# SOCIAL MOVEMENTS OF THE COUNTRYSIDE, EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND HUMAN FORMATION

### MOVIMENTOS SOCIAIS DO CAMPO, POLÍTICAS EDUCACIONAIS E FORMAÇÃO HUMANA

# MOVIMIENTOS SOCIALES DEL CAMPO, POLÍTICAS EDUCACIONALES Y FORMACION HUMANA

Marli Clementino GONÇALVES<sup>1</sup> Neuton Alves de ARAÚJO<sup>2</sup>

ABSTRACT: This article has as goal to analyze the contributions of social movements of the contryside to the construction of inclusive educational policies from the 90's of the 20th century, a period that in Brazil and Latin America the neoliberal policy was underway in all dimensions of society redesigned the state action. It is in this period, too, that the social movements of the countryside place, with greater emphasis in the political agenda of their organizations, formal education as a banner of struggle. The research, based on bibliography and documents, mapped the collective actions developed by the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST, Portuguese initials) in order to guarantee the right to school education in agrarian reform settlements and camps, focusing on the proposals and what managed to ensure within the scope of educational policies.

**KEYWORDS**: Social movement. Educational policy. Countryside education. Human formation.

RESUMO: Este artigo objetiva analisar as contribuições dos movimentos sociais do campo para a construção de políticas educacionais inclusivas a partir da década de 90 do século XX, período em que no Brasil e na América Latina a política neoliberal em curso em todas as dimensões da sociedade redesenhava a ação do Estado. É nesse período, também, que os movimentos sociais do campo inserem com maior ênfase, na agenda política de suas organizações, a educação formal como bandeira de luta. A pesquisa, de base bibliográfica e documental, mapeou as ações coletivas desenvolvidas pelo Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) a fim de garantir o direito à educação escolar nos assentamentos e acampamentos de reforma agrária, tendo como foco as proposições e o que se conseguiu assegurar no âmbito das políticas educacionais.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE**: Movimento social. Política educacional. Educação do Campo. Formação humana.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Federal University of Piauí (UFPI), Teresina – PI – Brazil. Adjunct Professor in the Department of Fundamentals of Education. Doctorate in Education (UFPI). ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9802-9535. E-mail: marliclementino@yahoo.com.br

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Federal University of Piauí (UFPI), Teresina – PI – Brazil. Adjunct Professor in the Department of Teaching Methods and Techniques. Doctorate in Education (USP). ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4320-9536. E-mail: araujo060416@gmail.com

RESUMEN: Este artículo objetiva analizar las contribuiciones de los movimientos sociales del campo para la construcción de políticas educacionales inclusivas a partir de la década de 90 del siglo XX, período em que en Brasil e en América Latina la política neoliberal en curso en todas las dimensiones de la sociedad rediseñaba la acción del estado. Es en ese período, también, que los movimientos sociales del campo insieren con mayor ênfasis, em la agenda política de sus organizaciones, la educación formal como bandera de lucha. La investigación, de base bibliográfica y documental, mapeó las acciones colectivas desarrolladas por el Movimiento de los Trabajadores Rurales Sin Tierra (MST) a fin de garantizar el derecho a la educación escolar em los asentamientos y campamentos de la reforma agraria, teniendo como enfoque las proposiciones y lo que se consiguió asegurar em el ámbito de las políticas educacionales.

**PALABRAS CLAVE**: Movimiento social. Política educacional. Educación de Campo. Formación humana.

#### Introduction

In the present study, which is bibliographic and documentary in nature, the objective is to analyze the contributions of social movements of the countryside to the construction of inclusive educational policies from the 1990s, the 20th century, a period in which in Brazil and Latin America neoliberal politics were underway in all dimensions of society.

What is observed is that educational reforms have a direct impact and are linked to the world of work, and that these reforms, to some extent, have enabled children, youth and adults to have the right to formal school education. However, on the one hand, what is found is an education in the perspective of that offered by conservative bourgeois education, focused on instrumentalization. There is a marked precariousness both in the school organization and in the formation of teachers and teaching workers. As so well expressed by Lessa (2011, p. 176, our translation), "[...] the changes are so abrupt, and so overwhelming are the threats to the survival of our way of being and feeling, that our reaction is centered on the most immediate challenges that impose themselves with the strength of the here and now".

