

Nzolani: new-found will, knowledge and action in high education

Nzolani: novas vontades, saberes e fazeres na educação superior

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RESUMO | O objetivo deste artigo foi apresentar instrumentos teóricos-metodológicos que temos utilizado e (re)construído em nossas experiências de atuação solidária - neste caso, vividas no contexto da disciplina Construção de Projetos Sociais Multidisciplinares, da Universidade de Brasília - a partir da narrativa dos/as participantes envolvidos/as no desenvolvimento dos projetos sociais intitulados: Revitalização da Escola Flor de Laranjeira (em Brasília) e Combate à Intolerância Religiosa (em Salvador). A pesquisa qualitativa com delineamento de pesquisa-ação fundamentou a prática; e a pesquisa narrativa fundamentou a construção de informações para a análise das experiências, entendida como as lembranças que a pessoa tem de uma situação vivida que a impactou. A análise das narrativas geraram dois eixos vinculados aos significados atribuídos à experiência de atuação solidária: modo de execução e consequência. Os resultados apontam que os contextos formativos construídos na disciplina afetaram os posicionamentos de si, no sentido de considerar, com mais propriedade, os outros escopos sociais e os contextos com os quais interagiram, favorecendo a construção de identidades profissionais solidárias. Com isso, entendemos que a inovação da atuação extensionista está em evocar e permitir a construção de posicionamentos preponderantes de colaboração, que evidenciam um interagir intencionalmente solidário, que tende a gerar alegria, saúde mental e sentimento de dever cumprido, como evidenciado nos relatos dos/as estudantes.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Educação superior. Solidariedade. Projetos sociais. Extensão universitária.

ABSTRACT | The goal of this article was to present theoretical-methodological instruments that we have been utilizing and (re)constructing in our solidarity activity experiences - in this case, lived in the context of a discipline called Construction of Multidisciplinary Social Projects, in University of Brasilia - from the narrative of participants of the following projects: Revitalizing *Flor de Laranjeira* School (in Brasília) and Opposing Religious Intolerance (in Salvador). Qualitative research with research-action design based the practices; and narrative research based data construction for the analysis of the experiences, considered as memories someone has of a situation that impacted them. The narratives analysis generated two axes, tied to the meanings related to solidarity activities experiences: means of execution and consequences. The results showed that the formative context generated in the discipline affected student's self positioning, in the sense of considering, more appropriately so, other social scopes and contexts with which they interacted, favoring the construction of professional solidarity identities. With that, we understand that innovation in extension activities consists in evoking and/or allowing the construction of preponderant collaboration positioning, that show an intentionally solidary exchanging behave, that tends to bring joy, mental health, and the feeling of fulfillment, as evidenced by students' reports.

KEYWORDS: Higher education. Solidarity. Social projects. University extension project.

Introduction

Nzolani in the African dialect Kikoongo, denotes love, desire and fellowship amongst people. Or, put another way, solidarity - which is shown in the formation of reciprocal bonds based on collective action for the social good (Pérez, 2001; Sousa, Caixeta & Santos, 2016), a concept compromised by overuse and its availability in the search for new explication and context (Santos, 2018). It is, however, a concept defined, not through the individual, but within a society.

In this work, we inquire into the experience of graduate students in actions of solidarity within the sphere of community collaboration. We take experience to mean what actually happens to us rather than simply what happens or passes us by (Bondía, 2002, p.21).

Higher education, External Collaboration and the debt to the social good

It is the role of higher education to provide learning opportunities which allow its students to perceive social injustice as a societal problem and how far each participant is involved in its resolution. (Pérez, 2001; Sousa, Caixeta, & Santos, 2016; Caixeta, Costa, Lima, Silva, Alves, Gomes, Silva, Sousa, & Santos, 2018). For this, it is not enough to identify social ills, such as poverty, but to identify its causes - inequality, custom, education and work.

In its role as a provider of professional training, the university develops community- embedded projects, which through facilitating links between specialist and then wider expertise, combine together to add to the stock of knowledge (Caixeta et al., 2018).

In this article we will focus on external collaboration as an innovative educational practice, since it supports various elements of the definition in use, namely the “process of freeing, or opening up, whilst not forcing, is in essence the result of uniting attitudes of various sections of the community”, with “the potential to generate equal personal, social and intellectual development amongst those involved in the educative process”, (Guimarães, Sousa, Paiva, & Almeida, 2015, p. 42).

Thus, collaborative, external practice prompts, 1. initial preparation of graduate students in the creation of insights specific to their area, as well as

the development of personal social skills, such as the ability to function with people from varying multi- and interdisciplinary backgrounds; 2. the on-going education of professional participants (post-graduate and graduate students, tutors, facilitating colleagues), since the developing context requires theoretical and methodological critiquing; 3. in-service training of university teachers, since the on-going varied contacts with their fields of activity will benefit their professional development thorough discussion and intervention; 4. a type of teaching linked to change, which gains meaning when subjects shape their own propositions and actions, leading to new knowledge, critical gain, and new human possibilities; 5. teacher and student reflection upon the world beyond the university, preparing individuals and institutions to favour ethical demands over established conceits.

