

SOME RESULTS IN COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION ON SEXUALITY
SINCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF POPULAR EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

THE WIDE RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES THAT POPULAR EDUCATION OFFERS IS THE BASIC FACTOR FOR ANALYZING HOW ITS IMPLEMENTATION HAS CONTRIBUTED TO COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION ON SEXUALITY. THE PURPOSE OF THIS ARTICLE IS TO EXPOSE THE RESULTS OF ITS IMPLEMENTATION FOR COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION ON SEXUALITY. IN THIS EXERCISE OF THINKING AND ACTING (REFLECTION AND ACTION) PEOPLE EXPAND THEIR KNOWLEDGE WITH REALITY AND WITH WHAT THEY BUILD THROUGH SELF-LEARNING IN WORKSHOPS AND IN THEIR DAILY ACTIONS. OBVIOUSLY, THE IMPLEMENTATION OF POPULAR EDUCATION TO COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION ON SEXUALITY PROMOTES CRITICAL AWARENESS, SELF-DETERMINATION IN TERMS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND COMMITMENT TOWARDS TRANSFORMATION, AMONG OTHER THINGS. THEREFORE, THE IMPLEMENTATION OF POPULAR EDUCATION PROMOTES THE COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION PURPOSES AND GOALS OF BEING ABLE TO DETERMINE THEIR EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL, AND SOCIAL DECISIONS, AMONG OTHERS. IN THE FIELD OF SEXUALITY, THE ACHIEVEMENT IS BASED ON THE POTENTIALS FOR AND COMMITMENT TO CHANGE OF THE SUBJECTS INVOLVED.

KEY WORDS: PARTICIPATION, AWARENESS-RAISING, CRITICAL AWARENESS

INTRODUCTION

Popular education, analyzed in its broadest sense from a semantic meaning, is as old as humankind and has been implemented through the transfer of knowledge, experiences, and traditions, from one generation to the other. First, it was transmitted through oral tradition (illiterate education) and later on through the written word, sometimes spontaneously, others intentionally. Thus understood, it is practiced as a form of social relationship that is part and parcel of human activity and communication, originating with the genesis of the human being itself.

However, the purpose of this article is not the scope of popular education but rather another approach: an education process based on experienced praxis in order to transform that praxis through the awareness and commitment of those involved and in accordance with the different contexts in which it is implemented. This research combines theoretical and empiric methods. The latter include group workshops for identifying and developing actions. Workshops contributed to expand information in terms of diagnosis, control, and evaluation, restating its rationale when appropriate.

In this exercise of thinking and acting (reflection and action) people expand their knowledge with reality and with what they build through self-learning in workshops and in their daily actions. The wide range of possibilities that popular education offers is the basic factor for analyzing how its implementation has contributed to comprehensive education on sexuality. The purpose of this article is to expound the results of its implementation for comprehensive education on sexuality.

To substantiate the use of Popular Education as an education trend we must start with its definition. This article refers to Popular Education as the education trend implemented since the

1960s in Latin America, i.e., the set of educational practices focusing on the defense and autonomy of the human being that starts with a critical analysis of the social reality to transform it in a creative manner through its own and forward-looking effort.

In practice, however, there is no universal definition since its scope and meaning vary according to the context in which it is implemented, though certain important principles and features apply in any educational process based on it. This is corroborated by the following statement: "Education must be provided and acquired by many means. The important thing here are the lessons learned and the knowledge acquired by the individual rather than the means through which such knowledge was attained . . ." (1). In the author's view, irrespective of the context and the nature of its implementation, Popular Education must be analyzed as:

A transforming educational process based on a critical and self-critical analysis of the social reality in a systematic dialogue with subjects and persons from formal and informal institutions or organizations who pursue such goal. It is analyzed as an educational process based on the triple self-diagnosis of the social reality, shared with other subjects and to achieve a creative transformation [2].

To understand why it can be used for a comprehensive education on sexuality it is important to take into consideration its principles and rationale. Thus, Popular Education is known as an educational and training process that not only envisages the inclusion and praxis of concepts, methods and techniques, but also fundamental values and human attitudes. We are speaking therefore of a transformative and liberating form of education in a process of creation and re-creation of knowledge by all those involved, i.e., a scientific process of training and educating people to meet their interests in accordance with their historic time, trying to transform their experienced reality to make it more creative and transformative and richer.

