

Conferences

Countryside Education and Alternation Pedagogy. The Brazilian experience

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INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon! I would first like to thank the Education Sciences R&D Unit of this Faculty, in the form of its coordinator, Professor Rui Canário, for the invitation to take part in this Cycle of Conferences. I am extremely honoured at being given the chance to share with you some of our reflections and analyses on the current state of Brazilian education, specifically on the educational movement that, in recent years, has built a different paradigm of education and school in the rural environment in our society. It is in this background that I will attempt to develop my talk around three main ideas: First, the countryside, in Brazil, is in movement. There are tensions, social struggles, organisations and land workers' movements that are changing the way society looks at the countryside and its dwellers. Second, in this social dynamic, in this movement, which is also a sociocultural movement of humanisation of people that take part in it, an original and innovative educational project is taking place, which, in its different initiatives, has led to new school practices. Third, the Alternating Educational Family Centre constitute one of these initiatives that, despite its contradictions and constraints, has tried to confer other meanings to the pedagogical, political and social function of school in the countryside. The path chosen for the development of these ideas starts with a panoramic presentation of education in the Brazilian rural environment. We then briefly describe the movement "For countryside education", so that in the context of this movement, highlighting the Alternating Educational Family Centres, we analyse some educational conceptions and practices that have been inside them, so as to identify the advances made and the challenges that must be faced in the consolidation of a countryside school.

THE REALITY ON THE GROUND OF EDUCATION IN THE BRAZILIAN COUNTRYSIDE

In Brazil, despite a decade that has seen significant improvement in access to school, in which 96% of children from 7 to 14 years old are enrolled, there are still problems of low quality and efficiency of the education systems. One of the constraints holding back the universal quality and rise in indices of children that complete their schooling is related to the education service in rural Brazil (Bof, 2006). It is in the rural communities that we find the lowest indices of schooling in the entire Brazilian society. This rural community, according to the data disclosed by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), numbers 32 million Brazilians. In other words, in spite of the intense urbanisation that has taken place over recent decades, around one fifth of the nation's population lives in the countryside.

The level of instruction and access to education of this population segment are important indicators of the educational reality on the ground in rural Brazil. The IBGE data, systematized in the project entitled *Panorama of Countryside Education* (Bof, 2006), show that the average schooling of children aged 15 or over who live in the Brazilian countryside is 3.4 years, almost half of the estimated figure for the urban population, which is 7 years. While illiteracy indices in Brazil are high, in rural communities these indicators are even more worrying. According to the IBGE, 29.8% of the adult population — 15 years or more — who live in the countryside is illiterate, while the percentage for the urban population is 10.3%. It is important to point out that the illiteracy rate considered here does not include functional illiteracy, i.e. the population segment with less than four years of fundamental schooling. Other data show that in the Brazilian countryside 6% of children from

7 to 14 years of age are not enrolled in school, and that although 65,3% of youths from 15 to 18 years of age are registered, 85% of them are not in their correct school year, which means they remain in fundamental teaching. Only 2% of youths that live in the countryside go on to attend middle education.

These are some indicators that show the historical denial to the right to access and remain in school for the rural Brazilian population. It is the upshot of economic, social, cultural and education policy processes in Brazil, which have left the rural schools with a precarious framework in relation to the human resources available for the pedagogical function, as well as unsuitable facilities and physical spaces, poor geographical distribution of the schools, lack of working conditions or specific training for the rural environment, among other factors. In addition to these questions of scarcity or facilities and staff, the current socio-educational situation is accentuated by the kind of education on offer at these schools. A unilateral conception of the city-countryside predominates in the teaching, with the dissemination of values, knowledge and attitudes that are very different from the way of life and culture of the rural population and which only serves to further stimulate the exodus and departure of many youths to the towns and cities. This education and this school disrespect the reality of its surroundings, destroy the self-esteem of countryside dwellers and do nothing to encourage their growth.

Indeed, this is a trend that has worsened in recent years with the education policy in force, called nucleation, which claims that rural schools are more costly and has stimulated children and the young to study in the urban environment. This has led to initiatives by many local councils aimed at reducing costs by transporting the pupils to the urban centres in journeys that take hours along precarious roads. To further exacerbate the situation, in the urban schools the pupils are put either in different classrooms “*sala da roça*”, thus reinforcing the rural-urban dichotomy, or when placed in the same classroom are looked upon as backward by their urban classmates, and assimilate different values to their own in order to be considered modern (Silva, 2003).

