

The pedagogy of alternation in rural/country education: competing projects

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Abstract

The article focuses on the rural/country education developed inside popular social movements. It deals with the experiences of the CFRs – Casas Familiares Rurais (Rural Family Houses) and EFAs – Escolas Famílias Agrícolas (Agricultural Family Schools) linked to rural workers unions, non-governmental organizations and community associations. It also deals with the experiences of the FUNDEP – Fundação de Desenvolvimento, Educação e Pesquisa da Região Celeiro (Foundation for the Development, Education and Research of the Celeiro Region) and of the ITERRA – Instituto de Capacitação e Pesquisa da Reforma Agrária (Institute for Training and Research of the Land Reform), both linked to the Via Campesina–Brasil (Campesino Way – Brazil). The objective is to capture, in the experiences of formation that articulate labor and education carried out by these movements and organizations, the contradictions expressed in the practices/conceptions of the Pedagogy of Alternation. These contradictions have the potential to shed light on the projects of society envisaged by the collective subjects that build their pedagogical proposals upon the relation between productive labor and schooling. In this sense, the Pedagogy of Alternation can point to a work-education relation of a new kind, based on cooperation and self-management. It can nevertheless, also mean forms of control of social tensions, signaling with the possibility of the rural worker remaining in the land, as well as of masking unemployment by alternating professional education and paid apprenticeships through alliances with companies, which then become agents of formation.

Keywords

Labor – Social movements – Education.

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The article is a product of two studies: a) Pedagogy of alternate times/places in the formation of agriculture technicians: a study of the experiences of FUNDEP and ITERRA; and b) Freedom, autonomy, and emancipation in the relationship between agricultural labor and school education: concepts in question, both of which were sponsored by CNPq. The latter study results from a post doctorate research carried out at the State University of Rio de Janeiro. It received inputs from the following works: Camila Lombard Pedrazza (Scientific Apprenticeship): A look upon the formation of monitors of Rural Family Houses/RS; Clenir Fanck (MA): Between hoe and pencil: the educative practice at the Rural Family House of Francisco Beltrão/PR (both under CNPq scholarships); and Ailton Gonçalves Fernandes (pupil of the course on Land Pedagogy: agreement between the Technical Institute for Training and Research of the Land Reform (ITERRA) and the State University of Rio Grande do Sul - UERGS): Contributions of the Pedagogy of Alternation to the Pedagogy of the Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB). This research deals with the rural/country education developed by the popular social movements constituted by men, women, and children living in the countryside and working the land for a living¹. It deals more specifically with the collective political subjects we have been interacting with, organized in the Campesino Way – Brazil, which adopts the concept of field education, and with the small and medium-sized landowners unionized and organized in the Land Workers Federation of Rio Grande do Sul (FETAG/RS), which adopts the concept of rural education. Campesino Way – Brazil is an “articulation formed by the Movement of Small Land Workers (MPA); Movement of Landless Rural Workers (MST); Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB); Movement of Campesino Women (MMC); Commission for the Pastoral of the Land (CPT); Pastoral of the Rural Youth (PJR) and Federation of Agronomy Students of Brazil

(FEAB)” (Guzmán; Molina, 2005, p. 07).

The concept of field education has been developed by the organized social movements in Campesino Way – Brazil. For these movements, the word “field” has a political meaning of continuity and identity with the international history of campesino struggle, and the concept is explained in the Operational Guidelines for Basic Education at Field Schools, according to which:

Field education, treated as rural education under Brazilian legislation, has a meaning that incorporates the spaces of forests and of cattle farming, of mines and agriculture, but goes beyond them by including fishing, seashore, riverside and extractive spaces. Field, in this sense, more than a non-urban perimeter, is a field of possibilities that intensify the linkage between human beings and the very production of the conditions of their social existence and the accomplishments of the human society. (Arroyo; Caldart; Molina, 2004, p. 176).

In the State of Rio Grande do Sul, unionized rural workers have kept the concept of rural education, demarcating the reality of the culture and work on the rural area, and linking themselves to the historical experiences of rural education that created in Europe the Pedagogy of Alternation.

The definition of the theme makes it clear that there are controversies between these collective subjects, who have been creating in their practice a pedagogical project based on the method of the Pedagogy of Alternation. This method consists in the articulation between School-Time (ST) and Community-Time (CT). In ST, students remain fulltime within the space of the school for anything between two weeks and two months,

¹ For the purposes of this work, land comprises areas covered with grass or other vegetation, woods, forests, cerrado, savannas or even bare land, such as deserts with or without rocks, and also the waters of brooks, rivers, lakes and seas. It is the place from which these workers derive their sustenance.

depending on the course. In CT, students go back to their family farms or to their communities or settlements to put to practice the knowledge they studied during the ST based on problems detected during a previous CT. The Pedagogy of Alternation requires a specific training for teachers, which has not been taken into account in Licentiate courses. For this reason, entities and organizations which have adopted this method choose to hire monitors who are usually agronomists or agronomy technicians. The licentiates who choose to work with the Pedagogy of Alternation attend courses offered by those entities and organizations (Begnami, 2004; Estevam, 2003; Lambert, 2002).

Like the theme itself – rural/field education – Pedagogy of Alternation is a polysemous phrase that has some common elements but that is actualized in many different forms, according to the subjects that assume them, the regions where experiences occur, the conditions that allow or limit, or even impede, their realization, and the theoretical conceptions underlying their practice. Bearing that in mind it can be broadly said that the Pedagogy of Alternation takes the productive labor as the principle of a humanistic education that articulates dialectically formal teaching and productive labor.

