

## "Preferably Quilombola": At the crossroads of territory, teaching, and Education Policy for Quilombola Communities

*"Preferencialmente Quilombola": a encruzilhada território, docência e política de Educação Escolar Quilombola*

*"Preferiblemente Quilombola": La encrucijada entre territorio, docencia y política de la Educación Escolar Quilombola*

Andréia Martins da Cunha <sup>1</sup>  
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais

Shirley Aparecida de Miranda <sup>2</sup>  
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais

Débora Rodrigues Azevedo<sup>3</sup>  
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais

**Abstract:** This article aims to reflect on the shifts caused by the implementation of an educational policy focused on Quilombola Education (EEQ), which, in its political framework, opposes the current school model by demanding the coexistence of other logics, other rationalities, and how this policy is based on the field of teaching. The "preferably quilombola" prerogative, established in the context of the EEQ policy in Minas Gerais, brings to the scene tensions and conflicts that focus on the confiscation of an identity and the insurgent process of its resignification. Being quilombola, being a teacher, a quilombola teacher, more than disputing a functional space in the school institution, speaks of the existence of an identity in the political field, an existence in dispute. It is a dispute that marks the process of recognition of quilombola communities, their territories, and territorialities.

**Keywords:** Quilombo Territory; Quilombo School; Territorialized Teaching.

**Resumo:** Este artigo busca refletir sobre os deslocamentos provocados pela implantação de uma política educacional voltada para a **Educação Escolar Quilombola** (EEQ) que traz, em seu marco político, a contraposição do modelo escolar vigente pela demanda de coexistência de outras lógicas, outras racionalidades. Indaga-se como essa política se assenta no campo das docências. A prerrogativa "preferencialmente quilombola", instituída no contexto da política de EEQ de Minas Gerais, traz, à cena, tensões e conflitos que enfocam o confisco de uma identidade e o processo insurgente de sua resignificação. Ser quilombola, ser professora, professor quilombola, mais que disputar um espaço funcional na instituição escola, diz da existência de uma identidade no campo político, uma existência em disputa. É uma disputa que

<sup>1</sup> Doutora em Educação, Conhecimento e Inclusão Social pela Faculdade de Educação da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais - FAE/UFMG. Prefeitura de Belo Horizonte - PBH, Belo Horizonte - MG Brasil. E-mail: [martinsdacunhaandreia@gmail.com](mailto:martinsdacunhaandreia@gmail.com); Lattes: <https://lattes.cnpq.br/9205837767570158>; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-5761-5835>.

<sup>2</sup> Doutora em Educação, Conhecimento e Inclusão Social, pela Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais; Professora da Faculdade de Educação da UFMG. E-mail: [smiranda@ufmg.br](mailto:smiranda@ufmg.br); Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/3847776763284981>; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8312-2262>.

<sup>3</sup> Mestre em Educação, Conhecimento e Inclusão Social, pela Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais - FAE/UFMG. Doutoranda na Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais - UFMG, Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais - MG Brasil. E-mail: [deborarodrigues@ufmg.br](mailto:deborarodrigues@ufmg.br); Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/2096088728914695>; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-3473-629X>.

marca o processo de reconhecimento das comunidades quilombolas, seus territórios e territorialidades.

**Palavras-chave:** Território Quilombola; Escola Quilombola; Docência Territorializada.

**Resumen:** Este artículo busca reflexionar sobre los desplazamientos provocados por la implementación de una política educativa orientada hacia la Educación Escolar Quilombola (EEQ) que trae, en su marco político, la contraposición del modelo escolar vigente por la demanda de coexistencia de otras lógicas, otras racionalidades y cómo esta política se asienta en el campo de las docencias. La prerrogativa “preferentemente quilombola”, instituida en el contexto de la política de EEQ de Minas Gerais, trae a escena tensiones y conflictos que enfocan la confiscación de una identidad y el proceso insurgente de su resignificación. Ser quilombola, ser profesor, profesor quilombola, más que disputar un espacio funcional en la institución escolar, habla de la existencia de una identidad en el campo político, una existencia en disputa. Es una disputa que marca el proceso de reconocimiento de las comunidades quilombolas, sus territorios y territorialidades.