Although the 1996 Directives and Bases National Law establishes that in basic education for the rural population the systems should be adapted accordingly to make them suitable to the peculiarities of the rural life in each region, governments have made little progress in the implementation of effective policies and practices for education in the Brazilian countryside. Likewise, only recently has the Council of State Secretaries of Education included rural education on their agenda, and it is also only recently, in 2004, that the Ministry of Education set up a General Coordination of Basic Education in the Countryside, under the aegis of the Secretary of Continued Education, Literacy and Diversity.

At the inception of these government initiatives, unprecedented in Brazilian society, it is possible to identify several articulations and mobilisations of the rural population which, through their social organisations and movements, have looked to react to the process of social exclusion, calling for new public policies that guarantee not only access to education, but essentially the construction of meaningful schools and education in the countryside. And here one has to highlight, much more than a simple change in name — rural to countryside — the expression “countryside education”. It constituted one of the milestones endowing identity to a national movement that has been consolidating itself in the fight for public policies that guarantee the rural population’s right to an education that is *in the* and *of the* countryside. This is a movement, as highlighted by Caldart (2004), which more than the right of the population to be educated in the place they live, advocates the right to a well thought-out education based on its geographical location and participation, linked to the local culture and human and social needs. It is therefore a view of countryside education as a right. A universal, human and social right. But which also presents another important factor: the design of an education policy that is also concerned with the method of educating the beneficiary of this right, so as to build a high-quality education that instructs people as law-abiding subjects.

So who are these subjects of countryside education? They are those who, although excluded and marginalised by the Brazilian agriculture modernisation process, in contrast to the exodus strategy, have decided to resist and continue to live *in the* and *of the* countryside. In other words, subjects who fight to continue being farmers in spite of a model of agriculture that increasingly excludes them; subjects who fight for the land and for Agrarian Reform; subjects who fight for better working conditions in the countryside; subjects who stand firm in the land of the *Quilombos* and the very identity of this legacy; subjects who fight for the right to continue to be indigenous and Brazilian, in demarcated land and with respected identities and social rights; and subjects of so many other cultural, political and pedagogical resistance movements. Countryside education is therefore a movement that in confirming and dialoguing with the different subjects, strives to add the fight for education to a set of struggles aimed at transforming the social living conditions in the countryside, marked by violent dehumanisation. Adding this fight for education to social struggles is underpinned by the basic idea that one cannot truly educate the subjects of the countryside without transforming the current conditions of their dehumanisation, together with the understanding that it is in the very fight for these transformations that the process of humanisation is undertaken (Caldart, 2004).

In this perspective it must be pointed out that the expression “countryside education” also identifies a pedagogical reflection that recognises the rural environment as a place which does not only reproduce, but also produces pedagogy. A reflection that outlines an education project or the training of countryside subjects which, in Caldart’s definition as part of the national articulation of the movement, “Is an education project that reaffirms how the overriding purpose of educational action is to help in the full development of the human being, his humanisation and critical insertion into the dynamics of society that he is part of; which understands that the subjects become humanised or dehumanised under certain material conditions and social relations; that in the same processes in which we produce our existence we produce as human beings; that social practices, and among them, working relations especially, form (shape or deform) the subjects” (Caldart, 2004, pp. 154-155).

It is therefore an educational project that reaffirms and dialogues with different pedagogies: with the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, following the principle that it is the oppressed who are the subjects of their own education to release them from their state, as well as defending culture as the framework of the human being; with the Pedagogy of the Movement, in understanding the firmly educational aspect of participation of people in social struggle movements and in movements throughout history; and with the Pedagogy of the Land, which understands that there is an educational aspect in the relationship between the human being and the land: land that cultivates life, land of struggle, surrounding land, the earth.

In its conceptions and principles one can see that the view of education that has been elaborated by the countryside education movement does not fit into a school. It is a much wider perspective, in which education is not reduced merely to the school dimension. Nevertheless, the fight for school has been one of its most striking aspects. This is because there is an understanding that denial of the right to schooling is an emblematic example of the educational project that was imposed on the countryside and that the kind of school set up in the rural environment is largely responsible for the domination and degradation of the living conditions of countryside subjects. Moreover, there is an understanding that the school has a fundamental educational task and can be an effective space for turning the countryside education project into reality.