In their vast literature, the Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire and the Mexican pedagogue Carlos Núñez point out four distinctive features of Popular Education: its ethical concept, its epistemological nature, its pedagogical content and its political essence.

The popular educator Alfonso Torres Carrillo states:

Without ignoring the heterogeneity of its perspectives, fields of action, subjects and practices, we can identify a set of features and ideas that gives Popular Education its identity:

1. Reading and outraged criticism of the social order and questioning the multiplying role of hegemonic education system.
2. Ethical-political and emancipatory intention to build societies that can overcome injustice, domination, exclusion, and inequality.
3. Contribution to popular sectors as subjects of transformation by consolidating their organization and struggles.
4. As a pedagogical action, it seeks to influence the subjective domain (conscience, culture, beliefs, interpretative frameworks, emotionality, will, and corporality).
5. Development and implementation of dialogic and participatory working methodologies such as collective knowledge building or the knowledge dialogue [3].

In considering the above opinions as valid, the author feels that for education and research purposes the following features of Popular Education should be highlighted:

- Enable people to learn from their own knowledge, encouraging curiosity that leads to posing questions to others and to themselves and recognizing that everything is undergoing changes and therefore should be analyzed.
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- Popular Education is truly humanist and seeks to incorporate the individual into his/her reality. When people are allowed to talk and express themselves they have the possibility of using two ways to change the reality in which they live and work: THINKING and ACTING.
- The protagonists in the educational process are sensitized through the dialogic and participatory process that is generated.
- An ethical stand leads to commitment to transformation through critical and self-critical awareness.
- The views of others are respected and are not refuted. Dialogue is permitted and every participant can give his/her views without offending or judging.

Knowing the features of Popular Education is important but knowing its principles and dimensions is too. The principles or goals of Popular Education as generally reflected in the literature are related to the fields of pedagogy, research, culture, politics and communications. Intention is related to the ultimate goal be it of a political-ideological, cultural, vocational, labor or educational nature. They can influence the individual, the group, the family, the community, the nation, or the region. So it is not limited to thinking what is going to be transformed but also who are involved in such transformation, for which purpose and why.

The system of principles listed below summarizes the essential aspects of Popular Education and contributes to its implementation. These aspects should make sure that any transformative educational process achieves its goals. The proposal reflects on how the educational process should be consistent with the real context in which it is implemented. The intention is to find coherence and uniformity in Popular Education projects whatever their intention or dimension may be so that they lead to success. Bearing in mind that these principles constitute a system, the implementation of one of them shall favor or guide the use of the others.

PRINCIPLES PROPOSED (4)

1. Principle of the practice-theory-transformative practice link

This principle envisages the methodological concept of Popular Education based on the dialectical-materialist theory on knowledge as a universal method, since the rationale of the educational process can only be the rationale of the knowledge process understood as the process of creating and recreating knowledge. Therefore, it requires starting by a triple self-diagnosis of the social reality.

This means that the initial practice must be reflected in the self-involvement of the individuals: What is done and for what purpose? In what context will the transformation be promoted? Which is the theoretical concept? According to dialectics, social practice, as the starting point of any process that generates knowledge, constitutes the truth criterion. The dialectical methodology concept enables a coherent articulation between content, expected goals and the methodology to achieve them. In other words, a scientific process to train and educate the people in accordance with their interests and the historic process they are experiencing, trying to transform an experienced reality to make it more creative, transformative and richer. This principle allows us to analyze the existing practice, run through the necessary theory and reach a more transformative practice.

Application of this principle favors awareness about the way of thinking, about the way of acting, and about the relation with the context and its conditions, encouraging transformation of both the context and the individuals involved in the process. The dialectical methodology concept establishes that we must not work on the practice but based on it, i.e., based on what is really done, on the actions, on the historical and daily personal and social experience.

Sharing among all and comparing with what should be really done, with what we know about the theory and having the participants decide accordingly. We build and rebuild taking into consideration the ultimate goal of the implementation of this educational practice that was generated. By theorizing about scientific knowledge and enriching the practice we get an enriched and transformed practice. Going back again to practice is an ongoing, transformative and non-exclusive conscience process. Practice should reflect theory and needs. Depending on the actual possibilities of those involved, it should be adapted to their intellectual level, their knowledge and the extent to which such theory is understandable for them. This principle implies understanding the educational process as a process of systematic reflection on its application.

