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The integralization of extension into the Biological Sciences course at UFPR Setor Palotina

A integralização da extensão no curso de Ciências Biológicas da UFPR Setor Palotina

REVISTA EXTENSÃO EM FOCO
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ABSTRACT

The manuscript brings an experience report with the aim of presenting the initial analyzes of the implementation of an umbrella extension project, Bio na Boca do Povo, for the crediting of extension hours for students of the Biological Sciences course at the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR) of the Palotina Sector. The project was developed in 2022 and from the second half of 2023, the potential and challenges to enable extension principles in the actions of the disciplines linked to the project could be identified, namely: dialogical interaction; interdisciplinarity and interprofessionality; inseparability between teaching, research, and extension; impact on student training; and social impact and transformation. The first experiences will be discussed here considering the literature and official documents relating to extension practices. Among the weaknesses highlighted, the extensive use of social networks as extension actions can be seen, which makes it difficult to implement several of the principles. Furthermore, there was a gap in knowledge regarding the educative process of teachers and students regarding the conception of extension. However, positive aspects of initiatives that took place in the community and, therefore, impacted the training of students and society were highlighted. It is concluded that the option to adopt an umbrella project for the Biological Sciences Course was an option consistent with the reality of our context, especially as it frees teachers from creating their own extension projects, thus ensuring the supply and calculation of the respective extension hours.

Keywords: University graduate. Umbrella extension project. Crediting the extension

RESUMO

O manuscrito traz um relato de experiência com o objetivo de apresentar as análises iniciais da implementação de um projeto guarda-chuva de extensão, o Bio na Boca do Povo, para a creditação das horas de extensão dos alunos do curso de Ciências Biológicas da Universidade Federal do Paraná (UFPR) do Setor Palotina. O projeto foi elaborado em 2022 e a partir do segundo semestre de 2023 já puderam ser identificadas as potencialidades e os desafios para viabilizar os princípios extensionistas nas ações das disciplinas vinculadas ao projeto, a saber: interação dialógica; interdisciplinaridade e interprofissionalidade; indissociabilidade entre ensino, pesquisa e extensão; impacto na formação do estudante; e impacto e transformação social. As primeiras experiências serão aqui discutidas à luz da literatura e documentos oficiais referentes às práticas extensionistas. Dentre as fragilidades apontadas, percebe-se o extenso uso das redes sociais como ações extensionistas, o que dificulta a concretização de vários dos princípios supracitados. Além disso, verificou-se uma lacuna de conhecimentos em

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relação ao processo formativo dos docentes e dos estudantes quanto à concepção de extensão. Todavia, foram evidenciados aspectos positivos de iniciativas que se efetivaram na comunidade e, portanto, impactaram na formação dos estudantes e na sociedade. Conclui-se que a opção pela adoção de um projeto guarda-chuva para o Curso de Ciências Biológicas foi uma opção condizente com a realidade do nosso contexto, especialmente por desonerar os professores de criarem os seus próprios projetos de extensão, garantindo, com isso, a oferta e a computação da respetiva carga horária extensionista.

Palavras-chave: Graduação. Projeto guarda-chuva de extensão. Creditação da extensão.

INTRODUCTION

The first known extension activities were recorded in 19th-century England. From there, they spread across Europe, later reaching the United States and Brazil only at the beginning of the 20th century. Although they did not have the same objectives in European countries and the United States, extension activities were and still are in a context of social equity and other political tensions (DE PAULA, 2013). These aspects strongly influenced extension in Latin America, which culminated alongside counterculture movements and university reforms that challenged the authoritarianism imposed by the military dictatorship at that time. Motivated by other ideas and struggles, university extension began to adopt the principles of popular education, with the thinker Paulo Freire as its main reference (GADOTTI, 2017).

However, over the decades, three strands of university extension have emerged in Brazil: the welfare-based, academic, and mercantilist approaches. According to Jezine (2004), the welfare-based approach functioned as a substitute for the government's responsibility to formalize public policies that served society. In other words, under the discourse of the university's social commitment, students and professors would be cheap labor in extramural social actions. The mercantilist approach, activated by neoliberal ideological practices, would equate extension with the provision of services. That is, instead of prioritizing the emancipatory principles of university extension, society would play the role of client and consumer of the productions carried out in the academic sphere. Finally, the academic aspect refers to the principles of popular education, perceiving the community as the protagonist of university discussions. Jazine (2004) goes further and postulates that this aspect:

> It is not just a matter of establishing interaction between teaching and research but also involves incorporating this interaction into the education of students, teachers, and society, as part of a political-pedagogical project for universities and society in which criticism and autonomy are the pillars of education and knowledge production. (JAZINE, 2004, p. 03, our translation).

