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EDUCATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT: WHAT ARTICULATION BETWEEN PERSONAL QUALIFICATION AND QUALIFICATION OF THE TERRITORIES

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INTRODUCTION

The reflection around the concepts of training, local development and territory, trying to understand what relationships there are between these concepts and what articulations may be and/or are established between them, occurred to us because of the execution of an external evaluation study regarding a local development project. Named "*Pro-local – Training through Development*", the project occurred in a territory that, in the words of the own project, "presents characteristics of a rural world at crisis, desertified and in a growing process of destructuration", involving as participants young people with low levels of education and experiencing a situation of exclusion from the work market. The evaluation that was carried out, by not being limited to the fulfillment of a mere function of verification, but by mobilizing principles of an institutional evaluation model (Terrasêca 2002), tried to account for some of the logics underlying the developed educational interventions. In this manner, this evaluation study, based on principles of multireferenciality and rejecting an analytical or fragmented view of the projects and/or actions, considered them in global terms and in regard to their complexity, allowing us to question the meaning of the educational interventions within the project and interpret how they occurred, not as sets of successes or gaps, but as opportunities for the questioning of the intervention practices and their base reasons.

Based on this investigation study – about a project that assumes itself as being a training, communitarian animation and local development project – and the reflection it offered us, we try to support the idea that training and learning throughout life are elicited by their definition as a global context of construction and reconstruction of positive dispositions for training and that the training processes may be elicited if planned as development strategy, both for people and the territories.

In this manner, considering the centrality that both the territory and the people have in this text, we will start by presenting a brief characterization of the territory where the project "*Pro-local – Training through Development*" occurred, trying to intersect it with a reflection around the concept of territory, which necessarily implies referring to the people that inhabit it, particularly those who constitute the privileged subjects in the intervention promoted

during the course of the project. Thereafter, we will approach the training strategies adopted in the project and their articulation with the objectives that its implementation aimed at accomplishing.

The reflections on this project, which, as we already mentioned, were raised through the developed evaluation model, will allow us to point out arguments for the support of a conception of training as a process of qualification simultaneously oriented towards people and their life contexts.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TERRITORY WHERE THE PROJECT WAS DEVELOPED

Occurring under the aegis of ICE – Educational Communities Institute, the “Pro-local – Training through Development” is a training and communitarian animation project that was developed in the coastal region of Alentejo, Portugal, in a depressed region, with pronounced asymmetries and growing unemployment and where a certain imposition of the logics of life and capitalist production has been causing a strong destruturation of the traditional ways of life organization in the rural world. According to the words of this project’s promoters, the few existing resources – for instance, child and old age care services – lack dynamization. It is a territory where “The suffocation and the abandonment of the agricultural activities, the collapsing of old hopes and the persistence of deep asymmetries make the rural world a depressed space, where unemployment grows, visible and concealed (...)”, as referred to in the text of the project’s fundamentals.

The project was thus planned to be developed in a territory in need of dynamization, with the perspective of promoting the existing few resources and structures and whose population shows a very low global level of education (15,1% has not completed any education level) and is somewhat aged, since people over 65 years old constitute 20,2% of the population, while people between 0 and 24 years old represent 27,2% of the total. Despite the existence of some child and old age care services, they lack dynamization, which also constitutes, on its own, a problem, being therefore important to create and recreate relationship networks between people that allow to reshape the communities, thus awakening their feeling of belonging either to the territory or the own communities and contributing to the development of new networks of sociability: “In the peripherization in which the rural collectivities feel threatened, the isolation, mostly generated by privations, is fought from the inside, producing new type of sociabilities: to take care of the elder and the (few) children, to resist the suppression of services, etc”. (Amiguinho, 2005: 11).

In spite of this somehow negative presentation of the territory and the people that inhabit it, the principles that guide the intervention of this project

elect as their privileged objectives “the local community in the perspective of its affirmation and development – giving space to the local, time to its affirmation, power to its power...” (*Guiding Principles of ICE*), in a perspective in which the educational dimension of the processes of intervention constitutes one of the dimensions of development, understood as an integrated and systemic process.

Therefore, this development and education project strongly articulates characteristics of people and characteristics of the territory: “Indeed, any project that one tries to develop in default of those to whom it concerns, is quickly transformed into an imposition, concentrating the action of the group in alienating activities or being object of refusal or indifference.” (Pacheco and Terrasêca, 2003: 256)

CONCEIVED AND DEVELOPED TRAINING STRATEGIES

What is more important to point out from the analysis that the evaluation has raised on the project’s founding documents, as well as documents produced within the process of following up and self-evaluation of the “Pro-local – Training through Development” is the underlying conception of training/education and local development. We point out, therefore, that the perspective from which one faces the work of training and animation, in this physical and human environment is based on a perspective of endogenous development, trying, from the existing resources in the territory, to achieve the best results and the best quality of life without an excessive dependence from the exterior. A *superavit* pedagogy is also supported in opposition to a *deficit pedagogy*, assuming the obstacles as strategic and pertinent resources of the intervention (d’Espiney, 2004), promoting the involvement of several agents and the consolidation of partnerships, viewing the development projects as contributes to the recreation of the communities, by the “*establishment of networks of dense relationships qualifying of the individuals and the communities*” (Correia & Caramelo, 1998).