2. Principle of conscious and transformative involvement

Obviously, any educational project should involve all potential participants, since nothing can be achieved without a genuine participation. Generally, the reality of all organizations and institutions is studied, projects are designed for them with their involvement, but are such plans fully implemented? Are goals achieved in the same way they are achieved when there is full participation of all those involved, proposing ideas and projects or at least being consulted? People are aware that processes with the involvement of all stakeholders have been the best school to develop values and democratic practices.

How can we analyze involvement? The participation we are talking about is the involvement of the individual who reflects and is actively and not passively involved in the action by doing things, proposing ideas, searching for solutions and helping to implement them. A participation that will have him/her involved in all the stages: from analysis (what is happening?), reflection (why?), involvement in the implementation, and post-evaluation. In other words: diagnosis, implementation, and evaluation. Participation will create an individual that thinks, speaks and does

something himself/herself. This requires a change in the individuals involved that will bring about a new vision of the reality: the awareness that will promote an attitude for change. It is not a problem of being out of touch with an immediate task, it is a problem of bearing in mind that the important thing is not the concrete task at hand but that all this shall lead to the creation of values and convictions that will allow self-transformation and thinking about solutions not only to individual problems but in other dimensions also. It has been proven that the more committed a person is with his/her colleagues, the more responsible he/she will be. Therefore, if we are dealing with a community, the commitment of each and every member of the community will be a requirement for success because the more committed they are, the possibilities for the success of the project will be greater.

3. Principle of integrating dimensions or fields, intentions, and who is the subject of transformation

Reality is one, though multifaceted and complex. Working only on one field or dimension of the social reality is to lose sight of the strategic meaning of the project that will lead to a transformative practice. Every educational process demands the integration of the fields or dimensions, the intentions, and those on which transformation is sought, since they are all elements of the reality we seek to transform and should therefore be designed and managed with a comprehensive strategic vision. In other words, as to the fields of pedagogy, communication, politics and research, and as to the political-ideological, economic, ideological, cultural or educational intentions in several fields, such as the comprehensive education on sexuality, it is important to know who is to be influenced, be it an individual, a group, etc. This author believes that working on the different elements separately will not lead to a fully globalized vision of the social reality of those involved. Therefore, the question is not limited to think about what is going to be transformed, but on who this transformation will be promoted.

4. Principle of systematization

Systematization is of utmost importance to understand any educational process since systematization and sequence is what will lead to the success of the proposed educational tasks. Systematization should be a priority in any educational process since systematization and sequence will successfully solve the educational tasks proposed. This presupposes:

- the rationale of the tasks proposed, supported by putting in practice the knowledge achieved through the analysis of such practice, since the starting point is the research in the experienced reality;
- sequencing the tasks with a regular continuity; in other words, its planning favors consistency with the reality we want to transform, enabling the creation of an algorithm or norm, control, and evaluation;
- decision-making and the implementation of such decisions in a consistent and systematic manner;
- a structured system, organizing the work in such a manner that allows monitoring the progress of the process, making new decisions if the results are not satisfactory or the results expected, changing or transforming the goals as the process is in motion, i.e, evaluating the new enriched practice.

Systematization makes possible the regular evaluation of the process enabling a critical interpretation of the experience in order to describe its stages, the influencing factors and the reason for the results whatever they may be.

These principles can be applied to any action, process, educational strategy, project or program to be implemented through Popular Education and with any intention for which transformation is sought.

Therefore, if the purpose is to contribute to the comprehensive development of sexuality, which according to Dr. Mariela Castro is defined as an educational practice aimed at:

Promoting an education model on sexuality, which takes into account the different interrelated power dynamics and that influences sexual decisions with the resulting emotional, mental, physical, and social impacts on the development of each person. Our approach highlights sexual expression, sexual realization and pleasure [5].

It is then obvious that applying popular education to a comprehensive process on sexuality will promote, *inter alia*, critical awareness, self-determination in terms of human conduct, and commitment towards transformation. Therefore, this application will promote the purposes and goals of comprehensive education: that of determining their emotional, physical, and social decisions, among others.