Created in 1987, the Forum of Pro-Rectors of Extension of Brazilian Public Universities (FORPROEX) is a reference for university extension as public policy. FORPROEX discussions seek instruments for evaluating and monitoring extension actions, in addition to institutionalizing extension as an inseparable dimension of university activities. Since its creation, it has been responsible for several advances in what we now have as the National University Extension Policy, which establishes five guidelines that guide the formulation and implementation of university extension activities in Brazil: "1-) Dialogic Interaction, 2-) Interdisciplinarity and Interprofessionality, 3-) Indivisibility of Teaching-Research-Extension, 4-) Impact on Student Training, and 5-) Impact and Social Transformation" (FORPROEX, 2012).

This entire movement culminated in a process called the curricularization of extension, regulated by Resolution MEC/CNE/CES No. 007/2018, of December 18, 2018 (BRAZIL, 2018). Like the concept of extension itself, its implementation in the curriculum is polysemic in nature. It is a matter of equalizing extension activities, which have always been subordinated to teaching and research activities in the history of the university. Adding the complexity and diversity of the concept of curriculum to the plural nature of extension is a challenging task.

Just as the implementation of extension programs has different trends, the curriculum within the university has also been and continues to be the subject of tension. Some curricula pursue a mercantilist and neoliberal vision, emphasizing strictly technical aspects and reducing professional training to conceptual aspects without discussing aspects of a more just, civic-minded, and ethical society. On the other hand, there are curricula with problematizing visions that invest in graduates with a broader education by not restricting disciplines to scientific concepts alone. By proposing reflections and a vision that extends the discussion to public, cultural, ethical, social, and political life, these curricula prioritize critical and emancipatory education.

According to Gadotti (2017), the proposal to include extension programs in the curriculum is not new. It has been discussed at other times and was strongly rekindled in the National Education Plan (PNE) 2001-2010, in its goals 21 and 23, and in the PNE 2014-2023, in its strategy 7 of goal 12. Both PNEs stipulate the obligation to ensure that at least 10% (ten percent) of the total credits required for graduation are earned in university extension programs and/or projects. The author posits that there has been an evolution from a more popular and emancipatory vision in the first PNE to the second, and that “the curricularization of extension also questions the meaning of the university” (GADOTTI, 2017, p. 01).

In accordance with national legislation, specifically Resolution No. 7/2018-MEC/CNE/CES (BRAZIL, 2018), the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR)

approved Resolution 86/2020 – CEPE (UFPR, 2020), which organizes extension curriculum activities (ACE) into five categories:

> I – ACE I – introductory course on the fundamentals of Extension, lasting up to 30 hours, either compulsory or optional;
>
> II – ACE II – compulsory subjects, including the compulsory internship subject, and/or optional subjects with part or all of the workload allocated to participation in Extension Programs or Projects;
>
> III – ACE III – student participation in UFPR Extension Programs or Projects;
>
> IV – ACE IV – student participation as a member of the organizing team and/or instructor of courses and events or participant in service provision activities, all of which are linked to Extension Programs or Projects, as understood in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Article 3 of this Resolution;
>
> V – ACE V – student participation in Extension Programs or Projects at other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with partnerships in accordance with the modalities standardized by the Office of the Dean of Planning and Finance – PROPLAN (UFPR, 2020, p. 03).

In view of this, the Structuring Teaching Nucleus (NDE) of the Biological Sciences Course at the Palotina Sector of the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR), implemented a curriculum reform in 2020 that, among several course requirements (updating course syllabi, enhancing successes, and correcting weaknesses), adjusted to new legislation and current recommendations. This experience report aims to present the organization of the extension activities of the Biological Sciences Course at the Palotina Sector of UFPR as a way to contribute to discussions about the curricularization of extension.

THE PROCESS

The Biological Sciences Course at UFPR – Palotina Campus is in the municipality of Palotina and was implemented in 2010 as a bachelor's degree program, as one of the actions of the REUNI Program (Restructuring and Expansion of Federal Universities). It was created due to a social demand in western Paraná for new professionals who could meet the environmental challenges of this region, which for decades has been exploited mainly for agricultural purposes. This was precisely the justification for starting a course with this profile in this region of Paraná.