This relationship between productive labor and teaching is already present in Marx (1982) in his study of “The machinery”, which was made against the backdrop of industrial labor in England. Gramsci (1989; 2001) enlarges this discussion in the revolutionary context of the 1920s Italy, and Lenin (1977) tries to put in practice the association between industrial productive labor and teaching, also in the 1920s, soon after the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. In socialist thinking, however, the work-education relationship is referred to the reality of urban industrial labor.

Lastly, the Pedagogy of Alternation articulates practice and theory into a praxis, and finds expression in times and spaces that

alternate between school and property, community, settlement, camp or social movement to which the student is linked.

Having made clear the focus of the present work – the Pedagogy of Alternation –, its objective is to capture in the education experiences conducted by rural/field popular social movements the contradictions expressed in the implicit practices/conceptions of the pedagogical method in which times and spaces of work and education are alternated. In such contradictions, the projects of society envisaged by the collective subjects that construct their pedagogical proposals based on the relation between productive labor and school education can be better observed. That does not entail classifying those proposals in a simple and binary manner as right-wing (identified with the restoration of the capitalist system) or left-wing (identified with social transformation or construction of socialism). We believe one should lose sight neither of the capital-labor contradiction, which feeds on the separation of city and field, nor of the movement engendered by the class struggle, whose conflicting interests permeate the experiences, redirecting and reconfiguring them in the processes that involve the collective political subjects – the rural/field popular social movements – that fuel them.

The experiences of the Pedagogy of Alternation, embedded in these popular social movements, seem to signal to a new project of society and education. Like a tiny shoot, and with much effort, this novelty struggles to spring free from within the old tree constituted by bourgeois society and education. For us researchers-educators the challenge is thus put of analyzing the potential and limitations of these experiences for the construction of a popular-democratic project of society and education, by trying to assess their contributions to the areas of curriculum, apprenticeship programs, and teacher education, amongst others. Countries like France, Sweden, and Canada begin to adopt the Pedagogy of Alternation as a policy of

education in times/spaces alternating between formal education and company work, in a form of paid supervised apprenticeship, reinforcing the need to increase the knowledge about this method (Laval, 2004; Pineau, 2002; Lambert, 2002; Duffaure, 1985).

It is thus justified the relevance and timeliness of clarifying the practices of Pedagogy of Alternation, and the conceptions underlying it, considering that this Pedagogy can offer a path to the relation between productive labor and school education in the human formation of rural/field workers. Nevertheless, it can also be a strategy of the capitalist State to form both young farmers and young urban workers. The reason, with respect to the former, is the reduction in public spending with education, since the monitors are not usually teachers from the state education system, and the organizations linked to the Church, non-governmental organizations, unions and community associations take on the administration of the CFRs – Casas Familiares Rurais (Rural Family Houses) and EFAs – Escolas Familiares Agrícolas (Agricultural Family Schools). In so doing, these organizations and entities lift from the state's shoulders most of the burden of being responsible for the formation of children and youngsters of the popular classes. The reduction of the length of study and the absence of qualified teachers can also mean the weakening and resulting lack of qualification of the formation offered to the children of the rural/field workers. Adopted by the State as a public policy for the formation of urban youngsters in some European countries and in Canada, the alternating between work and school can conceal unemployment and its causes, keeping these youngsters for more time in school and at the same time offering paid apprenticeships instead of regularly paid jobs protected by labor legislation (Laval, 2004; Tanguy, 1999; 2001; Pineau, 2002).

Chronicling the Pedagogy of Alternation

The Pedagogy of Alternation is a methodological alternative for the professional agricultural formation at a technician level of youngsters, initially for the farmers' sons who lost the interest in regular education because it was totally removed from their lives and work in the fields. In the works that record the history of this Pedagogy there stands out the dialogue of a father – Jean Peyrat – with his son Yves, who challenges his father's order to continue his studies, by saying: Papa, I want very much to obey you in everything, but as for the supplementary courses I'm decided, I'm not going back there, I want to work with you! This conversation drives the father to search for a solution, along with the village's priest, the Abbott Granereau, his son Yves, and other farmers who also faced the same problem. The parents' initiative with the help of the priest is at the origin of the creation of the first Maison Familiale Rurale (MFR) in 1935 in Lot-et-Garone, southwestern France (Chartier, 1986; Silva, 2003; Estevam, 2003; Nosella, 1977; Pessotti, 1978).

The abbot and the parents of the young farmers reached an agreement, according to which the boys would remain for three weeks working in their farms under their fathers' supervision, and would convene for a week every month to study at the parochial house.

At this time/place they would attend a distance course in agriculture and, along with this course, they would receive a general, human, and Christian formation supervised by the priest. Thus the Pedagogy of Alternation was born, alternating times/ places of learning, being a general and technical education in a regime of internship at an education center, and a practical work at the family property and in the community. (Ribeiro, 2006a, p. 2)

In 1942 France, during the German occupation in World War II, was created the

Union Nationale de las Maisons Familiaes Rurales [National Union of Rural Family Houses] (UNMFRs), which became the institutional coordination of the MFRs, working to turn them into cooperative organizations of local bases and to help them assume their responsibility in the functioning of the formation centers. From 1945 onwards, there is an expansion process of the MFRs around Europe, Africa and Oceania, giving birth to an international association congregating the MFRs-AIMFR (Chartier *et al.*, 1997), America and Asia (Estevam, 2003).