**Palabras clave:** Territorio Quilombola; Escuela Quilombola; Docencia territorializada.

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## Introduction

In Brazil, Quilombos are an experience of the fight for freedom and the affirmation of African ancestry. For centuries, the quilombos were tied to the bonds of colonialism-racism and were therefore persecuted, dispossessed, belittled, and consigned to the historical past. Emancipation and the conquest of rights follow in the veins of the constant struggle of the black and Quilombola movements.

It is in this context of fighting for rights that the quilombola school education modality is inserted, instituted by CNE/CEB Resolution No. 07/2010 with details defined by CNE/CEB Resolution No. 08/2012, which established the National Curriculum Guidelines for Quilombola School Education in Basic Education.

With the understanding that the social demands of the Black and Quilombola movements for the right to education highlight the need to break with the colonialist nature of the school and its guiding theories, we understand that the school institution represents, especially in countries with a colonial heritage, the equipment responsible for transmitting Eurocentric values based on the hierarchization of knowledge and social and cultural norms that privilege aspects of whiteness and subordinate the knowledge and socio-cultural expressions of other ethnic and racial matrices. Quilombola School Education (EEQ), therefore, is part of the social struggles for the historical and political recognition of quilombola communities and is also a demand that denounces an educational system that is

made up of pedagogical theories and school models that silence other epistemologies and other pedagogies coming from “other cultures, identities and knowledge” (Arroyo, 2017).

The EEQ also heralds reflection on the educational action of the Quilombola Movement which, by demanding a specific modality for school education in the communities, challenges the notion of the right to education and, by questioning the current organization of basic education, renounces the colonialist and abyssal structures under which education is organized, acting to re-educate society from an anti-racist perspective. This article seeks to shed light on how this interpellation creates policies that guide the implementation of the modality and whether these interpellations carry the potential for the teaching constitution of other curricular and didactic-pedagogical repertoires. Reflecting on the shifts caused by the implementation of an educational policy aimed at the EEQ which, in its political framework, opposes the current school model by demanding the coexistence of other logics and other rationalities and how this policy is based on the field of teaching are aspects that we will address in this article. We mobilize reflection on the consequences of the definition contained in Art. 48 of the National Curricular Guidelines for Quilombola School Education in Basic Education, according to which the EEQ should preferably be led by teachers belonging to quilombola communities. What is the scope of this preference for enforcing quilombola rights?

Considering that the school institution existed in the quilombos before the right to a specific type of education, led by professionals who do not belong to the communities, how do they relate to this recently instituted teaching? This article reflects on these issues from the intersection of two studies carried out in the same field, at the same time, but by researchers with different enunciations and who address the quilombola territory differently. The research was marked by dialog and the coexistence of perspectives on the territory, based on a cooperative exercise between “insiders” and “outsiders” (Santos, 2019). The articulation of the perspective of a Quilombola researcher who has lived in and belongs to the territory and the perspective of a black researcher who does not belong to the territory and who has professional experience in the field of public education policies. The territory of Pinhões, a quilombola community located in Minas Gerais, was thought of in the horizontality that comes from the reflection of distinct and confluent points of view, which favored the construction of data that subsidized the research underlying this article.

Interviewing teachers at the Padre João de Santo Antônio School in Pinhões - Santa Luzia - MG was the methodological strategy chosen in the research itinerary that resulted in this work. This stage of the research took place in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which required adjustments to the research procedures, making it necessary to adapt the interview scripts and how the interviews were conducted. The interviews were therefore

conducted using video calls and Google Meet. The then-principal of the school and five teachers who worked or had worked at the school in the years before the research were interviewed. We used the designation “teacher”, followed by a number, to indicate the interviewees' speeches and thus better preserve the identity of the people who contributed to this investigation. Later, when the context became favorable, visits were made to the community by the Quilombola researcher. This aspect gave the collaborative perspective of this study a tone of greater dialog with the community's experiences.

The article is structured in three sections, starting with this introduction. In the next section, we will discuss the theoretical bases that support this reflection, as well as the proposed analytical model. Next, we will look at the case of the political construction of the modality in the context of the Minas Gerais state education network. Finally, we will look at the materialization of this policy in the context of a school in quilombola territory, focusing on the teaching performance at the Pinhões school.