We consider that the introduction of collaborative action, centred on an interactional methodology between theory and practice in community settings, including professionals from varying backgrounds, enables ethical reflection and builds a base for citizenship in action.

Theory-Practice Interaction: qualitative methodology applied to Collaborative Projects

Research interventions in university collaboration are best served by qualitative methodology, as it is a mode of inquiry offering a range of pathways, an essential element for working in the community (Sousa, et al., 2016; Yin, 2016; Caixeta, et al., 2018).

We justify our choice of action-research, in that it “provides for a greater number of participants, shortens the distance between researcher and society, embraces change grounded in fact, and leads researchers to function in the field, where conditions are fluid (...)” (Sommer, & Arnick, 2003, p. 3).

The presumption of action-research, which stresses partner engagement, is in line with the idea of solidarity as reciprocity, or the notion that the other is capable of teaching and learning with us, of forming new abstractions and practices. It is a mode of research where inquiry and practice unite, affording a wider voice, where an argument’s worth is judged by its content, not by the top-down voice which asserts it (Sousa, 2011). It is a mode of research where each contributor is free to raise, extract and create expertise, to question oneself and others, initiate

new exchanges in the group, the greater society and world, whilst retaining respective identities, and widening the positional opportunities for oneself and others” (Bauman, 2001; Sousa, et al., 2016).

Embedded within a qualitative methodology through alignment with action research, the social projects presented in this article form part of the University of Brasilia’s Rondon Project. In practice, this refers to the gathering of knowledge, the overcoming of exclusion, effort to understand validity realms, the agreed use of shared time and space, and objectivity as a relational achievement (Sousa, et al., 2016).

The Rondon Project, the creation of multi-disciplinary social projects (FMSP) applied thorough action research

In its fulfilment of social projects, the Rondon Project is a current venture of some note. The result of national policy involving various ministries and institutions of higher education, (UnB, 2016) the Rondon Project offers university students a chance to engage with the authentic diversity of Brazilian life from a multidisciplinary standpoint, while necessarily showing regard for their partner groups.

The University of Brasilia (UnB), has since 2005 (UnB, 2016) delivered intervention strategies throughout areas of low socioeconomic status. Projects are set on two levels; first, the compulsory engagement of students from different courses and, secondly, as a learning space for the acquisition of technical, ethical, aesthetical and political skills, (UnB, *ibid*).

To boost programme effectiveness, a Faculty founded a related discipline, created as Formation of Multidisciplinary Social Projects, (FMSP) with a duration of sixty hours, calling on various university departments, such as Human Rights, Education, Communication amongst others (UnB, 2016).

In summer 2018, at the Planaltina Faculty of UnB, we offered the course entitled the above-mentioned course presenting enrolled students experiments in solidarity, within a framework of qualitative action-research.

The course received thirty one enrolments from various student backgrounds, namely Natural Sciences, Management of Agrobusiness, Environmental Management, Geography, Education and Social Sciences.

Course content was set along these lines: 1. Subjects definition, solidarity, social projects and action-research; 2. Relating disciplines to the practice of social projects in disparate areas; 3. Project planning, execution and evaluation, with summaries and relevant texts; and then organized into four sections: 1. What am I able to do for someone I don’t know?; 2. From the notion of people to the notion of solidarity; 3. Theoretical and Methodological Bases – and 4. Multidisciplinary Social Projects.

The course had its opening session at the university, and another at the project locations, the rural school *Flor de Laranjeira, Planaltina de Goiás*, and the *Terreiro de Candomblé¹ Tumba Junsara, Salvador, Bahia*.

Module one was spread over twenty hours and previewed the learning materials of content units 1, 2 & 3. It aimed to create interactive space so that members could marshal resources termed by Marinho-Araújo e Almeida (2016) as socio-affective, whose goal is to reach common aims through emerging personal links. Module two took longer than planned for reasons later explained in the section dealing with Social Projects. The aim of the second module was to enact the cycle of action-research, namely the planning, executing and evaluation of functions anticipating social transformation for the common good.

The classes of the first module, running at five hours each, were characterized by dialogue, group discussion, consideration of text, and simulations to further the act of collaboration.

In the opening class, we used a welcoming technique, which showed various types of greetings. To follow, in order for us to acquaint, each person would produce an item, or object which in some way reflects him / her to pass on to a colleague chosen by lots. The aim of this was to encourage colleagues to view themselves and others, by presenting something of him / herself to another group member.

¹Part of the Macumba cult in Afro-Brazilian religion.

