

Representations, Educational Processes and Practices in Youth and Adult Field Education in Brazil

Lourdes Helena da Silva¹, Élide Lopes Miranda²

¹Post-Graduate Program in Education, Federal University of Viçosa, Viçosa, Brazil

²Department of Education, Federal University of Viçosa, Viçosa, Brazil

Email: lhsilva@ufv.br, elida.miranda@ufv.br

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Abstract

The Field Education movement emerged in the Brazilian society in the last two decades, bringing to the national political scenario the role of social and trade union movements of the countryside in the affirmation and struggle in defense of a new paradigm of education and school for people living and working in the countryside—farmers, camping and agrarian reform settlers, rural workers, indians, *quilombolas*, among others. Parallel to the achievements of this movement, especially in the context of State public policies for countryside people, the subject of Field Education has gradually been consolidated in national academic productions. However, despite the increasing volume of work and scientific publications in the area, a balance of academic production reveals the existence of a theoretical gap Youth and Adult Education (EJA) in the field. This recognition of the reality of Youth and Adult Field Education in our society is an area yet to be mapped, and considering the existence of a range of practices and dispersed EJA experiences present in the everyday of the countryside that require more specific studies, the research program entitled *Practices in Youth and Adult Education, Literacy and Educational Alternations* emerged, whose purpose was to carry out a coordinated study network that would enable the systematic collection and production of data and analysis on the EJA experiences present in the rural reality of Brazil, emphasizing the dimensions of educational practices, processes and pedagogical dynamics constructed within these experiences. In this article, originated from this research program, our purposes are to characterize and analyze under the Field Education movement, the EJA experience in the field, called Agrarian Residency Program in its history, principles and political and pedagogical practices, highlighting the alternated training dynamics gestated in its inside and the social representations built by educators on the alternation. Among other aspects, the study results show that the Agrarian Residence Program, as an experience of Youth and Adult Field Education has become a transformation-propellant space in training professionals of Agricultural Sciences, highlighting both the construction of emancipatory pedagogical practices, and the new political

and social relations between universities and social movements. In this respect, besides the processes of dialogical and collective training, the Agrarian Residence Program has also provided the students and educators with a set of experiences and reflections on the reality of the areas of Agrarian Reform and Family Agriculture that, driving another action approach of these subjects in our society, also contributes to a project of a university and professional training in dialogue with social movements and more committed to our social reality.

Keywords

Field Education Movement, Youth and Adult Education in the Field, Agrarian Residence Program

1. Introduction

This paper is derived from the research program entitled *Practices of Youth and Adult Education, Literacy and Educational Alternation*, developed under the Observatory of Education Program (OBEDUC), funded by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), a Brazilian government agency under the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC). At the origin of this research program—fruit of an institutional partnership between public universities and rural social movements in the realization of the Project *Education, Field and Citizenship Awareness*, of the National Education Program in Agrarian Reform (PRONERA)—the finding of a diversity of processes and educational practices present in the countryside reality that, in turn, required a rethinking on the conception of the Youth and Adult Education (EJA) guiding the practices, reflections and investigations constructed in the Brazilian society (Silva, 2009). A conception of EJA, according to Canário (2000), goes beyond adult literacy practices, to incorporate a variety of other existing educational practices in rural areas, such as social and cultural activities, local development, professional training, among others; thereby, recognizing the diversity of young and adult subjects living in rural areas in Brazil. Finally, a conception of EJA that effectively incorporates the principles of the movement that, in the last 17 years with the role of social and trade union movements in the countryside, has affirmed the right to Education and to Field School.

And in this aspect, it is important to note that, due to the achievements of this national movement, the theme of Field Education, in recent times, has been established in academic productions and, especially, in the national political scenario with the struggles of social movements for state public policy to the countryside. However, despite the achievements of the movement of Field Education and the increasing volume of work and scientific publications in the area, there is still the need for a deepening and a review on the subject of EJA in order to meet an existing theoretical gap in the current academic production on Field Education (Silva et al., 2010). The analysis of theoretical productions of seminars and meetings of Field Education researchers reveal that, besides having only a few academic productions on Field Education, in the specificity of the educational processes of youth and adults, research seeking articulation and dialogue between the Field Education issues with the Youth and Adult Education (Silva et al., 2011) are also incipient.