It is in this context that, in recent years, different educational experiences have cropped up in the Brazilian rural environment. These are experiences that, in most cases, came about through the initiative of the population itself, through its organisations and social movements, based on alliances with Political Parties, the Church, Universities and Non-Government

Organisations, in the search for affirming principles, conceptions and practices of a countryside education and a school. Examples of these initiatives are, among others, the *Sem Terra* (Land-less) Movement through the Settlement Schools, Camp Schools and Travelling Schools; the concern of the Movement of those Affected by Dams with the resettlement schools; the educational experiences of the Alternative Technology Service and the Community Organisation Movement; the fight of the indigenous and the forest peoples for a school linked to their culture, as well as the experiences of the Alternating Educational Family Centres, which now take centre stage in this discussion.

THE ALTERNATING EDUCATIONAL FAMILY CENTRES IN BRAZIL

The first Alternating Educational Family Centre enterprises were created in Brazil at the end of the 1960s, in the State of Espírito Santo, in Southeast Brazil, when they were called Agricultural Family Schools (EFAs). Subsequently, in the 80s, in the State of Alagoas, Northeast Brazil, without any connection to the EFAs movement, Rural Family Houses (CFRs) were created. Today in Brazilian society there are eight different Alternating Educational Family Centres which, as a whole, encompass 250 educational enterprises in Brazil. Among these enterprises, the Agricultural Family Schools and the Rural Family Houses stand out as the oldest and most well-known Centres that directly influenced the implantation of others. Hence, today we have the Rural Community Schools and Settlement Schools, in the State of Espírito Santo, as well as the State Technical Schools, in the State of São Paulo, which were heavily influenced and took on many traits of the Family Schools. The Rural Entrepreneur Youth Training Programme, in the State of São Paulo, the Rural Family Houses, in the States of Bahia and Pernambuco, and the Rural Youth Development Centre, in the States of Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul, sprouted and spread from the Family Houses. In 2005, on the occasion of the 8th international Alternating Educational Family Centre Pedagogy International Meeting, articulation started within the group of these Alternating Educational Family Centre enterprises that culminated in the setting up of a national network. This led to the so-called Alternating Educational Family Centres (CEFFAs), an abbreviation that we shall adopt henceforth (Silva & Queiróz, 2006).

Aside from their specificities, differences and divergences, the CEFFAs have in Alternating Educational Family Centre pedagogy the fundamental and guiding principle of their educational projects. This principle implies a process of education that combines and

articulates periods living in the school environment with periods living in the family environment. Hence the agricultural training on the land is alternated with the general theoretical education at school which, as well as the basic subjects, encompasses preparation for association and community life. In the articulation between the two educational times and spaces several pedagogical strategies are used, called Pedagogical Alternating Instruments, such as: Study Plan; Reality Booklet; Placement in common; Study Visits; External Intervention; Didactic Booklet; Family Visits; Professional Youth Project; Training Placements (Silva, 2003).

The emphasis on the rounded education of the youth, participation of the families in running the educational project and in the management of the school, not too mention the aspect of development of the environment, are the other principles that, articulated with the alternation, sustain the pedagogical project of the CEFFAs, chiefly within the framework of the Agricultural Family Schools and the Rural Family Houses.

Alternation, as a pedagogical principle, rather than describing repeated sequences of events aims to develop in the education of the young situations in which the school world is positioned in interaction with the surrounding world. Seeking to articulate universes considered opposite or insufficiently interlinked — the school world and the true life world, the theory and the practice, the abstract and the concrete — the alternation puts different partners in touch with identities, concerns and ideas that are also different: on the one hand, the school and the idea of transmission of knowledge, and on the other hand the specificity of the Brazilian CEFFAs, the family and the logic of family agriculture. Therefore, in presenting a new interaction dynamic between subjects of the educational project, the alternating education brings with it a complex problem in terms of relations built between the school environment and the family environment.