To round off the session, students were faced with the question, What would I do for someone that I don't know? The response was to be issued in the form of a letter to a recipient chosen by each writer. A group discussion on the letter opened the second session, with questions such as What was it like to write this? or Would anyone like to read us the letter? or What did this activity teach us?

We followed this dialogue with the activity Are You Human? suggested by Werneck (2003). Here, certain questions were posed, such as Is a child human if born without a brain? or Is a murderer human who kills, chops up and eats his own mother? What about industrialists, a prostitute, someone in a permanent coma? Are they human? The questions were placed in a box and passed around while music played. When the music stopped, the holder of the box was to take a question and offer an opinion, inviting contributions from others.

When the questions were used up, participants were required to define the word human. Then an additional question was put from Werneck (2003); What must I take from you for you to cease being human? An intensive debate produced the following definition: in each and every one of the above cases is a human being.

The goal was to define solidarity. For this we played the games *Escravos de Jo*², where each person holds an object and to the tune *Escravos de Jo*, synchronizes an exchange with a partner's object, and then reclaims the original. Success depended on collective collaboration. In the room, five exchanges were needed to regain one's original object. At the end of the game, students were questioned as to what this had to do with solidarity. A new debate concluded that the essence of solidarity meant action in common.

The class concluded with the setting of two texts, Pérez (1997) and Almeida (2007), and a task: based on the definition of solidarity as action which is joint and reciprocal. to write a text recounting an act of solidarity which had been experienced by you.

The third class opened with a report of actions already experienced. We noted that differing attitudes had emerged, some of which drew on the notion of Assistencialism, where necessities may be met, without attending to their root cause (Sousa, 2011). We stressed that our focus was on promoting critical intervention, where opportunities are identified, where the community is in control and, in overcoming immediate difficulties, defines its own needs.

We continued with the Web of Life simulation game, where each member presents a personal characteristic which would support an action of solidarity. He / she holds the end of a ball of string which is then thrown to a colleague. The aim is to connect the group with each participant at a point in the web. The next step is to pinpoint the aims we would choose as part of our act of solidarity. Through a group discussion, we chose three: 1. to leave a mark on the land, where that is a social space, the place of action; 2. to promote change and 3. to foster integration.

With the goals classified, the next activity involved suspending three pens, each representing a goal, above three bottles. The point of the simulation was to place each pen in a bottle as a sign that objective had been reached. Thus, we were required to use the space to attain the target, for example to step to the left, or to lower or raise ourselves. With that achieved and in order to undo the web, each person rolled up the ball of string, whilst each one articulated what we had to do or to be in order to reach our agreed goals.

To round off the class, students were advised to read a text by Sousa, Caixeta e Santos (2016) on qualitative methodology as an agent in inclusive environments.

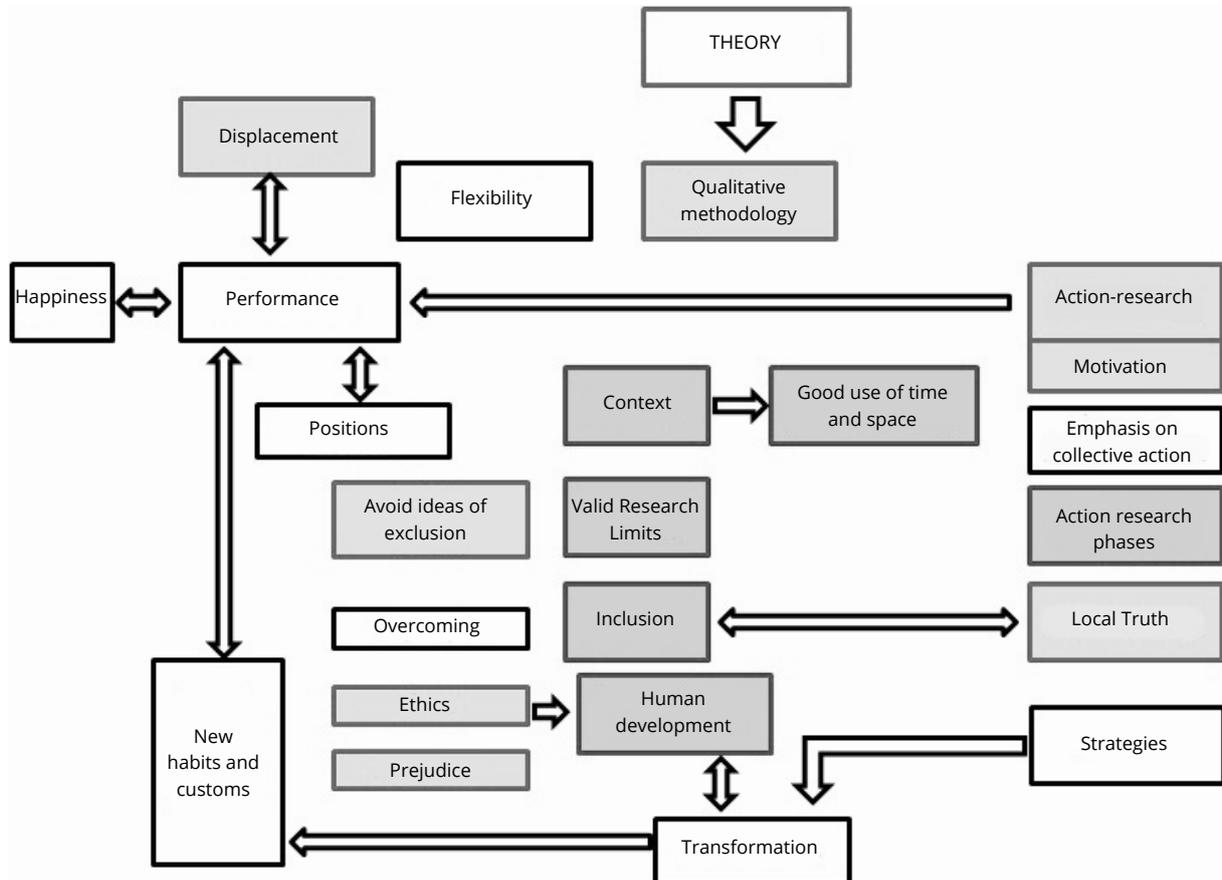
In the final meeting of this module, we identified key words from the text, wrote them onto signs to form a concept diagram, relating the notions of solidarity and people, with those denoting a qualitative methodology (see fig. 1).