Against this perspective, social movements in the countryside have been impacting on educational policies, creating the conditions to have a concrete education. Countryside Education constitutes this proposition of broader formation of the human being, in addition to schooling, without giving it up, that is, from the perspective of "problematizing" education (FREIRE, 2005), "revolutionary" (TONET, 2016), an education as a human formation, fully forming individuals, in opposition to the logic of capital, in which its main place is not the four walls of a classroom, but rather a place "[...] reserved for concrete social struggles. It is also

important to clarify that revolutionary education, within the school, means neither indoctrination nor direct politicization of all content" (TONET, 2016, p. 198-199, our translation).

The article in question focuses on the set of educational practices that have been developed by the Movement of Landless Rural Workers (MST), in the political field, which unfolds in cultural, educational, economic, and social actions. Thus, the focus is on the educational aspects that have been materializing in a broader action with other social movements in the countryside, which since the 1990s have been called Movement For a Countryside Education. Such movements put pressure on the public authorities to build a specific educational policy for the Brazilian countryside.

As a result of these actions, to mention some of these achievements, there are the establishment of Countryside Education policies that are embodied in the construction of legal frameworks, schools and programs, such as the Operational Guidelines for Basic Education in Rural Schools (DOEBEC's), from the National Education Program on Agrarian Reform (Pronera), created by Decree no. 7352/2010, which instituted the National Policy on Countryside Education and the Support Program for Higher Education in Teaching Degree in Countryside Education (Procampo). However, it is necessary to problematize the fragile institutionalization process on which these policies are based in the neoliberal state. In view of this problem, this study seeks answers to the guiding question: As the social movements of the countryside, in the context of the educational policies of the neoliberal State, they have been organizing forms of action that constitute possibilities for a broader human formation in the perspective of emancipation?

It is in this context that it is necessary to briefly analyze the educational policy in the aforementioned time frame, in the interface with the action of the social movements of the countryside, constituents of Countryside Education, as a possibility to make a counterpoint to this State policy, in that capitalist, hegemonic social relations began to regulate work, ceasing to be, as Frigotto (2005, p. 12, our translation) explains, "[...] a constitutive condition of human beings' life in relation to others".

## Educational policy in the 1990s: neoliberalism in education

It is worth emphasizing that Brazil, from the 1990s, began to organize its policy under the aegis of neoliberalism, thus having a redefinition of the role of the State, which, in turn, is part of a greater movement of crisis of capitalism (PERONI, 2003). Thus, it focuses on developments and implications within the scope of Brazilian educational policy, especially with regard to the effects on rural areas.

In this scenario, neoliberal thinking is placed as the only way to organize the economy and consequently society. From this perspective, the State suffers harsh criticism and is seen as one of the main responsible for the existing social problems; since in the conception of neoliberalism it is up to the market to absorb the demands and balance the economy. In other words, the State is judged to be inefficient and incapable, responsible for the low quality of public services, establishing the defense of the market as agile and capable of imprinting quality to the services and products it offers. Thus, the minimum state is preached in terms of the formulation and implementation of policies, assuming the role of regulator and inspector.

Under these conditions, the neoliberal onslaught in Brazil finds in the Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC) government the conditions to develop. Why do you say that? FHC proposes a reform in the Brazilian State, adapting it to the imposed requirements. In this regard, Peroni (2003, p. 58) mentions an excerpt from a document presented by the Master Plan for the Reform of the State Apparatus, in which he explains:

State reform must be understood within the context of redefining the role of the state, which is no longer directly responsible for economic and social development through the production of goods and services, to strengthen itself in the role of promoting and regulating that development (our translation).

From the aforementioned excerpt, we can infer that the State, at that moment, left its role as directly responsible for public policies and became regulator of those policies, which radically changes its function. Here is the answer to the question: why should the neo-liberal state be called the minimum? Because it minimizes its action in the management of policies, which it regulates through evaluation mechanisms.

However, what is observed is that the State minimizes its action to social policies, including education and, consequently, maximizes its actions for capital. On this issue, "the point is that the minimum state is not synonymous with a weak state. Regarding accumulation strategies, it is stronger than ever, since it takes on the role of managing and legitimizing, in the national space, the demands of global capitalism" (AZEVEDO, 2001, p. 12, our translation).

In this way, it is possible to infer that the State, as an instrument of the hegemonic class in power, carries out actions that meet the interests of this part of society, and that by reducing its action in social policies, it maximizes its power in the defense of the dominant group's interests, holder of capital and means of production.

