

Is the University made for indigenous people and quilombola?: Reflections about the permanence in higher education in Brazil¹

*A universidade é para indígena e quilombola?:
reflexões sobre a atualidade da permanência no ensino superior do Brasil*

*¿La Universidad es para los indígenas y los quilombolas?:
Reflexiones sobre la actualidad de la permanencia en el grado en Brasil*

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Abstract: This article is about the processes of access and permanence of indigenous and quilombolas in Brazilian higher education. It aims to present reflections on the complexity involved in the issue of insertion of the traditional peoples in universities and highlight the challenges of access and permanence. To this end, it presents a brief history of public policies on affirmative action in higher education and a bibliographic review about the process and its presence in universities. It is noteworthy that, from the bibliographical survey carried out, more works were found on indigenous people at the university than on quilombolas. It is noted that language and curricula constitute obstacles to the democratization of education and that they need to be overcome. Finally, it is argued that Higher Education must guarantee the appreciation of the heterogeneity of Brazilian ways of life and diverse ethnicities.

Keywords: Indigenous; Quilombolas; Access and permanence in the higher education; Affirmative Action Policies.

Resumo: O presente artigo versa sobre os processos de acesso e de permanência de indígenas e quilombolas no ensino superior brasileiro. Pretende levantar reflexões sobre a complexidade envolvida na problemática da inserção dos povos tradicionais nas universidades e destacar os desafios do acesso e da permanência. Para tanto, apresenta uma breve história das políticas públicas de ações afirmativas no ensino superior e uma revisão bibliográfica acerca do processo e de sua presença nas universidades. Destaca-se que, a partir do levantamento bibliográfico realizado, foram encontrados mais trabalhos sobre indígenas na universidade que sobre quilombolas. Nota-se que a linguagem e os currículos configuram obstáculos à democratização

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da educação e que precisam ser superados. Por fim, defende-se que o Ensino Superior deva garantir a valorização da heterogeneidade dos modos de vida e diversas etnias brasileiras.

Palavras-chave: Indígenas; Quilombolas; Acesso e permanência no ensino superior; Políticas de Ações Afirmativas.

Resumen: Este artículo trata sobre los procesos de entrada y permanencia de indígenas y quilombolas en la enseñanza superior brasileña. Intenta presentar reflexiones sobre la complejidad que se interpone en la inserción de los pueblos tradicionales en las universidades y resaltar los desafíos de entrada y permanencia. Par lo tanto, se presenta una historia corta de las políticas nacionales de acción afirmativa en la educación superior y una revisión bibliográfica sobre el proceso y su presencia en las universidades. Es de destacar que, a partir del levantamiento bibliográfico realizado, se encontraron más trabajos sobre indígenas en la universidad que sobre quilombolas. Se señala que el idioma y los planes de estudio constituyen obstáculos para la democratización de la educación y que es importante superarlos. Por fin, hay el argumento de que la Educación Superior debe garantizar la apreciación de la heterogeneidad de los modos de vida brasileños y de las etnias distintas.

Palabras clave: Indígenas; Quilombolas; Entrada y permanencia en la enseñanza superior; Políticas de Acciones Afirmativas.

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1 Introduction

This article aims to reflect on the presence of indigenous and quilombola students in Brazilian public universities. To this end, it is based on a bibliographical survey on the inclusion of indigenous and quilombola populations in higher education and considers the theoretical production which is so important in the context of higher education today.

The research was born from the concerns of one of the researchers about the limits of psychological work in educational spaces and the development of school complaints, after having had initial contact with the academic demands of indigenous and quilombola students⁵. During her undergraduate studies in Psychology at the Federal University of Pará (UFPA), the issue was not addressed in the curriculum, less so in the classroom or during internships. However, it is understood that such absence is not exclusive to one university, but rather a general symptom of the Brazilian reality that ignores the presence and resistance of traditional peoples in various spaces, whether in health, education, clinical practice or assistance.