According to sexologist Stella Cerruti (6), the objectives of comprehensive education on sexuality are, among others:

- To develop critical thinking that translates into positive attitudes towards sexuality, understood as an inherent human feature, rather than accumulating knowledge and information *per se*.
 - To favor a process that enables the person to know, identify and accept himself/herself as a sexual and sexed being during his/her lifetime, free of anguish, fears and guilt.
 - To promote communication between the couple and within the family by fostering equitable and horizontal relations at home emphasizing the respect and consideration that, as persons, all its members deserve irrespective of their sex and age.
 - To promote equality and share responsibilities within the couple regarding procreation, children care and the use of contraceptives.
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- To promote conducts of mutual responsibility regarding the prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

The foregoing proves that through Popular Education we are able to engage the persons involved in changing their reality, develop critical and self-critical awareness that would lead them, as appropriate, to transform their reality and learn a theory that will enrich their knowledge.

In the Popular Education process it is important to value the opinions of everybody, bearing in mind that everyone has a rich personal history that serves as a starting point for reflection. The social and cultural experience of the individuals must always be a reference but we must try to enrich their knowledge with the theory they learn, which should be adapted to the educational level of the participants in this process.

To involve everybody in a comprehensive education it is essential to start with a triple self-diagnosis of the participants in this educational process so that they can determine what they need for change and check that the theory put into practice be related to the changes they have to make in their own practice.

How was Popular Education carried out? Which were the results achieved with its implementation?

The rationale of the research is determined by the methodology used adapted to the context in which it was applied with Popular Education as its overarching framework. Though the results of its implementation were positive, the tasks listed below are not the only ones that can be carried out. The coordinating group of the program can determine the path to be followed, the plans and the projects that will enable self-transformation. We cannot extrapolate. We must be authentic and take the reality of a given context as the baseline. However, the following methodological model (7) can serve as a guide.

FIRST TASK: AWARENESS-BUILDING AND TRAINING OF THE GROUP THAT WILL SET IN MOTION THE JOINT TEACHING CENTER-COMMUNITY PROGRAM.

In the author's opinion, out of all the stages involved in designing a transformative educational program, this is the most important one, since its success will greatly depend on this task.

What is to be done to implement this task?

a) Establishing the transformative educational group. Sensitizing the persons that will make up the transformative educational group must be a priority. Building awareness of the need for change will enhance the will of those involved in the program to collectively develop the intentions of the same and maintain this spirit throughout the whole process. To establish the group, prior personal contacts are important in order to know the aspirations, specific orientations and even the character, among other things, of those who will make up the group.

Actually, the group should be made up by all the persons, institutions and organizations whether formal or informal—empowered members of the community—who are willing to contribute to transformation, among other motivations, and constituting an educational force to carry out transformative actions. It is important to observe that the presence of persons of all ages in this group—that we have called the management group—is an inviolable requirement. It is important for the group to be aware of their actions as a group and of the group's creative unity.

b) Training of the group. If social transformation is the goal, knowing the methodology will enable effective results. For the training to be effective, the methodology to be used must be participatory, with dialogues with workshop activities and group techniques. The way in which the training is done will depend on the context and the creativity of the educator-facilitator.

SECOND TASK: DETERMINING THE AREA OF ACTION

To characterize the area of action, the first thing we must determine is context area (territorial, institutional, etc.) in which the joint program will be implemented. This will allow us to visualize what actually exists in the area and make the self-diagnosis of the same.

THIRD TASK: STUDYING THE AREA OF ACTION

The persons involved (the persons who will make up the group that will implement the program) do not have a comprehensive knowledge of their needs. They are faced with elements unknown to them when analyzing their own reality. Hence, rather than learning about the area of action they begin to recognize it. In other words, the baseline must be what the protagonists feel, do and think; what they already know and what they still have to learn about their own reality, about their real interests in life. The analysis of the reality must be a participatory process since only then their conclusions will be richer. Besides, a collective effort to know more about the reality in which one is working, increases motivation, inter-personal relations, and commitment towards the reality and the program to be implemented. For this, it is important to know which dimensions and indicators will be taken into consideration for triple self-diagnosis in accordance with the context.

The instruments to be applied are sometimes well-known traditional research techniques (interviews, surveys, observation) but with a different vision. The purpose is that individuals identify the problems and needs while critically reflecting on them and finding solutions.

In order to visualize reality, workshops with children, adolescents, youth, and adults can be organized focusing on a topic that moves reflection and enables a more truthful, critical and accurate knowledge of the reality and share potential solutions and involve individuals in them.

