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Chapter 2

The Indigenous School: A Space of Ruptures and Tensions within Local Culture

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Additional information is available at the end of the chapter

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Abstract

The study analyzes tensions and ruptures within indigenous community practices, school devices, and subjectivities that are built among their actors, based on the significance of their experience as educational agents in the school environment. The work is interpretive, carried out through interviews applied to students, teachers, and school principals of two schools in San Andrés Larráinzar, in Chiapas, Mexico. The information obtained was analyzed through the understanding of the records, their integration into categories, delimitation, and interpretation. The results include six thematic content units: space and context; expression and resistance, dynamics of the culture; disruption of culture order; students outside the norm: alcohol, graffiti, and pornography; courtship and its reconfiguration; and school supports, peer tutoring, and teacher criticism, in which the realization of the school formation process becomes a complex phenomenon, full of tension and conflict between the demands of the school institution and the local culture.

Keywords: indigenous school, local culture, language

1. Introduction

Human activity is developed predominantly based on the pedagogical action, whose discourse is closely related to education promoted at home that prepares men to be part of a political community and the one referred to by the culture in which they grow to form a home [1]. Thus, every educational system educates from the social ethos, but it relies on institutions such as the school for the formation of the whole man.

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The school has been the driving force behind this pedagogical system, which has its presence in different social formations [2], which has become naturalized as the founding element of education in modern enterprise, with a hegemonic presence in all societies, whose practices are not free from tensions, conflicts, and purposes not initially considered [3].

The school is proposed as the essential instrument for the establishment of the modern national state [4], a symbol of progress [5], a space that allows a career open to talent, merit, and social mobility, but also as a representative of an educational system that regulates and normalizes the actions and desires of the subjects through specific devices of discipline, the formation of curricula, universal and uniform practices, ordering, and decontextualization of academic content [5].

The fact that the school constitutes the axis of the formation of man derives from its connection to other processes such as socialization, education in a broad sense, and literacy itself, as well as its hegemonic presence in all societies. All this sums up a modern vision of education, which includes the inculcation of the dominant social and market values through a unique reference of knowledge, which is science and technology.

Such imposition is legitimized in an environment of socio-political-economic globalization, a condition that sets out from the school to be a free and equal access for individuals into cultural objects, an illusion that results lacerating in the subjective student conformation. However, the school has maintained a vertiginous success, standing as an instrument of self-realization of the individual, of social progress, and of economic prosperity, aspect severely questioned from studies that discard such achievements, pointing out their disarticulation to other spheres such as labor and socioeconomics [3].

Having become naturalized, by living others' speeches as one's own, it is clear that this will awaken in students' and parents' expectations of social mobility, economic improvement, and even other work possibilities than those commonly planned for a social group. In an indigenous community, this is linked with the desire to continue studying and thereby transforming their present condition of life, through the appropriation of the word and hegemonic discourses of the dominant culture. In an indigenous community, this mates with the desire to continue studying and thereby transforming their present condition of life, through the appropriation of the word and discourses of the hegemonic or dominant culture.

The proposed education for indigenous communities has been the way in which historically the development of a national identity has been promoted, and an attempt that has been made to "Mexicanise" these peoples [6]. In this context, a curricular proposal has been developed for indigenous schools in which the tensions that emerge from the relations between local and western culture, from the subaltern and hegemonic, as well as from the indigenous and mestizo worldview, are replaced by "A new imaginary utopian, national and intercultural (…), which assumes equality, respect and coexistence in diversity without conflict [7]."

Indigenous schools develop a curriculum that favors contents that correspond to the dominant culture. In this process of "colonization of knowledge" [8], knowledge alien to the local culture is legitimized, which causes tensions, and conflicts with respect to one's own and others.

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Negation of the culture of the indigenous subject in the school processes leaves aside the daily life of a family, his previous learning, and all those elements that give him meaning. Family life is the space in which the identity of the child is formed, through which he enters and becomes part of the community, through observation and participation in work, religious tasks, preparation of festive activities or community life such as assemblies; when he counters this experience, tensions, and ruptures are established between the forms of interaction and knowledge developed in the school and the culture of the community itself. Another area of concealment of culture is the banning of the use of the mother tongue, which does not appear in didactic interactions with teachers or because it even encourages students' castellanization (using Spanish as a second language).

All these actions are narrowed in school practices that can be combined in rituals of instruction, revitalization, or events that seek to exalt the commitment and forms of work in accordance with what is expected for the community and nation: rituals of intensification, which direct relationships and belonging to the group, and resistance rituals, which counterpose the legislation and ways of proceeding assumed by the school for the development of academic work [9].

Rituals express myths of the culture, which are usually performed in the community by members with authority, and in the school, by principals, teachers, and the parents' representative, are constituted in everyday, hegemonic and functional practices of the relationships that imply the exercise of authority, and belonging to the group. Therefore, the closer approach to their actions, language, and resources, the greater internalization of the institutional; in addition, they mediate much of the daily activity in the school practices of the different educational agents.

School practices are explained as the framework of experiences that take place in the classroom and school, in which "the objective reality is internalized by the actors, but at the same time it is shaped and shaped according to a variety of possible options, According to the individual and collective practices and knowledge that mediate reception [10]." In this social space merge different actions in which the participation or not of other agents of the community configures a way to develop school tasks, closer or not to the local environment. In this way, there is a dialectic of school practice, conceived as problematic acts [11], a diverse and contradictory scenario, of institutional demands promoted by the school and those formed from the culture.

The relations between agents with unequal power related to each other lead to processes of continuous confrontation in a relationship of domination-subordination [10]. In this process, the teacher embodies the role of a cultural and political mediator, in which family and local culture are opposed to the school, whose hegemonic representation tends to deny or appropriate their presence and manifestations. However, pupils and parents and even teachers themselves because of their own original condition (indigenous, peasant, or worker) rest importance or oppose to such hegemony in daily work, as well as transgressing school or social rules [10].

Educational practice operates as a dynamic force for continuity and social change [12], which is constructed historically and politically through the meanings of action, available

not only subjectively but also by the interpretation others make of it, which makes possible a critical form of reasoning, which enables a reflexive process, of participation, of relationship with the other, of encounter, and of present dialogue through the recognition of the other, which denotes openness to the community. If such recognition is omitted in school practice, the practice develops from a hegemonic perspective, denying the conflict itself of such contradiction.

