

4th International Conference on
MODERN RESEARCH IN PSYCHOLOGY: TRENDS AND PROSPECTS
03 to 05 June 2011, Sibiu, Romania

PROSPECTING ADVANCED RESEARCH IN HEALTH,
EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Editors:
MARIUS MILCU
UTE SCHMIDT-BRASSE
KARL WESTHOFF
MARILENA MILCU
CRISTINA GRABOVSCI



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THE LANDLESS PEASANT'S MOVEMENT EXPERIENCE IN BRAZIL: POLITIC AND EDUCATION IN A LATIN AMERICA SOCIAL MOVEMENT

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ABSTRACT: In my paper the relation between critical education and the political reading of social movements in Latin America will be elaborated. I would like to remark that thinking about education is related with acting towards change. Such action is based upon a fundamental premise: *education is a political act and its neutrality is a false myth*. As a political act, the education should be a practice of participation, becoming a laboratory of ethics and solidarities politics. The critical pedagogy, like revolutionary education philosophy, has to be influenced from processes of political democratization in social movements, like the The Landless Peasant's movement in Brazil. Their actions are significant not only for their reality, but also for anyone that understood that education is a lifelong process, but then forget that politic is an ongoing process in constant evolution: the politic is a lifelong learning.

Key words: Politic, education, Latin America, participation, democracy.

1. LANDLESS PEASANT'S MOVEMENT IN BRAZIL

The Movement of Landless Peasants (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra - MST) was born in the Brazilian rural area in response to the landowners' historical unfairness and due to the bad and the unjust distribution of the land. It grew in the late Seventies, but its first official act was in 1985, one year after the end of the military dictatorship, when the first national congress was held in Brazil. The main objective of the political organization of rural workers is a land reform. The political history of the movement and the occupation of the land, establishment of camps, long marches demonstrations, becomes a way of organizing the productive sectors, based on cultural and economic cooperation. From this process emerges a pedagogical proposal intimately linked to such kind of policy, which began in the first years with itinerants schools in makeshift camps, and then gradually more open to areas of study and coordination, making schools more stable, permanent pedagogical centres, political and pedagogical proposals that have been considered in national and international education researches groups. The progressive structure of education does not imply that they have lost the concept of itinerant teaching: the lifelong learning changes according to political objectives and social conditions of the movement. *Itinerant* in this case means an education and its structures are always in multiplying processes.

2. SOME HISTORY

The history of the MST moves in the trails of religious organizations that gave protection and warmth to the peasants and urban workers during the military dictatorship in Brazil (1964 - 1984). In the early sixties the Basic Ecclesial Communities (CEB) began to form in Brazil; they reinterpreted Christianity from the perspective of the oppressed and criticized social injustice. These organizations were identified in the Land Pastoral Commission (CPT), expressing a radical criticism against the injustices of the capitalism, referring to messages of equality coming from the basic Christianity. These experiences formed the first seeds

that gave life for the Movement and it has moved on the trail of the rural workers' religious traditions, mysticism, and celebration of the Earth - a Christianity where they beat the dogmas of the controlling hierarchy and where the Bible was read and discussed in groups. Slowly those movements began to convert into political dimensions based on claim and the construction of a reality-based economic and social cooperation. The political dimension conducts to the social reading of the reality, though never dogmatic or naively orthodox. Many educators, intellectuals, writers such as Paulo Freire, Frei Betto, Leonardo Boff, Florestan Fernandes, Sebastiao Salgado expressed in words and in facts, the proximity to rural movements of Landless Peasants.

