SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE EMANCIPATION OF THE SOCIAL ACTORS INVOLVED

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze discussions about social movements in education and their change in approach over the course of the 20th century, with an emphasis on the more active participation of the social actors involved, valuing orality and local and regional experiences for decision-making. It addresses the struggle for recognition and autonomy of Indigenous peoples, Black people and Afro-descendants, women, and the rural population, thereby contributing to social visibility provided by liberating knowledge. It presents criticism aimed at overcoming historical processes inherited from coloniality, supported by access to education with more participatory actions for decision-making that meets local and regional aspirations. It discusses the overcoming of historical processes of coloniality in Latin America and Brazil promoted by a change of focus toward participatory action research. The study was developed through bibliographic analysis of contemporary authors who discuss social movements and education.

Keywords: Social Movements. Education. Coloniality. Political Emancipation. Rural Education.

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this study is to analyze the contribution of social movements to processes of political and social emancipation through education, supported by the pedagogy of active listening that mediates the aspirations of the communities served, in pursuit of greater participation and belonging in contemporary society.

The discussion promoted by social movements underwent paradigm shifts throughout the 20th century, when governments were dictatorial and the relationship was tense, requiring greater attention to the causes of citizenship and political participation. With the shift to democratic governments and economic neoliberalism, the agenda came to demand the correction of regional socioeconomic inequalities. The alternative put forward by social movements was closer engagement with governments to establish partnerships that would support education and subsequent entry into the labor market. The criticism of this approach lies in the fact that it does not provide the clarification necessary for an appropriate critical reading of the reality of those involved, serving only to reproduce the historical process of coloniality. Another approach within social movements is one that contemplates the active participation of those involved, strengthened by active listening and an understanding of their true local and regional situation. This approach is considered quite appropriate because it mediates the community's aspirations by creating joint alternatives to foster education that transforms and liberates.

DEVELOPMENT

Emancipation from Coloniality

According to Streck and Adams (2012), Latin America has experienced a process of coloniality despite the independence processes of Spanish-speaking countries and Brazil. How are social movements acting to overcome the dichotomy between "developed" and "developing"? European countries' hegemony has long dominated the autonomy to develop social proposals for education, maintaining educational policies that do not meet the aspirations of emancipation among the economically disadvantaged population.

"In this perspective, we propose to set forth an epistemology of the South that grounds research capable of empowering emancipatory movements so that they can better fulfill their historical role. Increasingly, knowledge and technology are decisive components in the direction societies take. Therefore, as education agents, it is essential that we seek clarity regarding the foundations upon which we anchor our strategies to overcome the coloniality of knowledge, of power, and of being." (Streck & Adams, 2012, p. 245).

According to Streck and Adams (2012), during the 20th century there was a significant shift in the understanding of social movements. Attention turned to the importance of collective participation in drafting comprehensive proposals for education, steering them toward more participatory and independent endeavors. The authors mention social research efforts led by the sociologist Orlando Fals Borda in Colombia and Paulo Freire in Brazil—both focused on action that leads participants to becoming aware of their reality. "All share, with distinct roles, the protagonism in unveiling and pronouncing the world." (Streck & Adams, 2012, p. 246).

The collective began to take on greater prominence in South America, with an emphasis on orality. Memory came to be sought out and valued in its multiple differences and in the ways communities experience it. "[...] systematization emphasizes the role of collective memory, recognizes the complexity of social phenomena, and values the diversity of languages used to name and interpret reality." (Streck & Adams, 2012, p. 247).

This differentiated approach in social research meets Latin America's desire for independence from the vestiges of coloniality that still exist on the continent. The nuances of social actors committed to achieving

independence in educational knowledge include Indigenous peoples, Black people, and women. The authors cite the important contribution of Nísia Floresta (1810–1885), a pioneer of feminism in Brazil, and the inclusion of women in the scientific sphere.

"It is within these spaces of struggle within social movements that we perceive a nexus between participatory research methodologies, the construction of paths to overcome coloniality through the development of transformative actions, and the practices of popular education. How can research be enhanced in the current context of collective actions with an emancipatory character?" (Streck & Adams, 2012, p. 250).

During the dictatorial governments that afflicted Latin America in the 20th century, social movements had an autonomous political character that sought to confront their respective governments in pursuit of social justice. In the 21st century, we see a rapprochement with democratic governments.

"The centralized, bureaucratic, and explicitly authoritarian State was replaced by the neoliberal model (blended with elements of the welfare state), which decided to share with society the responsibility of caring for the social wounds left by the exclusionary dynamics of the capitalist market." (Streck & Adams, 2012, p. 251).

There is a strong change in how social movements operate, driven by neoliberalism, which differs from the pioneering activities of earlier social movements.

"In our understanding, participatory research brings together the favorable conditions to remain a practice that contributes to strengthening the perspective of decoloniality of power, knowledge, and being, and to building emancipatory processes. For that, it is necessary to recover and rewrite—that is, systematize and analyze—the vast range of experiences in order to expand the horizon of concrete possibilities, taking into account the potential present in these practices and identifying within them the tendencies of an emancipated future." (Streck &

Adams, 2012, p. 253).