In this context, the present work describes the tensions, ruptures, and resistances that are presented between the indigenous community practices, school devices, and subjectivities that construct their actors.

2. Methodological approach

During the course of the school in an indigenous community is problematized through the interstice and encounter between the educational agents of an indigenous community with the school device, in its social and historical development.

From this position, this study is carried out with a qualitative approach, which has as its main source natural situations, their spatio-temporal and contextual references, of particular relevance for the approach of social relations and experiences of the subjects in certain environments, considering that "local, temporal and situational (…) limited narratives are now required from the expressions and activities of people in their local contexts" [13].

In this perspective, what is attempted is to give an account of how subjects "construct the world around them, what they do or what happens to them in terms that are meaningful and offer a full understanding of wealth" [14].

The study is made from critical hermeneutics, a position characterized as the valuation of meanings in light of historical conditions, in order to clarify the conditions under which the understanding of reality may have occurred, a situation that should lead to an emancipatory action/practice [15].

Such an interpretive approach tries to approximate the meaning and sense that the concrete subjects have in their condition of being schooled.

2.1. Techniques and instruments

The techniques allude to specific and particular action procedures for compiling information related to the research method used. In this case, the compilation of information was made from non-participant observation, individual and group interviews, and the analysis of students' narratives about their experience in school.

Observation is the process of rapprochement with the object of study, which allows having a vision of the context, its development, and the events that happen. Observation is a systematic description of incidents, events, and behaviors in the social scene studied [16]. Observation is useful to researchers in a variety of ways, as they provide methods for revising nonverbal

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expressions of feelings, determining who interacts with whom, allowing participants to understand how participants communicate with each other, and verifying how much time is being spent on particular activities [17].

In order to do this, the field journal was one of the instruments used, through the registration of all relevant information for the investigation, the recording of topics, people, impressions, comments, and other significant events.

In this description throughout the observation process, we were part of the study group, to the point that the members included us in some of the activities performed.

In addition to the observation, the interview was used, which is "the most usual form of face-to-face verbal exchange" [18], one of its forms of application is the unstructured interview, which "attempts to understand the complex behavior of the members of a society without imposing any prior categorization that may limit the field of investigation" [18]. Besides, the interview is inevitably related to the context, historical and political elements, a situation that rejects any hint of neutrality; therefore, it can be used for or against participants or groups that are interviewed.

2.2. The research context

Mexico is a multicultural country with diverse ethnic groups. The most populated area of these groups is the southeastern part of the country, especially the state of Chiapas. There is the municipality of San Andrés Larráinzar, whose inhabitants belong to the cultural and Tsotsil linguistic ethnic group, which, in turn, is part of the Mayan groups.

The research work was carried out in the municipal seat of the municipality of San Andrés Larráinzar, which has the same name, located in the Tsotsil Tseltal economic Altos region. It is 28 km from the city of San Cristobal Las Casas and 90 km from the state capital.

According to the Secretariat of Social Development [19], in 2010 the municipality had 20,349 inhabitants, 15,271 speak the native language, more than 60% are bilingual (Tsotsil/Spanish). The inhabitants of the community are mainly engaged in agricultural activities of maize and coffee, breeding sheep and domestic animals, with a production of self-supply.

A total of 98.69% of the population is indigenous, and 83.97% of the population speak an indigenous language. A total of 22.67% of the population speak an indigenous language and does not speak Spanish. In San Andrés Larráinzar, there are 786 housing units. Of these, 96.74% have electricity, 85% have piped water, 98.26% have sanitary facilities; 43.91% radio, 49.78% television, 12.61% refrigerator, 6.09% washing machine, 9.35% automobile, 3.91% personal computer, 12.61% telephone Fixed, 31.96% cell phone, and 1.52% Internet [20].

A total of 12.90% of the population is illiterate (7.63% of men and 17.93% of women) [21]. The level of schooling is 6.18 (7.16 for men and 5.22 for women). According to the State Secretariat of Education [22], at the end of the 2007–2008 school year, the number of pupils at the primary level was 4584, at secondary level 909, and at high school level 360; it is clear that as the academic level increases the student population decreases. In this sense, it is important to give an account of the psychosocial problems of adolescents attending

basic education and higher education, secondary and high school[1] in the community. In the school year (2011–2012), there was a population of 594 secondary school students and 369 high school students, who constitute the study population. In the educational field, the coverage from primary to secondary, from this level to high school and from college to university is decreasing.

Within the community, there are cell phone shops and the main antenna of one of these companies, various commercial stores, including clothing, music records, groceries or bakeries, pharmacies, inexpensive dinners, and beer stores. House structures are made of concrete, wood, adobe, or lamina. Clothing is different between men and women, some men no longer use typical clothes while women still use it. Some institutions are the Integral Family Development office and a health clinic. At the entrance of the community there is a military detachment unit. There is a difference between traditional and municipal authorities.

This municipality had a prominent role during the movement of 1994 in which the Zapatista army uprising happened, because this was the municipal seat where the agreements of San Andrés were signed, an agreement made between the Mexican Government and the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) to end the war.

2.3. Participants

This study was carried out before informed consent with the secondary school and high school students from San Andrés Larráinzar, Chiapas, who live in different municipalities in the area, many of which live in places and rancherías (a group of ranches) of these municipalities, the reason why they have to move to school every day on foot or by public transportation, from 1 to 2 h. Likewise, interviews with parents, teachers, and schools managers were carried out.

Access to school space was done on a number of occasions, once a week for just over a year and a half. In this process, our presence was becoming less new and more ordinary for the school staff and the students themselves. Another important aspect of this process was the attempt to approach and understand the language and culture of the participants. The fact that one of the members of the working group was originally from the same community, with knowledge of the mother tongue, made it possible for the significance of the facts, comments, and interpretations not to lead to misunderstandings.

The presentation was made in front of the participants, it was like teachers who wanted to learn about the school life of the students and teachers of the schools we visited; the frequency of our presence in different spaces of the school allowed us to have more confidence from our interlocutors, and gradually a greater understanding of their situation and the way they see the world.

[1]The educational system in Mexico considers as basic education: preschool, which begins at age 3 and lasts 3 years; primary school, which begins after preschool and lasts 6 years; secondary level, which takes place after primary and lasts 3 years. Higher education comprises different kinds of high school or preparatory courses, it generally lasts 3 years and starts after high school, after high school one can start a higher level, in universities, and institutes.