²A children's nursery rhyme and game.

The diagram systematised the concepts under discussion, with meanings and understandings as to the content studied and the methodology suggested for our social projects.

Aiming to employ a qualitative methodology within a research setting, we completed the final simulation game. For it to succeed, The Doll requires the exchange of information and materials.

Figure 1. Concept diagram



The group was divided into four, and each sub-group into pairs. Groups 1 and 3 formed a team (A), while groups 2 and 4 (B) did likewise. The two teams were tasked with making a doll. (A) would fashion the right side of the figurine, and (B) the left. The dimensions of the doll were shown on the board, for example, the head would measure 30 cms in diameter, the leg 80 cms. Instructions to the two teams, to make a doll, were identical. Apart from the dimensions, appropriate materials were provided, such as cloth and stationery.

The teams were to return an hour later with their completed dolls. The outcome was two figures whose right and left sides did not fit, (see fig 2) whereupon we opened a discussion as to what may have occurred. Replies suggested the need for dialogue and planning, prior to either group rushing off to begin the task.

Figure 2. Figurines



We showed through this activity that, although materials are fundamental, in themselves they are not enough to complete a task. Team integration for planning would have led to a more successful conclusion.

The second module of the course centred on the delivery of two Social Projects: Regeneration at a school, and an event entitled Combating Religious Intolerance. The project settings, a rural school named Flor da Laranja in Planaltina, state of Goiás, and a religious centre named Terreiro Tumba Junsara in Salvador, Bahia, were selected as locations for their low socio-economic status, of social vulnerability, having lacked public support in the first instance, and discrimination in the second. Both institutions had previously benefited from UnB community projects, for four years and one year respectively.

Project Regeneration comprised twenty-nine enrolments, while the two in Combating Religious Intolerance were chosen for their previous experience in arts, culture, marginalism, and black studies.

As mentioned above, a qualitative methodology was selected to drive the inquiry, and to meet our methodological guidelines, we decided that planning would actually take place on research domains.

Regeneration at the Flor de Laranja school

The research domain was profiled on the first visit to the school, in the company of the volunteer students, a member of the university teaching staff, and the head and deputy head of the school.

Figure 3. Flor de Laranjeira pre-project



This initial experience had its impact on the university visitors. Fallen sheets of PVC roofing material littered the floor, paint was peeling, lighting was out of action, and vegetation was overgrown

Following the structural appraisal and talks with the school head and deputy, the team, as it was to be known, was organized into five groups responsible for;

- (1) cutting back vegetation
- (2) tending the garden
- (3) repairs
- (4) the play-store and
- (5) school cleaning.

The team decided that each participant could choose membership of whichever group and, if sufficient progress had been achieved, could join another group. Thus, the members of group (1) could join another team once the undergrowth had been trimmed.

(As this task was mostly completed in week one, most of group (1) joined group (3) in view of the amount of work to be done, such as (a) replacement of PVC roofing in the classrooms, (b) the installation of lights and twin plugs throughout the school, (c) the placement of rails and curtains in classrooms, (d) freshening up of paintwork throughout the building,

(d) attention to bathroom fittings (g) repair of cupboards and chests and (h) general decoration.

