


Women's performance at university extension at Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso (UFMT)

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Resumo

Nos primeiros anos de funcionamento, a Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso desempenhava um papel fundamental de interação com a sociedade por meio das atividades extensionistas. Este artigo tem o objetivo de analisar a participação das mulheres em ações extensionistas como processo de formação acadêmica, produção de conhecimento e diálogo com a comunidade. Para tal, foram utilizados documentos localizados nos acervos dos diferentes setores da Universidade. A análise fundamenta-se nos princípios teóricos da Nova História Cultural (Burke, 1992) e da História das Mulheres (Perrot, 2020; Scott, 2008). Os documentos investigados revelaram que as mulheres, embora em pequeno número, desempenharam papéis de destaque na atuação como coordenadoras de ações de extensão e tiveram impacto significativo no âmbito acadêmico e administrativo da universidade.

Palavras-chave

extensão universitária; mulheres extensionistas; educação superior; história das mulheres.

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Abstract

During its early years, Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso used to have a key role in interaction with society through extension activities. This paper aims to analyze the participation of women in extension actions as academic formation process, knowledge production, and dialog with the community. To do so, documents archived at different sectors of the university have been used. The analysis is founded on the theoretical principles of New Cultural History (Burke, 1992) and Women's History (Perrot, 2020; Scott, 2008). The documents investigated showed that women, although in small numbers, performed key roles acting as coordinators of extension actions and had a meaningful impact in the university's academic and managerial context.

Keywords

university extension; extension women; college education; women's history.

Desempeño de las mujeres en la extensión universitaria de la Universidad Federal de Mato Grosso (UFMT)

Resumen

En los primeros años de funcionamiento, la Universidad Federal de Mato Grosso-UFMT jugó un papel fundamental en la interacción con la sociedad a través de actividades de extensión. Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar la participación de las mujeres en acciones de extensión como un proceso de formación académica, producción de conocimientos y diálogo con la comunidad. Para ello se utilizaron documentos ubicados en las colecciones de diferentes sectores de la Universidad. El análisis se basa en los principios teóricos de la Nueva Historia Cultural (Burke, 1992) y la Historia de las Mujeres (Perrot, 2020; Scott, 2008). Los documentos investigados revelaron que las mujeres, aunque pocas en número, desempeñaron roles destacados al actuar como coordinadoras de acciones de extensión y tuvieron un impacto significativo en el ámbito académico y administrativo de la universidad.

Palabras clave

extensión universitaria; mujeres de extensión; educación universitaria; historia de las mujeres.

1 Introduction

Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso – UFMT, established by Law No. 5,647 on December 10, 1970, was founded with a primary focus on contributing to regional development as it is located in Portal da Amazônia, an area of interest for both the government and environmentalists (Sá; Monteiro, 2017).

Since its inception, UFMT has undertaken significant extension initiatives, such as the Cidade Laboratório (Lab City) Project in Aripuanã, 497 mi from the capital. The project aimed at gathering knowledge about the Amazon region and converting it into educational materials to work in the classroom, addressing challenges in agriculture, health, fish farming, forest management, and more [...] A crucial aspect was the anticipated interplay between research, teaching, and extension. (Lima, 2005, p. 67).

Hence, exploring UFMT's extension projects led us to inquire—What was the extent of women's involvement in university extension?

This article seeks to analyze women's participation in the early stages of university extension at UFMT and was accomplished through extensive research of letters, ordinances, and reports sourced from various departments within the University.

This qualitative research approach involves examining documentary sources from a problem-oriented perspective and questioning the elements arising during the research

process. As per Bogdan and Biklen (1994, p. 49), “[...] nothing is trivial, and everything holds the potential to provide clues for a more comprehensive understanding of our research subject.”

The pursuit of historical and documentary sources involved navigating through intricate and unsure paths. We traversed from one document to another, aiming to uncover the experiences and trajectories of women who attended university extension at UFMT (Perrot, 2011).