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Informants were approached among those who were during school breaks, waiting for the development of physical education activities, in the school cafeteria, or library. Some agreed more willingly to dialogue with us, others showed some caution, but there were always some who showed willingness to chat with us.

During the process, it was important to have field notes taken each time the schools were visited, some of which were recorded immediately after the observations or interviews were carried out, and the analysis of these working notes was subsequently carried out.

2.4. Information analysis

The analysis of the information was performed through the extensive understanding of records, unit extraction, category development, its delimitation, and interpretation [23]. The information analysis technique was applied [23], which consists of selecting or extracting units of text, which are coded by codes developed by researchers. Afterwards, the data are analyzed simultaneously to develop concepts.

This application involves a comparison of subcategories or first categories, which arise along a study in successive time frames or contexts.

This procedure is developed in four stages: the first involves understanding of the data; the second involves an integration of each category with its properties; the third requires delimiting the findings; and the fourth operates on the analysis and interpretation of the information obtained, after a process of relation, comparison, and reduction of the units belonging to each category.

The study is carried out with strict adherence to ethical standards such as the informed consent of the participants, respect for the privacy of the informants, and protection against damages.

3. Results

The analysis of the information obtained from multiple encounters with students, teachers, and school administrators allowed, through a continuous process of analogy, contrast and delimitation, the construction of six large categorical content units. The first of them, space and context, abounds in the characteristics and school dynamics, which allows to have a more comprehensible vision on the sense that is given to the school from its different actors; the second: expression and resistance, the dynamics of culture, shares the significance and change that is manifested around the use of traditional clothing, language, and identity of the subjects, regarding the demands of wearing uniform in civic activities and using Spanish in the process of education; the third was named disruption of the culture order, it exposes conflicts and tensions that arise with respect to the narrowing of the relation between men and women promoted by the school and the difference and distance that the local culture establishes in this sense; the fourth was students outside the norm: alcohol, graffiti, and pornography, presents the rupture that students assume regarding the rules of the school itself, but also the model of community life, which finally show what is tried to hide or deny, the tensions around the education and training received by adults; the fifth content unit: courtship and its reconfiguration,

expresses one of the nodal aspects that specify the rupture between school provisions, which promotes interaction and communication between peers, within the school and that continuous outside of it; and local culture, in which such interaction is a foundational expression of marriage; and, the content unit: school supports. Peer tutoring and teacher criticism expose the way teachers and students try to approach school content, but also representations underlying the process of students' castellanization (using Spanish as a second language). The units of analysis retrieved from the records are now analyzed in detail, which give account of aspects related to each of the mentioned content units, as well as their interpretation.

3.1. Space and context

The schools in which the study was carried out are the Technical Secondary School No. 57 (EST. 57) and the Colegio de Bachilleres de Chiapas (COBACH), which is a state high school, campus 60. The former, with 35 years of foundation, currently has 18 groups; it is the oldest and the largest of the region at this level. Students attend this school from different places and adjoining localities. It is a school of complete organization, with teaching staff that presents high labor mobility, situation that limits the development of programs or strategies of didactic work in the mid- and long-term; only one of them has his residence in the community and none masters students' mother tongue. The educational practice is developed in Spanish, Tsotsil is used in informal spaces of the school (corridors, sports areas, and meetings outside the classroom); it is a marginal language in the curricular educational process, it is not promoted as an element of learning. English is part of the curriculum and is one of the subjects that the student must take and approve. From their students, approximately 65% of them receive daily food support and more than 50% have some type of complementary economic scholarship.

The COBACH, campus 60, has 369 students distributed in 10 groups [24], it is one of the high schools recognized by the High School National System, which assesses the quality of schools according to the guideline pointed out in the Comprehensive Reform of Higher Education (RIEMS) and certifies those who meet the requirements, as evidence of their management processes and in particular the teaching-learning process. In this campus, about 80% of its students receive some kind of scholarship support.

In the secondary school, teachers live in other communities, and only the principal of the campus masters the native language, a situation that enables interaction and communication with students and parents. The process of schooling in basic education is considered important for parents; however, this is limited to primary education and preferentially to men. Therefore, those who study middle and high school can be considered privileged, due to the small number of students who complete higher education. For this reason, scholarship supports play a fundamental role in the students' stay at this school level.

Having scholarships, conditions the students' attendance, since many of them only attend for this incentive

> *… there are families that only send their children to receive this financial support, or the student does not come for self-interest, he only comes because parents themselves ask them to obtain that financial benefit. (COBACH principal)*

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Access and permanence to secondary and high school is related not only to the competences and learning developed by students but also by the exclusive use of Spanish in the school work, their second language, whose understanding is limited, as well as the precarious economic conditions of the students and their families, a situation that forces them to commute up to 2 h on foot to get to the school or a limited and nutritious diet. About this, one of the students notes the following:

> *…sometimes the father and the mother work one day and the others they do not, because there is no work!, there are also students who live too far and because of the ticket price they cannot come!, or because they have to buy school supplies ! The sum of these factors, makes a bigger expense for the family. (Francisco, EST student)*

Another student points out:

> *… I know that I won't be able to continue studying – beyond high school, so why should I make an effort? (Juan Carlos, COBACH student)*

For most students, this will be the pinnacle of their education; after that, it only remains to work and make a life as a marital couple.

The principal of COBACH campus 60 notes:

> *…society, the culture of the natives did not conceive school to be important. Perhaps elementary and middle school feels as an obligation for their children, because in high school with young people who are 17, 16 or 15 years, parents do not have to look after them; however, we have tried to make them see during parents' meetings that their effort is worthwhile and we have seen the participation of the parents! We have changed that mentality! The school has a good image and some of its graduates are teachers, professionals that help! In addition, in the ENLACE[2] test we are above the national average, 15 or 20 percent.*

In San Andrés schools, you can find wide corridors and walkers that look like mazes that meander the school buildings. Between classes, classrooms are filled with students who go from one classroom to another, where they will receive the next class or during the 10 min between classes. Classrooms, administrative areas, and laboratories are connected to each other through wide open air corridors; you can find pine trees, gardens with green leaves, and flowers that define the landscape of the school. Taquerias (taco-stand) and tricycles with people selling tamales, soft drinks, and rice with milk and coffee invade the school during the break time. Outdoor chairs and tables are covered by the shade of trees or by galvanized sheets. The structure of the school, its wide corridors, the shade of the trees, and the aroma of the environment invite people to walk, to accompany, and to talk among students. This place provides an opportunity for the match among peers.