Following the first day, we moved onto planning, executing and evaluating our activities, in terms of the groups we had formed and the project as a whole. Given the constraints of school and course time, we confirmed that the phases of our action- research for smaller tasks would proceed in line with our overall work objectives. Flexibility within the workflow was vital to progress, once the challenges for each group were set. For example, the Repairs group needed outside help to complete certain activities - the roofing installation, for instance. It was therefore necessary to re-plan to ensure that the programme was not halted in this phase. Similarly, the gardening group need to stage their work of planting, cutting back, disposal, and soil fertilisation with organic compost, as well as painting the wall to add a cheering touch.

Work at the school took place over four weekly visits of an average four and a half hours per visit. Some colleagues volunteered to carry out their tasks at other times on different days. The course leader circulated a resumé of each day's activities and progress towards regeneration to be posted on WhatsApp and Facebook.

Activities for the upgrading of *Flor de Laranjeira* took place over twenty-five days, with a crew of twenty-eight volunteers. Nineteen sponsors donated money and items to the repairs and toy-store team. Assistance was also made available from the Council and some local companies. The intervention resulted in a regeneration of all school space (see fig 4).

Figure 4. *Flor de Laranjeira* after the upgrade



Project completion saw new LED lighting in the office and in the classrooms, PVC roofing materials, painting, electrical fittings, with improved storage and decoration. The tyre garden and the allotment were created and re-planted, while the bathrooms were painted and re-fitted. The whole school was done up and a toy-store devised.

Combating Religious Intolerance

Two students led the the second project for a community based at the Terreiro Tumba Junsara site, where the Kikoongo and Kimbundo dialects are spoken, hence explaining the use of the Kikoonga word Nzolani in our title.

Combating Religious Intolerance (CRI) was overseen by the Association for the Upkeep and Maintenance of Terreiro Tumba Junsara, or ABENTUMBA of Salvador, Bahia, amongst whose projects was the Residency Programme for Solidarity, a training centre where university students were encouraged to take part in immersion programmes, leading to limited inclusion in the community though day-to-day contact. Such connections would seek and promote alternatives to confrontation, while devising strategies for problem-solving and resolution (Carrion, Valentim, & Hellwig, 2006).

Combating Religious Intolerance Week comprised actions in line with a programme from Bahia University, entitled *The Place for Black Memory*. Reflection upon processes for survival and sustainability of black organizations was encouraged, aiming to raise awareness amongst academic communities and society in general as to the centrality of memory in re-appraisal of struggles in overcoming religious intolerance.

That this event should take place in the Terreiro Tumba Junsara continues a legacy of religious, cultural resistance, earning it a place in The National Institute of Patrimony and Arts (IPHAN) in 2018.

Throughout its history, the Terreiro has become a national reference point for black citizens in their pursuit of dignity, respect and recognition of religions rooted in Africa.

The residency consisted of ten days' immersion, where two course members planned, carried out and evaluated activities within the CRI event, including roundtables, lectures, short courses, consultations, group graffiti, dance and meals (Abetumba, 2018).

This project also contained two opening modules. The first involved classes where students learnt about African-based religion, ancestry, memory, residence,

unity and public policy. Visits to historical sites were part of the experience, as well as items of culture such as cooking. Sites to be visited included Pelourinho, the Church of Senhor do Bonfim, the Barroquinha Centre, the Museum of Modern Art of Bahia, and the Baiana museum.

The second module included student participation in the CRI week at the Terreiro Tumba Junsara, guided by staff linked to areas of Education and Psychology activities from the UnB Faculty Planaltina and also a member of ABENTUMBA.

Methodologically, the project resembled its counterpart in Goiás, where, guided by staff on-site, students demonstrated planning and evaluation on a daily bulletin.

Throughout the event, students assisted by Terreiro staff opted to join the work group linked to Arts and Culture, for group encounters, collective graffiti and artistic presentations (see fig 5). In addition, students helped in the cleaning and preparation of the graffiti spaces.

Figure 5. Atuação do Grupo Arte e Cultura



Upon project completion, teams from either site - Salvador and Goiás - re-assembled.

Aims

The purpose of this article was to present through contributor reports, the strategies we adopted and our experiences of action in solidarity contextualised in the course Building Multidisciplinary Social Projects at UnB.

Methodology

The motivator for data-collection was the narrative (Yin, 2016), a process which organizes our life experiences. Autobiographical methodology suggests inquiry into how individuals assemble and interpret social reality and how they act in the

world to transform or preserve this reality - so-called transforming and conforming (Passeggi, 2016, p.19).

The narratives were decided upon in different modules. In the first session we requested that the students

- (a) write a letter to a special acquaintance, detailing what they were capable of doing for someone they didn't know;
- (b) define solidarity and to recount a personal experience of such;
- (c) explain their understanding of the effect of qualitative methodology on action- research.

In the second course meeting, the WhatsApp group produced a digital group diary in which members registered and exchanged their experiences in the school and in the Terreiro site. The course closed with the production of a text entitled Five Weeks in Summer, where participants were to relate their experience. Of all the course activities, this was optional.