Moreover, the author’s viewpoint aligns with the encountered experiences while collecting documentary sources within institutional collections. The dispersed nature of these documents demanded a meticulous search for their location, as the relevant materials on women’s involvement in university extension were intermixed with a myriad of topics addressed by the institution. Therefore, it became imperative to thoroughly scrutinize each document to discern its relevance to the study at hand. An endeavor that demanded meticulousness and persistence. According to Michel de Certeau (2011, p. 69), “[...] history begins with the act of segregating, reuniting, and transforming specific objects arranged differently into ‘documents.’”

In our analysis, we embraced theoretical and methodological foundations from the New Cultural History, enabling us to establish connections that broadened our comprehension of the research subject, approaches, and treatment of the consulted sources. This approach underlines the belief that the human movement has a historical context that can and should be reconstructed and reinterpreted from various perspectives. It involves problematizing history within a socially and culturally constructed context in society (Burke, 1992).

Throughout this inquiry, we aimed to unearth events and information concerning women’s involvement in both academic and administrative realms within the university extension framework at UFMT. The goal was to craft a historical narrative highlighting women’s contributions and valorizing their roles within the university. As Michelle Perrot (2020) emphasized, the crux lies in rediscovering proactive and engaged women capable of propelling change. These women, through their active participation, possessed the agency to alter the course of history despite their historical suppression. In action, they innovated their “[...] practices, women endowed with life, and not absolutely as automatons, but creating the movement of history themselves” (Perrot, 2020, p. 199).

Nevertheless, it is crucial to note the scarcity of available historical records. Thus, this research endeavors to further document and integrate women into the narratives of Education History and Women's History. This encompasses women who contributed to this significant facet of higher education, aiming to transcend barriers and challenges that hindered their presence in public spaces. It acknowledges women as "legitimate historical subjects" (Scott, 2008, p. 52) who exerted influence and played pivotal roles in public life across historical timelines.

For that purpose, the text was structured into two distinct sections. Firstly, it delves into the inception of the initial extension initiatives at UFMT. Subsequently, it scrutinizes the involvement and contributions of women within the university extension framework at the institution under examination.

2 University extension at UFMT

As per the Fórum dos Pró-reitores de Extensão das Universidades Públicas Brasileiras (Forproex, 2012, p. 15), university extension embodies an "[...] educational, cultural, and scientific process that intricately intertwines teaching and research, fostering a transformative relationship between the university and society."

Building upon the definitions outlined by Forproex, the 1988 Federal Constitution mandates the "[...] inseparability between teaching, research, and extension..." (Brazil, 1988, art. 207) and also establishes that "[...] university research and extension activities may receive financial support from the public authorities" (Brazil, 1988, art. 213, § 2).

Hence, the Brazilian Federal Constitution (1988) signifies shifts within higher education institutions towards a more democratic perspective, accentuating the involvement of societal groups concerning social rights and the right to education.

The course of institutionalizing Extension during the period of redemocratization indicates a rise in the prevalence of conventional university definitions. Essentially, university policy underwent redefinition with increased involvement of the extension community in interactive, deliberative, and argumentative processes, an elevation that granted university extension status in formulating, implementing, and evaluating higher education policies (Passarelli; Azevedo, 2017, p. 27).

University extension occupies a crucial space within the university landscape, positioning itself as a “[...] philosophy, action-linked, policy-driven, democratizing strategy, and methodology...” functioning to “[...] produce knowledge, science, technology, and art, ensuring accessibility of this knowledge to the populace.” The purpose of teaching and research aligns with societal transformation. Extension, therefore, becomes a form of social engagement, as it manifests as “[...] an intentional action that emerges from and addresses objective reality, generating knowledge aimed at societal transformation” (Tavares M., 2001, p. 78-79).

