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## CURRICULARIZATION OF EXTENSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: APPLIED PRACTICES AND TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACTS ON ACADEMIC TRAINING

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**Abstract:** In recent decades, higher education in Brazil has undergone significant transformations, including the curricularization of extension, which integrates extension activities into the academic curriculum. Officialized by Resolution MEC/CNE/SES in 2023, this practice aligns with Goal 12.7 of the National Education Plan (PNE), promoting a transformative interaction between higher education institutions and society. Faveni University Center - Unifaveni stands out in this context, developing projects that enrich students' education, such as the proper disposal of batteries and the construction of cultural identity. These projects involve an exploratory approach and participant observation, allowing a qualitative analysis of extension practices and their impact on academic education. The results demonstrate that, in addition to meeting legal requirements, the curricularization of extension at Unifaveni promotes an engaged and conscious education, addressing environmental and cultural issues that directly impact society. The research reveals that students developed greater awareness and social responsibility, essential to face contemporary challenges, both in the environmental and cultural spheres. The conclusion points to the relevance of these activities in the comprehensive education of students, proposing new research to deepen the understanding of this dynamic educational process.

**Keywords:** Curricularization, Extension, Projects, Society

## INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, higher education has undergone significant conceptual, pedagogical, and organizational transformations. One of these relevant changes is the curricularization of extension, a movement that aims to integrate extension activities into the curriculum of

undergraduate courses. In Brazil, this practice was made official by Resolution MEC/CNE/SES, making the inclusion of extension activities in academic curricula mandatory as of 2023. The curricular integration of extension emerges as a fundamental strategy as outlined in Target 12.7 of Law, number: 13,005/2014, which belongs to the corpus of the National Education Plan (PNE).

According to article 3 of this resolution, Extension in Brazilian Higher Education is configured as an activity intrinsically linked to the curricular matrix and the structure of academic research. This process, of an interdisciplinary, political-educational, cultural, scientific, and technological nature, aims to foster transformative interaction between higher education institutions and the various segments of society. This interaction is materialized through the production and application of knowledge, establishing a lasting connection with the spheres of teaching and research.

In this context, the Faveni University Center has stood out by promoting projects that seek not only to comply with legal requirements, but also to enrich the education of students, promoting a broader education that is engaged with society.

The extension curricularization activities represent 10% of the total course load. However, achieving this accreditation in undergraduate programs was a challenge due to the lack of national guidelines to guide institutions in this process.

This article aims to analyze two projects developed within the scope of the extension curricularization at the Faveni University Center. The first project focused on the proper disposal of batteries, addressing environmental issues. The second project explored themes of pluralism and cultural identity, promoting the understanding and appreciation of diversity among students.

The present study adopts an exploratory approach, focusing on extension as the object of investigation. For this analysis, the documentary analysis technique was used, as recommended by Souza and Giacomoni (2021). Initially, relevant documents were collected, including legislation, national education plans, policies from extension forums and the Guidelines for Extension in Brazilian Higher Education (BRAZIL, 2018), recently published, all available on public access websites. In addition, it is worth mentioning that the research method adopted in this study is participant observation, of the student body of the Faveni University Center.

The results of the participant observation carried out with the student body of the Faveni University Center will be presented in the following sections of this article. Then, the data will be analyzed in light of the extension curricularization policies and the Guidelines for Extension in Brazilian Higher Education (BRAZIL, 2018), seeking to understand how the integration of extension into the curriculum impacts the students' experience and promotes interaction between the educational institution and the community. The Results and Discussion section will describe the observations made during the researchers' active participation in extension activities and in student interactions. The study will highlight students' perceptions regarding outreach activities, their involvement, learning, and the impact of these experiences on their academic and personal development. Finally, the Conclusion section will bring together the main findings of the study, highlighting the contributions to understanding the role of curricularization of outreach at Faveni University Center. The study's limitations and suggestions for future research will also be presented, aiming to deepen knowledge on this relevant and dynamic topic in the Brazilian educational context.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study adopts an exploratory approach, focusing on university extension as the central object of investigation. To conduct this analysis, we used the documentary analysis technique (SOUZA; GIACOMONI, 2021). During this stage, relevant documents were collected, including legislation, national education plans, policies originating from extension forums and the Guidelines for Extension in Brazilian Higher Education (BRAZIL, 2018), recently published. All of these materials were accessed on public domain websites and represent sources to support our research.