As an illustration, to adapt to the requirements of the neoliberal prescription, Brazil invested in policies whose focus was "minimizing the State, recommended as an indispensable precondition for the Brazilian economy to become attractive in the eyes of foreign investors" (PERONI, 2003, p. 46, our translation). Under these conditions, as neoliberalism advances, social rights diminish. Thus, it does not guarantee most of the population the minimum for their survival, directly linking the standard of living to the market, transforming it into merchandise. About this discussion, Coutinho (2009, p. 45, our translation) asserts that

> The need to develop educational policies is closely related to the current stage of capitalism. This demands a higher level of education, flexibility, technical qualification to meet the accumulation process, but in return it decentralizes, focuses and privatizes the offer of education. When formulating education policies in the 1990s, Brazil does not aim to serve only national interests, but the global guidelines for education, announced by its agencies (World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Trade Organization (WTO)).

However, in the midst of this neoliberal hegemonic construction in the country, several sectors of civil society have engaged in struggles to denounce and seek other State constructions and development models. To this end, they announced the contradictions of capitalism and its selective, exclusionary and unscrupulous face, acting, predatorily, on the environment and human relations. The perspective that there was no way out of capitalism is contested by social and union movements that present in opposition the proposal to dispute the State, exploring its contradictions and entering the public arena.

Thus, the concept of State presented by Marx and embraced by Peroni (2003, p. 22, our translation), "Historical, concrete, class state and in this sense, maximum state for capital, since, in the process of correlation of forces underway, it is the capital that holds the hegemony", proceeds in this reflection.

From this perspective, starting from the assumption that the State is historical and was created from human action in view of certain interests, implies understanding that its definition is not given a priori and that there are multiple possibilities of actions within it also defined by the correlation of forces that move within the class struggle, the result of historical and concrete factors, located at a defined time.

It is in this context, in opposition to the development of oppressive forms of capital, that the social movements of the countryside operating in the 1990s engender a set of struggles and have a relevant national representation in the MST. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the meaning of these struggles in a historical moment marked by uncertainties, caused by changes

in international politics, with wide repercussions in Brazil, to think about the possibilities of building another society, whose paradigm is not the basis in that capitalist society is based.

In view of these comments, it must be stressed that social struggles have brought about changes in this situation. In what way? As social movements began to press for their guaranteed rights, access to public education with quality and equity being one of the rights that make up the agenda of claims of these movements.

#### Other social subjects enter the scene: Landless Rural Workers Movement

Pointed out as a revolutionary movement by some and disorderly by others, the MST symbolizes "the largest popular social movement organized in Brazil and, possibly, the largest in Latin America" (GOHN, 2000, p. 105, our translation). In fact, it achieved visibility both on the national and international scene (BEZERRA NETO, 1999). Today, it is organized in the 27 Brazilian states and has a history of many actions, from occupation of land, public buildings, marches, congresses, meetings, including the construction of a school called National School Florestan Fernandes. This school offers courses for its activism and partners with several social movements in Latin America (BASTOS, 2017).

The MST appeared on the public scene in the late 1970s, a time when it organizes landless rural workers, squatters, sharecroppers and other subjects from the countryside, in order to participate in occupations and, consequently, the formation of settlements, with a view to carrying out agrarian reform.

In that attempt, he did the reverse of what until then was propagated as the best possibility of life: migration to cities. Opposed to this perspective, the MST's advances focus on returning to the countryside with conditions worthy of staying and producing life. As Bezerra Neto (1999, p. 22, our translation) explains,

For the MST, it is this mass of workers subjected to the condition of lumpem that can break with the capitalist system and build the foundations of socialist society, desired by a large part of the proletarians and rural workers in the country, which is why they are the privileged groups that form their ranks.

The social movement, as explained in the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education - LDBEN no. 9394/96, in its Art. 1 (BRASIL, 1996), is a 'place' where the human being is formed in the struggles for the claim to enforce their rights, since education comprises the broader formative processes beyond the school, the family, but also "in social movements and civil society organizations and cultural manifestations" (our translation).

In this way, in order to achieve production conditions, the MST has placed in its various documents and publications the challenge of guaranteeing educational access to its base, to technically qualify workers in the use of technologies that enable the settlement development. These demands, which have been turning into achievements, also occur in the educational aspect and, as highlighted by Gohn (2000), the results have been extraordinary.

In this sense, the MST "seeks to build a new cultural identity for the landless, based on the cooperative/collective model" (GOHN, 2000, p. 105, our translation). To this end, it presents a pedagogy in which schools, with their educational practices, create non-formal education processes that differentiate themselves by demonstrating a strong resistance to hegemonic models based on capitalism. In this perspective of pedagogy, he builds a pedagogical action and acts as a collective subject not only for the landless, but "for society as a whole in order to contribute in some way to reorient the possibilities of formation and experiences that induce more democratic and solidary practices [...]" (SABIA; BRABO, 2019, p. 1606, our translation).