In addition to the foregoing, data can be collected by visiting places where information is available or by studying documents. This will enable the characterization of the whole area of

action. Such places could be architecture and urban planning centers, People's Councils, health centers, the National Revolutionary Police, minor care centers, the Communist Party, museums, historical centers, comprehensive transformation workshops, and working centers, among others. There are documents that provide a wider knowledge about the reality.

It is important that the results of the process are not analyzed separately during the self-diagnosis. With this data, the group will be able to construct multiple truths. On the basis of these results and the personal experience of the participants, a triple self-diagnosis of the social reality is carried out in terms of its practice, conception, and context.

a) Determining the real possibilities for action. By determining the needs, motivations, expectations, and problems, as well as the material and human resources available will help in determining what paths will joint actions follow, which priorities should be taken into consideration, and what needs require immediate solution, in order to establish our priorities. We must also determine the concrete actions to be taken and whether they will really lead to creative transformation. All this enables a better explanation of the reality and the most adequate actions for transformation. This research concludes with the proposal of actions for social and educational change.

b) Developing a social intervention program, an educational project and its implementation. This task should not be understood as a task for intellectuals and professionals but rather as an educational process analyzing a course of action taking into account actual resources, and educational demands for its successful implementation.

We cannot ignore:

1. What are the intentions of the transformative actions? We need to define if they are of a political, educational, cultural or vocational nature, among others.
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2. To what dimensions will each of these intentions be related?
3. Selecting persons that can do a transformative educational job in each of these intentions and proposals, who can be called educational or social-pedagogical promoters can be very useful.

Systematization in no way means that we have to create a totally new practice if it is not necessary or discard what we know is effective, since we also have to take into consideration aspects that were thought about but never put into practice and we do not know their possible results, which could have been positive. When projecting transformative action we must go from the immediate and experienced reality to strategy.

Long-term goals, patterns and actions should not be set because action must have scope. Realities change all the time, therefore we need to establish guiding ideas with the possibility of being flexible.

Transformative practice can only be seen when the proposed actions are set in motion. Ideas do not transform; what does ideas reflect is what transform, i.e., practice itself.

c) Systematization, evaluation, and reformulation of actions. This implies the application of the principle of systematization. There can be no creative or transformative practice until the tasks proposed are translated into real and systematic actions and positive results are obtained. Systematization should be seen as the critical interpretation of the processes experienced. The results obtained shall be the basis for constant reflection. Are they transformative or not?

How can we evaluate the results? The following indicators will enable us to fully evaluate the results obtained through the actions implemented: effectiveness, persistence, and impact. Some of the results obtained in practical experiences that have explicitly and implicitly contributed to comprehensive education on sexuality in the actions generated are listed below as an example.

EXPERIENCES IN WHICH POPULAR EDUCATION WAS APPLIED USING THE PROPOSED METHODOLOGY	RESULTS IN TERMS OF COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION ON SEXUALITY
<p style="text-align: center;">Coordination of projects</p> <p>Pogolotti Project Lazo de la Vega Behavior Disorder School Project Pocitos Palmar Project. Coordination República de Chile Project. Promoting Transformations in Secondary School. Working with the family and the community.</p>	<p>Adequate treatment between sexes both in out of class activities as well as in class.</p> <p>Decline in violence against girls, increased knowledge of STIs and Aids.</p> <p>Decline in teenage pregnancy.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Tutorship</p> <p>In Cuba: Mártires del Paraíso School, Cotorro Ramón López Peña School, La Lisa Mártires de Humboldt 7 Secondary School, Cayo Hueso neighborhood, Centro Habana Municipality Julio A. Mella Secondary School, CEL Marianao Dora Alonso School for Autistic Boys and Girls, CEL Marianao Lidia Doce Primary School, CEL Marianao Luis de la Puente Uceda School, Cotorro Interrelation between the school and illegal immigrant settlements. El Concuñí, San Miguel del Padrón Testa Zaragoza School, Marianao</p> <p>In Mexico: Civic Schools, Guadalajara</p>	<p>Increased knowledge of sexual rights</p> <p>Empowerment of women.</p> <p>Decline in school and family violence.</p>

CONCLUSIONS

The application of Popular Education both pedagogy and research contributes to comprehensive education on sexuality since it guarantees a return to a creative and transformative practice. Both individual and group reflection is generated through the analysis of the initial practice, the theory that can lead to a change towards a transformative practice, developing a critical awareness that will ensure a healthy, full and happy sexuality.

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