### **Education of confluences: territory, teaching and public policies**

We understand that the EEQ is at the confluence, at the crossroads (Rufino, 2019) between the processes of recognizing convergent identities, the struggles of black communities, and the formulation of a specific educational policy for quilombola territory. Recognition and representation express two points that meet at the crossroads from which the idea of a quilombola form of education arises. It is at the crossroads of the social fights and the institutional designs proposed by the Brazilian state for education that the invisibility that used to predominate in curricular content, as well as the silences that operate in didactic-pedagogical dynamics, begin to demand our vision and require us to listen in search of the just security of the right to education. At the “crossroads” at which the modality is situated, as a public educational policy, relationships also emerge marked by tensions between school and territory, which question the political-pedagogical organization of educational institutions and which demand that teachers, in their pedagogical work, establish new repertoires for professional performance, or at least question the repertoires established in teacher training and practice based on what is known as regular education.

The EEQ modality has been constituted in the midst of power games and the constitution of government agendas favorable to the inclusion of its guiding principles in their education systems. The formatting of these favorable agendas is the result of micro-policies (Arretche, 2003) that coexist in the formal bureaucratic system and, in the case of social public policies, are tensioned by the struggles of social movements and the

political dynamics of the quilombola communities themselves. The Black Movement, as a “political subject that produces and is the product of diverse social experiences” (Gomes, 2017, p. 28), broadens the concept of public policy and political agendas by turning demands into formative processes that put pressure on normative structures and government management in the field of basic education.

Figure 1 - Triad: public education policies, quilombola territory and teaching skills<sup>4</sup>



Source: collective elaboration, 2022.

The axes “educational public policies”, “quilombola territory” and “teaching” are related when we think about the process of establishing the EEQ modality. They are concepts that guide the reflection proposed here and materialize in a conceptual triad with analytical potential that highlights the constitutive process of the modality. They are concepts highlighted in the National Curriculum Guidelines for Quilombola School Education (DCNEEQ), especially articles 31 and 32, which deal with the political pedagogical project (PPP), and articles 34, 35 and 38, which deal with the curriculum inquilombola schools. The categories highlighted as axes, according to our understanding, coexist imbricated with each other, forming a conceptual triad in which

<sup>4</sup> 4 NT: The red part reads “Quilombola Territory”, the orange part reads “Teaching” and the blue one “Public Policies”  
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the notion of quilombola territory plays an articulating role because the EEQ modality was constituted from the political presence of quilombola territories.

Although public educational policies have advanced, especially since the 2000s, as a result of the actions of the black and quilombola movements, understanding diversity and its full inclusion in educational systems still requires reflection and reconfiguration. This is what we observed in the political context of Minas Gerais between 2015 and 2019, a period in which the state's education portfolio was coordinated by a black woman linked to the Black Movement, an aspect that, as described in Cunha (2022), boosted the opening up of the political agenda to the quilombola agenda. The EEQ is therefore a right in dispute for the communities, as are the struggles for legal, social, historical, and cultural recognition of quilombola communities (Miranda, 2016).

Understanding the challenges and conflicts experienced by the communities is relevant to research into educational processes in quilombola communities. Research into the relationship between education and quilombo developed in the early 2000s showed how much the school acted as an obstacle to the processes of inserting elements of the memory, identity, culture, struggles, and resistance of these communities into the school context (Silva; Regis; Miranda, 2018). At the same time, this research has highlighted how school education appears strategically in the context of social disputes over the historical and political recognition of quilombola communities.

As described in Cunha (2020), education research on EEQ published between 2015 and 2019 showed that teaching in schools situated in quilombola communities is crossed by the ambivalence experienced in the communities concerning the conflicts inherent in legal recognition, the processes of incursion into the memories, culture, and tradition of the communities and the recognition of local knowledge throughout the process of community recognition. In addition, the institutionalization of the teaching modality located between compliance with the national curriculum and the requirements presented by the Guidelines for Quilombola Education raises new pedagogical demands for the organization of teaching in these schools.