⁵ That is the way how indigenous and quilombolas call themselves at the Federal University of Pará (UFPA), because they consider that their ethnic belonging comes before their institutional belonging as students (ARAYA, 2024).

2 Brief History of the Inclusion of Indigenous and Quilombolas in Universities

Mobilized by various social movements and state and federal laws, Brazilian universities have been the stage for debates about the social role of scientific knowledge for over a decade. As a result, they have begun to develop differentiated entrance exams in order to increase the number of places available to the poorest and most disadvantaged groups in the universalist and meritocratic system of selection processes.

The conditions for differentiated access and institutional changes have occurred in practically all public universities in the country, albeit at different times. Thus, they have gradually become a place where people from different social and economic backgrounds could get together. At the same time, there has been a growing debate about privileges, inequalities, and the legitimacy of compensatory actions (Santos, A. P., 2012). The scenario favored the growth of contact with subaltern cultures, young people from different indigenous ethnic groups, self-declared quilombolas from different regions, with also heterogeneous ways of existing. Specifically, with regard to the Amazon region, formal education involves and has involved not only friendly contact between different knowledge, cultures and temporalities, but also clashes immanent of the region's territoriality, which brings together different plans and visions of the world (Vasconcelos, Abaraldo, 2020).

It is assumed that the understanding of university has been expanding, seeking to encompass different ways of life, ways of thinking and culture, and the presence of traditional peoples in these spaces has made a significant contribution in this sense. The growing demand for higher education for indigenous peoples and quilombolas is part of the agenda of recognition and appreciation of their cultural, social and economic organization consolidated in the 1988 Federal Constitution. Currently, in addition to the recognition of their territoriality, there are demands for access to higher education through differentiated policies aimed at responding to the historical under-representation of traditional peoples in university spaces. The quota system, by the way, designated by law no. 12.711 of 2012 (Brasil, 2012), is an example of affirmative action developed to promote opportunities for access to federal higher education institutions, evoking important discussions in the country about the democratization of education, justice and the social role of universities in recognizing differences (Santos, J. T., 2012).

Among the groups benefiting from the Quota Law are students from villages and quilombos. The growing influx of traditional native peoples into the universities opens up new reflections on what Brazilian universities can do, raising some questions: As conceived, what could the University add to the education of these students whose knowledge is intertwined with community methods of schooling? After all, in their territories of origin, the transmission of knowledge values orality over writing, the use of knowledge applicable to the reality of their lands of origin and the specific needs of their territories. Furthermore, their ways of life point to other places, besides classroom, as possible places for teaching and learning, such as: celebrations in their territories, living with the elders, and relationships with nature (Kaingang, 2022). Indigenous and Quilombola School Education, announced by the most recent Constitution, provides for bilingual, territory-centered and differentiated education, aspects that are made invisible in higher education and are justified by the very historical formation of universities.

Until the early 2000s, access to public universities in Brazil was universalist and meritocratic – in other words, anyone could have access to a place, as long as they performed well in the selection processes and achieved the grade required for the course they were applying for. With the definition of the quota system, there was an increase in students from social classes previously absent from these spaces, inaugurating a new moment in the history of universities, which attracted the attention of managers, professors and several other agents in this space. There were also new changes in the already consolidated conceptions of education, research and inclusion, leading to the redefinition of institutional practices, which were still comprehensive (Bergamaschi, 2018; Valadares, Silveira Júnior, 2016).

In general, studies on the entry of students from affirmative action programs have focused on generating answers to the problems of “academic deficiencies” and the situation of “deprivation” of these individuals due to their social origin and basic education conditions (Santos, A. P., 2012). Basso-Poletto et al. (2020) demonstrate that there has been a concentration on comparative studies between quota and non-quota students based on concerns about the decline in the quality of higher education. Research has devoted little attention to understanding the institutional changes allowed for the university space received. In addition, quota students have not been included in research and policy formulation, generating new erasures processes, now facilitated by policies that propose to be inclusive. The authors conclude that affirmative actions needs to be thought of in terms of access, but also in terms of opportunities, monitoring and results, that is, in terms of permanence (Basso-Poletto et al., 2020).