According to Leonídio (2017) and Nogueira (2005), university extension assumes a pivotal role in the social role of the university, being acknowledged as one of the three essential dimensions of higher education in Brazil. Its primary objective revolves around fostering connections between the university and the community, which involves redefining concepts, formulating strategies for integrating teaching and research and addressing issues concerning interdisciplinary approaches and societal commitment.

Moreover, university extension plays a pivotal role in evaluating the knowledge generated within the university by comparing this knowledge with real-life situations and presenting it for societal scrutiny. Extension activities open a door for the recognition and appreciation of diversity while fostering dialogue between traditional and academic knowledge, thereby promoting interculturality (Nogueira, 2005, 2019).

Given its geographical location, UFMT in Cuiabá, often referred to as Portal da Amazônia—meaning the Gateway to the Amazon Rain Forest—, earned the moniker of the University of the Jungle, a designation justified by its dean, Gabriel Novis Neves, during the 1st Meeting of Deans of Public Universities in Brasília (1972).

The presence of tribal communities in the vicinity of 700 m² microwave antennas, the need to assist the development of new colonies, the mining of knowledge directed at regional economic growth, constant engagement with the untamed environment, and the role as a reflective entity influencing the national decision to integrate the Amazon into Brazilian development—which figure among essential features of a new kind of public University: the University of the Jungle [...] (Neves, 1972).

In this context, the University was envisioned as “[...] a critical force in fostering wealth growth and raising the cultural standards of the people by creating indispensable human resources, both in quantity and quality, for regional progress [...]” (Dorileo, 1984, p.

23). Extension initiatives were integral to this vision, acting as a nexus between teaching and research.

The organization of extension activities at UFMT began in 1972 through Resolution No. 02, issued by the Board of Directors on January 4. This resolution established the Research and Extension Division within the Department of Education and Research (Depes), under the Academic Vice-Dean's jurisdiction, responsible for implementing extension activities. Subsequently, in 1973, another administrative alteration occurred with the publication of Resolution No. 04 on January 10. This change restructured the extension framework at UFMT, segregating Research and Extension into distinct divisions while keeping them within Depes (UFMT, 1972, 1973).

During its initial years of operation, the University's productivity was evaluated based on criteria such as the training of professionals and researchers, as well as the quantity and quality of services provided to the community (UFMT, General Catalog, n. 01.1973). To address the diverse local and regional needs, UFMT offered specialized courses and services in collaboration with public entities and the private sector. Its professionals actively contributed to primary and secondary education reform within the state and were involved in developing medical assistance projects for indigenous communities (UFMT, General Catalog, n. 01.1973).

According to Dr. Gabriel Novis Neves, its inaugural Dean, the aim was to foster regional culture by integrating indigenous and other cultures. This vision led to the establishment of various institutions like the Rondon Museum of Ethnology and Archeology (1972), the Library (1972), the Museum of Popular Art and Culture (1974), the Ateliê Livre (1974), the Regional Historical Documentation and Information Center (NDIHR, 1976), the Samba School (1976), s Zoo featuring the fauna of the Pantanal of Mato Grosso (1977), and the Symphony Orchestra (1979). Additionally, the Aripuanã project (1973) led to the creation of the Amazon Administration School, aimed at training individuals in addressing the challenges in the area (Tavares R., 2001).

In tandem with these initiatives, UFMT offered extension courses, seminars, congresses, exhibitions, fairs, conferences, festivals, and various other activities, as outlined by the Departments, course coordinators, supplementary bodies, or the Extension Division itself. Proposals for these activities were to be submitted to Higher Administration

through the Vice-Dean for Academic Affairs, and their execution was supervised by the Extension Division within Depes.

In this context, university extension was perceived as a strategic means to procure resources. By forging partnerships with the public or private sectors, the university aimed to gather the resources necessary to bring extension activities to life. This approach underscored that the extension extends beyond a service offered by the University; it was seen as an avenue for collaboration and cooperation. The university could benefit from external resources to sustain its extension endeavors, while the community could benefit from the knowledge generated by the university.