Following the same method, of alternating times and spaces of instruction and labor, but this time with the support of the municipal public office, the EFAs are created in Italy in the early 1960s. This support resulted in incentives for the implementation of the experiences, which could then rely on teachers from the public school system, although these teachers, because they were not directly involved in the construction of the pedagogical proposal, were less motivated and committed to the idea than the CFRs monitors.

It is an experience that found support in the Church, but that was born directly out of the action of politicians, the opposite of what happened in France. (Nosella, 1977, p. 30)

Until the late 1960s, the Pedagogy of Alternation was used only by the CFRs that were already consolidated and recognized by society. From then on, and in a context of unemployment, it raises the interest of the State, which attempts to associate professional training – from the technical level learning to higher education – to paid apprenticeships through what has been termed a partnership with companies, attracting both support and criticism from researchers. We shall not pursue this discussion here because it would take us away from the objectives of this text, but interested readers will find relevant material in

Laval (2004); Pineau (2002); Lambert (2002); and Duffaure (1985).

The EFAs arrived in Brazil before the CFRs. In the State of Espírito Santo, the EFAs were created on an initiative of the Movement of Promotional Education of Espírito Santo (MEPES). They had the institutional and financial support of the Catholic Church and of the Italian society through the mediation of Father Humberto Pietrogrande. Currently, they are organized at the national level into the National Union of Agricultural Family Schools (UNEFAB)², created in 1982. Begnami (2004) calls attention to the strong presence of religious leaders in the expansion of EFAs in Brazil. He says:

[...] in the majority of cases, the initiate was taken through the social work of the churches, specially the Ecclesiastical Base Communities – CEBs – linked to the Catholic Church. (p. 8)

The movement, of French origin, has its beginning in Brazil in 1981 in the Northeastern region of the country with the creation of a CFR in Arapiraca, in the State of Alagoas. The experience is, however, short-lived. In 1987, a CFR is created in the State of Paraná, municipality of Barracão, and in 1991, another one is set up in Quilombo, Santa Catarina. The CFRs are managed by students' parents, community leaders, and by NGOs, and offer Fundamental Education from the 5th to the 8th grade associated to agricultural professional training. There are already several CFRs in the State of Rio Grande do Sul, where the CFRs of Frederico Westphalen, Santo Antônio das Missões, Alpestre, Ijuí, and Torres are active, and on October 3rd, 2005 a CFR was set up in Três Passos. At the time, a CFR was planned for Vacaria, and another one for Santa Rosa (Vier,

2. According to Ribeiro, Begnami and Barbosa (2002), there are EFAs in the following Brazilian states: Espírito Santo, Bahia, Minas Gerais, Piauí, Maranhão, Rondônia, Goiânia, Mato Grosso do Sul, Tocantins, Amapá, Rio de Janeiro, Pará, Amazonas and Ceará.

2005, p. 11). It is, therefore, in the Southern region of the country that the movement of the CFRs consolidates coordinated by the Regional Association of Rural Family Houses of the South Region (ARCAFAR – Sul).

The historical synthesis of the experiences – French, Italian and African – carried out by Chartier (1986), Silva (2003), and Nosella (1977), and the studies about the Brazilian experiences of the CFRs and EFAs conducted by Nosella (1977), Pessotti (1978), Begnami (2003), Silva (2003), and Estevam (2003), allow us to raise two points that will be dealt with more thoroughly in the next section: a) the explosive context of the period between the World Wars and after WWII in which the confrontation of forces between liberalism and communism was felt and, following that, the growing concern of the Church with social issues, adopting a conciliatory position; and b) the lack of interest of the State with the schooling of European peasants, which resembles what the history of education in Brazil has registered with respect to the education of rural workers.

Church and State in understanding CFRs and EFAs

Both the initiative to create the CFRs and EFAs, and the wording they employ, which in the former begins with the House where work time is spent and, in the latter, begins with the School where instruction time takes place, hint at differences that reside in the origins of their creation, but that may or may not be present in the experiences carried out in Brazil.

Initially, we can think that these initiatives of country education result just from a common sense constructed from the social practices of the workers, who recognize the importance of the link between schooling and work for the future sustenance of their children. This is because the Pedagogy of Alternation is not a proposal that stems from academic thinking. It did not involve teachers or

education researchers, even because these have been largely distanced from the issues raised by the popular layers of society, especially, but not exclusively, those living in the countryside. If, however, we pay attention to the situation in Europe at the time when those experiences happened – the period between the two World Wars in the case of France, and the post-war period in Italy – we shall make significant discoveries that will allow us to unveil the conceptions that inform them. In this sense, we highlight here aspects that can help us understand the features that have remained in the Pedagogy of Alternation that has been used in the experiences of the rural/field popular social movements in Brazil, and those features that were the historical product of an era.

One must here be aware of the context, which in the period between wars is one of confrontation between liberalism – here included its most brutal face, identified with the Nazi-fascism – and the communism strengthened by the Russian Revolution (1917) and by the beginning of the revolutionary process in China (1934). In the post-war period, a balance of forces is found, which becomes visible with the creation of the Social Welfare State and with the Cold War. In this context, and steering the discussion to the objectives of this article, the concern of the Catholic Church with social issues is prominent, a position that begins by the late 19th century, explaining its conservative stance also towards rural workers, and which finds expression, among other strategies, in the creation of the Catholic Action, through which it tries to preempt the international communist movement and its potential for organization of these workers.