In view of this, the issue of retention has been neglected at Brazilian universities, and dropout and retention rates have been analyzed in terms of deficiencies, which reiterates old prejudices against students from public and poor schools. It is in this sense that some universities are beginning to formulate strategies to support students, in order to respond to the difficulties they may face during their educational journey. Most of them are launching assistance programs to distribute scholarships, ranging from those provided by the Federal Government's Permanence Scholarship Program (PBP) to local initiatives that bring together benefits focused on food, housing, research, extension and monitoring, accessibility, sports, culture, and assistance and pedagogical support (Moura, Matos, 2022).

However, the demands for retention are not just limited to the need for financial support, since quota students have increasingly complained about interpersonal relationships at university, mental health, and various forms of discrimination (Moura, Tamboril, 2018). Faced with the challenge of restructuring universities to receive students from affirmative action programs, some institutions have created committees, seminars and conferences to discuss relevant topics on how to welcome them. These debates have given rise to programs throughout Brazil to support quota students during their academic careers, such as Afroatitude at the University of Brasília (UNB). Created in 2012 to meet the demands of black students and promote their integration and mental health, the program discusses ethnic-racial issues through teaching, research and extension activities, recognizing the need for comprehensive education that addresses a wide range of factors that may hinder their education.

The contributions to this debate are eminently interdisciplinary, due to their complexity. They involve several dimensions of the social field, thus demanding the intersection between different areas of knowledge. In the field of Psychology, the subject has been approached through the analysis of discourses and social representations, field research focused on institutions and social relationships established within them. In addition to investigations into the psychosocial processes of identity, racism, stereotypes, related to ethnic-racial issues and the constitution of racialized subjectivities (Moura, Tamboril, 2018).

In this regard, Maria Helena Souza Patto (2009) warns that it is not new in the field of psychology to study social issues that overlap with the analysis of private and individual aspects. The problem, in fact, comes from the social field of which the subject and the institutions are part, as well as the psychosocial processes involved. In other words, the author

reveals that the problem of reducing social factors to psychological factors lies in the fact that studies on social issues forget, sometimes intentionally, that the subjects analyzed and the institutions of which they are part are products and producers of this social that is incorporated and is always in reciprocal relationship with this individual, with the emotional, cognitive and bodily processes related to him/her.

This possible approximation with Patto (2009) seeks to use the reflections she raises on the social field to reflect on the demands of quota students produced within the university. Regarding this, Eliane Rodrigues Putira Sacuena tells us that:

[...] It is necessary to understand who we are (indigenous peoples), that my shaman is both a doctor and a doctor for non-indigenous society. Training for non-indigenous peoples must interact with us (sic), indigenous peoples, it is necessary to strip away everything that lives in non-indigenous society in order to understand our cosmogenies and epistemologies, where everything in our culture is interconnected with the whole in the world, that is, territory, health and education (2022, p. 183).

What Patto (2009) demonstrates in her studies on academic failure in Brazilian public schools is that psychological techniques must be unraveled in their details, problematized in this context in which the theories developed and the methods used have replaced the analysis of a society in crisis. Our century has ushered in something new which no longer resides in the authoritarian management of populations at risk, but in the management of productivity and potentialities, according to individual techniques for those who seek lost happiness and sociability (Patto, 2009). The dissemination of individualism as an expression of freedom is reinforced in this social field through marketable self-techniques for those who seek self-knowledge and the empowerment of the Self. In turn, such self-techniques demobilize collective actions and forms of resistance among socially marginalized groups.