Scherer-Warren (1993) characterizes the struggles undertaken by social movements as propellers of a project of society different from the one that is underway, alluding to an "integral" citizenship, forged in the educational processes that the social struggle provides.

[...] what is new in the Social Movements in the Countryside is the centrality of the struggle for integral citizenship. This is expressed through the utopia of building a new society: more just, from a social point of view, in which the right to land for those who work and live there, among others (social citizenship), is respected; more participatory and democratic, in which workers have their organizations and forms of representation recognized and considered (political citizenship); and in which there is respect for cultural diversity (peasant way of life) or gender (peasant woman) (SCHERER-WARREN, 1993, p. 72, our translation).

Based on these reflections, the utopia<sup>3</sup> that unites them in the construction of other life possibilities, aiming at individual and collective emancipatory processes, has been creating struggles against the different forms of exclusion to which millions of Brazilians are subjected, especially those who live in the countryside. In this perspective, Freire (2000, p. 60-61, our translation) notes that

[...] if the landless had believed in the "death of history", of utopia, of dreams, the disappearance of social classes, the ineffectiveness of the testimonies of love for freedom; if they had believed that the critique of neoliberal fatalism

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Utopia that in Paulo Freire's (2001, p. 32, our translation) conception does not mean the unrealizable: "utopia is not idealism, it is the dialectization of the acts of denouncing and announcing, the act of denouncing the dehumanizing structure and of announcing the humanizing structure"

is the expression of "neodumbism" that does not build anything; if they had believed in the depoliticization of politics, embedded in speeches that say that what matters today is "little talk, less politics and only results"; if, believing in the official speeches, they had given up their occupations and returned, not to their homes, but to the denial of themselves, once again agrarian reform would be archived.

In view of the above, it is valid to state that education, in the MST, is born glued to the struggle for land as one of the demands of families that recognize the importance of school education for their children. This aspect of education as a necessity, which arose in families, imposed on the Movement the convenience of basing its demands on the school. According to Caldart (1997, p. 30, our translation),

The driving force behind the issue of education in this context was, on the one hand, the need (children are a presence that cannot be ignored) and, on the other, a certain intuition about the fact that school is a right for everyone, both motivated by one of the characteristics of the struggle for land that persists today, which is to be carried out by families, which ends up generating other demands and the awareness of rights more quickly than just the conquest of the land itself.

It is possible to deduce from this reflection that the pedagogical action of the MST is strictly linked to the collectivity and has as references the social struggles for the right to land, work, food, well-being, social justice and equality of social rights, which have to be earned. However, Caldart (2000) explains that the education that the MST needs does not only occur at school, it is a broad process that accompanies or is strictly linked to the dynamics of social struggle. In other words, as the same author postulates,

But the struggle for schooling the landless is fundamental: in addition to being a citizenship right, it represents the possibility of access to certain types of knowledge that make an effective difference in the unilateral formation/education of subjects, in social transformation and in conquest of human dignity (CALDART, 1997, p. 3, our translation).

In this scenario, the broader formation processes developed by the landless have gained prominence and their educational experience has been awarded by UNICEF, so that the MST already has a "great collection of accumulated knowledge, registered via the movement's own production [...] and in dissertations, theses, articles, and books" (GOHN, 2001, p. 96, our translation).

Gohn (2002, p. 110-111) credits the achievements in the educational scope of the MST, from its genesis, to two factors: the political situation, especially in the 1990s, in which "there

is a vacuum in the technical formation sector, mainly to work in the field; and the other part must be attributed to the MST's own organizational capacity" (our translation).

It is worth noting that, in 1997, the MST held the 1st National Meeting of Agrarian Reform Educators (I ENERA), in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB) and with the University of Brasilia (UnB). From then on, a process of discussion started on the constitutive bases of what is currently called Countryside Education.

### Perspectives for Countryside Education as human formation

The proposition built by social movements in the countryside from their practical and theoretical actions and which has the MST as one of its greatest exponents began to materialize after the I ENERA. At this meeting, the first National Conference "For Basic Education in the Countryside" was held, held in Luziânia in July 1998 and promoted by the MST, UnB, UNICEF, UNESCO and CNBB.