Chartier (1986) analyzes in detail the files that keep the memoirs of the CFRs to show that their history goes back to the 19th century and early 20th century. According to the author, the creation of the CFRs is preceded by a long reflection in which the active

presence of the Church can be felt. The Church intends to denounce the dehumanization brought about by capitalism and, at the same time, draw attention to the risks that a victory of an atheistic communism would present. Under this view, two antecedents of the creation of educational alternatives for peasants, as materialized in the CFRs and EFAs, can be identified: the papal encyclicals³, and the organization of Christian laymen into the social movement that takes the name of Sillon, started in the late 20th century by Marc Sangnier, a French publicist (Chartier, 1986). Sillon in French means furrow; it puts forward through a magazine of the same name, released in 1944, the idea of furrowing the earth to prepare it to receive the seed, in an analogy to the purposes of the movement of “preparing the farmers through formation and change of mind for affirmative actions of participation, organization and leadership” (Begnami, 2003, p. 28). This movement had its roots in a social Catholicism whose principle was “the defense of democracy as condition for social progress” (Silva, 2003, p. 46). Inside Sillon, the Catholic Agrarian Youth (JAC)⁴ is created. Following the guidance of Pope Leo XIII, young priests took the initiative of going to the people, creating the democratic religious tradition from the movement of social Catholicism (Sandri, 2004).

The pioneers of the Rural Family House of Lot-et-Garone were deeply influenced by the Christian Democrat wings of the Rural Sillons and of the Secrétariat Central d’Initiative Rural (SCIR)⁵. These movements proposed to conduct a formation that would qualify the farmers to create and manage in an autonomous way their unions and cooperatives, so as not to be influenced by the communist movement.

The Catholic Church also exerted enormous influence on the processes of organization of rural workers in unions and in the Movement of Base Education (MEB) in the years of the 1960s that preceded the military coup in Brazil. The work of JAC, based on the social doctrine of the Church for the

construction of syndicalism in the countryside, is recognized by Duarte (2003) by saying that:

Amid the work of the Catholic Church, and by the efforts of the Catholic Agrarian Youth – JAC, the Association of Studies, Guidance, and Rural Assistance – ASSESOAR appears in 1966, with the support of Belgian priests. It comes as a lay organization, but due to its origin and context, it adopts as orientation the Social Doctrine of the Church, with its typically pastoral actions [...]. (p. 11)

The second important aspect to understand the Pedagogy of Alternation is the lack of interest of the State in the education of European farmers. Recalling the history of the first Rural Family House, we see that Yves’ father, in his conversation with the Abbot Granereau (apud Chartier, 1986), justifies his call for help with the education of his son by saying:

Yes, this is all good to form the city folk, but not to form the peasants. [...] How many peasants have you seen finishing an agriculture school? And it is expensive. For us (peasants) it is always the same! Either educating oneself and leaving the land... or, in order to stay in the land, remain ignorant for the rest of one’s life. (p. 63)

3. Pope Leo XIII wrote several encyclicals on social problems, notably *Rerum Novarum* (1891). Pope Pius XI issued *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) celebrating the 40 years of the *Rerum Novarum*; produced several documents against Fascism, Nazism and Communism; organized the Catholic Action around the world (1922). Pope John XXIII authored *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and *Pacem in Terris* (1963) on the progresses of the social doctrine of the Church, the most complete and clear encyclicals. Pope Paul VI is the author of *Populorum Progressio* on the progress of the social conditions of human life (*Enciclopédia Mirador*, 1987, v. 15).

4. About the interest of the Church in social issues and the Catholic thinking on the subject, see Messner, 1960.

5. In 1916, as a spinoff of the Sillonist movement, the workers union that shall give support to the CFRs is founded. The program of the SCIR for the creation of the Professional Agricultural Union of Growers includes among its demands: “To ensure the constant collaboration and restore the mutual trust between employers and employees; to encourage the development of rural industries to promote the economy of the peasants” (Chartier, 1986, p. 52).

In Brazil, the absence in the history of Education of policies specific for rural education is recognized by many authors, such as Calazans (1993); Leite (1999); Gritti, (2003); Damasceno (2004). It comes as a surprise to learn that in Europe there was no interest either on the part of the State with rural education. In 1918 in France, a pedagogical journal already denounced “that the agricultural schooling was insignificant and lacked organization” (Chartier, 1986, p. 08). “To be sure one should not generalize, but one can say that until a recent time the peasants were influenced by a trend that regarded education as useless to farm the land” (p. 19). Nevertheless, Rui Canário (1995) in a work that articulates studies on rural education in Europe, shows concern with rural schooling in view of the shrinking of rural communities in the late 20th century, because this school was seen in the 19th century was a sign of progress and as a “factor of identity of the village” (p. 9).

However, whilst these authors denounced the immaturity and lack of continuity of a State policy on peasant education, some works on the history of pedagogy describe experiences of the New School or Active School as having as their main feature being situated in the countryside. These experiences purported to be “laboratories of practical pedagogy”, developing activities of study and work in a regime of internship, and keeping manual works and agriculture and aviculture practices in their curricula, but are not identified as rural schools (Larroyo, 1974).

Thus far, we have followed the process of creation of the CFRs and EFAs, which in Brazil are closer to the rural workers unions and federations, such as the Federation of Workers of Family Agriculture (FETRAF-Sul), integrated by unions affiliated to the United Workers Central (CUT) and the FETAG/RS, the latter being in charge of following up in Rio Grande do Sul the implementation and working of the CFRs (Vier, 2005; FETAG/RS, 2006). We have also seen the influence of the pastoral work of the

Church, and the contradictory role played by the State with respect to the public policies for rural/field education (Ribeiro; Antonio, 2007). In this sense, the use of alternating can represent at the same time the possibility of an education sensitive to the interests of farmers, and a cover-up for the impossibility, at the current stage of reproduction and accumulation of capital, of economic growth accompanied by the creation of job positions, or even of a recovery of the Social Welfare State.