In addition, for a more holistic understanding, we adopted participant observation as a research method, following the methodology proposed by Creswell (2014). Participant observation is a qualitative technique that involves the active insertion of the researcher in the studied environment, allowing data collection in a natural and contextualized way (CRESWELL, 2014).

In this context, researchers observe and actively participate in student interactions and activities, providing a deeper understanding of the experiences of students at Faveni University Center and extension practices, carried out during the first project period from February 4, 2023 to June 30, 2023 with a total sample of 481 students, and the second project developed from August 12, 2023 to November 3, 2023 with a total sample of 314 students. This approach allows for a qualitative analysis of the impact of the curricularization of extension in the academic context, providing valuable insights into the perceptions, interactions, and engagement of students in this transformative educational process. This technique involved the active immersion of researchers in the extension environment, allowing a direct understanding of the activities, interactions, and experiences

of the students involved. This method provided valuable insights into the impact of the curricularization of extension on student education, as well as on the practices and challenges faced in the academic setting.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During this study, several aspects related to the curricularization of extension were addressed as provided for in the Guidelines for Extension in Brazilian Higher Education (BRASIL, 2018), such as: the integration of extension activities into the curricular matrix of undergraduate courses, in line with the guidelines established by the Ministry of Education; the promotion of a transformative interaction between the higher education institution and society, through the practical application of knowledge; the need to foster an interdisciplinary, political, cultural, scientific and technological educational process, aiming at the training of more aware and engaged professionals; and, finally, the implementation of strategies that provide a more comprehensive education that is committed to contemporary social and environmental demands.

To make this possible, a project called “Battery Disposal” was developed in the first half of 2023, which focused on the proper disposal of batteries, considering both the environmental and social perspectives. To contextualize this issue, it was essential to explore the national solid waste policy established in Brazil, which provides guidelines for the correct management of these materials.

In addition, guidelines were developed for students to understand the appropriate procedures for the disposal of batteries, highlighting the importance of safe and environmentally responsible techniques to minimize damage to the environment and human health. Figure 1 shows the knowledge

of the students participating in this project on Battery Disposal.

Is there a battery collection point near your home?

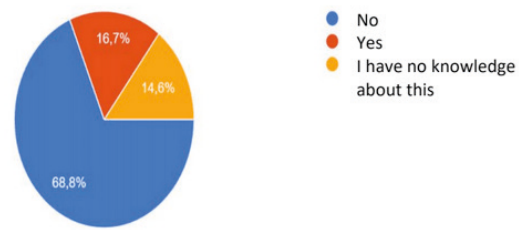


Figure 1: Knowledge about collection points - Battery Disposal Project

Source: Research data.

By addressing the problems arising from the improper disposal of this waste, it was possible to highlight the threats to fauna, flora and water resources, as well as the health risks to communities near irregular disposal sites, as seen in Figure 1. 83.3% of students do not have collection points or knowledge on the subject. Therefore, it was observed during the implementation of the project that students developed awareness of these problems, promoted through awareness campaigns involving local and academic society, which proved to be a preponderant step towards changing attitudes and promoting a culture of conscious disposal.

It was noted that this project revealed notable transformations in the thinking and attitudes of students from different areas of training, providing a transversal perspective and a heightened sense of responsibility. The integration of the extension curriculum in undergraduate courses not only broadened the horizon of students' knowledge, but also stimulated critical reflection on their role in society, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 shows the students' consumption and lack of awareness about proper disposal, with 60.4% throwing it in the regular trash, another 16.7% keeping it at home, and 2.1% throwing it underground. These results

What is your battery consumption level?



Figure 2: Results on consumption and disposal - Battery Disposal Project

Source: Research data.

In your home, what is the destination for batteries after use?

