guaranteeing access to general knowledge without having to deny their cultural specificities and ethnic identities. The proposal for a differentiated indigenous school represents a major novelty in the country's educational system and requires responsible bodies and institutions to define new mechanisms, concepts and dynamics so that these schools are effectively benefited and incorporated with their inclusion in the official network, and respected in their particularities.

**Key words:**Principles. Indigenous School. Brazil

## RESUME

This article presents an extract from the Doctoral Thesis that investigates HIGHER EDUCATION: THE TRAINING OF INDIGENOUS TEACHERS IN THE PEDAGOGY COURSE – NATIONAL PROGRAM FOR TRAINING OF BASIC EDUCATION TEACHERS (PARFOR), IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SAN-TO ANTÔNIO DO IÇÁ – AMAZONAS. The study deals with the insertion of the school in the Brazilian indigenous space where the school among indigenous communities acquires a new meaning, starting to be considered as a means to guarantee access to general knowledge without having to deny their cultural specificities and their ethnic identities. The proposal for a differentiated indigenous school represents a great novelty in the country's educational system and requires that the responsible bodies and institutions define new mechanisms, concepts and dynamics so that these schools are effectively benefited and incorporated with their inclusion in the official network, and respected in their particularities.

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## SUMMARY

This article presents an excerpt from the Doctoral Thesis that investigates HIGHER EDUCATION: THE TRAINING OF INDIGENOUS TEACHERS IN THE PEDAGOGY COURSE – NATIONAL PROGRAM

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FOR TRAINING BASIC EDUCATION TEACHERS (PARFOR), IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SANTO ANTÔNIO DO IÇÁ – AMAZONAS. The study deals with the insertion of the school in the Brazilian indigenous space where the school among indigenous communities acquires a new meaning, starting to be contemplated as a means of guaranteeing access to general knowledge without having to deny their cultural specificities and their ethnic identities. The proposal for a differentiated indigenous school represents a great novelty in the country's educational system and requires that responsible bodies and institutions define new mechanisms, concepts and dynamics so that these schools are effectively benefited and incorporated with their inclusion in the official network, and respected in their particularities.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The indigenous school process in Brazil had its origins in Portuguese colonization. Above all, we sought to evangelize the people using the traditional system of the Church, through its Orders and Congregations.

They imposed not only their own culture, but also a system of living and celebrating faith, which led to the devastation of indigenous cultures and their beliefs, leaving an indelible mark of their presence in the country's educational history.

The Portuguese colonizers implemented an educational policy for indigenous peoples based on the educational precepts of the Western world and little by little the remnants of these peoples were subjected to an educational process that was indifferent to them.

Although the indigenous people constituted the ideal contingent by origin and quantity to provide slave labor, this objective was not easily achieved, as they offered resistance and were seen as “savages”, in need of “pacification”. To achieve their goals, Jesuit missionaries traveled to villages in search, above all, of children. As they did not have fixed and adequate educational facilities, these movements were called missions (SCHMITZ, 1994).

Schools, mainly colleges and seminaries that operated throughout the colony, acted to ensure the reproduction of slave and segmented society.

With this, the Catholic Church not only assumed hegemony in civil society, but also penetrated, in a certain way, into political society through this peaceful weapon, which was education, according to Schmitz (1994). Thus, the Church, through educational institutions, spread to various parts of the territory, marking its dominance.

This ethnocentric position legitimized the “civilizing” action, which aimed to integrate indigenous peoples into the Western and Christian society of the time. Until the expulsion of the Jesuits by the Marquis of Pombal, it was up to religious missionaries to fulfill the “civilizing” and educational task of spreading an education based on the practice of catechesis among the indigenous people.

From the point of view of colonial policy, the intention was to subject the Indians to the dictates of the Portuguese metropolis, to integrate them into the actions of their interests. Indigenous legislation, during this period, conjectured this aspect and was based on problems related to the shortage of labor, allowing the capture, catechization and enslavement of Indians.

## 2 Guiding principles of indigenous schools

The provision of school education programs for indigenous communities in Brazil has been driven, since the 16th century, by the catechization, civilization and forced integration of Indians into national society. From the Jesuit missionaries to the positivists of the Indian Protection Service, from catechetical teaching to bilingual teaching, the focus was one: denying difference, assimilating the Indians, making them become something different from what they were.

In this process, the institution of schools among indigenous groups has served as a tool to imposing the values of others and denying different identities, languages and cultures (GRUPIONI; MONTE, 2006).

The small size of the indigenous population, its dispersion and heterogeneity, the prediction of its disappearance as differentiated ethnic groups and the prospect of the need for integration of indigenous peoples into the national communion, considering them a transitory and destined ethnic and social category, made this particularly difficult, representing obstacles to the implementation of an educational policy of the Brazilian State that respected the worldview and way of life of these people.

Only in recent years has this situation begun to change. Organized civil society groups began to work with indigenous communities, seeking alternatives to the subjugation of these populations, such as

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guarantee of their territories and less violent forms of relationships and coexistence between them and other segments of national society (PIRES, 2017).

Different experiences emerged in various regions of Brazil, building specific educational projects for the sociocultural and historical realities of some indigenous communities, practicing interculturality and bilingualism and adapting to their different future projects (MATOS, 2010).

It is precisely from fragmented and localized experiences that a new model for introducing schools to indigenous communities was born. This model, fundamentally guided by the principles of respect for indigenous social organization and the appreciation of their mother tongues and the traditional knowledge and understanding of these peoples, has been incorporated in recent years by the Brazilian State.