In the next section, we shall discuss the rebirth of the Pedagogy of Alternation in the pedagogical proposal of the MST, which lies at the root of the creation of the Foundation for the Development of Education and Research of the Celeiro Region (FUNDEP) and of ITERRA.

The Pedagogy of Alternation in FUNDEP and ITERRA

There are several works recording the history of the organization of the landless rural workers since the end of the 1970s, when the military dictatorship was still in full swing, up to the creation of the MST at the First National Meeting of the Landless, which took place in Cascavel/PR on 22 January 1984 (Morissawa, 2001; Caldart, 2000; Menezes Neto, 2003; Bonamigo, 2002). These struggles find their rationale in the unjust and extremely uneven distribution of land, which is historical in Brazil, a country that, according to the “FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) and the PNUD (United Nations Development Programme) is second in the world in land concentration, behind Paraguay” (Morissawa, 2001, p. 117). Although the 1988 Brazilian Constitution, in its 3rd and 5th articles, affirms that the property of land must fulfill its social function, both the State policies and its actions have failed to guarantee land to be worked for those who do not own it, and the conditions for small and medium-size landowners to remain on it. The development of agro-business, of biotechnology applied to

agriculture, and the interest of the World Bank in the privatization of public land (Martins, 2004) explain both the escalate of conflicts in land disputes and the criminalization of the popular social movements involved in these struggles (Carvalho, 2005; Melo, 2006).

Just as in the period before the Dictatorship, the process of struggling for land, the organization of camps and settlements, the marches, and the congresses of the Landless⁶, all had the support of Catholic priests and nuns. They were following the orientations of the Second Vatican Council – conducted under the pontificate of Pope John XXIII from October 1962 to December 1965 (Löwy, 1991) –, and the documents produced by the Conferences of the Latin American Episcopate (CELAM) carried out in Medellín, Colombia, in 1968, and in Puebla, Mexico in 1979, when the Church chose to “give voice to those who do not have it”, and made the “preferential option for the poor”. They were also inspired by the Liberation Theology, a Christian movement that took its name from the work of Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation* (Löwy, 1991). In Brazil, there was a greater involvement of priests and nuns, resulting in the creation in 1975 of the CPT, which then assumed an ecumenical character including Catholic bishops and Evangelical pastors, and released, among other documents, *Church and land problems in 1980*. Without the support of the churches involved in the CPT or of unions affiliated to the CUT, the landless workers would have enormous difficulties to survive “camped beneath black canvases” with children and elderly people. However, this support can also arouse conflicts, as Duarte (2003) records, bringing about the need of the MST defining itself with autonomy from the churches, unions, and political parties. Also in Paraná, the movement that gave origin to the CFRs split in two: on one side the ARCAFAR-Sul and, on the other, the ASSESOAR, which continued “to direct its actions in field education initiated

with the JAC – Catholic Agrarian Youth” (Sandri, 2004, p. 99). ASSESOAR appears in 1966 from the JAC. In the late 1970s, it gets involved with the work of giving union formation to workers, incorporating elements of the Marxist interpretation of society into the Social Doctrine of the Church, and its work is associated to the one developed by CPT (Duarte, 2003). ARCAFAR-Sul results from the need to create a general coordination to standardize the activities of the CFRs in the State of Paraná, Santa Catarina, and Rio Grande do Sul (Estevam, 2003). The origin of these organizations makes it clear that there are divergences in the conceptions the orient the formation of farmers, but pursuing this aspect would lead us away from the objectives of the present article. Unlike these organizations, which work with the formation of farmers, the MST is a movement that struggles for land, linking this struggle with the occupation of the school (Martins, 2004).

The absence of public policies for rural/field education, as previously noted, is confirmed by the MEC/CEB Report 36/2001 approved on 4 December 2001, which justifies the establishment of the Operational Guidelines for Fundamental Education in Field Schools (Arroyo; Caldart; Molina, 2004). Thus, the relative absence of the State from the formulation of a public policy specific for rural/field education in Brazil is one of the essential elements to understand the contradictions expressed in the practices/conceptions of the Pedagogy of Alternation that we propose to examine in this text.

MST's pedagogical proposal is also recorded in the *Cadernos Pedagógicos* and in many other studies that produced monographs, dissertations and theses, some of them published as books (Caldart, 2000; Morigi,

6. Caldart (2000) established the difference between workers who historically did not have, and continue not having, access to land, who in Portuguese are named “sem-terra” (literally, “without-land”), and the workers organized around the MST. The participation in the organization and struggles for land in the MST confers a new identity to the working subjects identified as “Sem Terra”, written in capital letters and without the hyphen.

2003; Vendramini, 2002; Martins, 2004), and other generating articles (Ribeiro, 2001).

We can say that it is in the struggle for the “occupation of school” (Martins, 2004) that the creation of FUNDEP is included, with its Department of Rural Education (DER) in Braga/RS in 1989, and currently functioning in Ronda Alta/RS. Later, in 1995, due to a conflict of practices/conceptions between militants of the DER that coordinated the pedagogical experiences, there is a schism, and the creation of a new Collective. This Collective of Field Education developed actions that resulted in the foundation of ITERRA in Veranópolis/RS, and is responsible for the coordination of the pedagogical actions of this institute (ITERRA, 2002, n. 1). FUNDEP and ITERRA offer courses at the secondary and higher education levels to popular social movements organized in the Via Campesina-Brasil (Campesino Way-Brazil), the former under the leadership of MPA, and the latter under the coordination of the MST.