In 2013, the first curriculum reform was carried out with the aim of including a teaching degree as one of the course qualifications. Therefore, as of 2014, the Biological Sciences Course at UFPR – Palotina Sector began to offer two modalities: Bachelor's

Degree and a Teaching Degree. During the years of implementation of the new curriculum – Teaching Degree, new professionals joined the course's teaching staff, who were able to offer new lines of research that would contribute to the graduate's profile. In addition, there were demands for updating the current curriculum, resulting from updates in legislation, which needed to be incorporated. These new demands, identified by the Structuring Teaching Nucleus (NDE), led to the decision to reformulate the curriculum, which now incorporates extension as a mandatory component.

Discussions began in 2020, but the new curriculum was only implemented in 2022, with a total workload of 3,350 hours and, therefore, the need to include 335 hours of extension courses in the curriculum. During these two years of discussion, the course coordinators, together with the NDE, involved all teachers, presenting possibilities for carrying out the extension in their respective disciplines and allowing teachers to choose how they could contribute to each one. For the discussions, groups of subjects were organized by related areas, and teachers were asked to include extension hours according to their needs and possibilities. In addition, during the discussions, it was announced that there would be an extension project that would include each of the subjects with extension hours, as well as isolated events or events linked to the project, relieving teachers of the burden of creating their own projects and thus ensuring the provision and calculation of the respective extension hours.

The Bachelor's Degree program in Biological Sciences at the Palotina Campus was designed from the outset to enable greater interaction with elementary and high school teachers and students through its courses. Thus, by presenting materials proposed by students in the program throughout the semester, in roundtable discussions with teachers, lectures, and/or workshops, the aim is to bring the university and future graduates closer to the reality of teaching. Therefore, the subjects that contain Practices as a Curricular Component (PCC), which aim to discuss the teaching of specific science and biology content, in addition to the other mandatory subjects of the Course Pedagogical Project (PPC), began to account for almost the entire extension workload within ACE II (TABLE 1).

On the contrary, it was already anticipated that it would not be possible to count on the total extension workload in the Bachelor's degree subjects because, unlike the Teaching Degree, which naturally has a link with extension, in this other modality the technical aspect, more linked to research, still predominates. Thus, the Bachelor's degree has fewer hours linked to courses (TABLE 1), requiring supplementation through participation in elective courses with extension or in extension projects.

Table 1 – Workload distributed among the different Extension Curriculum Activities (ACE) in the Biological Sciences Course at UFPR – Palotina Sector

Modality	Extension workload in compulsory subjects	Hours to be completed in elective subjects (ACE II) and/or extension projects (ACE III, IV, and V)
Bachelor's Degree	139 hours	196 hours
Teaching Degree	330 hours	05 hours

It is worth mentioning that the Palotina Sector of UFPR is recognized for its extension practices (ARANTES et al., 2023; BALTELMEBS; BERTICELLI, 2018), a condition that provides students with various opportunities to participate in extension projects. However, in order to assist professors in the Biological Sciences Course who were not involved in extension activities and who would now have extension activities in their disciplines, a project was created that could link the disciplines of these professors, or others interested, from both modalities, Teaching Degree and Bachelor's Degree. This project was developed by an internal committee, formed within the Course and following PROGRAD Normative Instruction 1/2022, of March 23, 2022 (UFPR, 2022), which is responsible for maintaining it. The Bio na Boca do Povo extension project, now referred to as the "umbrella project," is currently in effect and is expected to end in 2027. It was approved by the Dean of Extension and Culture (PROEC) under registration number PEX00000789.

PROJECT ACTIONS

The Bio na Boca do Povo extension project was implemented in the second half of 2022 and in its first year of activity it already offered 22 courses. To assist in the organization of activities, three students were linked to the project in 2023, one of whom was a scholarship recipient.

With the aim of disseminating the different areas of knowledge in the Biological Sciences, providing opportunities for students on the course to carry out different extension activities, with the aim of training them to work from a community perspective, the project operates on three fronts:

1ª) Preparation of teaching materials related to the field of Biological Sciences: together with their supervising professor, students participating in the project

develop teaching materials that can be used in outreach activities carried out in schools or at regional events for different audiences, such as educational exhibitions or workshops, in order to bring scientific knowledge closer to the community. These materials are stored in a collection and are available for loan to the local community and teachers in the basic education network.

Subjects that choose to propose the creation of new teaching materials (whether ideas, new ways of working with content, or recreational activities and teaching models) have the possibility of adding their proposals to a digital collection. Thus, a domain associated with UFPR (www.movibio.ufpr.br) was created, which makes materials proposed by students from different disciplines (especially from the Bachelor's Degree) available, in addition to providing visitors with more information about the extension at UFPR and, in particular, the Biological Sciences Course, Palotina Sector.