In the interstice between the school and the territory, there is a complex negotiation between each individual who is at the school, in terms of institutional relations, which mark different moments in the struggle over educational policy for the EEQ. In our opinion, this negotiation reveals the community's agency around the right to education - an aspect originally observed in Azevedo's research (2020) - and heralds the process of territorialization of the school and the teaching profession. The multiple ways in which individuals from outside the community disregard or take for themselves and their

professional practice the experiences of the territory and how teachers belonging to the community translate their quilombola identity into their pedagogical practice are aspects that characterize teaching in quilombola territory.

### **The “preferably quilombola” prerogative**

In 2017, the Minas Gerais State Department of Education published guidelines for quilombola school education. The “preferably quilombola” prerogative present in the text of the state regulations for organizing the teaching staff, management (director and vice-director), basic education teaching assistant (ATB), and basic education assistant (ASB) in schools, is a key point in the policy established in the state of Minas Gerais during the period under analysis. This prerogative is rooted in the National Guidelines for Quilombola School Education, in article 8, item IV, and brings a discussion about belonging and identity into the political sphere.

Resolution SEE No. 2945, of March 18, 2016, is a regulation that pays attention to the specificities of the process of choosing civil servants for the position of principal and vice-principal to work in state schools located in quilombola territories. In Minas Gerais, in the absence of a public competition to fill the vacancies, the appointment process in the state network was set up as a temporary organization for the composition of the teaching staff and other school staff. Thus, the resolution inaugurated a material and symbolic shift in the staff of quilombola schools. Being a quilombola or belonging to a quilombola community was defined as the preferred criterion for appointing civil servants to work in state schools in quilombola communities.

The resolution does not discard the processes already instituted for this purpose in previous legislation, nor does it infringe on the constitutional right to enter the public service employing a public examination, but the category “preferably quilombola” is added to the text of the guidelines, thus placing professionals who belong to a quilombola community in a better position in the ranking. In a direct reading of the impacts of the inclusion of the “preferably quilombola” category in the guidelines for hiring civil servants for public schools in Minas Gerais, we can see that there are a considerable number of teachers and basic education technical assistants (ATB) responsible for general services in schools, who previously did not work in the schools in their community, now do. This same process gave visibility in the field of participatory management of quilombola schools to community associations, which through Annex III of SEE Resolution No. 3,677 of January 5, 2018, began to contribute directly to the process of validating quilombola self-declarations.

As Miranda and Silva (2020) emphasize, the “preferential” character adopted by CNE/CEB Resolution No. 8/2012, and included in the resolutions for appointments to the Minas Gerais State Education Network, reinforces the strategic place occupied by these professionals for the implementation of the modality, and also shows us points of tension that point to characteristics specific to the ambivalence of quilombola territories, which the field of public policy has yet to address.

The political intention adopted by SEE/MG to consider quilombola identity and territorial belonging as criteria in its internal designation process stems from the process of implementing state guidelines. It represents a normative shift concerning the structuring of the teaching modality, and also a strategy to boost the construction of the EEQ. However, the standardization of processes that affect quilombola territories highlights the relationships established within the communities, often unsuspected by public management. Aspects that tell of the trajectory of these communities in terms of their constitution of identity and their processes of consolidating their belonging and bond with a territory that becomes territoriality, based on political, social, and cultural clashes and their relationship with the historical past and the present. This is what we observed in the first process set up by the resolution guiding the choice of principals and the appointment of teachers, SEE Resolution No. 2945 of March 18, 2016. Quilombola identity is summoned by the state to form part of a bureaucratic process, but it is the community itself, in the form of its association, that must validate this process. By being summoned by the government, quilombola associations are performing a function that had not been assigned to them by the community: certifying their belonging to the government. The consequences of this measure for the Pinhões community are brought up by the teachers through reports that reveal tensions, disagreements, and fissures in relations between community residents (Cunha, 2022).

The pedagogical and curricular organization of the Padre João de Santo Antônio State School is based on national and state regulations for the EEQ modality. Since 2016, the school's teaching and management staff has been based on the logic of belonging to the community expressed in state educational legislation. The movement induced by state policy has had repercussions not only on school relations but also on social relations in the quilombola community and points to other analytical perspectives about the quilombola school in between. This understanding helps us to read the EEQ policy in the Pinhões territory. The interviews conducted with teachers who worked or worked at EEPAJOSA after the EEQ modality was instituted brought elements that reinforce this understanding of a school in the territory that makes the political and historical transit of being “in” and being “of” the territory. This political and historical transit also guides the way teachers talk about themselves, the school, and the community of Pinhões.