Herbetta (2018) lists some main and common obstacles in the academic trajectory of indigenous and quilombola people, which, in addition to being crossed by markers of income and schooling, are also intertwined with other factors of race and ethnicity. One of the obstacles identified lies in the limits and intricacies of social relations in Brazil that produce exclusions in everyday life. In the university setting, we are beginning to see, among other things, the difficult relationship between non-indigenous professors and indigenous students

is beginning to be revealed, whose complaints and noises go beyond mere difficulties in getting along and point to prejudices (Klichowski et al. 2020). The very rigidity of the university structure itself is organized around consolidated models of thought that are not very flexible and open to the understanding of other epistemologies, making the only possible path to follow for these students to adapt to hegemonic bureaucratic, evaluative, pedagogical, and cultural practices (Herbetta, 2018).

Feldmann and Libório (2023) discuss the invisibility of quilombola students in retention policies in general, manifested more drastically in exceptional circumstances, such as during the Covid-19 pandemic. For around three years, the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) was the main means of connection between the educational institution and the student, sometimes, put into practice indiscriminately. The authors emphasize that, during this period, higher education institutions paid little attention to details such as the difficulty of accessing remote classes, due to the lack or inefficiency of internet coverage in rural areas. They emphasize that the lack of understanding of quilombola territoriality by educational institutions and the absence of educational practices that reflect these rural realities were determining obstacles to student involvement in classes and compliance with the the proposed activities (Feldmann, Libório, 2023).

There is not only the distribution of academic papers in various areas of knowledge on the subject of permanence in universities, but also the work of professionals in Psychology, Pedagogy and Social Work in university services, as required by assistance and training support policies. However, the practice in this context of higher education and the works that address the dimensions of this work in the literature are still incipient, and if not, they focus on understanding the situation of the individual needs of quota students and the need to adapt them to this reality (Moura, Tamboril, 2018). Therefore, it is necessary to move forward in order to evaluate how retention policies are taking place within universities, through which strategies they have sought to promote the inclusion of students from affirmative action programs in higher education and the guarantee of completion of their courses.

3 Method

The following will explain the central discussions of the articles found in the literature review, which consisted of a survey of works found on the Scielo platform

(Scientific Electronic Library Online), using the keywords “indigenous”, “quilombola” and “university”, “permanence”. The research resulted in 85 articles distributed among different major areas: Education, Administration, Anthropology, Linguistics, Psychology and Interdisciplinary, with a greater concentration in the area of Education. After excluding repeated articles, along with those that did not deal with Brazilian universities and those that did not deal with the subject of permanence, a total of 24 articles were gathered. It is noteworthy that of these 24, 20 address the indigenous issues and only 4 the quilombola problems.

4 The Current Issue of Indigenous and Quilombol Permanence in Brazilian Universities

Today, brown self-declared population already exceeds the white population in the country, and there is also a growing self-declared brown and indigenous population (Brazil, 2023). As stated by Medeiros (2016),

It is clear that despite the fact that the majority of the population is made up of PPI and people with a family income below 1.5 minimum wages per capita, and the majority of students are in the public system, higher education is mostly occupied by white students, with a family incomes above 1.5 minimum wages per capita, from private high schools. In addition, it confirms the persistence of a historical problem: whites have, on average, more years of study and account for the highest percentage of higher education graduates. (p. 01).

This scenario not only affects the criteria for admission to universities, but leads to changes in the way they are organized institutionally. The University of Brasília (UnB) is one of the pioneering federal institutions in introducing quotas for black students, which came into effect in 2004. The State University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UEMS) is another example that established a reserve of places for indigenous people in 2004, via a state law decree the previous year.

Given the consolidation of the quota policy, the university scene is composed, for the first time since 2019, of a greater number of black (12.9%), mixed race (61.3%), Asian (2%), quilombola (3.4%) and indigenous (0.9%) university students (Andifes, 2019), when compared as a whole in relation to white university students. This scenario is due to the consolidation of affirmative actions in Brazilian higher education, which provided

measures for the selection processes designating the need to reserve places for students from public schools and low-income students, previously underrepresented in this context.