2ª) Disclosure of information or display of educational materials on online platforms and social media: in this area of work, students participating in outreach activities are encouraged to write entertaining and scientific texts or develop teaching materials focused on science education with the aim of promoting scientific dissemination.

In fact, some teachers and disciplines have opted to disseminate science through social media, mainly using Instagram. Data collected over one semester (second semester of 2023) show the interaction of posts with more than 500 online profiles.

3ª) Working directly with the community: it involves planning outreach activities for a specific audience (children, adolescents, adults, or seniors) and context (museums, conservation units, schools, fairs, squares, etc.) in order to promote the exchange of experiences between the population and the university.

Within this front, four events linked to Bio na Boca do Povo were held, namely: “II Virtual Biology Exhibition - MoViBio,” “III MoViBio,” both events open to all course disciplines; “Roundtable Discussion: How we think about Science and, in particular, ecology in basic education”, linked to and developed for the Didactic Ecology Workshop course; and “Experiences with parasites”, linked to and developed for the Health Sciences Workshop course. In addition to these events, the subjects of Environmental Education, Demystifying Zoology, Phanerogam Systematics, and Zoology 2 carried out activities directly with the community, either in a formal setting

(schools or university spaces) or informal setting (residents' associations, churches, companies, among other places).

INITIAL ANALYSIS

The first weakness perceived in the process of accrediting the extension of the subjects linked to the Bio na Boca do Povo project was the lack of understanding of what extension is on the part of the students and teachers involved. This is due to the fact that many teachers are just beginning to work with extension, and most students in the course have not undergone a training process that presented the historical aspects, conception, and importance of extension activities. This theoretical gap can lead to superficial practices that are poorly grounded and far removed from the principles of extension. Authors have already drawn attention to possible reductionist practices that dissociate extension from the co-generation of knowledge and the transformative role for all those involved in the process (IMPERATORE, PEDDE & IMPERATORE, 2015). To overcome this gap, there is an understanding of the need to organize roundtable discussions between students and teachers and to create an elective course for students in the Biological Sciences program. These two spaces would be viable for discussing the potential and challenges of implementing extension principles. Arantes et al. (2023) had already noticed this gap in knowledge about extension among students in the Palotina Sector and suggested some strategies that could be employed to change this scenario. One of them is the promotion of activities, such as conversation circles, discussions, or even short workshops, in which it is possible to work on the concept of extension. The authors affirm that this initial dialogue process is essential to awaken students' awareness, especially regarding the inseparability of teaching, research, and extension in their actions and academic daily lives.

A second analysis of the credit process in the Biological Sciences course focuses on the excessive use of social media as an extension of activity. Social media are currently important channels for scientific communication and dissemination, but they do not replace effective contact with the community. Dialogic interaction, one of the principles of extension, requires a more proactive stance, mobilized through meetings with different actors and social segments. Although Santos et al. (2022) analyzed the use of social media in the development of extension and understand that these are positive communication tools, contributing even to future professional actions, in these

virtual meetings, communication is understood to be unidirectional (as in the case of Instagram posts) and not multilateral. Furthermore, a view or a like on a social media post does not actually represent access to shared knowledge. By enabling effective, face-to-face meetings, we are exposed to difference and dissent, which translates into a possibility for learning and an impact on student training, because, as Paulo Freire (1992) would say, “we learn from difference and not from sameness.” In addition, these opportunities allow students to reflect on their experiences, on what they have learned in the classroom and with the community, enabling them to develop based on the pursuit of knowing how to be, knowing how to do, and knowing how to learn, that is, on the development of their skills (FERNANDES et al., 2012).

Both points mentioned are aspects that should be evaluated in the context of the accreditation of the Biological Sciences course extension, with the aim of directing future extension activities so that they can have a real impact on student training and enable social transformation.

In this sense, throughout these first actions of the Bio na Boca do Povo project for the accreditation of the extension, there have already been some reports of positive impacts. In the Phanerogam Systematics course (mandatory), for example, the professor in charge reported that some undergraduate students who carried out the activities in person with students from a Municipal Center for Early Childhood Education (CMEI) in Palotina-PR on the university campus felt motivated and were able to use the knowledge they learned in the classroom to explain the universe of plants. They reported that they realized, during the activities, that the form of dialogue with the children could not be academic and that they needed to modulate the form of communication to work on the content in a more playful way, attracting the attention of the visiting students. The same teacher, who accompanied all the activities, also reported that she noticed the children's excitement when observing the optical equipment in the laboratory, when entering the forest trail, or simply by being at the university.