In this school landscape, teachers and managers emphasize the academic, artistic, and cultural achievements of their students. At the same time, an aspect repeatedly mentioned by students and teachers, it is the care of the image and conditions of school facilities whose organization and order are carried out through campaigns and teams.

[2]In Mexico, the ENLACE test is applied in Higher Education to determine the extent to which young people are able to put into practice, in real-world situations, the basic disciplinary competences in the fields of Communication (reading comprehension) and Mathematics acquired throughout their academic career (Secretary of Public Education).

Some teachers of COBACH consider these aspects as high priority, they note:

> *… boys have contributed to keep the bathroom clean!, the classrooms clean! We go to other campuses and the classrooms are dirty!, the chairs are painted! The walls are painted! (Professor Edith, COBACH)*

> *…Everyone think it is pretty! (The school), we have an image as a school that not only us have seen, but those who come from outside. As a school we have distinguished in many cultural, sports and civic activities, that also make it beautiful!, Apart from the infrastructure, some have stood out academically, in dances, people from outside have come to visit us, from other schools and they have admired the cleanliness!, the green areas!, due to the kind of students and values! (Professor José, COBACH)*

> *When students arrive, they say: how nice the campus looks!, how clean! But it also has to do with the work of us as teachers, what we have done, the cleaning activities, which take place every two months, the good maintenance of green areas, the work in classrooms with students and encouraging the habit of placing everything in its place. Students have to learn to adapt, it is a radical change! Which they also give, it is different to change from secondary school to high school because they have other classrooms, subjects, and the infrastructure is different and changes all the work. (Professor Maria, COBACH)*

However, this is not the EST No. 57 situation, in which one of the students refers to the facilities:

> *… There is no water in the bathrooms, they are dirty, a change is required in the school, in order to have a better school. (Francisco, EST)*

Thus, while in COBACH the facilities and space are a symbol of pride; in EST No. 57, it is evident the insufficiency of the infrastructure and services offered.

3.2. Expression and resistance, the dynamics of culture

There is an idea of a school that arises not in terms of teaching contents but with an ideological component, which indicates ruptures regarding the conditions of the students:

> *Students are expected to change their way of thinking, so that they are not left behind! For that they have to learn what is taught in school. (Professor Enrique, EST)*

Customs are respected, but at the same time, forms of expression of other cultures are proposed.

In terms of communication, students speak Tsotsil, but teachers do not, so that Castellanization (using Spanish as a second language) is a process that is privileged, in areas of a greater labor and economic development for the future life in other communities.

Nobody has been denied of using his mother tongue, they try to speak more Spanish here in school and their mother tongue at home, their parents tell us:

> *My son at school speaks Spanish, here (at school) I do not care if he speaks my dialect because he already knows it, I want him to speak Spanish, so when he goes to the city he can understand. (Professor Candelario, EST)*

For teachers, recognition of the inherent difficulties of language mastery is maintained, although it is not appreciated as one of the aspects that should be considered for their improvement as teachers.

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> *… We have communication difficulties with students, we have barriers, language is an obstacle, we have difficulties because we speak different languages. (Professor Irma, EST)*

This situation is also clearly recognized by the students, but their answer is to try to learn directly from the teacher, even with the consequent difficulty that it entails.

> *…during their participation they find it difficult to speak Spanish, sometimes they even stutter or speak slowly. (Francisco, EST student)*

> *… It is not well understood … sometimes they give an instruction and it is difficult to do it (Laura, COBACH student).*

We do not know how to say or write a word. (Guadalupe, COBACH student)

> *… Sometimes we do not understand some words, teachers only say them in Spanish; then we talk to them and we understand something, but sometimes the word is not clear. (Luis, COBACH student)*

This reality establishes an asymmetric relation between us (students) and the others (teachers), between the discourse of superiority of Spanish language against Tsotsil, a situation that perverts the pedagogical and social relations among the actors. Schools that deny the use of their students' mother tongue in their daily activities carry out a homicide of the indigenous language in their classrooms, a murder to language codes, and the word, because the language is not only an element of communication but also serves to name reality and to name ourselves, as well as being the way to understand other cultures [25].

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that there are strong communication problems in the school, in understanding the curricular contents and in the learning process.

In interviews, students express emphatically that Spanish constitutes a barrier of communication that brings as consequence difficulties and problems in understanding the thematic content of the subjects. The seriousness of this situation is not only the impossibility of students accessing the contents of the official curriculum, but goes further; it does not only violate the individual, it annuls a whole group of what he/she represents, it eliminates a culture and a way of being and living in the world [26]. It is a slow and silent death, it leaves no traces to pursue, no guilty, tolerated, and encouraged.

Students' attire is another element that distinguishes them. Regarding school uniform, this has been an aspect that has been intended, especially in sports activities in which teachers persuade parents that their children, men and women, wear this clothing, but it not a requirement for attendance to school.

In the institutions addressed, there is a greater use of traditional attire in secondary school and a little less in high school. Two situations are closely related to this situation; on the one hand, in secondary school, parents have a much more active and close presence concerning decision-making, not so much in high school; on the other hand, the greater mastery of Spanish and with that the approach to the culture of the speakers of this language, as it happens with COBACH students, foster the desires of greater belonging to this culture, from the use of other types of clothing, musical interests, and use of digital media, to even avoid discrimination among their own peers.