Figure 2 - School-territory-teaching connection<sup>5</sup>

Source: Collective elaboration, 2022.

When invited to reflect on their place as teachers at EEPAJOSA, the teachers interviewed took their relationship with the territory as their starting point. Thus, belonging to the territory and professional career mark the way these teachers position themselves in education in the quilombola territory. In narrating their experiences as teachers in Pinhões, the interviewees also bring in aspects of the community's social and political struggles, as well as the culture, religiosity, and traditions of the territory, from the perspective of their ties to Pinhões. The analysis carried out here is organized based on the keys of reading, belonging, and trajectory, seeking in these keys the aspects related to the territorialities of Pinhões. Concerning belongingness, we observed different relationships between quilombola teachers from the community itself or from another quilombola community and non-quilombola teachers. Regarding trajectory, we noticed aspects in the narratives of quilombola teachers that reveal difficulties in accessing school education and how these difficulties relate to the very history of the school's presence in the community.

<sup>5</sup> 5 NT: The orange part reads “teachers who are not quilombolas, but live in the community”, the blue one reads: “teachers who are not quilombolas and do not live in the community”, the brown part reads “teachers who are quilombolas and live in the community” and the red part reads “teachers who are quilombolas, but live in other communities”.

## **Belonging and trajectory: The constitution of a territorial teaching based on the experience in the community of Pinhões**

When we interviewed teachers who had worked or still work at the Padre João de Santo Antônio - PAJOSA/Pinhões state school, we noticed that there are strong movements in the community in favor of school education that have marked the personal trajectories and professional choices of these teachers. These narratives highlight the place of life stories, with their struggles and setbacks, and professional training. They tell of the difficulties of accessing mainstream education and staying in school as aspects that added to the training process of these teachers. The mention of life-sustaining practices (Azevedo, 2020) carried out by women from the families of the interviewees reveals how these practices relate to everyday training practices, which leads us to realize the effort made by their families to provide them with training, thus demonstrating the value placed on education.

The accounts show the intertwining of life stories, everyday training processes inherent to the territoriality of Pinhões, and the professional choice of teacher. Life repertoires meet teaching repertoires. The presence of the school in the community, as expressed in Azevedo's work (2020) and in the teachers' accounts accessed in this study, highlights how school education is an important point in the social and political constitution of the territory. In narrating their experiences of accessing the profession, the teachers affirmed the arrangements for overcoming obstacles to accessing training, such as distance and lack of transportation. They also highlighted the importance of being a teacher in the area, expressed by family expectations and investments and by their personal admiration for their childhood teachers. As well as revealing contradictions and ambivalences in terms of the community's challenges and personal projects - which in our view constitute teaching in the territory - these narratives also reveal aspects linked to the struggle for rights, agency, recognition, and identity, converging in what we call territorialized teaching. Belonging to the community or being in the community to work professionally changes the tone with which life trajectories are intertwined with teaching trajectories.

Belonging to the community occurs in different ways among the teachers interviewed. There is belonging by birth and belonging by parental descent. And that belonging which takes place through the dynamics of identity construction, of self-recognition as a member of the community based on self-declaration as a quilombola, evokes a condition of belonging to another quilombola territory. Among those interviewed, there was also another form of relationship with the territory - being a resident. Some people move to the community because of marital ties. Some move in because of work ties, in this case with the community school.

The fact is that the physical presence in the territory, the place of residence, and the geographical and spatial displacement bring dimensions that, in our analysis, refer to the symbolic processes of these professionals who, in contact with the community, reshape their professional performance. In this sense, Teacher 1, who moves within his territory for his professional work; Teachers 2 and 3, who have to move outside the territory to carry out their teaching profession and Teacher 4, who as a quilombola from a neighboring community chooses to live in Pinhões, through their reports, add important insights to this research about the relationship between teaching and the territory. The relationship with the quilombola community, both of the teacher, who moves to Pinhões due to her marriage to a member of the community, and of Teacher 5, who chooses to live in the community, instigates our understanding of territorialized teaching.