Data and procedure for analysis

Our research data is elicited from the meeting of group one i.e. fifteen letters plus nineteen texts and from group meeting two, daily reports plus WhatsApp exchanges and eight texts entitled Five Weeks in Summer, plus private messages to staff, one email and two private WhatsApp messages.

Prior to initiating research through data analysis, student permission was sought to use texts they had produced on various platforms throughout the course i.e. Moodle, WhatsApp and Facebook, as well as images they had produced of action domains.

Authorization for use was officially recorded, as well as signed participant statements confirming their freedom to leave the project at any time. For this, the names of domains, and participants are fictitious, apart from Terreiro Tumba Junsara and its Association.

For data analysis we employed a dialogic thematic approach suggested by Silva and Borges (2017), which depends upon an intense reading of the material under inquiry, the organization of evidence into themes and sub-themes, taking evidence as any linguistic item bearing meaning (Bakhtin/Voloshinov, 2014), and finally, the production and review of a semiotic map inspired by Rosa e González (2013) understood as a representation of the dynamics and relations within the constructs of the texts.

Results

Results will be presented along two axes linking the features attributed to the acts of solidarity,

namely delivery methods and consequences. Such themes, derived from the work of Caixeta e Barbato (2004), prove appropriate in this case, since analysis produces information on the means of identification. Such can only be grasped in the light of social interaction, which benefits from the construction of the individual in diverse positioning. By positioning, we understand the form in which the individual constructs his / her identities discursively, in relation to other, and with social functions by assuming for him / herself or by attributing to others (Oliveira, Guanaes, & Costa, 2004, p.76).

Through the use of axes defining delivery and consequence, we are able to replicate the processes of identification, which are both dynamic and multifaceted, along with identity which is formed in and by social interaction.

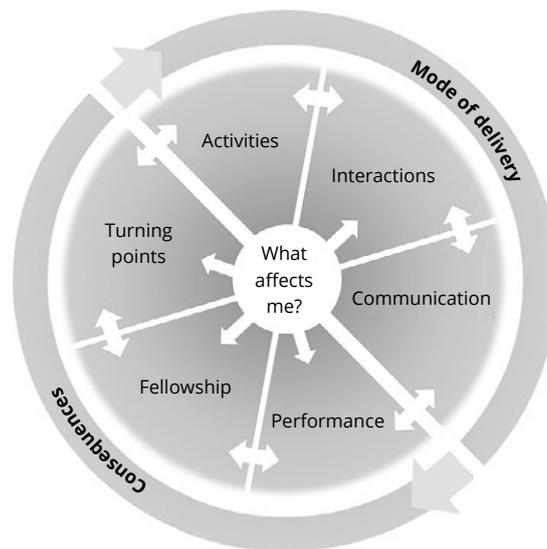
The axis shown as mode of delivery and outcome refers to the various ways in which the students were led towards acts of solidarity, while that of consequence refers to the results inwardly and outwardly perceived, where varied time and space re-aligned the project actions. Thus, in the semiotic diagram, the arrows show a cyclical direction (fig 6).

Each axis reveals its themes, creating a semiotic analysis of the solidarity action experience in the course Foundation of Multi-disciplinary Social Projects (FMSP). For each theme depicted on the axis, we will produce citations from the data, whilst withholding identity.

The Delivery Axis

We included three themes on the delivery axis: activities, interaction and communication. The themes, duly shown in fig 6, reflect mutual influences.

Figure 6. Semiotic diagram



Activities

The theme of activities calls upon the evocative and challenging element of the course, which required one a) to think of oneself's personal history and choices made in a situation of solidarity b) to consider one's relationship with others and c) consider oneself, a colleague and other participants within a joint action.

*What can I do for someone I don't even know? (...)
This has brought me certain anxieties
and I think that must be good!
from Ewê's letter*

*Solidarity linked to cheerfulness and good humour
in the room placed us in a group situation, leading
to a reciprocity where all simultaneously sensed an
interaction amongst those involved.
from Diana's letter on Solidarity*

*I don't know where to start about these five weeks of
summer which turned out to be so intense ... anyway at
the start I entered the room I was well nervous, shy, not
knowing what to expect ... my first surprise was to see
how people greeted each other ... it's so usual to spend
a whole course and hardly know who anyone is ... my
second surprise was the type of activity where
I was made to think ... such as Is a man human who
kills and eats his mother? I found it very interesting the
way to relate to people despite their mistakes ... another
activity which stood out for me was that of the doll ...
I confess I didn't get the meaning at first but it proved to
be one of the most useful.
from Five Weeks in Summer by Dandara*

Interaction

The theme of interaction brought together meanings linked to the actions necessary for collaboration. The narratives showed that interactions referred not only to speech but also readiness to converse and then to act together. Therefore we can say that encounters brought approximation, knowledge and recognition and a sense of belonging, leading to empathy.