For some Brazilian public universities, the concern with a policy to promote retention came late. For others, the issue of retention began to be considered in parallel with the introduction of quotas. At the Federal University of Goiás (UFG), the UFG Incluir Program, created in 2008, focused on the challenge of inclusion as a central theme of university reform and the need for an explicit policy to support students in completing their courses properly (Herbetta, 2018). The program's actions included: creation of a preparatory course; exemption from fees and reformulation of tests in the selection process; expansion of student assistance; dissemination of inclusion actions promoted by the institution; and monitoring of the academic progress of new students (Herbetta, 2018).

In addition to involving practical actions of material support, this Program also seeks to qualitatively evaluate the experience of new students at UFG Incluir regarding access and retention. It therefore aims at the “integration of indigenous students, quilombolas, deaf people, teachers, researchers and others interested in promoting and improving the Program” (Report, 2015, p. 2 apud Herbetta, 2018). This reveals an important dimension of permanence, but little observed in practice: active participation and listening to the experiences of students in the programs, allowing the definition of demands and the identification of difficulties.

Thus, in the bibliographic review carried out, it can be seen that there is a concentration of works that guide the relationship between universities and indigenous peoples situated in the contexts arising from the experience of teachers and students in Intercultural Degrees within universities, highlighting the need to transform curricula and pedagogical practices that introduce changes in the educational routine. (Valadares, Pernambuco, 2018; Santos et al, 2018; Herbetta, 2018; Guimarães, 2019; Ponso, 2018; Kawakami, 2019; Guimarães, 2022; Valadares, Silveira Júnior, 2016). Santos et al. (2018), for example, develop a strategy that places indigenous culture at the center of the educational process. Intercultural dialogue functions as a means of listening and openness. The relationship with community life in the territories acts as a teaching and learning practice, in inviting activities that mix scientific knowledge with traditional knowledge.

In light of these productions, it is worth reflecting on what intercultural work can contribute to new institutional practices, in contexts where the indigenous and quilombola presence is growing in regular courses. It is not about gathering and proposing generalist epistemological changes, but about raising awareness about the role

that the curriculum can play in the training of indigenous and quilombola professionals capable of responding and giving feedback to the realities of their territories. Recognizing oneself in the curricula can be a way of strengthening the self-esteem of these groups and opening them up to training opportunities.

The curriculum is a territory of negotiation between different cultures, an “in-between place”. To this end, the classroom increasingly becomes a border space, where silences are managed according to the way in which the relationships, experiences and stories of the different subjects are enabled or not (Valadares, Pernambuco, 2018). For a long time, classes were designed according to a unitary curriculum that brings together homogeneous educational practices around which everyone, regardless of their specificities, must be evaluated.

Brazilian universities, historically dedicated to the education of a knowledge elite, also historically reproduce forms of socialization and hegemonic dialects (Silva, Soares, 2021). Of the possibilities for intercultural encounters, until then, we had Intercultural Degrees as the first responses to higher education for traditional peoples, aiming to meet the demand for indigenous and quilombola teachers to teach in the School Education of the territories. Over time, the presence of indigenous and quilombola people grew in regular courses, such as in the areas of health, law, and agricultural sciences.

Therefore, some studies are beginning to problematize the design of these courses and the educational experience of non-indigenous and non-quilombola people, revealing the need for new notes and studies on professional practice in traditional communities. In this regard, Guimarães et al. (2019) describe something of this experience in the territories regarding the elaboration of culture shock during the internship in Psychology. In these stages, the knowledge acquired up to that point was reinterpreted in light of the relational limits manifested in the field, such as the ambiguous feeling of wanting to get closer to (care for?) the other and having to elaborate on what goes beyond personal cultural experience: the limit of purely verbal discourse and immersion in distinct cultural experiences, rituals and modes of symbolization. In addition, it is necessary to commit to the education of individuals who belong to and are knowledgeable about these territories and to reflect on the limits of hegemonic sciences in these contexts.