3. LAND RIGHTS AND RIGHT TO EDUCATION

The right to land is the right to health, work, education, is the right to a fair life and can't be achieved without the political realization of these rights. The critical pedagogy is in relation to questions involving the society through the education questions as a reaction to the reality of injustice, inequality, lack of human and social rights. A movement, in addition to being a political subject, becomes a critical subject of education, strong in its potential to reveal the hegemonic power of the ruling classes and to think in alternatives through community experiences. Certainly, there are contradictions and imperfections in the Movement, once there are human beings involved, there are relationships and many interests behind it. Against the Movement, some actions have emerged, most of them ordered by the "ideology owners" of "media campaigns", which has ensured that the strength of participation in recent years has been weakened and debased. This trend is even more serious when we take in consideration the fact that, in Brazil, there are many women and men living with no dignity, on street corners, with no guarantee of food, water, and the minimum health and work conditions. The Movement had the intelligence and strength to think of an idea and to practice this idea, trying to emerge from the poverty in a dignified way, with collective, human and educational power, but has often been isolated from the

middle class and by the ideology of the mass media. Instead, we believe that the pedagogy of the Landless Movement should be at least known, studied, analyzed for those problematic questions, the proposed content and the social processes which aim for a vision of a "counter-hegemonic" society.

In this sense the Pedagogy of the Movement, remarks in its practices and experiences some issues expressed from Paulo Freire: this important philosopher of Latin America popular education, in his main book "The Pedagogy of the Oppressed", reflects about the education as an instrument to manifest the conditions of dependence that exists in the relation between oppressed and oppressor. Consequently, Freire affirms the importance of a consciousness emersion from the social contradictions, so this route cannot be done individually, but it has to be built collectively through the critical dialog.

4. THE PEDAGOGY OF THE MOVEMENT

Even if the movement recognizes the importance of the education for the social changes.

It doesn't suppose that the revolutionary process is possible without a transformation of economical and political structures, as wrote Roseli Salate – author of the book "Pedagogia do Movimento Sem Terra", the education is revolutionary only if it is a part of a complex process of transformation.

.. In the pedagogical intentions of the Movement, the school is not the centre of the educational process, but it is increasingly important (...) It would be very ingenuous to think that the school are places of the liberation of the peasants or the solution of the agriculture problems in Brazil (...). At the same time, it is unrealistic to think about the school as something alien to it .. (Roseli, 2004).

From this thought Roseli Salet, activist, writer and educator of the Landless Movement, provokes deep and simple questions. What is the power of education? Can education change the world? Can it liberate the human being? The answer is that there is education that frees the human race, solves the problems of slavery and dependence, solves the problem of land and colonization, only in relation with political, economical, and cultural processes. The movement cannot expect to change the reality without transforming education and so the pedagogical intentions are straight related with political intentions.

Again we read from the book of Roseli Salet:
There is a particular pedagogical intentionality in MST on the process by where an action can be transformed into knowledge, in behaviour, attitude, values, symbols, objects ... (Roseli, 2004).

This intentionality is clear in the National School of Landless Peasant's Movement "Florestan Fernandes". This school, founded in 2005, was built in five years thanks to the volunteer work of more than a thousand activists from the Movement. The educational processes have been started even before the built of school, already in the choice of construction materials, in the design of the spaces, the whole project was already a teaching and participative project. The material engineering was an educational engineering, as confirmed by Maria Gorete, the coordinator of the school that in a interview with me says:

"We cannot consider the school as a simple building. Since the early groups, when we began to build the bricks, we asked ourselves: what are we building? What does this school do? The work we are doing is alienating or not? These are questions and discussions that we made beyond the technical formation in the building process. The biggest work is not in the material building, but in the pedagogical building. However, there is a constant debate between these."

In the pedagogy of MST, the theory grows with a collective and material experience.

5. CONCLUSION

The relationship between theory and practice, the proposal of itinerant schools, the significance of the education in historical revolutionary processes, are some of the issues of the MST pedagogy, which invokes the critical pedagogy to generate arguments to questioning itself and its possibilities.

The deepest seed of the movement is to build a cooperative society. A collaborative society, which has not written and theorized like an ancient doctrine, but is an inedited social cooperative, based in co-workers and an independent family agriculture. However, in the process of the realization of this idea many contradictions appear with a world determined by the capitalist model even more sponsored by media campaigns. Indeed, the conflict between capitalist system and cooperative purpose is also one of the deepest contradictions that agitate the international movement for Critical Pedagogy. I think that we have a historic role to reflect on this conflict to think and practice a pedagogy that is not idealist, but historically founded and rooted.

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