Another subject with positive results was Environmental Education (compulsory), which has been working from a project-based teaching perspective (BRAZIL, 1998) since 2016. Through this methodology, students develop participatory work through three consecutive meetings with the community in different contexts and audiences. According to Oliveira and Zancul (2011), project-based pedagogy enables the definition of a theme and the choice of a research problem; the demarcation of

objectives; the selection of content for addressing the proposed problem; the selection of activities for exploring the theme and for its conclusion; and a proposal for evaluating the results. Over the years, students have articulated theory and practice, reinforcing the principle of the inseparability of teaching, research, and extension. In addition, the importance of articulating the dialogue of knowledge through the exchange of experiences between scientific knowledge and traditional knowledge was recognized, a fundamental aspect for enabling dialogical interaction, interdisciplinarity, and interprofessionality.

The courses Demystifying Zoology (elective) and Zoology 2 (compulsory) also carry out activities with the community on the UFPR campus. In the first, Demystifying Zoology, the proposal was to present the discussions raised by students and teachers in the classroom to visitors at the "Come to UFPR" event (2023 edition – first semester), which welcomed students from 43 schools in 23 municipalities, as well as the community at large, totaling more than 2,000 participants. The Zoology 2 course worked with high school students from Colégio Agrícola Adroaldo Augusto Colombo in a workshop offered at UFPR, in the 6th Cycle of Lectures of Colégio & UFPR Setor Palotina. For this workshop, students in the Zoology 2 course had to gather information about groups of animals already studied in class (in this case, mollusks) with an interest (positive or negative) in agriculture. Fifteen students from the Agricultural College were welcomed, along with a teacher, for a morning of discussions and practical activities.

The first weakness perceived in the process of accrediting the extension of the subjects linked to the Bio na Boca do Povo project was the lack of understanding of what extension is on the part of the students and teachers involved. This is due to the fact that many teachers are just beginning to work with extension, and most students in the course have not undergone a training process that presented the historical aspects, conception, and importance of extension activities. This theoretical gap can lead to superficial practices that are poorly grounded and far removed from the principles of extension. Authors have already drawn attention to possible reductionist practices that dissociate extension from the co-generation of knowledge and the transformative role for all those involved in the process (IMPERATORE, PEDDE & IMPERATORE, 2015). To overcome this gap, there is an understanding of the need to organize discussion groups between students and teachers and create an elective course for students in the Biological Sciences program. These two spaces would be viable for discussing the potential and challenges of implementing extension principles. Arantes et

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A second analysis of the accreditation process in the Biological Sciences course focuses on the excessive use of social media as an extension activity. Social media are currently important channels for scientific communication and dissemination, but they do not replace effective contact with the community. Dialogic interaction, one of the principles of extension, requires a more proactive stance, mobilized through meetings with different actors and social segments. Although Santos et al. (2022) analyzed the use of social media in the development of extension and understand that these are positive communication tools, contributing even to future professional actions, in these virtual meetings, communication is understood to be unidirectional (as in the case of Instagram posts) and not multilateral. Furthermore, a view or a like on a social media post does not actually represent access to shared knowledge. By enabling effective, face-to-face meetings, we are exposed to difference and dissent, which translates into a possibility for learning and an impact on student training, because, as Paulo Freire (1992) would say, “we learn from difference and not from sameness.” In addition, these opportunities allow students to reflect on their experiences, on what they have learned in the classroom and with the community, enabling their education to be based on the pursuit of knowing how to be, knowing how to do, and knowing how to learn, that is, on the development of their skills (FERNANDES et al., 2012).

Both points mentioned are aspects that should be evaluated in the context of the accreditation of the Biological Sciences course extension, with the aim of directing future extension activities so that they can have a real impact on student training and enable social transformation.

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(positive or negative) in agriculture. Fifteen students from the Agricultural College were welcomed, along with a teacher, for a morning of discussions and practical activities.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

To date, few indicators have been obtained for a more in-depth analysis and evaluation of the impact and scope of the Bio na Boca do Povo project on the community and on student education, due to its short implementation period. However, despite this, it is believed that, according to reports received, there has been a noticeable difference in the political and civic education of students and teachers who have undergone this training process. This is reason enough to believe in and invest in curricula that are more participatory and engaged with and in society.

Finally, it was found that the Bio na Boca do Povo umbrella project is an effective initiative to enable accreditation of the extension course in Biological Sciences at UFPR Setor Palotina. The adoption of three fronts (1. Development of teaching materials related to the field of Biological Sciences; 2. Dissemination of information or display of teaching materials on online platforms and social networks; and 3. Carrying out work directly with the community) has encompassed the various actions of the teachers of the disciplines and brings integrity to the scope of the project.

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