In EST, the following happens:

> *… here at school there is no daily uniform or other for special dates, because the community has not allowed it!, many think that it is like coming to take away some of their identity, they do not want their children to dress like cashlanes!.*[3] *More in women than in men !, they have typical clothes, but since it is extremely expensive, not everyone uses it, only the authorities of the community (…).Girls still keep the regional costume of the community, some come with jeans, blouses, which is also allowed, when they do not have physical education they can come as they want, only the days that have sport is when they wear the red uniform, pants and shorts so they can do the exercises on the school court. (Professor Yulibeth, EST)*

Similar comments are given in COBACH:

> *…there is no impediment in wearing traditional clothing, considering that parents have no possibilities, we have been flexible in wearing the uniform (…) except for Mondays and Fridays when they are asked to wear the shirt. (COBACH Principal)*

However, there is an imaginary position that suggests that in the school environment, the use of clothing other than everyday clothing is part of the school's enlightening work:

- Yes, they have brought their clothes and participate!, I do not exclude them because they bring their dress !, but if I approach them I say:
- next time if you can, bring trousers!, so you'll feel more comfortable and be able to participate

> *And if they do! It's how they feel, most of the girls bring the regional attire to school, meanwhile men are losing the tradition of bringing their blanket trousers. (Professor of Physical Education, COBACH)*

> *We ask them to wear the uniform, the T-shirt from Monday to Friday, women with blue skirt, most men wear blue jeans, from the social point of view, that is going through changes, we have the influence of television, we are in small cells, surrounded by fashions and different social behaviors, mass media, television magazines and all that is changing the identity here. (Professor Mario, COBACH)*

Teachers notice in other institutions or media a strong influence to change traditional elements such as clothing, but they hardly notice their own implicit and explicit interference in such changes. Principals and teachers are key elements of this transformation, because demands are pointed out in a space in which students attend most of the year, with adults whose authority is legitimized through the regulations and provisions that must be complied.

However, it must be said that the meanings that are presented regarding certain devices demanded by the school such as the use of uniform, are reasons to dispute, confluence, juxtaposition, or opposition, which is manifested in the appropriation or not of that device, which is managed in hegemony and subordination relations between the different educational agents involved, rejecting or assuming the provision or maintaining in this case forms of clothing legitimized by the community.

In some cases, this even culminates in rejecting the use of traditional clothing in events that can be considered as spectacle, since it has internalized a superfluous vision, external to its use, and not with the connotations that culture and community assign:

[3]Tsotsil word to name mixed race.

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There are occasions when we have events, and we want aides dressed with traditional clothing and they do not want to, they are asked to wear the typical blouse and jeans, now that they do not want to wear the skirt, the blouse, the belt, they themselves do not want it! Sometimes, when we have participated with the school band, students are asked to go with their traditional clothes and they have a hard time doing it, they themselves do not feel like doing it. Here we have tried to keep the culture in place, we have respected traditions or customs. (Professor of COBACH)

Nevertheless, there is a loss of tradition in the general population acknowledgment, especially in men, now that a few of them wear their traditional attire, while the use of women's pants is becoming more common.

A more pragmatic view of this situation is merged into the economic level:

> *Traditional attire is more expensive, and wearing cheaper clothing is more convenient for us, we can buy a lot more clothes instead of a suit. (Leticia, COBACH student)*

> *Handmade clothing rarely made by my mother, because it takes a long time to make it and she makes it only to sell it. (Guadalupe, COBACH student)*

In men, this situation is different:

> *…teens, it's not because they do not have the traditional attire, it's because they do not want to. (Leticia, COBACH student)*

> *They are embarrassed, it is good that they wear pants, but they should also wear suits. (María, COBACH student)*

Identity is one of the components that makes visible the tension between the local culture and the western culture, of someone's own and someone else's.

> *… sometimes they chose for fashions from other cities, when they leave for the migration to the United States, that causes them a little loss of their identity, sometimes they do not know how to behave, they behave in a way in front of us, like cashlanes; that is how they call us cashlanes, because we do not belong to their culture, to their indigenous area, but they, they sometimes do not know how to behave! They want to talk like cashlanes!, expressions like: what's up? How are you? Hi! What's up teacher?, but when they are not in the school they start talking in their native language. (Physical education professor, COBACH)*

The strengthening of cultural identity is not only aimed at preserving cultures but also to promote the unfolding of their potential, to allow the exercise of cultural rights, to establish fairer channels of dialogue and participation in decision making, and to avoid overwhelming processes of interaction between different cultures [27]. Attire is one of the elements that distinguish the community and consequently provide a cultural identity, is judged, valued, appreciated, or rejected by others, and even by its members, because as a dynamic process, it evolves by contact with other cultures.

In this process of appropriation and culture contrast, the student "reinvents his ethnicity, in order to adapt and respond to the changes and transformations of his environment (…) he turns the cultural reference points of indigenous modernity and tradition into malleable and dynamic identity attributes that enable the reinvention of their ethnicity and with it the political use of the cultural issues [10]."

Other behaviors and manifestations have become present among them. This refers to:

…There are many boys from Larráinzar who go to study in San Cristobal and bring another ideology, they come back with skateboards, they want to behave like city people, there is graffiti, when here in the community that is not allowed; this phenomena is happening as globalization increases, is the loss of their identity. (Professor of Physical Education, COBACH)

However, for many of them, their belonging to the group gives them a different meaning:

I think we should be proud of being indigenous (Laura, COBACH student, campus No. 60).

I am still indigenous, even if I have a career I will not change that. (María, COBACH student, campus No. 60)

3.3. Disruption of culture order

Regarding the relationship between students, it is common in the community to differentiate between men and women in festive and religious activities, as well as in family and social interaction. From school, they are encouraged to approach among them. This is why we look for forming mixed work teams, which is gradually achieved. This condition challenges and stresses two worlds: the one at home, including the community and customs, and the one demanded by the school.

Behaviors of men and women are clearly differentiated among students, which is a reflection of what happens in the community itself. In the case of women, some of these behaviors are:

They are very submissive! Although they pay attention, they do their homework! Women are the ones who work the most. (José, hall supervisor of EST)

In the classroom, many of the girls are completely reserved, unfortunately the culture has made them not shine as much as boys, it is cultural!, they grab their rebozo (a long flat garment) and cover their face, some, very few come with pants to the hip and very awake, but there are other girls who do not and that isolation, that shyness, causes them to speak less and learn less in Spanish. (Prof. Yulibeth, EST)

In the classroom, especially in secondary school, the spatial differentiation among them is still evident:

…in the classrooms on the right or left side only men sit together and on the other side all the women sit together. (Prof. Yulibeth, EST)

The following work with them tries to approach a reality shared with other female students and male students.