Thus, recognizing that the reality of Field EJA is an area yet to be mapped, and considering the existence of a range of practices and scattered experiences of EJA present in the everyday of the countryside that require more specific studies, the proposal of the program *Practices in Youth and Adult Education, Literacy and Educational Alternations* was to carry out a network coordinated study that would enable the systematic collection and production of data and analysis on the EJA experiences present in the Brazilian rural reality, emphasizing the dimensions of educational practices, pedagogical processes and dynamics constructed within these experiences.

It is in this theoretical background that lies the research *New Faces of Alternation Pedagogy in Field Education*, whose objective was to analyze the social representations, processes and pedagogical practices built within two EJA experiences in the rural area: the programs *Saberes da Terra*, of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) and *Agrarian Residence*, of the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA). To achieve this goal, the methodological approach has combined various technical procedures, specifically in data collection, using questionnaires, interviews, literature and documentary research; in the organization and systematization of data and information obtained, the technical procedures of Content Analysis were used. Arising from this particular research, our purposes of this article are to characterize, under the Field Education Movement, the Agrarian Residence

Program in your pedagogical practices alternated and the social representations built by educators on the alternation. Particularly, in relation to social representations, it is worth highlighting that the use of this theoretical-methodological framework is based on constructs of the theory inaugurated by [Moscovici \(1978\)](#) in the field of Social Psychology.

With these goals, this article is structured in three sections: the first, we present an overview of field education movement built with the leadership of the movements of Brazilian peasants in the defense and affirmation of a school and an field education, highlighting the emergence inside the educational experience of Youth and Adult Education called Agrarian Residency Program. In the second section, we analyze the Agrarian Residency Program in its history, principles and political and pedagogical practices, highlighting the dynamics of alternating training that has been developed inside and the social representations of alternation constructed by their educators. In the third and last section in our final remarks, we seek to highlight the results of the research, among them those that reveal the Agrarian Residency Program, as an experience of Youth and Adult Field Education has become a transformation-propellant space in training professionals of Agricultural Sciences, highlighting both the construction of emancipatory pedagogical practices, and the new political and social relations between universities and social movements.

2. Field Education Movement & Agrarian Residence Program

The Field Education movement has been stated in Brazilian society, in the last two decades, by a set of struggles of social and trade union movements of rural areas in defense of a new paradigm of field education and school, as well as the statement of another project of field and society ([Molina, 2010](#)). In this movement, the field is understood as an area of life, culture and knowledge, in which the farmers are entitled to decent permanence on the land ([Fernandes & Molina, 2004](#)).

It is a movement that was born as a criticism to the Brazilian educational reality, especially of the people who live and work in the rural areas ([Caldart, 2008](#)). One of the fundamental traits of the identity of the Field Education movement is the struggle for public policies that guarantee the right of peasants to an education that is not only in the rural areas, but that is fundamentally built with the participation of the inhabitants of these areas. In this perspective, the Field Education movement links the struggle for education to all the social struggles for the transformation of living conditions in the countryside, valuing the ways of production of peasant life, emphasizing the countryside as a place of construction of new possibilities for social and cultural reproduction and sustainable development ([Caldart, 2008](#); [Santos, et al., 2010](#)).

Under these principles, the Field Education movement has conquered room in the national political agenda in the last 15 years, having as milestones of this historical path: the National Conferences of Field Education in 1998 and 2004; the creation PRONERA, in 1998; the institutionalization of the Operational Guidelines for Basic Education in Field Schools in 2002; the creation of the Permanent Group of Field Education Working (GPT) in the Ministry of Education (MEC) in 2003; the institution of the National Program of Field Education (PRONACAMPO) in 2012; among other actions and political and pedagogical achievements.