Both FUNDEP and ITERRA adopt the method of alternating times/spaces of work and study, and both conduct, through secondary and higher education courses, the formation of students sent to them by the popular social movements linked to the Via Campesina-Brasil and to the Movement of Jobless Workers (MTD). Higher education courses – Rural Development, Administration and Management, conducted at FUNDEP, and Pedagogy of the Land, conducted at ITERRA, both under agreements with UERGS, were discontinued in July 2007 because the government of the State of Rio Grande do Sul deemed unfounded the claim of the Popular Social Movements that specific courses should be carried out targeted to the reality of the field workers, and in particular to those workers that are part of these movements.

With the support of the material expounded so far, we shall now discuss the practices and conceptions of the Pedagogy of Alternation in the different popular social movements that make use of this method.

Pedagogy of Alternation: conflicting conceptions and projects

We have seen some of the elements that help to characterize the Pedagogy of Alternation, its origins, the link with collective processes involving family farmers, the participation of the Church⁷, and the relationship with the State. This Pedagogy is being incorporated by the community and union movements, and by those movements of struggle for land to work on; this incorporation takes on different forms that reveal divergences as to the social projects that give support to the pedagogical experiences under focus. In this section, we make use of the elements noted above to attain the objectives of the article of capturing the contradictions and, in them, visualize to what social projects the experiences of popular education developed by CFRs, EFAs, FUNDEP and ITERRA are associated (Ribeiro, 2007).

We have already highlighted the fact that the CFRs, without forgetting the school formation, place their focus on the agricultural work, whereas the EFAs, without neglecting the agricultural work, are more focused on formal schooling. They coincide, however, in keeping the phrase Pedagogy of Alternation to identify books, articles, reports and news bulletins dealing with the issue.

Jean Claude Gimonet (1998), one of the researchers in this field, says that by the end of the 1990s in France, alternating was publicized as serving three purposes: “the professional guidance and insertion, the adaptation to the job, and professional qualification” (p. 55). A fourth purpose was seldom mentioned: that of a general formation that would prepare the youth to face examinations on selection processes, and thereby acquire the same levels of learning achieved by other ways. With that, the

⁷ The Church plays an essential role in the creation of FUNDEP and in the support to the establishment of ITERRA, as can be observed in the documents produced by both these institutions. See: Cadernos do ITERRA, n. 1, 2001.

author manifested a concern with the quality of a formation in which work and schooling take turns. Another worry of his was with the unity between successive times/spaces as a condition for a truly integrative alternation.

Having studied the experience of the MFR of Granit in Canada, Lambert (2002) defines it as a structural project that makes the worker more competitive, expanding the potential for job generation in the agro-industrial sector, since the youngsters acquire two certificates, relative to secondary education and to their professional training. To that author,

The pedagogy of alternation prepares adequately the youngsters to face their realities of agricultural and forest work. As they are conducted to several places of apprenticeship during three years, and by adapting to different contexts and various practices, they reach the work market with an extra advantage in comparison to people who have studied under conventional ways. They constitute first-rate workforce for the developments of the region, and do not have any difficulty to find jobs by the end of their studies. (p. 41)

There is already a debate about alternation applied to professional education. In this respect, Landry (1998) distinguishes four terms – cooperative teaching, school-work alternation, formation in alternation, and work-study alternation – that left their mark in the history of formation in alternation in Quebec, Canada. In her article, when analyzing the formation in alternation, the author asks “to which development?” (p. 67). There are also authors that, defending the partnership between school and business, affirm that the power to carry out the formation must be shared, constituting the alternation in such a way as to make it possible a relation between general formation and professional training (Clénet; Gérard, 1994).

The Pedagogy of Alternation begins to

grow in France within the regular teaching system as a way of tackling problems of dropout and failure of youngsters from the popular classes. It is only from the 1980s that the use of alternation starts to disseminate, being adopted in professional formation at the levels of technical and higher education. It takes place in the form of alternate periods at school and in paid apprenticeships in companies. For Laval (2004), the alternation tends to be generalized to all modalities of formation: professional, technical, and general. In the same work, the author questions the model adopted by France, which is “very different from the German model built upon the principle of alternation” (p. 74). Lucie Tanguy (2001) raises questions about the format assumed by the company-school relation, characterizing it as a movement of “desacralization of knowledge”, in which the company, instead of being just a place for apprenticeship, becomes an agent of formation that cooperates with the school. The author says that:

This movement, strongly driven by the State, produced a radical change of attitude among teachers, families, and students, who reached the point of considering the school-company alternation as an active principle of all education⁸. (p. 28)

The generalization of alternation into the technical-industrial and university schooling brings forth questions about the nature of this methodology and its ends. To what model of education and society would it be associated? Would its role be limited to the promise of social and professional insertion in times of unemployment, or would it contain the

⁸ In a different work (Tanguy, 1999), she analyzes the enduring search for approximation between education institutions and businesses. The author points to a movement of valuation of alternation including practices that aim at the cooperation between social institutions of education and industrial, commercial, and service companies.

perspective of rupture with a model of education that historically privileged the exclusive space/time of the school? If, throughout history, rural workers have been at the margin of, and sometimes excluded from, educational policies directed at them and, also, if they have always been discriminately labeled as backward and uncultured, how is it possible that an initiative from these workers would become a reference for school education and especially for the school-business relationship?