The kind of intervention foreseen in this project comprehends the development of formative and non formative actions and establishes objectives that point out the need to stimulate and accomplish a community animation work that “was able to promote and stimulate peoples’ participation in the development process of their own community”, thus articulating its action closely with the line of intervention defined by ICE, i.e., “to invest in alternative presents in a perspective of social re(creation)”. It seems to be precisely with this purpose that the “Pro-local – Training through Development” is conceived as a training and communitarian animation project, aiming at:

identifying and promoting alternatives of development that recreate the will for future and empowerment dynamics of the communities, thus contributing for the construction of new competitiveness, the identification of rights and the exercise of citizenship in the local;

contributing to the definition of a global politics of educational, social and cultural development, creating the conditions for personal and social development" (Text of the Project's Fundamentals).

In the project's proposal, the non formative actions are distinguished from the formative actions by the assumed educational intentionality of the latter and by the consubstantiation of the first in educational actions at the non formal and informal level, with interventional character aiming at the promotion of the communitarian participation and the improvement of personal and social competences and having as "addressees" the population of the rural communities. Through these non formative actions, one has tried to sensitize, inform, divulge and promote the project, besides creating permanent spaces of reflection between animators, technicians and members of the institutions involved in the project, to develop diagnosis, planning and evaluation practices, as well as the promotion of the creation and animation of a "sack" of communitarian notions and sensitization/information sessions towards families, elderly and groups at risk and domiciliary support for families of children at risk. The educational character of this type of actions is mainly found at the level of the involvement of the local actors, being the intervention a process of knowledge of the subjects about their community and about ways of intervening and transforming it.

It is thus shown that an important characteristic in the conception of this project consists in the notion that the construction of solutions should be based on the existing resources. This vision of the local as resource and not as a problem, visible either in the project's fundamentals or in the designed strategies of action, is indispensable to fight the deficient and negative images of the territories and of those who inhabit them and thus contradict the notion of "depressed territory", which has been lately used to designate the desertified regions of the interior experiencing structural problems. (Terrasêca & Costa, 2005).

In its turn, the formative actions were executed through several training actions, in the formal and institutional meaning of the concept, whose addressees were technicians of ICE and partner institutions, who would make the project operational in the field. We also highlight, among these formative actions, one that was aimed specifically at people living in the municipality, in "active age" and in a situation of unemployment or youngsters looking

for the first job. In this manner, a space formally consigned to promote and elicit the reflection of the trainees is instituted within the project, namely the animators, on their training and animation practices and on the actions that are being developed. The concern with working with people living in the areas of the implementation of the project is coherent with the stated idea of "mobilizing, within a logic of endogenous development, those who are the most important resources of a region: people" (Terrasêca & Costa: 2005: 12). In these formative actions, the mobilization of contents indicates a link with the real context in which technicians are implicated in order to have "a strong incidence on the value of experience and in the perspective of its questioning, aiming at turning each technician into a symbolic analyst" (In Project "Pro-local - Training through Development" - Descriptive memoir), recognizing and valuing the investigational valences of the training practices.

To sum up, the training strategies designed in this training and local development project seem to be based on a systemic logic, in the sense that this type of approach tends to define problems and equate the ways of intervention from the identification of several critical points, whose interaction is emphasized, therefore allowing the tackling of the problems in a more dynamic way and eliciting the meaning of the interventions. Other aspects that we also consider important to highlight concern either the globalized approach of the educational action promoted by this intervention, since it is guided towards a diversity of actors, or the different levels - formal, non formal and informal - in which the educational action occurred. Finally, we highlight the recreation of a relationship with the communitarian territory, in order to point out and reinforce its educogenic potentialities. We may, therefore, say that this is a project that builds the notion of training and local development, assuming that the relationship between these concepts - training and local development - is established through the creation of situations of interaction between several modalities of learning and different levels of formalization of the educational action, i.e., designing the development process as a formative process.

TRAINING AS QUALIFICATION OF PEOPLE AND THE TERRITORIES

According to the perspective on which this communication is based, it is our conviction that the formative processes should acquire the quality of development strategies for people and the territories. It is this characteristic of articulating people's training and the development of territories, that elicits the continuity of training, withdrawing it from the episodic and factual status, which is conjugated with a logic of accumulation of notions external to the person, to conceive it as something that occurs in a continuum, undistin-

guishable from peoples' lives, valuing the notions that they already have and contradicting the theory/practice disjunction.