Among these achievements, the creation of PRONERA stands out, whose purpose was to strengthen education in the areas of Agrarian Reform, from educational projects, carried out in partnership between social and trade union movements in the countryside and public universities, and using participatory methodologies; it aims to effectively contribute to the development of the countryside, with a view to the expansion of the democracy conditions ([Santos et al., 2010](#)). Analyzing the PRONERA experiences in our society, a dynamics that involves dialogue of different social subjects and institutions, [Santos et al. \(2010\)](#) consider that the political importance of the program stems from its conception of education that systematically seeks to link the educational processes to the world of labor, production, culture, and life.

The partnership built between the social and trade union movements in the countryside, the Brazilian public universities and sectors of government, has provided support to PRONERA that, in its 15 years of existence, has been responsible for literacy, education and training in middle and high levels for over 400,000 settlers and campers of the agrarian reform. In this context, stands out the *National Program of Field Education: Student Training and Professional Qualification*, also called Agrarian Residence Program ([Santos et al., 2010](#)).

The Agrarian Residence Program was designed in order to enable professional training in Agricultural Sciences for distinguished performance in both the Technical, Environmental and Social Advisory (ATES) and the Technical Assistance and Rural Extension (ATER) in areas of the Agrarian Reform and Family Agriculture

in Brazil. The purpose is to improve the training of graduate students to develop the work of ATER and ATEs in a perspective of understanding and attending the demands of the peasants in areas of Agrarian Reform and Family Agriculture (Molina et al., 2009). Originally, the Agrarian Residence Program had the partnership of a number of public universities participating of PRONERA, with the purpose of strengthening university networks involved in the production of knowledge in the perspective of Field Education (Molina et al., 2009).

To enable the Agrarian Residence Program, besides public universities, other partnerships have been set up, especially the Federation of Agronomy Students (FEAB), which, since 1980 has held the Internship Experience; the ATEs program and the ATER teams. Importantly, during its implementation, in the Brazilian scenario, another conception of rural extension was outlined from the guidelines of the new National Policy of Technical Assistance and Rural Extension (PNATER), which favored a strong connection with the Agrarian Residence Program.

Analyzing the recommended model for the new PNATER, especially regarding the methodological direction of a transformative and liberating extension practice, Caporal & Ramos (2007) and Diesel et al. (2009) point out that the concept of a “dialogic” extension is not new in the Brazilian society, but was advocated earlier by Paulo Freire (1983), especially in his classic work “Extension or Communication”. The authors also point out that in the 1990s, guided by this Freirian design, some Brazilian states sought to print out a more progressive orientation to rural extension programs in their realities. However, despite these isolated and disjointed initiatives in ATER to farmers, a practice of dialogic participatory extension, committed to social justice, is not yet prevalent in our society (Diesel et al., 2009).

One of the constraints of that frame is the fact that, historically, rural extension services in Brazil have always had the conventional agricultural model as the only reference, with the development of an extension practice predominantly marked by diffusion of technology, whose educational dynamic was based on the relationship of power of the technician and subordination of the peasants; thus prevailing, most of the time, the knowledge and the will of the technician over the rights, knowledge and demands of the farmers (Caporal & Ramos, 2007). The new proposal of PNATER, particularly in the areas of Family Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, is the result of critical evaluations of this traditional practice of dominant rural extension in our society, as well as a set of historical claims of social and trade union movements in the countryside.

In the specificity of the areas of agrarian reform, data released by the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA, 2015) reveal the existence in our society of a population of 968,887 settled families, living in 9256 rural territories conquered for the Agrarian Reform. It was in this political, social and educational context that, in 2004, the Agrarian Residence Program was implemented in our society. The program name explains well its biggest intention: to be a professional training policy, aiming at contributing to the promotion of rural development in the pursuit of improving living conditions in rural Brazil. Due to its main implementation strategy—insertion and retention of college students in settlement and family agriculture areas for extended periods—it was also known by the name of *Agrarian Residence Program* (Molina et al., 2009).

In developing its proposal for training professionals of Agricultural Sciences and related areas for differentiated performance in Technical, Environmental and Social Advisory (ATEs) and Technical Assistance and Rural Extension (ATER), the Agrarian Residence Program was structured in five thematic axis: countryside and development; family and peasant economy and solidarity socioeconomy; agroecology, production and sustainability; field education and development; participatory methodologies and research as an educational principle. Among other aspects, the proposal for formation of the program was designed by considering the materiality of the agricultural work in the areas of agrarian reform and family agriculture, from the concrete challenges that the political and ideological choice of building a rural development model different from the hegemonic model places for the implementation of public policies, especially in terms of their social and environmental impacts.