In Brazil, the pedagogy of alternation has raised the interest of researchers since the late 1970s. In the same State of Espírito Santo, and at the same time that Paolo Nosella (1977), Alda Luzia Pessotti (1978) carries out a study about the EFAs. To this latter author:

The alternation consists in splitting the time of formation of the youngster into periods of living at school, and with the family. This alternate rhythm dictates the whole structure of the school, and seeks to reconcile school and life, preventing the breaking of bonds between youngster and family and, consequently, the rural environment. (p. 37)

Lourdes Helena da Silva (2003) conducted a more recent study, in which she compares two experiences of formation of young farmers: the CFR of Quilombo/SC and the EFA of Vinhático/ES. In that work, the author makes a deeper analysis of the concept, bringing into the debate the use of an alternation of appearances, referring, among other examples, to the night courses offered to working students and the curriculum apprenticeships. To the author,

The real alternation, in its turn, consists in an effective commitment, an involvement of the alternating student in tasks of the productive activity, so as to relate his/her actions to the reflection about the why and how of the activities developed. (p. 30)

In the Pedagogy of Alternation disseminated by the CFRs and EFAs there is a valuation of the knowledges constructed in the social practices, specially the work experience,

[...] for it makes use in its learning process of situations experienced by the youngsters, met with and observed in their medium, instead of the simple practical application of theoretical classes, as it is usually the case in traditional schools. (Estevam, 2005, p.26)

Turning now to the analysis of the formation given by FUNDEP and ITERRA, we see that this formation also occurs in alternate times/spaces of work and education. Would that be a form of alternation? Where does it come close, and where does it depart from the method used by the CFRs and EFAs, and by the current initiatives of companies that act as agents of professional formation?

Observation of the experiences carried out by FUNDEP and ITERRA, and the interpretation of the production that comes out of these experiences, reveal contradictions that on one hand point to a confirmation of the Pedagogy of Alternation, but on the other signal to its substitution by a pedagogy inspired by the historical reflection and experiences of relation between productive work and schooling. Such disagreements unveil processes of construction of an original pedagogy associated to a project of society, as we shall see further on.

FUNDEP does not have many publications. In a visit to the headquarters of this Foundation in May 2006, several interviews were carried out with educators-researchers, and several observations and informal conversations with students were conducted. On that occasion, the coordinators interviewed recognized a deficiency in the systematization and publication of the results of the work with Popular Education developed there.

In the work *Coragem de Educar*, (Courage to Educate), FUNDAP (1994) some elements can be found that allow us to establish an approximation, and some differences, between FUNDAP's proposal and that of ITERRA. Firstly, it refers to teachers as monitors, just like in the CFRs and EFAs. Secondly, there is an identification with the pedagogy historically constructed and identified as Popular Education, having as its reference the practice-theory-practice relation and Paulo Freire's method (Brandão, 1981; Freire, 1978; 1980; Beto, 1981). This method is historically linked to the campaign for the literacy of adults in the 1960s, to which Paulo Freire creates a method that starts from reality, goes to the reading and writing, and produces the understood reading/writing of that reality, or the reading of the world. It was adapted for the work with Popular Education, articulated to the see-judge-act method used by the CEBs. It also became a reference for Popular Education as practice-theory-practice, which is used by FUNDEP.

In a different publication, *Retalhos do Pedagógico* (Fragments of the Pedagogical) (Ghedini; Sirena, 1995), the authors refer to the "system of alternation of the Course of Agents of Rural Development, with respect to the School-Time and to the Community-Time". Referring to the First Degree (now Fundamental Education from the 5th to the 8th grades) 'Suppletive' [shortened substitute] course for the formation of Agents of Rural Development (ADRs) with the objective of preparing leaders to intervene in the social movements in the countryside, in the cooperatives, in the communities and in the workers unions, the authors say that:

It is structured with duration of two years, comprising six stages of sixty days each that take place in a system of alternation – School-Time (TE) and Community-Time (TC), based on the already known experiences of the schools visited. (p. 14)

At ITERRA, there are also approximations and differences with respect to both the CFRs and EFAs, and to FUNDEP.

When presenting the formation in alternation conducted by the Pedagogy of the Land Course, carried out under an agreement between ITERRA and UERGS, Edgar Kolling (2002) says that:

[...] our formal courses are all conducted in the system of alternation. This modality allows us to work School-Time (TE) and Community-Time (TC) in a combined way. (p. 55)

In the collective work recovering the experiences of the courses on the Pedagogy of the Land⁹ (ITERRA, n. 6, 2002), none of the articles has the expression Pedagogy of Alternation, but there are references to the organization of courses into School-Time (presence) and Community-Time (distance). In the text *Pedagogia da Cooperação* [Pedagogy of Cooperation] created by Paulo Ricardo Cerioli (Caderno da Educação, n. 13, Dossiê MST – Escola, 2005), the author proposes the Pedagogy of Cooperation as a way to overcome both the Pedagogy of Alternation and the Paulo Freire method (1980):

I am increasingly convinced that the pedagogy of alternation is not a pedagogy; it is just a detail in the organization of the course and school, and, when invented, the generating issues are a methodological mistake; they tend to be a result of idealism and not of teaching-learning about the real. (p. 181, emphasis in the original)

In the *Pedagogical Method* (ITERRA, 2004, n. 9), Alternation appears as part of the Social Engineering, and occurs in two periods:

⁹ These are the courses on the Pedagogy of the Land offered by universities: Salete Strozake Class (UNIJU); Paulo Freire Class (UFES); Paulo Freire Class (UNEMAT); Onalício de Araújo Barros Class (UFPA); José Marti Class (UERGS).