Thus, the struggle for inclusive policies based on a collective action of diverse social movements in the countryside was constituted from the theoretical and practical construction of Countryside Education, in which, in addition to the MST, the Confederation of Agricultural Workers (CONTAG) and the National Union of Family Agricultural Schools (UNEFAB) stands out, proposing paradigmatic changes in the formulation of these policies, while producing a pedagogical theory that permeates formal education.

In this regard, according to the criticisms made by Molina (2015, p. 382, our translation), we need to understand that "Countryside Education is much broader than school education. Making this reduction is extremely serious because it removes the dimension of the conflict, of the class struggle, reducing it to the teaching-learning processes that take place in the school environment".

In this struggle for the recognition of Education in the Countryside, according to the reflections of Molina (2015), the question is: what education is the author referring to, when she points out that "Countryside Education is much broader than school education"? Certainly, as Frigotto (2005, p. 24, our translation) understands, it would be that education in which

[...] our effort as educators is, at the same time, to qualify ourselves to help students to read critically the life-threatening and mutilating reality under capitalist society and to fight for changes that are not meant to reinforce that society, such as compensatory or philanthropic policies in the social,

economic, and educational spheres, but that point to new social relations or effectively socialist relations. Distinguishing one from the other is an essential ethical-political task.

In this perspective of education, Molina (2015) and Frigotto (2005), are talking about the process of objectification and appropriation of theoretical and scientific concepts, that is, of the cultural values produced by humankind that constitute human social reality. In summary, as explained by Saviani and Duarte (2010), it is the specific activity of men and coincides with the process of human formation, in which educators have appropriation of human development and, necessarily, there must also be structural changes in the way of production. Therefore, for this to happen, the path must be "[...] work, understood in its ontological sense, as human achievement and production, and as economic praxis" (BARBOSA, 2019, p. 70, our translation). In this way, it is evident that we are not born human, we have become human.

As Mészáros (2008, p. 25, our translation) justifies, "[...] a significant reformulation of education is inconceivable without the corresponding transformation of the social framework in which the educational practices of society must fulfill their vital and historically important functions of changing". In line with this justification, we add that, "[...] without questioning the roots of social inequality, without taking a firm stand against the logic of capital, it contributes, no matter whether consciously or unconsciously, to the reproduction of a form of society entirely contrary to that proclamation" (TONET, 2006, p. 17, our translation).

That said, resuming the struggles developed by social movements in the countryside, we can insert them in the context that Severo (2017, p. 2123, our translation) defines as Social Pedagogy, which for the author in evidence

[...] is, in our national literature, a recently inserted term. We are faced with its most recurrent use, notably from the first decade of the 2000s, when, in Brazil, it started to unfold, in different institutional focuses and under the articulation of popular social movements and academic groups, events and publications that deal with this that seems to sound like a new Pedagogy, when, in fact, this term refers to a long theoretical-methodological tradition of more than two centuries and whose historical development crosses different stages, manifesting an expressive density and conceptual wealth that, without dissociating from the Pedagogy itself, streamlines, resizes and expands the radius of reflection and pedagogical proposition around the processes of human socialization in different socio-educational contexts.

It was from this meaning of education as human formation that the social movements of the countryside, here understood as educational and collective subjects, have been fighting to make the liberating, revolutionary practice appropriated by the school. Or rather, a practice that really enables students "[...] to reconstruct identities - to see and be seen in other ways, in order

to know/reckon oneself and (re)think in terms of origin, belonging and social insertion" (HAGE, 2014, p. 136, our translation).

#### **Final considerations**

From the reflections put, in the search for answers to the question that guided this study: As the social movements of the countryside, in the context of the educational policies of the neoliberal State, they have been organizing forms of action that constitute possibilities for a broader human formation in the perspective of emancipation, aware that in Brazil, from the 1990s, neoliberal thinking becomes the only mechanism for organizing the State, the MST begins to defend a proposal for Countryside Education from the perspective of human formation, as discussed in this text.

It became evident that there is a hegemonic proposal of education, of society, supported by neoliberal thought, which seeks to guarantee the conditions for the reproduction of capital. For this, the social and human condition is not valued, whether it resides in the countryside or in the city. The primacy is in the capital, instead of the State creating the objective and subjective conditions to have a problematic education, in which the development of the human being is at the center of the formative process and not the capital, with no precariousness both in the school organization and in formation of education workers.

Thus, it was possible to infer that the MST has been producing a broader pedagogical action, influencing targeted educational policies, such as Countryside Education. However, considering the structure of capitalist society, these policies are vulnerable due to fragile institutionalization processes.

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