Inserted under the Field Education Public Policy, the Agrarian Residence Program shares the ideologies and intentions of the national movement of Field Education, with the specificity of training professionals of Agricultural Sciences to act as extension agents in areas of Agrarian Reform and Family Agriculture (Bruziguesi, 2010).

3. Principles, Practices and Social Representations of Agrarian Residence Program

Heir to the concepts and principles of the Field Education Movement, the Agrarian Residence Program was directly inspired by the pedagogical ideas of Paulo Freire. In this regard, Molina (2009) points out that the

methodological strategies of the program are designed and oriented to the cultivation of dialogic practices, in a dynamics in which ideas, knowledge and values of the peasants should have the same legitimacy of ideas, knowledge and values of the Agrarian Residence Program team.

Guided by these political and pedagogical principles, the Agrarian Residence Program was structured in two stages: the first stage, consisting of the Experience Stage (EV), lasting six months, carried out with the immersion of students in agricultural sciences and related areas in the everyday life and work of settlers and family farmers, accompanied by technicians of ATER and ATES. The next step, consisting of the Specialization Course in Family and Peasant Agriculture and Field Education, lasting two years, aimed to develop the training of professionals to work in the ATES and ATER programs under the foundations of humanistic education, committed to understand and transform the realities experienced by peasants of the Agrarian Reform and Family Agriculture. The structuring of the Agrarian Residence program in two articulated stages—Experience Stage and Specialization Course—also reveals conception of education as a process of “communication, [...] dialogue, to the extent that it is not knowledge transfer, but an encounter of interlocutor subjects who seek significance of meanings” (Freire, 1983: p. 69).

Moreover, in the process, the integration of the two stages of Agrarian Residence Program is to reference the Pedagogy of Alternation, in a dynamics aimed at an articulation of different times and training spaces (Silva, 2010). From this perspective, students participate alternately of training time at university (Time-School) and training time in the areas of Family Agriculture and Agrarian Reform (Time-Community). At the end of the Specialization Course, as a requirement of the titration, the students present a monograph, whose process of construction should involve the direct participation of peasants, who directly followed the whole dynamics of alternated training. In this proposal for an alternated training, articulating different times, spaces and training subjects, we identified one of the pedagogical-political perspectives of the Program that recognizes the need and importance that professionals working in the field are more than a technician; they are also committed educators, inserted in the movements of struggle with the peasants for social change, whether political subjects, in dialogue with other subjects. The search for an organic nature in the formation process of the Agricultural Residence Program also reveals, as values and principles shared with Freire, the faith in human being, in his ability for reflection, “in their presence in such a world, presence which is a *being with*, comprises a permanent confrontation with himself” (Freire, 1992: p. 39).

This dialogical practice, guiding the practice of Alternation in the Agrarian Residence Program, is also highlighted by Lima (2009: p. 162) that, analyzing the dynamics of training conducted between Time-School and Time-Community, affirms the potential of this pedagogical strategy for enabling to the different subjects involved—educators, students, technicians and peasants—the awareness of the importance of coordination and dialogue between the academic training and the practical reality. This interpretive and reflexive dynamics that, according to the author, guides the process of construction of knowledge in the dynamics of formation of the Agrarian Residence—whose roots can be found in Freire’s perspective (1992) about the relationship between theory and practice—also emerges in the social representations of alternation built by the Program educators.

Thus, in relation to social representations, we found a tendency among the educators interviewed of signifying the formation by alternation of the Agrarian Residence Program as an educational proposal for integration of different training times and spaces: Time-University and Time-Community. However, the meaning attributed to such integration is understood in two perspectives: one that highlights the dimension of the underlying learning process (8/10 educators); and one that highlights the dimension of the movement and the transformation in the educational spaces (2/10).