Gaia et al. (2021) point out that the senses and meanings attributed to quilombola body practices in the field of Physical Education are closely linked to the body culture of movement, whose practices strengthen the collective memory and consciousness of the group. This happens through orality and imitation, and through the sharing of

knowledge between generations through dance and theatricality, such as Zumba de Coco, Samba de Cacete, Coco de Roda and Jongu. Works like these illustrate that institutional changes do not occur solely through policy intervention. It is also through the relationship between distinct knowledges that are affected by the intervention of new subjects in these spaces of knowledge production.

Such discussions lead us to another dimension addressed in the vast majority of texts: the naturalization of the basic assumptions of scientific theories in Western culture as the only interpretation of the world, which have their main route of transmission in universities. While the expansion of scientific knowledge has opened up new possibilities for knowledge, choosing it as a universal language has led us to believe that it is the only possible language for coding the world. Consequently, by reducing all possible languages to just one, we consider that neutrality and objectivity are the criteria for validating and demarcating different types of knowledge (Valadares, Pernambuco, 2018).

More than signaling epistemological and scientific reformulations, it is important to recognize that these erasures have repercussions on ways of being, thinking, and teaching. This is what contemporary studies on Coloniality point out to us, whose effects, both political and subjective, proliferate over nations founded by colonial and imperialist regimes in the past, in addition to constituting systems responsible for the death, not only physical, and for the economic exploitation of native peoples and peoples from the African continent. Despite their resistance, ancestral and cultural memories are also the target of this erasure process.

Latin American social thought finds in decolonial thought a way to combat not only the social ills arising from colonial policies in former colonies, but also a way to recognize and value other ways of being and thinking that help us reforest the imagination. The Coloniality of Power is a device that installs its symbols and meanings in cultures. Therefore, thought can become a strategy that overcomes dense colonial walls, since it learns to question them in order to crack them, produces infiltrations, moves from one side to the other, invades their obstacles and builds bridges between the colonial and the decolonial (Sedeño, Jaramillo, 2021).

In view of the above scenario, we question how institutional policies are being mobilized, at a time when indigenous and quilombola peoples are beginning to be agents of change in their own realities and not merely subjects protected by the State. We also seek to understand how contact with hegemonic culture provokes the questioning of crystallized worldviews and subjectivity and changes in perspective.

The investigation draws attention to the fact that hegemonic cultural patterns, behaviors and norms, taken as natural, legitimize one social project to the detriment of others. At the intellectual level and in the production of knowledge, they still determine which knowledge is more or less valid in official teaching spaces.

As an example, language is a portrait that allows us to witness more exclusions. Academic language assumes that Portuguese is the first language of every student in Brazil, as it is the country's official language, and that English and Spanish are second languages. However, the requirement that the language of Indo-European origin be used in Brazilian selection processes and even in the educational context, in the production of articles and scientific papers, represents a linguistic policy that manages those most capable in the selection processes and ends up becoming a determining factor for indigenous and quilombola students to enter and remain in university (Ponso, 2018). By imposing obstacles on some that do not exist for others, Herbetta (2018) reports on the linguistic criteria in the case of a Brazilian university:

Ercivaldo did not pass the English test equally. It should be noted that he was literate in his native language and has the Xerente language as his main language of communication, especially among his people. He only became literate in Portuguese at the age of 19, a situation that is quite common for a large part of the indigenous population in Brazil. Portuguese is, therefore, already their second language, and is obviously important in many contexts of communication outside the Akwẽ indigenous land, such as in the city of Tocantínia, close to their community, and at the university. (p. 308).

Similarly, the authors Lisbôa and Neves (2019), when analyzing the reality of the Federal University of Southern and Southeastern Pará (UNIFESSPA), argue that not mastering linguistic practices is decisive for students to drop out, and much of this is due to an inflexible and unattainable bureaucratic policy. It is worth emphasizing here that this is not about inverting evaluation criteria and redoing existing hierarchies of knowledge by establishing new ones, but rather about expanding pre-existing criteria that are considered universal, fundamental and indispensable.