In navigating these challenges, the success of extension initiatives relied “[...] partially on the organization of departments, their workforce, and dynamism.” Some departments hadn't fully integrated into extension programs (Depes/UFMT, 1974, p. 10), leading to an excessive workload for teachers involved in the projects, which, in turn, harmed the university's interaction with the community.

Given the scarcity of human resources, the significance of student involvement in university-led extension actions became evident. To foster student engagement, the Extension Division issued Ordinance No. 637 on August 7, 1975, outlining guidelines for student and teacher participation in university extension.

As per the directive, students participating in extension activities would earn points convertible into credits for the subject ‘Study of Brazilian Issues II,’ offered in undergraduate courses. Additionally, they could earn credits for subjects involving practical teaching hours aligned with their course's professional area. Notably, participation in extension activities would be recognized as a significant service, duly recorded in the students' academic records.

The ordinance also stipulated that teachers engaged in extension programs should adhere to the weekly workload as specified by their departments. They were encouraged to motivate teachers' involvement in extension programs, entitling them to the salary benefits inherent to their roles. Consequently, extension activities were acknowledged as crucial undertakings applicable to both teachers and administrative staff at the university, while participation was compulsorily recorded in their employment records.

Amidst this framework, the pertinent question emerges—How did female teachers engage in extension activities?

3 Women attending university extension at UFMT

In 1973, when the Extension Division was established, leadership was entrusted to Professor and Psychologist Nelson Zanata Gomes. In the following year, Professor Neuza Luiza Ferreira Machado assumed the position. Norly da Conceição Monteiro da Silva served as the section head, and Maria de Lourdes da Silva took on the role of administration officer.

During the initial administrative structuring of the extension, women held leadership roles in areas deemed fundamental within the University. Professor Neuza Luiza Ferreira Machado was deeply involved with the Social Service course, playing a foundational role as one of its idealizers and figured among its initial instructors. Notably, she served as the coordinator of the Social Service Department in 1972 and was appointed as the head of the Extension Division in 1974. Within the team, therefore, there were two women at the helm of organizing extension activities at UFMT.

The 1973 Catalog detailed university extension activities, which encompassed courses and services offered, along with their respective coordinators and affiliated units, as presented in the table below.

Table 1 – First university extension actions at UFMT, 1973

(to be continued)

Year	Extension Actions	Coordination / Professors	Unit
1973	Personnel Administration	Prof. Jonas Nolasco de Souza	Department of Economics
1973	Contemporary Literature Profile	Prof. Dr. Affonso Romano de Sant'Ana, Dr. Gilberto Mendonça, Dr. João Antônio Neto, Moacir Cirne, Sérgio Waldec de Carvalho, Álvaro Sá andlademir Dias Pino.	Department of Teaching and Research (Depes)
1973	Journalistic Information and Communication	Wlademir Dias Pino	Depes
1973	History of Painting	Aline Figueiredo	Depes
1973	Hydrometeorology	Prof. Ricardo Serrano Ramires	Department of Civil Engineering
1973	Computers – Programming	Prof. Walter Cavalheiro Teixeira	Department of Civil Engineering
1973	Training for Administrative Agents	Professors Leonardo Shessarenko, Laury G. de Souza, Benedito Zacharias da Silva, Aristides da Silva, Altino da Cunha Rego, Lourival Nunes da Silva	Department of Economics

Table 1 – First university extension actions at UFMT, 1973

(conclusion)