From this perspective of movement and transformation of the educational spaces, the understanding of the educators about the alternation is linked more directly to the movement of training that takes place at different times and training spaces—Time-University and Time-Community. The aspects of this dynamics of training are marked by educators in their social representations, in which both the activities of the Time-University, and the actual classes are highlighted; oriented field trips—in agrarian reform settlements and in areas of peasant family agriculture; study groups; guidelines and planning, among other activities that, in turn, are articulated to the experiences and practices developed by students in the Time-Community. Under this logic, alternation is understood as a movement of formation and transformation of the subjects and alternate spaces.

Alternation would be these alternate times, this change, the movement, which I think the movement itself is what enriches the most (Teacher 04).

What about the movement I have to take? This means sometimes reading, sometimes means reading and do laboratory analysis, that is, one must necessarily make a series of actions to solve that problem situation (Teacher 02).

In view of the representation of alternation as a learning process, the central tonic of this logic used by educators is that alternation is a pedagogical dynamics that favors the intertwining of scientific knowledge with the knowledge and experiences of those involved in the training process.

Alternation is the learning process because it is deeply coherent with the construction of learning. [...] it is a process that essentially involves people who develop actions. Alternation brings this real involvement with the process and makes the students develop actions within this learning process (Teacher 07).

A construction process taking advantage of the knowledge that is produced in a formal institution (Time-University) related to the practice, experience in a particular community (Time-Community). [...] a moment of very deep exchange of skills, experience, knowledge and learning process (Teacher 05).

(...) teachers are learning more with students. And I think this is very good because it is a way of eliminating an authority, a power that is set up without violence. You just show him another reality and he is changed right away. So, the great quality that I see in Residence is this, teachers are improving (Teacher 03).

In this representation of alternation, integration is both of the times and educational spaces, and of the knowledge and experiences of the different subjects involved in the program—educators, students, technicians, communities and settlements. Thus, it is an approach that adds a new dimension to the educational process—the alternation of knowledge and experience between the subjects who, in turn, indicates a perspective of educational relationship guided by dialogue, partnership and co-participation of the subjects involved in the program.

4. Final Considerations

Our analyses and reflections built on Agrarian Residence, in the specificity of a Youth and Adult Field Education experience, reveal that, as a program constructed on a dialogue and partnership dynamics between social subjects, universities, ATER and ATES institutions, has enabled the construction of another paradigm for the training of professionals in agricultural sciences and related areas, in a perspective of strengthening peasant family agriculture, sustainable development and agroecology (Santos et al., 2010). A training, according to Bruzi-guessi (2010), has also been strategic to strengthen the movement of Agrarian Reform in our society, as it has enabled educators, students, technicians and peasants involved, to overcome many prejudices and to open cooperation and partnership processes. The wealth of human relationships, built in different times, spaces and training experiences during the realization of Experience Internship and specialization courses also helps in this process. In this regard, the experiences of students in the daily lives of peasant families during the Time-Community, foster closer relationships between them, contributing to the establishment of affective bonds, especially a strong “loveliness” that, in Freire’s perspective (1978), is life: life shared with the countryside subjects, with their struggles, dreams, aspirations; which has in the affection a materiality of the mutual compromise.

This opportunity to share life, work, bonds and interactions among the peasants, their social movements and the university, is an important achievement, with various impacts, which needs to be maintained and expanded daily. This potential of the Agrarian Residence Program, along with other PRONERA projects, has enabled our universities to transit, in the words of Gadotti (1998), from an old to the new university model. A model in which educators and students go beyond the walls of the institution, and the peasants occupy this territory, to learn together and in dialogue while teaching. And the construction of another university is being gradually gestated this process: a more plural university, dynamic and, above all, committed to the transformation of society.

In short, we can recognize that the Agrarian Residence Program, as an experience of Youth and Adult Field Education, has constituted a transformation-propellant space in training professionals of Agricultural Sciences, highlighting both the construction of emancipatory pedagogical practices, and the new political and social relations between universities and social movements. In this respect, besides the processes of dialogical and collective training, the Agrarian Residence Program has also provided the students a set of experiences and reflections on the reality of the areas of Agrarian Reform and Family Agriculture that, driving another action approach of these subjects in our society, also contributes to a project of a university and professional training more committed to social justice.

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