Figure 3 – Teaching-territory connection<sup>6</sup>



Source: Google Maps, with intervention.

The school wall materially and symbolically represents the border established by the antagonism between “inside and outside”.

We can see that the belonging-teaching relationship highlights the school as an in-between place constituted by the borders that can be established between insiders and outsiders, between those who are not and/or are not from the community and those who are and/or are from the community. As evidenced by the school wall, which materially and

<sup>6</sup> 6NT: In the center we read the name of the community “Pinhões” and from the top, going clockwise we read: “(the person) was born in the community”, “relatives”, “(the person) lives (in the community) and is quilombola” and “(the person) chose to live (there)”.

symbolically displays the border established by the antagonism “inside and outside”. This tension gives rise to questions about who can be a Quilombola teacher. In analogy to Jesus' (2021) reflection on racial identities in Brazil, we formulated this question as a reflective exercise fueled by questions raised by the interviewees.

Figura 4 – Wall of the Padre João de Santo Antônio School



Source: Facebook Pajosa (2021).

When we arrived in the room (where the designation process was taking place) and we could not see a teacher from the community, we got here and we put our mouths to the world, you know. We put our mouths to the world until three showed up. And of those three, two were not quilombolas, but if they are at the school, I think they want to, or had the desire to, because if they do not, there is no point (Teacher 3).

In recounting a fact about the first process of appointment to work in the school, governed by the regulations in which the prerogative “preferably quilombola” was included, Teacher 3 leads us to reflect on the school that is claimed as a frontier and on how quilombola teaching is constructed not only as a functional category, but also as a place of action intersected by different situations and demands raised by teaching invited to the territory, but not always belonging to it. In our research, we observed that the condition of “preferably quilombola” signaled in the resolutions appointing teachers to work in the community is in line with Santos' (2019) reflection. The condition of “non-existence”, “radical invisibility” and “irrelevance”, under which quilombola communities, their knowledge, history, and culture have historically been subjugated, began to be confronted when the EEQ policy began to recognize the existence and relevance of

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dimensions that had previously been silenced and radically invisibilized in a school organization based on coloniality and their violence. In this sense, an important political milestone was the inclusion of the dimensions of quilombola belonging and identity in the process of appointing teachers to quilombola schools.

### **Final considerations**

According to the 2015 National Household Sample Survey (PNAD), Minas Gerais is the third largest black state in Brazil and, according to data from the Eloy Ferreira da Silva Documentation Centre (CEDEFES), has more than 800 quilombola communities certified by the Palmares Cultural Foundation and/or recognized/self-declared by CEDEFES. However, it was only very recently, with the State Guidelines for Rural Education (2015), which also covered the pedagogical organization of quilombola schools, that the structure of basic education in Minas Gerais began to include a normative apparatus or pedagogical guideline that covered the reality of quilombola schools, but without yet giving EEQ (Quilombola School Education) recognition of its specificity as a modality. Furthermore, even though EEQ is included in the text of the State Curriculum Guidelines for Rural Education in Minas Gerais, published in 2015, the situation of urban quilombolas and other forms of territoriality was not included in the official formulation proposed by SEE Resolution No. 2820, of December 11, 2015, which established the aforementioned guidelines. This process illustrates the political invisibility of quilombola issues within the organization of basic education in the state of Minas Gerais.

The process of appointing teachers to work in quilombola schools in the Minas Gerais State Education Network brought important symbolic and material dimensions to the legal constitution of the modality in the state. Furthermore, from the perspective of the teachers interviewed, the territory features prominently in the repertoires they use and build up in their work at EEPAJOSA. However, underlying these findings, there are fundamental questions that still need to be better explained: who is (can be) a teacher in quilombola schools? Is it possible to think of quilombola teaching?

The Pinhões school is made at the intersection of the territory and the life trajectories of the teachers and the relationships established along these trajectories. The policy, by including “preferably quilombola”, places school education from the perspective of quilombola identity. As not all teachers belong to the community, we see different forms of relationship with this community and, consequently, different forms of engagement and teaching performance. As we have argued here, the school in the Pinhões community is characterized by being between places in relation to the community and other spaces outside the territory.

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