Are We Copying or Recreating?

Eggert (2016, p. 19) begins by challenging Streck and Adams's (2012) analysis when they assert that social actions aimed at the autonomy of the subjects involved—through pedagogy—are merely copies of the colonial legacy existing in Latin America. Eggert counters by arguing for the importance of copying as a compass for the development and improvement of local particularities.

"I advocate this understanding of copying for pedagogy and observe that, for some people, the idea and the word copy provoke astonishment and rejection. Even so, I identify the argument for the reality and possibility of copying. Copying is nothing more than one of the techniques in the learning process. And technique is the work of bringing hand and thought together to solve a problem, a need that generates work and that, in the artisan's hand, leads to refinement." (Eggert, 2016, p. 19).

We can define two ways of transmitting accumulated knowledge—formally or informally—and we can assert that transmission is a copy of what has been discovered and is being taught, whether through school, in social movements, or by collective memory. In this way, that knowledge will be re-signified to meet local aspirations.

"Is the transmission of knowledge a kind of teaching of what already exists and, therefore, a copy? We need to ask ourselves about this and consider to what extent we copy to remain subservient or whether, ambiguously, we copy to survive and then, a little further on, free ourselves from the copy and recreate other paths?" (Eggert, 2016, p. 19).

The feminist movement's analysis of women's living conditions and access to education—framed by submission to masculinity inside and outside the home, unequal wages, and a subordinate and condescending social treatment; and Black women, who are neglected for being both

women and Black—raises uncomfortable questions and opened space for women's visibility and their recognition as autonomous, participating social subjects, whether through learning in social movements or at school. Schools have felt the impact of the demands of social movements, altering their curricula to include the history of Indigenous peoples, Africans and Afro-descendants, thereby promoting the sense of belonging among the popular classes in the teaching–learning process.

"Today, after so many years of struggle for quality public schooling, we are still hopeful and see many things happening. In no way do we have the sense of a mission accomplished. We know that we live in a different time, unlike that in which only white men could vote—those who owned land and those who could read." (Eggert, 2016, p. 21).

Undergraduate Degree in Rural Education (LEdoC)

The right to education is one of the basic conditions of society—everyone should be served from basic education through higher education. Are basic and higher education equally available in urban and rural areas? Rural populations have faced the closure of classrooms, forcing them to travel far from their homes to urban areas to continue their studies. The operation of multi-grade classrooms contributes to widening students' learning gaps; school curricula are not designed to serve rural populations with the pedagogy of alternation in all regions where it is necessary to meet this local specificity. Education does not always serve rural education in the countryside.

Social movements have contributed to the protagonism of rural social actors in achieving their political and educational autonomy.

"In this context, the establishment of Undergraduate Degrees in Rural Education at public universities represents an epistemological and political effort by peasants, organized in social movements, to build a rural education policy across Brazil's entire rural territory. Progressively, it restores the centrality of the right to education in the context of the rural basic school and in the struggle for access to higher education." (Batista & Silva, 2024, p. 3).

The aim of Batista and Silva (2024) was to analyze the professionalization of rural teachers and understand how much this education aligns with and meets the aspirations of daily rural life.

"Thus, inspired by the philosophical and educational principles that guide rural education, we feel compelled—based on experiences shared with students in the Undergraduate Degree in Rural Education (LEdoC) at the Professora Cinobelina Elvas Campus (CPCE), Federal University of Piauí (UFPI), and with peasants from rural communities located in the south of Piauí—to think about and problematize the professional and training context of teachers for work in rural basic schools and in non-school settings." (Batista & Silva, 2024, p. 3).

Rural education should address the realities that peasants face and promote the effectiveness of their political and social autonomy. Thus,

"Rural education, offered in rural schools from the perspective of the paradigm of/within the countryside, seeks to value peasant culture as well as the education of children, youth, and adults in accordance with the reality of the rural environment, based on contextualized teaching. Re-signifying the meaning of rural basic schooling—now underway—requires the political and pedagogical rejection of multi-grade schools." (Batista & Silva, 2024, p. 6).

It is by sharing knowledge and the aspirations of rural populations—regarding their needs for continuing into higher education—that degree programs were conceived and defended through the action of social movements.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Social movements, in their multiple roles within civil society, have contributed—and continue to contribute—to the resumption of

political and social emancipation of the actors involved in both urban and rural areas. These movements are not static; on the contrary, they follow all the historical dynamics of the societies in which they are embedded. We observe a change in how proposals are put forward to better meet the aspirations of the communities involved.

The concern with overcoming processes of coloniality—bequeathed by Eurocentric hegemony present in Latin America and Brazil—has led social movements to look at and value local and regional cultures and experiences, thereby valuing orality, the knowledge of Indigenous peoples and original peoples, Africans and Afro-descendants, women, and rural populations; and to establish partnerships with democratic governments in order to promote voice, visibility, and belonging for these social actors in society.

We can identify two important paradigm shifts in education through Laws 10.639/03—which mandates the teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African history and culture in basic education—and 11.645/08—which mandates the inclusion of Indigenous themes in basic education. These are actions that move us toward otherness.

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