TE in Veranópolis/RS and TC in the community or collective of origin of the student. It is possible to observe in the quotation below that the alternation of times and spaces of work-education assumes at ITERRA a dimension of its own, different from the Pedagogy of Alternation as practiced in the CFRs and EFAs.

Alternation: The school, the place where the development of the educative/formative process occurs, works under the regime or system of alternation (note 18). It should not be confused with the Pedagogy of Alternation as used by the EFAs – Agricultural Family Schools, for example. (p. 20)

The analysis made so far allows us to gather elements that capture, from the proximities and differences, and with the depth limited by the extension of an article, the social projects implicit in the pedagogical proposals of the rural/field social movements that make use of the Pedagogy of Alternation.

Pedagogy of Alternation: contradictions in perspective

Recalling the history of the Pedagogy of Alternation, both in Europe and in Brazil, it is possible to capture, in the practices/conceptions of the collective political subjects, the existence of competing social and educational projects. This statement can be corroborated by the list of elements that give support to these practices/conceptions, which have appeared throughout the text. They are gathered below, and accompanied by the analysis mentioned in our objectives.

a) There is interference by the Catholic Church (and/or by the Christian churches, in the case of the CPT) through their social doctrines and, later on, through the Liberation Theology, from the inception of the CFRs in France up to the organization of

the MST in Brazil. The contradictions are also present in the religious practices and conceptions that permeate the actions and theoretical production of the popular social movements. This happens because, on one side there is, on the part of the Church, the recognition of the dehumanization and primacy of having over being, implicit in the logic of the capitalist system. And on the other side, there is the fear of emancipation, the outcome of socialist and/or communist thinking, that sees the faith in an extraterrestrial being as alienation of the human being from him/herself and from his/her creative power. The Liberation Theology appears as a possibility of overcoming the dichotomy between the material and spiritual dimensions, recovering the primitive Christianity articulated to the work, life, and culture of the Latin American peoples. The social project that inspires the practices/conceptions of the rural/field popular social movements is, therefore, infused with the contradictions of their participants, who face the challenge of having faith in a being beyond themselves, and of relying on their own strength to face the struggle for land reform, against the latifundio, for social policies that privilege the rural/field workers... And the struggle for land can be very hard and bring with it death, as the MST history has been showing.

b) The State is absent as a formulator of policies that would generate the conditions for production/reproduction of a decent life for family farmers. In times of unemployment and waning of the Social Welfare State, one can also observe the vigor with which businesses emerge as agents of formation in partnerships with schools, and even with the financial support of the State (Ribeiro, 2006b; Gritti, 2007). This means that the State cannot be present as a formulator and, consequently, as a sponsor of social policies for rural/field education, but it is with its connivance that night courses for full-time workers and paid

apprenticeships are maintained. The former cannot possibly offer the same quality as regular courses, and the latter contributes to cover up the structural unemployment. Lastly, the closedown of rural schools, the nucleation of schools, and the disputes between states and municipalities over the responsibility for basic education have turned rural/field education into long and sometimes dangerous bus rides, or into days without classes, because roads are impassable. Now, that is certainly a responsibility of the State!

c) The experience of the CFRs and EFAs are permeated by the existing contradictions (Lenin, 1982; Kautsky, 1972); by the process of expropriation/proletarianization of Brazilian farmers (Martins, 1982); and by the formation of the Amazon worker as a class in which farmers-fishermen are expropriated/proletarianized to become workers in the industrial district of Manaus (Ribeiro, 2004). Family farmers are attached to their land and to their culture and, in this sense, they are conservative and resistant to change. Their historical awareness has shown them that many changes make them lose their land. However, family farmers can also be radical in their struggle for land and work. Thus, CFRs and EFAs manifest the age-old resistance to remain with rural education while advancing the proposal of articulating work-education through the Pedagogy of Alternation. One of the more serious contradictions that exist in the experiences of the CFRs and EFAs is the formation to remain in the field without having the assurance of owning the land. This analysis is made by Clenir Fanck (2007) when focusing the CFR of Francisco Beltrão in Paraná. The author observed that the parents of some of the youngsters already worked in urban areas, because they have no land, and even the smaller landowners have no way of dividing their land with all their children. There are also situations signaling to the elimination of manual work in the fields, something that can be seen, on one

hand, as a technological progress, and on the other as putting the following question: how are the youngsters formed by the CFRs and EFAs going to survive if they have no land and no work?

d) Lastly, the experiences of FUNDEP and ITERRA reaffirm their association to a popular project of society that overcomes the social relations of production built upon the private property of the means of production – among them the land – and survival. There is, however, a long way ahead in the construction of this project that assumes also a pedagogical dimension of formation of a new socialist human being. As said in the beginning of this article, we are immersed in, and living within the capitalist way of production. We are impregnated by the contradictions peculiar to the capital-labor relations, as workers subjected to their laws, and I the same movement, as workers belonging to collective political subjects, the popular social movements that fight to social transformation.

The reality of the CFRs, EFAs, of FUNDEP and ITERRA, the documents consulted, the observations and analyses made, considering the contradictions peculiar to a class society, all seem to point to a very large potential to be explored in the Pedagogy of Alternation created by rural/field workers. With that, theories that have attributed to them a subordinate role in social change, forgetting that the city-field separation is essential to the maintenance of the capitalist production social relations, are subverted. To overcome these relations, devising a new society and education, is a task for all those who experience the misappropriation of the land, of work, and of the means of production and survival.

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