*I think I could recognise that just by looking,
you will see another human,
from Ewê's letter.*

Putting oneself in the place of another, we will treat the other as an individual like ourselves, overcoming our prejudices and developing new habits and practices, and even using time and space for the benefit of all. Being ethically guided in our dealings creates human progress, by joyfully accepting differences.
by Aia on the conceptual diagram.

*I was truly amazed by the degree of unity
as well as the patience of my colleagues while roofing,
where your work could only proceed when a prior task
had been completed.
from Tânia's letter*

Communication

The theme of communication appeared in the narratives as a proposing and negotiating strategy. As a gambit, it was identified specifically in the social networks, where narratives revealed the wish to

share what had been done, or intentions which hadn't worked out, or more so those that had. In this sense communication was a method for expressing thoughts, wishes, emotions, wins and losses.

Dialogue on the stay from WhatsApp and Facebook

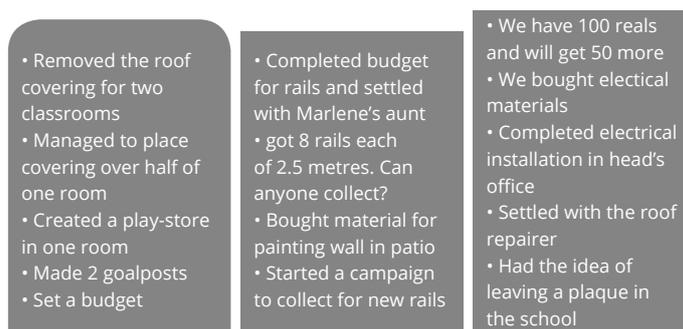
D: We're doing stuff about memory and unity
V: Cool!

D: Really interesting. They say its management for the future
V: Dealing with memory?

D: Memory is used as a path to the future. Within the network it's called managing the future. Incredible!

Daily Bulletins were used to ensure that all participants were up to speed with events in Flor and Residency. (see fig 7)

Figure 7. Daily Bulletin



As with negotiation, communication was viewed as a process to discuss, interpret, express wishes, thoughts and actions

All the time at the school, groups had to speak to each other, like, when painting the walls, you'd have to wait for another group to place the covers, another group to do the sanding and so on ...
from Dandara's letter

G: My dad suggested this colour (to cover a wall) as it's better to write and draw over. For graffiti it's a touch darker. Just thinking of costs.

V: What do you think? Economizing is important. We're broke.
(Conversation from WhatsApp)

Consequences

On the axis of consequences, three themes appear; action, fellowship and turning points These are themes which influence each other and figure in the mode of delivery. Thus, the semiotic diagram is circular, while the arrows show that realignment occurs between the variables which comprise each theme on its axis.

Performance

The theme refers to (a) the level of promotion of each participant during the course, once the task and activities of the group had been formed by decisions where negotiation was vital and (b) the need to change long-held positions to more flexible ones, in order to construct new types of behaviour

I'm sending this note to myself, as I wish to learn from each letter I set down and to engrave it in myself to act better towards others.
from Luz's letter

I was happy to receive your invitation. I'm not sure how it is I can help you, as I've never taken part in an act of solidarity. I do believe that, if you explain to me how it's done, I'll set about learning
from Morena's letter

At that moment, I put self to one side, as I always believed that I was at the centre, but seeing all those here, I was able to understand that my wishes were nothing as viewed by others, and I began to reflect more and through small acts was able to assist others as needed.
from Dolores' letter

Analysis of the theme Performance allowed the understanding that the stages of action- research - planning, delivery and evaluation, were intertwined throughout the variable of time and space of the project. The adjustable limits between phases were vital, for moments of difficulty, or dealing with the unexpected.

*Tomorrow there will be no roof-sealing team.
It's a rest day!
From the daily bulletin.*

Fellowship

The theme of fellowship refers to the act of comradeship, to bond with another, and encompasses the emotions - anger, happiness, perhaps, and moral traits such as empathy.

*My initial experience of the school caused me to react with anger. - not just at the neglect so commonly shown by our leaders, but a total lack of basic resources, a complete indifference to basic human needs.
from Valentina's letter*

*I feel at home. I'm leaving with a heavy heart. I've never felt this before. Such a reception! So many memories!
Ewe - Facebook*

Turning Points

This theme refers to two-dimensional change, that of the domain and in the self. Changes in the domain were noted in narrative extracts, referring to physical and social structures where activities were carried out, but also including the persons involved.

There was a general, although unspoken, transformation. They changed their way of attending school. You didn't need much to see the care they took. from Valentina's letter

We noticed a significant change within the school, from the way they looked at us and treated the surroundings, which was more important email from Pedro

Change in oneself relates to the impact of the project on ways of perceiving oneself and life, suggesting new standpoints and choices.