For Ponso (2018), there is a need to formulate a critical intercultural literacy policy at the university that considers the importance of the participation of the indigenous and quilombola community, elders and local community leaders, but, above all, it is necessary to train university professionals. The development of reading, writing

and text discussion activities must therefore take into account the repertoires of the students' native languages and their levels of proficiency in Portuguese, the inclusion of indigenous languages in fields of academic life, such as in the Lattes curriculum, entrance exams and scientific abstracts, the use of bibliographies by indigenous and quilombola authors and disciplines that promote the encounter of knowledge. In addition, the need to promote social relations based on the principles of interculturality and sociopolitical empowerment from academic training to critical professional practice is highlighted (Ponso, 2018).

5 The Experience of Dual Belonging

As this dimension was explored in the bibliographic review, it was noted that being indigenous and quilombola involves diverse identity processes that are subject to change and non-essences. Multiplicities, more than unitary, natural and pre-existing elements, in other words, social and historical productions, active and not merely determined by policies and laws. Dual belonging concerns the experience of traditional peoples at university: of ethnic-community belonging and academic belonging (Cassandre et al., 2016; Klishowski, et al., 2020)

Hurtado et al. (2021) conceive identity in distinct and complementary dimensions and conceptualize it as a practice of differentiation between oneself and the other – in the case of cultural identities, in the relationship between distinct cultures –, but always encompassing prerogatives that consider otherness in the social field. Eduardo Restrepo's elaborations on identity are used to designate the characteristics of this process, according to which identity is something relational. Although it seems crystallized, identity processes are procedural, multiple, discursive, mediated by social inequalities and outlined by resistance and empowerment, and can be attributed to the subject and fed by different meanings.

That said, we believe that there is no one way of being indigenous and one way of being quilombola. There are possibilities that are maintained through tradition and ancestry, such as through contact with white people and cities. For example, at the same time that there is, in hegemonic social discourses, the negative construction of black identity or Brazilian indigenous identities, there are movements that circumvent, reverse and circumvent these determinations at all times, making ancestral memory survive over time. This can be observed “in the crossings, in the paths taken, in the words exchanged,

from mouth to mouth, in the gestures and images that make up common life, beings reinvent life at crossroads” (Rufino, 2019, p.39).

In the higher education scenario, this dual sense of belonging demands that students work together to reconcile their own distinct knowledge, rules, customs, and traditions. In the articles by Cassandre and Amaral (2016) and Klichowski and Cassandre (2020), dual sense of belonging is discussed as part of the experience of indigenous students studying Business Administration in Paraná and their expectations regarding their university education and their entry into the job market.

These works discuss the hopes that indigenous higher education places on applying the knowledge acquired in their villages. Some can see where it is possible to promote the encounter between being indigenous and being an administrator. Others see both types of knowledge as distinct and sometimes irreconcilable (Klichowski et al., 2020). They therefore highlight difficulties and obstacles to these objectives, including the fact that community leaders do not always see the knowledge acquired at university as useful to community dynamics. The authors problematize these difficulties by stating that this lack of understanding may be linked to the limited construction of the curriculum of the Administration course at the university in question. From the perspective of a “narrow” curriculum, it is not yet possible to envision the educational needs and demands of future indigenous professionals (Cassandre et al., 2016; Klichowski, et al., 2020).

The literature presents the experience of students who migrate from rural areas to urban spaces. There are those who live in the cities and are supported by family support, while others live in villages and need to travel to study. The texts also say that from the time they enter university to the world of work, there are broken expectations due to the path taken in higher education itself. Alex, from the Guarani ethnic group, presents his account:

I thought I could use the Business Plan to make society aware of who the indigenous people are and our culture, to those who wanted to learn about it, and to contribute to the commercialization of handicrafts. My decision to enroll in university was motivated by the challenge of demonstrating that indigenous people have the ability to enter university to achieve the things they want, but in reality it is not like that. It was not what I had thought, as I had many difficulties, since the subjects are very complex for my reality. My main difficulties were associating myself with the academic environment, as I had no information on how to find the resources to follow the activities. (Klichowski et al., 2020, p. 10).