Year	Extension Actions	Coordination / Professors	Unit
1973	Histology	Prof. Paulo César de Figueiredo	Department of Natural History
1973	Training in Teaching Techniques	Prof. Célio Cunha, Prof. Sílvia V. A. Correa, and Prof. João Antônio Cabral Monlevade	Department of Education
1974	Assistance and Care for Flood Victims on the Cuiabá River	Prof. Neuza Luiza Ferreira Machado	Depes
1974	Specialization — prepare qualified human resources to meet the needs of the Department of Humanities, in agreement with the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro	Prof. Eneida do Rêgo N. Bomfim	Depes
1974	Pedagogical Supplementary Course Carried out in agreement with UFMT, CENAFOR, at the request of Colégio Industrial	Prof. Silvia Vitorino Alves Correa, Professors Nelson Zanata Gomes, João Antônio Cabral, Atasiano Alves da Silva, and Benedito Pinheiro de Campos	Department of Education
1974	Community Social Service Update Course sponsored by CAPES to prepare human resources to meet the needs of the Department of Social Service. Professors at Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro: Maria da Gloria Nun Ferreira, Danilo Lima, Oneida Enne de Araújo, Helena Angelina Lavander, and Edite Bezerra de Oliveira	Neuza Luiza Ferreira Machado	Depes
1974	Course agreement between UFMT and OSB. Provide law graduates and students with knowledge of the new Civil Procedure Code	Professors Edgar Muniz de Aragão, Galeno Lacerda, Hamilton Barros, and José C. B. Moreira	Department of Law
1974	Elementary Taxidermy Provides information on stuffing and preparing animals	UFMT professors	Department of Natural History
1974	Human Relations course held in partnership with the Military Police of Mato Grosso and UFMT	UFMT professors	Depes
1974	General History of Art	Aline Figueiredo	Depes
1974	Paleography Agreement with the Department of Education of Mato Grosso and UFMT. The course aims to provide an understanding of Paleography elements, facilitating a historical exploration of Mato Grosso's historical origins.	UFMT professors	Central Library Division

Source: Authored by the researchers (2023).

The table illustrates that these initiatives were conducted by different departments within the university and spanned diverse subjects, encompassing education, culture, human resources, and citizenship. These efforts are specifically aimed at equipping skilled

professionals to address the requirements of both the academic and external communities. The courses were open not only to the academic and external communities but also to the specific training of university staff.

However, among the 27 professors conducting extension courses, only four were women, comprising amounting to unimpressive 15%. This gender distribution suggests that women predominantly led courses within the Human Sciences, implying that areas such as Applied or Exact Sciences were deemed predominantly male spaces. This low representation of women might reflect the societal dynamics prevalent in Brazil during the military dictatorship, where men occupied leadership roles, particularly within academic spheres.

Beyond teaching courses, women played integral roles in various activities within the University's departments. For instance, Professor Maria Manuela Renha Novis Neves, a Social Sciences graduate, spearheaded the regional coordination of the Rondon Project operating in Mato Grosso.

She was responsible for the project's planning and presentation during a meeting involving mayors from 34 municipalities across the state (UFMT, 1972). While with the program, she provided insights into the functioning of the Rondon Project, discussing its history, philosophy, programs, and integrated actions. This encompassed aspects like action plans, agreements, and team formation, as well as the planning and execution of activities (UFMT, 1972).

Established on July 11, 1967, under the Ministry of the Interior, the Rondon Project aimed to engage university students in integrating Brazilian youth into the national development process, particularly in the Amazon region and Brazil's countryside. Its primary focus was to uplift the social and economic status of these communities (Passarinho, 2007, p. 3).

This project stood as one of the university's initial endeavors in community outreach, primarily focusing on activities in regions identified as underdeveloped by the state.

In 1975, Maria Manuela Neves was designated by the university's rector to institute and organize the structure of the Rural University Center for Community Action (Centro Rural Universitário de Ação Comunitária, Crutac) across rural areas of Mato Grosso (UFMT, 1975).

Crutac was created in 1966 by Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte and spread throughout the Brazilian state, with the “[...] objective of training students and providing assistance to needy rural communities.” Several universities incorporated this program across the country and it was widely incentivized by the Council of Rectors of Brazilian Universities (Gatti, 2019, p. 82).