*The change I felt from my first day to the last, was fundamental. My parents even asked me if I was dispensing smiles and hugs as a result of the trip. Man, it was so good, that not once did my head doubt what we could do
from Pedro's letter*

Discussion

It is the role of Higher Education to develop teaching strategies which challenge learners with regard to different populations, contexts and resources (Caixeta, et al., 2018; Sousa et al., 2016; Marinho-Araújo, & Almeida, 2012).

With this as a starting point, the projects stimulated the participants to increase notions of citizenship and democracy, rooted in a belief of care for others and individual liberty. (Bauman, 2001; Sousa, 2011; Rosa, & González, 2014).

Results showed that what made most impression on the participants was the challenges they faced, and the independence throughout, notably during project delivery, and the effects of such on themselves and on others.

The learning process possessed as premise and methodology the following:

1. to avoid any reasons for exclusion, which implies avoiding radical positions, leading to difficulties, distancing, or even an abrupt end to the project, insofar as the other's work relied on personal effort, as well as on the group.
2. to make a point of understanding useful space, that is margins where acting together is possible, even though this may mean breaking with what may seem correct and suitable at that time.
3. to use time and space rationally and communally, viewing people, materials and time for the best possible outcomes at a certain time and context.
4. to point up and consider certain popular and scientific notions, thus aiming creating greater chances for project success and mutual comprehension.

5. to gather local truth: including the diversity and adversity in action domains, participant exchanges were necessary to create opportunities for understanding, what are termed here as local truth. Such understanding, both collective and supportive, uniquely favoured solidarity.

6. Treat objectivity as a relational plus, which values agreement as the fruits of negotiation, via a legitimate effort to fulfil the aims of the project, including human and material resources. (Sousa et al., 2016).

We support Marinho-Araújo e Almeida (2016) which states that “the optimal locus for the development of skills is the workplace, where actions and operations are favourable for the construction of a professional identity applicable to both personal and collective states” (p.4).

Action in the community made it possible to adopt positions which may or may not have been achieved outside the intervention. We saw, however, that the course made possible the formation of collective identities, both fair and balanced, in demanding settings. Similarly noted was, through the removal of prejudices, a community spirit, respectful of what and who might be different. Experience in communities beyond the university may create the likelihood for solidarity and engagement with others and self.

Final Considerations

Project interventions and other course activities were geared towards activities for solidarity, through learning set up for interaction, and underpinned by precepts of solidarity, and the social requirements of higher education, and methodologies of action-research. The course was characterised by dialogue, both intellectual and affective cooperation, taking inclusion and goodwill as levers for such ethically democratic behaviour necessary for citizenship.

Analysis of student narratives showed that course activities drew the writers away from a self-centred focus to a more collective view of those they interacted with, forming professional solidarity. The practice of including others in the first action-plan showed values

of solidarity, or the first display of reciprocity. Thus, the benefit of external collaboration is in the formation of collaborative positions. Such affirmative exchange tends to produce happiness, mental health, a sense of duty done, as is demonstrated in student narratives.

We note the contribution of narrative research for the inquiry into experience, for offering techniques which ally with the concept of reciprocity, fundamental for a sense of solidarity. Additionally, we would state that future studies might benefit from narrative interviews, should they be episodic, or interactive or group-led, presenting each student with the chance to be heard.

Through this work, we hope to make our theoretical and methodological contributions, helping to overcome intolerance and egotism. We wish to add to the understanding of diversity, shaping people who are ready to change themselves and others for the better.

Acknowledgments

Pro-Rectoria of Extension Activities/ University of Brasília; Federal District Research Support Foundation (FAP-DF); Bancorbrás Institute of Social Responsibility; Association for the Up keep and Maintenance of Terreiro Tumba Junsara (ABENTUMBA); Interdisciplinary Center for Development and Social Management (CIAGS)/ University of Bahia.

This article is the result of research approved for presentation at the 7th Ibero-American Congress on Qualitative Research - CIAIQ, July 10-13, 2018 in Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil.

Authors' Contributions

Caixeta, J. E. coordinated the Revitalization Project of the Flor de Laranjeiras School and supported the Solidary Residency Project. Participated in the conception, design and analysis of information and writing of the scientific article. Sousa, M. A. supported the Solidary Residency Project, participated in the conception, design and analysis of information and writing of the scientific article. Silva, R. L. J. coordinated the Revitalization Project of the Flor de Laranjeiras School, participated in the conception, design and analysis of information and writing of the scientific article. Santos, P.F. guided Solidary Residency Project, participated in the conception, design and analysis of information and writing of the scientific article. Lima, L.M., Gomes, E.L., Silva, R.C., Alves, E.B.S. and Cunha, S.L. participated in the Revitalization Project of the Flor de Laranjeira School, the construction and organization of textual and image information, interpretation of results and review of the scientific article.

Conflicts of interest

No financial, legal or political conflict involving third parties (government, companies and private foundations, etc.) has been declared for any aspect of the submitted study (including, but not limited to, grants and funding, advisory board membership, study design, manuscript preparation, statistical analysis, etc.)

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