I do not try to seek equality among them, because it does not exist! We talk about equity but it is never achieved either!; so the girls listen more Spanish and try to join with their fellow men or work with women who have a different vision, dress or behave differently from them. (Prof. Guadalupe, EST)

This situation does not occur in the same way with men, where their relation with aspects such as clothes or objects they possess are not considered as nodal for their interaction:

…They show their friendship more, they buy their soda, their sabrita (chips), and they all sit down to take it and to talk to everyone, whether there is one who is well dressed and neat or someone who is not. (Prof. Yulibeth, EST)

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It has even been promoted tasks assigned socially to men and women who are resignificant in the school environment

> *We have tried to tell them that everyone can serve oneself or we all help to serve, boys can also serve themselves, women do not have to pass the food where the sir (male student) is seated, he can stand up and take it. They do it inside the classroom, but not at home, neither outside the classroom! (…), I've tried the same thing many times when cleaning the classroom, men should also grab their broom and sweep!, and grab their little flannel and clean! (Prof. Guadalupe, EST)*

Even so, the results are not as expected:

> *In most cases in the classroom, they accept each other, get to work and integrate into the group!, they go out, and during the school break in the court or somewhere else we see the same phenomenon again, men on one side, women on the other side!. In events like student's day that is celebrated on May 17th. they all receive the same snack, we try to look for a space where they can all interact together; however, we end up with a line of men waiting for their chicharrines (pork rinds) and all the women make line for their drinks, then all the women run to the other side to get tamales (Mexican minced-beef pie) and all the men go for their drinks. (Prof. Yulibeth, EST)*

Certain behaviors in the case of men such as aggression, harassment, and loyalty, are interpreted to reaffirm their masculine identity [28].

The interaction and changes that take place are a sign of the process of elaboration of their own with what is established by the school in its socializing function.

…Now, there is more physical contact among them!, more confidence!, I do not know, the mental opening they are bringing is greater !, profitable for us as teachers, but a little harmful for their culture(…), I have always managed activities in pairs, before it was man with man, woman with woman, not anymore, I say:

– Get in pairs!

If you do not get a man, work with a woman, and if carrying her is necessary, then it is done. Even a woman can carry a man. (Physical Education Teacher, COBACH)

> *There are small groups of boys and girls, unlike secondary school, here they begin to spend time together a little bit longer, among men and women. (Observation 2, COBACH)*

This greater interaction is evident for both men and women, one student comments:

…It is no longer like middle school where men were on one side and women on the other side, now we are all together !, mixed !, we talk and take more. (Ana Laura, COBACH student)

> *In my class from the beginning they are told: here you are no longer a man, or you are not less for being a woman!, then here we are equal !, both men and women can participate in team and coexist, a man is a little rough, that is understandable, but they have to coexist. (Professor Edith, COBACH)*

There is a fundamental condition of mandate in the figure of male that is tried to be emphasized when teams participate, in groups, in the use of spaces, which can be constitutive of interaction rituals in order to affirm social function and roles. In such circumstances, situations arise in which games are presented with punches, or violence, which seems to occur only in front of others, as a representation scene. Even then, different forms of behavior are observed in the relationship between men with men (beatings) and between women (offensive messages). These changes during interaction amalgamate this confluence of tensions

You can notice in some classrooms men are on one side and women are on the other side, women are subordinated to men! The man commands! (Professor of EST)

Machismo (male chauvinism) is presented all the time! Men are more aggressive with girls, they hit them, and they annoy them! Girls do not say anything, because practically they are taught, that they should not raise their voice to man. I tell them:

"Punch the boys, so they do not bother you!"

Girls start to defend themselves and boys start to respect them (Professor Enrique, EST)

…boys pull the girls' notebooks, they do not want to give them their notebooks, they do not let them walk around, they pull their hair, they throw them water, and girls do not say anything! They can take their food away and girls say nothing! (Joseph, hall supervisor of the EST)

Some female students and male students stand out:

Some men are very aggressive with women. (Gabriela, EST student)

Men are rude to women, they bother them or touch them. (Faust, EST student)

From teachers' perspective, some changes are relevant for students. Some elements are pointed out such as machismo and alcohol consumption, regardless of how it impacts or not the community itself, changes are set out from the worldview of the western world, from the authority that legitimates them socially from the school:

…..indigenous communities are governed by customs and traditions, then it is not so easy to eradicate these issues of machismo and drug addiction because it is very rooted!, because they enforce their traditions and customs!, it is not easy to remove or overcome them! It is a slow process that has to start at secondary level, in order to change their roles, to change part of their culture. (Professor Carlos, EST No. 57)

From the elements presented, there is an agreement with the idea that school experience is not exhausted by official programs or teaching, but it is in the dynamics between the official norms and the daily reality where the school life contextuality is created among concrete actors, norms, practices, and scenarios [29].

3.4. Students outside the norm: alcohol, graffiti, and pornography

Consumption of alcohol begins and its consumption is exacerbated with secondary school students, a situation that tends to decrease in the context of high school

Some of them escape from school and take the streets, in our group there are only three!, but in other groups there are many!, these three students bring sometimes drugs. We do nothing, because if we say something they threaten us! (Marcela, EST student)

When they are high, they do not know what they do, also we fear them because they come very aggressive. (Gabriela, student of the EST)

Consumption of alcohol is closely associated with aspects such as community traditions in which this consumption is presented in celebration of festivities

…there are students who, even though they have no family problems, they adopt bad habits!, but there are also students who drink alcohol, they spend a lot of time smoking marijuana!, that does not mean others do it; but when someone has a family or dating problem, they go out for drinks! (Francisco, EST student)

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> *…consumption of alcohol is closely linked to the culture, customs and traditions (…), they use it as an excuse arguing that it is part of the tradition, culture, even though rituals are not about getting drunk, it happens (…); it is not promoted by the culture to drink alcohol in excess though. (COBACH Principal)*

> *… in their culture alcohol is immersed, they are not even aware of it!, they cannot quit it !, there are few who do not drink, or their parents do not drink !, because in their culture, in each religious event alcohol has to be presented. (Professor of Physical Education, COBACH)*

This situation is aggravated by the lack of recreational spaces for young people

> *…There is no place in the community that serves as a distraction or healthy entertainment for a student or classmate, because of this situation many opt for alcohol consumption. (Juan Carlos, COBACH student)*

The consumption of substances is not only alcohol but also marijuana, inhalable and even cocaine. This situation occurs in both men and women, although this is predominantly performed by men

> *We drink with my girlfriends, sometimes when we drank they had something else, they had marijuana, the first time they gave me it I rejected it! From then I began accepting it, I did it to feel good for a while, to forget problems, to feel life! (Student of EST)*