It is worth noting that indigenous and quilombola higher education involves professional interests in working in the areas of management of public agencies, as well as in the areas of health and education, which announces the search for changes that have not yet been envisioned, through which they become protagonists of these services in the world of work and no longer people under their tutelage. This is an important change in the horizon of education, both indigenous and quilombola, as they are frequently treated as objects of policy, but almost never as peoples who envision autonomy and self-management.

As Kaingang (2022) points out, multicultural school experiences are those that allow the generation of new sciences and technologies, which help to recreate ways of life and living and enable “autonomous empowerment, pointing out new methodologies that consider the importance of listening and respect for bodies” (p.86). We believe, together with the aforementioned author, that practices that include knowledge from indigenous peoples also open up possibilities for the creation of other educational practices at the university.

Finally, we emphasize that educating future generations requires openness to ethnic and racial diversity and a willingness to build curricula that take this into account. It also involves questioning the logic of academic productivity, which finds in the homogenization of knowledge and intelligence the way to achieve educational efficiency, thereby fostering perspectives in which difference is an obstacle to be eliminated in favor of bureaucratic curricular efficiency (David *et al*, 2013).

6 Conclusions

Ailton Krenak, a Brazilian indigenous thinker, asks how we constructed this idea of humanity in order to justify the colonization of the rest of the world by white people, under the premise that there were more enlightened peoples who needed to bring their light to obscure humanity. In his *Ideas to Postpone the End of the World*, Krenak (2019) states that the notion of humanity that placed the human at the center of everything is more than an ideology: it is a collective imaginary in which generations, layers of desires, visions and entire life cycles are projected, through an ideal of a prosperous, infinite and abundant earth for our enjoyment.

The author poses the following question: “(...) after all, what is the use of our scientific apparatus and our techniques that protect us from the fear of falling, if we have done nothing in other eras but fall?” (Krenak, 2019, p.62). That said, it is essential to point out that the formulation of institutional policies is not something done by the good

will of leaders in the form of top-down actions. The indigenous and quilombola presence in Brazilian universities not only awakens the need for structural changes in institutional functioning, but also mobilizes such changes themselves. For Zélia Amador de Deus (2016), the black movement has had and still has a fundamental role in forging spaces in universities that have long been denied to black people. For her, the subgroups arbitrarily described in policies are subjects who carry, in addition to their life history, the history of their ancestors.

In this sense, the indigenous and quilombola associations of UFPA, the Association of Indigenous Students of UFPA (APYEUFPA) and the Association of Quilombola Students (ADQ) are decisive in demanding rights within the University and in defending the indigenous and quilombola people who access it. This work recognizes in these unofficial spaces a conception of education that goes beyond the walls of the school and university: non-formal education, according to which the production of learning and knowledge is considered in spaces other than the classroom, in collective actions that have an educational character both for the members and for society in general and the institutions involved, where it is possible to weave negotiations, dialogues or confrontations (Gohn, 2011). It points out that even when universities toughen the conditions of permanence and define actions that suppress traditional ways of life in these spaces, there are always forms of resistance being woven within the walls of the same universities that announce new horizons for indigenous and quilombola higher education.

This article discusses the processes of access and permanence of indigenous and quilombola students in Brazilian higher education. It seeks to present a brief history of the inclusion of indigenous traditional peoples in universities and to highlight the challenges, restrictions and erasure of the inclusion processes they undergo. Although it presents the framework of theoretical production, it does not present simple solutions to the complexity that permeates the production and the theme. It invites future researchers to embrace this initiative for democratic and heterogeneous higher education.

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