Today, the various indigenous societies are aware that the school can be, within the dynamics of social and cultural restructuring, an instrument of self-strengthening, as well as a vehicle for acquiring universal knowledge.

In this context, the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution constitutes a milestone in the redefinition of relations between the Brazilian State and indigenous societies. It is worth highlighting the fact that the Federal Constitution guaranteed indigenous societies the right to a differentiated, specific, intercultural and bilingual school education, which was regulated by several legal texts.

It was understood that only in this way would it be possible to guarantee not only their physical survival, but also their ethnicity, repaying the social debt that Brazil accumulated with the original inhabitants of the territory (GRUPIONI; MONTE, 2006).

With the 1988 Constitution, Indians were no longer considered an endangered social category and began to be respected as differentiated ethnicities, with the right to maintain “[...] their social organization, customs, languages, beliefs and traditions” (article 231 of the Federal Constitution of 1988) (BRAZIL, 1988).

The same constitutional text, in its article 210, guarantees indigenous communities the use of their mother tongue and their learning processes, with the State being responsible for protecting the manifestations of indigenous cultures (article 215 of the Federal Constitution of Brazil of 1988) (BRASIL, 1988).

These constitutional provisions support the new National Educational Guidelines and Basic Law, which guarantee indigenous peoples, in articles 78 and 79, the provision of bilingual and intercultural school education. With these legal provisions, the Indian has guaranteed the right to a school with specific characteristics that seeks to value the traditional knowledge in force in their environment, providing them with tools to deal with contact with other societies (GRUPIONI; MONTE, 2006).

The paradigm shift in the concept of school education for indigenous societies was introduced by the 1988 Constitution, when education ceased to have the integrationist character supported by the Indian Statute (Law 6,001/1973) and began to assume the principle of recognition of socio-economic status, -diversity, development and maintenance of language. This led to a change in responsibilities in leading the delivery of indigenous education programs.

With Decree No. 26/1991, the exclusive mandate of the National Indian Foundation to conduct school education processes with indigenous societies was removed and the Ministry of Education and Sports, at the time, was responsible for coordinating the actions, as well as its execution with the States and municipalities. As a result of this decree and Ordinance No. 559/1991, the General Coordination of Support for Indigenous Schools and the Indigenous School Education Commission were created at the MEC, an advisor to this body, of an interinstitutional nature and with representation of indigenous teachers (SOUZA, 2016).

Since then, the MEC's work has been guided by the principle of recognizing and maintaining the sociocultural and linguistic diversity of indigenous societies. Recognizing the need to define the parameters of action of the various bodies, the aforementioned Committee prepared, supported by several innovative experiences, largely the result of alternative work by civil society organizations, the “Guidelines for the National Policy on School Education Indigenous” (1993). This document, which represents a landmark for indigenous school education in Brazil, establishes the principles for pedagogical practice in the context of cultural diversity.

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This is due to the fact that, today, Brazil, like other Latin American countries, recognizes that it is formed by the presence of different ethnicities, which have the right to maintain their cultural, historical and linguistic specificities.

Recent research indicates that today there are between 290,000 and 330,000 Indians on indigenous lands, forming around 210 different groups, speaking 170 different languages. There is no information about urbanized Indians, although many of them maintain their traditions and languages.

The policy developed by the MEC aims to ensure that indigenous peoples have a quality school,



that respects their cultural specificities and guarantees their full participation in the country's future projects. Although, to date, there is no systematic study with precise data, it is possible to draw a profile of indigenous school education in the country. It is known that the provision of educational programs to indigenous peoples in Brazil is still incipient, characterized by discontinuous and fragmented experiences due to the actions of different institutions and bodies, following different guidelines and carrying out particular actions.

However, it is thanks to these initiatives that the school is now present in the daily lives of many indigenous societies, although it does not correspond to the school model that several indigenous peoples demand. However, despite growing, the number of indigenous teachers is still small.

In general, there is no adequate training for teachers who work in indigenous schools, whether they are indigenous or not, which allows them to acquire knowledge for teaching within a school proposal that has specificity, diversity, interculturality and bilingualism as principles (PIRES, 2017).

Few schools are recognized as indigenous: most of them are considered rural schools or extension classes. Another point common to indigenous schools is the lack of adequate and specific school material in the mother tongue of different ethnicities (PIRES, 2017).

The current situation reflects discontinuity, fragmentation and disarticulation, which the Ministry of Education has sought to overcome through the standardization of the principles that should govern educational provision for these people.

The right to a differentiated school, with teaching in the mother tongue and respect for correct learning methods, is expressed in the Federal Constitution of 1988. Later, in the 90s, the principles of indigenous schools were addressed in the National Curriculum Reference for Indigenous Schools (1998), drawing attention to their belonging to the national education system and to the need for a new public policy that meets and respects the linguistic, cultural and intellectual heritage of indigenous peoples.

### 3. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The principles for developing school projects in indigenous areas are effective participation of indigenous communities, based on the development of specific curricula, with school calendars that respect the traditional activities of different groups, with different teaching methodologies, with the incorporation of specific processes in each person's learning and with the implementation of school curricula and flexible learning assessment processes.

Furthermore, it is extremely important to carry out specialization courses for indigenous teachers, as well as the publication of teaching material in indigenous languages and Portuguese. These were the guidelines of the work currently developed by the Ministry of Education.

Assuming its responsibilities in coordinating indigenous educational actions in the country, the Ministry of Education and Sports proposed a policy that guarantees respect for specificity and ethnic diversity. This policy was detailed in the document "Guidelines for the National Policy on Indigenous School Education", the text of which is organized around some principles and guidelines, highlighted below.

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