The view that the human person is an eminently relational being and that his/her interactions with the environment elicit his/her capacities of growth and change (Pacheco & Terrasêca, 2003) is found on the basis of the global objectives of the project that are also based on a culture of participation and in the affirmation of the right to the exercise of citizenship and the production of the own life, investing in the revival of the potentialities of the interior region and its populations, refusing to accept the idea that the development problems are problems exclusive of the interior and rural regions and that their overcoming has to go through the reproduction of development models from the urban metropolis. In this manner, we should point out the importance given to a logic of production of the local in articulation with "logics associated to the notion of integrated development, based on the recreation of the social relationship, on the articulation of the different dimensions of the social and on a redefinition of the very social problems" (Correia & Caramelo, 2003: 168).

Therefore, this project assumes, as paramount, the idea that people's training should be a process included and articulated with the process of animation and development of the territories in the perspective of their qualification and should assume itself as a flexible and dynamic approach to education, for all, an education "that is popular, without any selection or barriers and close to reality and experience" (Finger, 2003: 32). Thus, the concept of Local Development that is here present articulates itself with the criticism to the concept of development understood within an exclusively economicist perspective: "basically, Local Development has a territorial basis, it starts in territories that feel they are going to disappear, given the major tendencies of investment, the major tendencies of concentration", as Alberto Melo states, adding that "an endogenous-type strategy with local resources and without such a strong dependence on the exterior may not be able to create so rapidly so many work places or raise so rapidly the monetary situation, but it is normally more sustainable." (Melo, 2005: 105 e 107). In line with this statement, we point out that the conception of this project is closely identified with the ways of intervention of ICE, that "invests in the qualification of people's having, being and wanting. Therefore, in what people have: their notions, their experience; in what they are: their values, their culture; and in what they want: their expectations, their wishes. It is not about what there is not in people, not in what they are not, not in what they don't want." (D'Espiney, 2004: 67).

For the "Pro-local – Training through Development", a structuring part of its intervention strategy in terms of training and local development is to

present circumstances for the "construction of the conditions for development of empowerment dynamics, i.e., of affirmation of a power to produce solutions (...) need of creation/recreation of local networks endowed with the capacity of producing alternatives" (In the project's fundamentals). This "key need", under the view point of the proposed intervention methodology is consubstantiated in a type of intervention assumed as a development process capable of creating and reinforcing solidarities among locals and reprojecting the local to create alternatives to its crisis, as well as promoting the qualification of the individual and collective subjects that may give life to that project. In this manner, we have to point out this investment in strategies that contribute to recreate the "will for future", i.e., alternatives that combat the negative and pessimistic view on the existing resources in the parishes included in the Project.

A special relevance is here given to the investment in the creation and dynamization of partnerships, since this investment allows to concentrate and optimize existing resources, in function of the collaborative involvement of several people and several institutions besides allowing to maximize and revalue the characteristics and resources of each partner, mobilizing the strengthening of the relationship through the establishment of intense processes of negotiation, activating communication networks and privileging ways of participation that establish a participative democracy and dynamics of communitarian development. This partnership issue is also relevant when one equates the sustainability of the interventions, since some risks are taken if the communicational and interpellative logic is not continuously nourished and promoted. It is an indispensable condition for the fulfillment of the purpose of the projects of local development to regard as contributions for the recreation of the communities, the establishment of networks of dense relationships that are qualifying of both the individuals and the communities. In this manner, the work of communitarian development should invest in the creation of mechanisms, whose addressees are not any longer the individuals but the community/project – associativism (Correia e Caramelo, 1998). In the way of thinking the articulations between local development and training and education, it seems notorious the capacity of the Project "Pro-local – Training through Development" to involve the several partners in implicated and active intervention logics, contributing to the creation and/or revalorization of common civic spaces where one may affirm "a certain convergence to a content, the sharing of purposes, the involvement in collective projects, the get together in plural cultural spaces..." (Pacheco e Terrasêca, 2004:241)

To sum up, we consider that we may re-affirm the imperious need of the projects of Local Development and Training to articulate the qualification of

people with the qualification of the territories, through the globalization of the educational action and through processes of training and intervention based on mechanisms of experiential training and in deep articulation with the working contexts of the educational and development agents, promoting spaces-times of reflection about their practices. On this issue, Abílio Amiguiño reminds us of some of the characteristics of Local Development that raise a greater consensus, pointing out: "bricolage activities; activities of a high social commitment; progressive implication and participation; partnerships and synergy effects; creation and shared management of capacities and resources; promotion of citizenship; territorial contextualization; self organization" (Amiguiño, 2005: 14).

Finally, it remains to point out that, since there is no relationship of linear causality between education and local development in which the qualification of human resources would be enough to unchain processes of development and vice-versa, the achievement of such an objective demands a complex intervention methodology, considering: the involvement of several agents; the founding of partnerships; the promotion of the involvement of local actors – namely young people in situation of high social frailty for being unemployed – in the development of their own community (constituting, as a matter of fact, a strategy of knowledge about their social and cultural roots and ways of action and social transformation); the establishment of partnerships, creating and consolidating, at the same time, solidary local networks endowed with capacities for the production of alternatives; the articulation with other development projects in a perspective of recreation of local communities, offering conditions for a multidimensional intervention; and, finally, the adoption of a local intervention development strategy, fulfilling the notion of globalization of the educational action.

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