Sanctioned by the UFMT Board of Directors, Resolution No. 09, dated February 15, 1974, established Crutac intending to engage the university with community needs, striving to enhance community productivity and fostering university-community integration. Its Article 2 underscored the program’s intent to organize and systematize university extension, particularly in “[...] providing services to the community.” It aimed to facilitate students’ involvement in a “[...] continuum of socioeconomic and cultural changes within the developing region” (UFMT, 1974, p. 1-2).

The involvement of additional women in the Crutac technical team was notable, taking on diverse roles such as administrative officers overseeing the project’s executive and operational facets. Some were teachers actively engaged in providing technical support for activities, organizing, and conducting courses. It is also important to acknowledge that while these roles have been identified, there might be others whose contributions were not recorded in the official documents consulted thus far.

Table 2 portrays the role occupied by some women who worked in the organization of university extension actions at UFMT.

Table 2 – Women who participated in the organization of university extension at UFMT (1972-75).

Year	Name	Position
1972	Manuela Renha Novis Neves	Rondon Project Regional Coordinator
1974	Neuza Luiza Ferreira Machado	Head of Extension Division
1974	Maria de Lourdes Bandeira De Lamônica Freire	Crutac Technical Advisory
1974	Janet Jacob	Crutac Technical Advisory
1974	Adnair Soares Souza	Administration Officer – Crutac
1974	Miracy Macedo Noronha	Administration Officer – Crutac
1974	Manuela Renha Novis Neves	Crutac Coordination
1975	Miramy Macedo	Crutac Technical Advisory
1975	Jurcelina Pereira Mendes	Crutac Technical Advisory

Source: Authored by the researchers (2023).

Women's involvement in UFMT's extension projects, while not extensively represented, remains evident. Soihet (2013) highlights the persistent struggle for women to establish themselves in public spheres, whether political or academic. Traditionally

confined to domestic roles, women faced societal expectations that acknowledged the home as their primary sphere of social engagement and familial responsibility (Soihet, 2013, p. 219).

Even so, Brazilian women have strived to achieve parity with men throughout history, particularly concerning access to education and employment. However, limited opportunities existed for women in higher education, as many pursued education in normal schools primarily to enhance homemaking skills or become educators teaching household tasks. This entrenched societal perception remains and continues to assign women roles historically associated with domestic work (Soihet, 2013).

The entrance of women into public spaces, particularly through education, provided them with the opportunity to attain specialized training, especially in the educational sector. This integration into the educational profession granted women the right to pursue careers, thereby fostering autonomy and independence, signaling their ascension within public and educational domains, even in contexts marked by indifference (Perrot, 2020).

4 Final considerations

University extension during UFMT's early years was structured with specific goals: 1. organizing extension courses and events; 2. establishing and nurturing connections with the community; and 3. collaborating with departments, institution sectors, and society to develop actions aligning with UFMT's areas of activity.

The examination of documentary evidence revealed that women's involvement in extension programs and projects was pivotal in their progression within academic spaces. Women not only engaged in academic settings but also actively participated in various locations across Mato Grosso in organizing university extension initiatives. They contributed through courses, events, and service provision, aimed at addressing the needs of the broader Mato Grosso society.

Despite their relatively limited numbers, women displayed courage and leadership in administrative units, spearheading the organization of university extension during UFMT's formative years. They played instrumental roles in implementing and overseeing activities across diverse spaces within the state of Mato Grosso.

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Translator: Tikinet Academic Eireli

How to cite this article (ABNT):

MATTOS, Sandra Jung de; SÁ, Elizabeth. Women's performance at university extension at Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso (UFMT). *Educ. Form.*, Fortaleza, v. 8, e11635, 2023. Available at: <https://revistas.uece.br/index.php/redufor/article/view/e11635>



Received on August 26, 2023.

Accepted on November 17, 2023.

Published on December 4, 2023.