> *That white powder I have also seen it here in school, some guys consume it; I have seen some of my classmates bringing it, or weed as they call it, they make it into a cigarette or smoke it outside, sometimes during school break time, they smoke somewhere hidden. (Diego, student of the EST)*

In addition, some students show parasocial behaviors such as wall graffiti, or fights due to jealousy situations when a man companies a girl who is supposed to be another man's date and girlfriend

> *…graffiti, belongs to small groups that imitate the behavior of another group of young people, all this pervades indigenous communities that previously did not present any of that.(COBACH Principal)*

Emphasis is placed on teachers, in aspects related to sexuality and alcohol consumption, whose behaviors are considered excessive, because students "see pornographic films and they even have clubs in which they watch these films," or alcohol consumption which forms part of the customs and traditions, it constitutes an impediment for its adequate development. In this imaginary position, it is denied thinking that like indigenous school children, students from other communities also consume pornography, "sex," that alcohol consumption is part of other rituals, in quinceañeras parties (sweet 15 birthday parties) or weddings. Facing these issues, school wants to avoid tension and does not know how the teacher feels without resources to face this situation, which occurs with regret and discomfort. The indigenous schooler is assumed to be a "pure" person, who, unlike others, consumes information that affects him and does not extend his understanding of life.

Some other expressions are a clear reflection of other cultural manifestations such as tattoos or musical interests.

A student in one of her arms, at the height of her wrist, had drawn a skull with black eyes. (Observation 1, COBACH)

When criticizing the work of the school, it is maintained that there is a tradition that conceives schools as places where children and young people are formed in the so-called school

knowledge and that it is a basic mistake to think of them only as a space for teaching, because, "beyond the virtual world of scholastic knowledge, there is a set of real events, which constitutes the daily experience of people and at the same time, serves as a field for scientific research. To this set of events we call it reality [30]." In the same sense, experience in school is not exhausted by official programs or teaching "the whole school experience participates in this dynamic between the official norms and everyday reality [29]." "This everyday reality is built on the contextuality of school life between concrete actors, norms, practices and scenarios [29]." The research experience in schools shows concrete situations that go beyond the school institution as a normative and learning space.

3.5. Courtship and its reconfiguration

For teachers, there is a strong tension between the inspiring factors of an open school to the expression of a more egalitarian relationship between men and women and the tradition that indicates a strong distance in the coexistence and differentiation in the behavior of men and women. In this regard, if two students are observed to talk and get along with some assiduity, this for some parents has the meaning of prelude to a marriage relationship, or the interest of their children to initiate sexual intercourse, even if only a fluent communication is maintained with means of friendship.

In the field of sexuality, the delay of reproductive, labor, and paternity life is proposed contrary to the customs of the community in which marital couples are formed at a very early age.

In non-indigenous society, dating is conceived as part of the family evolution and is conceptualized as a stage for interaction and have fun with the couple. Such component, however, is not appreciated in the relationships established in the community, for whom marriages are agreed upon by adults. In this sense, the perception of teachers and students about courtship is surrounded by contradictions that emanate from a greater openness to social interaction between peers, men and women and their social acceptance; nevertheless, the pressure of parents—increases in secondary school—confronts such openness and demands the distance between students, a situation that places teachers in an ambiguous position and provides a little definition due to the consequences that this could have toward them.

> *…here in San Andres courtship is forbidden by the culture!, if people see a boy and a girl together, what is done here by custom is that they have to get married! (…), sometimes if the boy does not want to, he is taken and put him into prison!, or he goes to court! (Francisco, EST students)*

> *If we get close to a girlfriend who is trustworthy and we talk, and her father or my father see us, they think something else, that we are a couple!, that we are going to get married! (Fausto, Student of the EST)*

Dating is also a topic whose conception changes during the schooling process, aspect that is noticeable in parents of undergraduate students, as well as the presence of other religious groups different from the traditional ones.

> *…Now you can have a relationship!, some parents give permission, it's not like before!, when a girl was seen talking to a boy, she was forced to marry him!, now they can decide! (…) My religion is not traditional, it is sabbatical and my family is not so attached to traditions. (Laura, COBACH student)*

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Last year we had Victor and Martina, a couple, parents knew about the situation and agreed on it, but we're talking they were children of bilingual teachers! (Professor Yulibeth, EST)

Even when that does not happen in this way, students themselves are generating new forms of interaction in assuming relationships with others:

My father never agreed with my current boyfriend, he always told me no!, maybe he never knew, I did not tell him!, Only my mother knew because she is the one I trust the most. When my dad found it out, he scolded and beat me! And from there even my mom told me she had problems with my dad. He thought … he was afraid of me doing bad things with my boyfriend, having sex:

– What if you get pregnant, that's all the boyfriend wants.

And that's what my dad did not want. (Guillermina, EST student)

…we already see life in another way, even if our parents do not let us, because we do it on the sly, we believe that times have changed, it is not how they lived, now it is not like this. (Leticia, COBACH student)

…there are those who have dropped out of school, either because they have no money to continue studying or because they live far away, in the case of girls, some because they have gotten married or pregnant. (COBACH student Eneyda)

This behavior is a sign of a different meaning of sexuality, which is associated with the affirmation of one's own identity and greater social legitimacy for women [28]. Likewise, maintaining a friendly relationship, chatting with a male, even with the impediment of adults and parents, constitutes values of change in communities where women have little access to resources, in such a way that it introduced a new way of reinventing ethnicity beyond school and community walls.

Pregnancy in students inevitably leads them to drop out of school.

….if they are caught together, they are forced to get married and cannot attend school, if they can, the parent who gets them married has no longer responsibilities with them, if it is difficult for the boys to come to school without their wife, then with wife and even with children it is more than enough reason to drop out of school. (COBACH Principal, campus No. 60)

These situations emerge facing events that are not part of the course of the school; they demand new actions and forms of action from their parents, who must deal with this, with different forms of parenting and communication.

What we have observed is that the relationships of couples among young people are reconfiguring over time and between generations, probably due to the relationships established with the non-indigenous world, since cultural groups are not explained and understood only from their attire, rites, traditions, or the so-called "cultural traits," but also in a permanent dynamic with the others. The identity of social groups is not built in seclusion but in constant communication with others. "Identity as culture, cannot be delimited, described or explained because, simply, it is impossible to define it. In any case what we call identity is articulated through processes of interactions, encounters, and if something is characterized by its multiplicity, its constant movement. Its constitution is heterogeneous, unfinished and changing [31]."