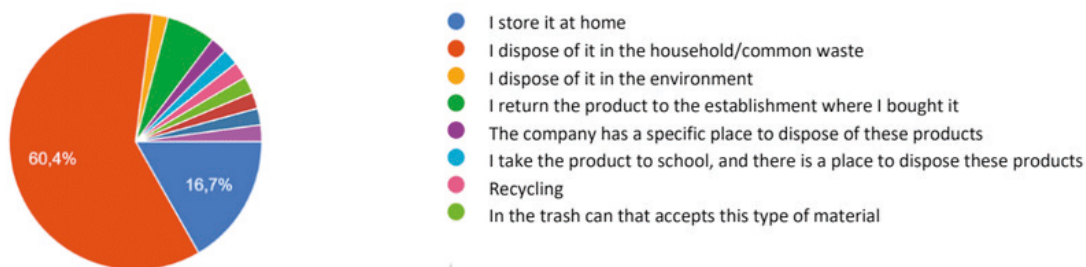


Figure 3: Results on consumption and disposal - Construction of Cultural Identity in the Context of Pluralism

Source: Research data.

demonstrate the need to develop the themes proposed by the Faveni University Center, since the observation of students from different areas of study led them to understand the importance of their active engagement in solving social and environmental problems. Through direct contact with the communities, they internalized the relevance of their individual contributions to collective well-being. This process not only awakened a sense of responsibility, but also encouraged a proactive attitude towards the challenges faced by society.

Within the scope of the second project entitled “Construction of Cultural Identity in a Context of Pluralism”, notable results were achieved, outlining a significant effort to promote the understanding and acceptance of cultural diversity, as well as to encourage the construction of a positive and healthy

cultural identity among students. The analysis of the data revealed a surprising finding in the context of the second project. As illustrated in Figure 3, it was clear that a significant portion, corresponding to 79.3% of the sample of participating students, did not have knowledge about the origin of their surnames. This data highlights an important knowledge gap among students, revealing a lack of awareness about the roots and history of their own families.

The lack of knowledge about the origin of surnames can have several implications, including a disconnection with one’s own cultural, historical and genealogical roots. This result suggests the urgent need to promote educational and reflective activities that explore family history and the cultural diversity present in the origins of surnames. By understanding their own roots, students



can develop a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity and, at the same time, build a more solid and conscious identity about their family origins.

One of the most significant results was the promotion of understanding of cultural diversity. Through interactive activities, group discussions and exposure to different cultural manifestations, students were encouraged to value and respect cultural differences, thus strengthening social cohesion and acceptance of plurality.

In addition, the project was effective in identifying and analyzing the cultural elements that influence the construction of students' social and cultural identity. Reflective activities and critical analyses were developed, students were able to explore their own cultural identities, as well as understand how cultural influences shape individual and collective perceptions and behaviors.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The experience of curricularizing the extension provided a holistic understanding of social and environmental issues, transcended the barriers of specific disciplines and encouraged interdisciplinary collaboration. This led to a change in mindset, where students began to see problems in a more comprehensive way and consider solutions that involve multiple perspectives and areas of knowledge.

With regard to curricularizing the extension, the projects played a fundamental role in transforming students' perspectives and behaviors. By integrating the theme of solid waste disposal and plurality into the course's curricular matrix, the curricularization provided a deeper and more holistic understanding of these themes. This not only enriched the professional training of the participants, but also prepared future professionals to deal with environmental and

social challenges in a more conscious and responsible manner.

In participant observation, it was possible to note a change in the students' mindset, thus, the curricularization of the extension not only meets national guidelines, but also strengthens the academic training of students, enabling them to be agents of change in their communities and in the world in general. Furthermore, these data highlight the importance of educational projects, such as the second project mentioned, which aim not only to promote intercultural understanding, but also to encourage research and appreciation of one's own origins. By integrating such activities into the curriculum, educational institutions can contribute significantly to the development of a richer cultural awareness and a stronger identity among students.

In the second project, the objective was achieved by raising awareness among students of the importance of building a positive and healthy social and cultural identity. The activities developed focused on promoting self-esteem and self-acceptance and acceptance of others, contributing to a more inclusive and welcoming school environment. In addition to providing students with skills and abilities to deal with situations of cultural conflict, the project equipped them with valuable emotional and social tools to resolve intercultural disputes constructively, promoting mutual understanding and social harmony.

Nevertheless, both projects promoted the development of technological skills through the use of online platforms and tools, which was an innovative facet of the project. This not only enriched the students' experience, but also prepared them to face the challenges of the digital age, enabling them to effectively communicate their ideas and perspectives in an increasingly connected and technological world.

Participant observation applied during both project periods revealed that the changes in thinking and attitudes observed throughout both projects not only enriched the students' education, but also shaped future professionals who were more ethical, committed and socially responsible. The sense

of responsibility acquired during participation in the extension curriculum transcended the academic environment, preparing students to face complex challenges and contribute significantly to the construction of a more just and sustainable society.

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