3.6. School support: peer tutoring and teacher criticism

One of the most recurring forms of support for students given the difficulties they manifest in understanding instructions or activities to be developed in class is peer support, whose mastery of Spanish and Tsotsil allows them to better understanding of school work. This aspect is extremely important, considering that in secondary groups only five or six of its members speak Spanish perfectly, who are used as monitors in teamwork to facilitate the development of activities; however, the difficulties involved in understanding the topics addressed are recognized.

> *If there is something they do not understand or do not get, if I have an idea of what they need then I support them, I guide them or give them an explanation! (…) Sometimes I explain in Spanish, it depends how they understand you better, either in Tsotsil or in Spanish. (Francisco, EST student)*

> *In the process of learning, the smartest - intelligent - joins with another, students look for him, what I try to do is for him to help me with those who do not understand me. (COBACH teacher)*

> *…I understand very little Tsotsil, but I can get help from the translators, in the classrooms there are children who are very skilled and I ask them what their classmates say and they translate it. (Professor Yulibeth, EST)*

In this process of mediation, the use of the language is submitted not to students but to the mastery or ignorance of the students' mother tongue from teachers, which is the reason why peer supports must be done in Spanish.

> *I explain in Spanish so that teachers can understand, because if I speak in Tsotsil, they will not understand what I said! -to classmates-, so in Spanish - teachers - will get the information and explain it themselves. (Francisco, student of the EST)*

The use of the dominant language is assumed as the means of formation, which is joined with an expectation from parents and teachers; this is an essential part of the school's mission, because of its promotion to the mastery of the use of Spanish among students.

This aspect of the course of the school increases a criticism of some teachers.

> *…In the case of a teacher, who works with the same book he gives us to transcribe-copy-to the notebook, it is quickly noted that he has no interest!; also he does not review the homework content, he just signs it!, he does not have a higher interest rather than the work!, what he counts is the number of signatures, if he complies or not!, if a student learned or did not learn it is not reflected! (Francisco, EST 57 student)*

In addition, among teachers themselves, the difficulties that some have to interact and maintain a respectful relationship of trust with the students are set out.

> *…there is a lot to do with the person who is in front of them, because I consider myself an open minded person, very open !, I can have their trust, I speak to them with great sincerity, with much respect !, they do it too, I receive the same rapport!, but I have seen that they do not behave this way with the reading teacher, math teacher, history teacher, I feel that there is a lot to do with the leading figure that is in front of them, the degree of trust they can perceive, if they can perceive that they trust you, they open up and express, they say everything!, if they do not trust you, they just say hi and that it is. (Professor of Physical Education, COBACH)*

Consequences of pedagogical practices in Spanish, like students, teachers recognize that it constitutes a communication barrier that implies the emergence of learning problems, because many young people repeatedly ask the meaning of a given word, sentence, or class instruction.

However, teachers feel overwhelmed by the culture shock, the activities they propose as alternatives to attend the learning difficulties of students, install them in a circle with no exit, they carry out actions of individual accompaniment to overcome the conflictive situations that result from being in the school, they teach remedial courses on curricular contents that students find difficult, they manage an indigenous-Spanish language dictionary, they request the support of parents to help their children at home. In the classroom, they carry out a pedagogical strategy of peer support, where boys who have a "fluent Spanish" form work team with the ones who have greater difficulty in understanding, with the expectation that among peers it is possible to express doubts and overcome the problems of understanding the language; however, students' learning is maintained with very poor results.

The conception of teachers about the students' learning problems agrees with the criticisms made [32], when it is said that, it seems to be repeated or updated, the same conception from the colonizers of America, who considered natives, was inferior and incapable of being interrogated as civilization, because they were savages. These situations are naturalized and show a veiled form of racism [33].

Schools, in a way of guiding their work, communicating and demanding, disappear the differences with the other and place them as students with learning problems (tutorial work is done and courses to strengthen Spanish are given); therefore, the indigenous condition continues to be a "problem" to meet the school's goals. Teachers express concern about the limitation of language, with consequent learning difficulties, which culminates in many cases, with student's school dropout; however, the tasks undertaken are far from the claim of indigenous culture with all its benefits that can bring in its formative process.

4. As a closing remark

All research work is by no means finished task, it always opens new paths and horizons to ask and start new directions. We recognize that this humanity is increasingly complex and diverse, and it is confronted by social, cultural, political, economic, and educational discourses and practices. What we have presented is only an approach to the reality of the indigenous school in a limited territory of the state of Chiapas, Mexico; however, it provides some information about the concrete reality and opens new perspectives in the study of subjects in schools of indigenous communities. Educational institutions that were studied embody a dynamic and construct a particular experience among subjects that make it possible; they are living scenarios, spaces of ruptures and tensions between the "universal" schools with the local culture.

School practices that we have noticed are aimed at the construction of subjects that can be inserted or participate in a liberal society, one that strives for individualism, competition with others and unequal distribution of real resources and opportunities, considered as the only and the best. The homogeneous curricular proposal presented by the Ministry of Education for indigenous education, the material and symbolic deficiencies of communities and schools, and the lack of knowledge of teachers of local language for pedagogical practice make them converge in the same space regarding both the structural power and the micro-social power.

The activities analyzed transcend classrooms and define ways of being and living the school process. During the course of the school, there is a set of real situations and practices that constitute the daily experience of students as a product of local cultural characteristics and processes. Students of the indigenous community live in situations of tension between cultural products and practices, norms, demands, scientific and technological contents that the school offers. The school is a silent institution that promotes a civilization thought and sustained outside the local context. School daily life is a symbolic reality, which alternates the local configuration, students become protagonists, main characters, not with academic activities, but with other activities that do not belong to the strict order of the transmission of knowledge such as contests, festivities, and shows. In this role, the pupil also shows to his culture the products that are created in the school environment, where he exhibits his achievements and not failures. In all this, school daily experience is a different experience from what is offered by the culture. It is an experience that provides the opportunity for the emergence of another actor, which is the student's presence in the indigenous context. It only remains to think how much tolerances toward the acts that transgress local norms such as living with people of the opposite sex, engaging in gambling, using other attire, acquiring another language, even foreign language, and respecting national symbols, are products of faith's trust and community expectations.

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