It was precisely this perspective, of relations built between the school environment and the family environment within the context of the Agricultural Family Schools and Rural Family houses of fundamental teaching, that we focused on in one of our first studies on Alternating Pedagogy in Brazil (Silva, 2000). Carried out in the field of psychology of education, our research aimed to analyse the school and family relation in these educational experiences based on the social representations of the different subjects — parents, pupils and monitors (name given to the education professionals) — involved in the educational process. The analysis of these social representations brought us face to face with a plethora of perceptions, meanings and images that reflect the differences in the socio-economics, culture and values of the participants. They also revealed the heterogeneity of forms of family agriculture in our society

that, generating specific work processes, ways of life and cultures, forge different representations of school, of alternation, of the roles and interactions of the actors involved, leading to the presence of different kinds of school-family relations in the alternating enterprises analysed. In order to outline some of the educational dynamics of the Alternating Educational Centres in Brazil, I will highlight a set of the social representations analysed, the representation of alternation. As well as being a central detail, it clearly exemplifies these differences in perceptions and meanings present in the symbolic universe of the alternating educational enterprises. Under different logics, the succession of periods in the family environment and school environment, the foundation in the alternating education process, is perceived as having a twofold goal: providing alternative schooling in the rural environment and professional qualification for young farmers.

THE DIFFERENT LOGICS AND PURPOSES OF ALTERNATION

Alternation as a schooling strategy emerged as part of the Agricultural Family Schools, anchored on the experiences and perceptions of the process of exclusion and inequalities felt by family farmers in Brazilian society, especially in the socio-educational dimension. The dynamics of the pupil spending successive spells in the school environment and in the family environment is thus understood in line with the idea of making school and education suitable for the living and working conditions of the rural population. The alternation idea, in this context, hence becomes a schooling strategy that enables the young who live in the countryside to combine school education with the activities and tasks of the family farm, without extricating themselves from the family and countryside culture.

At the root of this meaning of alternation it is possible to identify both the expression of abandonment of education in the Brazilian rural environment, which, as outlined above, is borne out through lack of schools, precarious facilities, unqualified teachers, unsuitable curricula, etc, and the denouncement that school has heavily accentuated the exodus and departure of many youths from the countryside to the urban environment. This group of difficulties and exclusions are incorporated in the understanding and, above all, the valuing of the alternation by the subjects of the Agricultural Family Schools as an alternative to schooling for the rural environment, which enables the pupil to have access to school at the same time as remaining with the family, immersed in its culture and its productive activities.

Articulated to this explanation and sustained by the relations that have been built between school and

family, we identify features of the practice of alternation that, in the specific case of the Agricultural Family Schools identified, are characterised by the successive periods in time and space consecrated for different activities, i.e. work in the family and study at school. This alternation method links very few of the aspects and activities carried out by the pupil in the family to the school education programme, and can thus be viewed as a juxtaposition of different activities. Even if the school intends to organise and link its educational content to the experiences of the pupil working on the family farm, this has little success as the families do not understand this purpose in the alternation, as well as the fact they are unprepared for a more qualified insertion in the pedagogical dynamics. Furthermore, as well as the constraints of the pedagogical tools used, the absence of a systematic insertion both of the monitors in keeping track of the youths in the family environment, and the families in carrying out the pedagogical project in the school environment, constitute, among others, limiting factors in the interaction between school and the family in the educational process.

In spite of the weaknesses and constraints in the context of the Family Schools, alternation is extremely highly valued thanks to the possibility of the youth remaining in the family environment. Advocates of it point out the importance of the labour of the family members as the engine behind the organisation of the work process in the farming family. And one has to highlight the fact that it is this predominant use of family labour in the productive activities that constitutes the link between the different segments that make up the farming family in Brazil: rural workers, owners of smallholdings, integrated staff, tenants, joint owners, land owners, among others, constitute the different forms of insertion into the farming family in the agrarian structure and the process of agricultural production. They are different segments that, as mentioned above, have stood firm in the countryside and reacted to the historical adversities through numerous social struggles. In the background of these struggles, which also reveal a new logic of countryside development, there has been a clamour for programmes and investments in the professional qualification of the farmers, as a strategy to make the productive potential of the farmers more flexible, minimising their dependence on external factors.

It is precisely in this perspective, of technical qualification of young family farmers, that the representations of alternation in the Rural Family Houses arise. Inserted, for the most part, in the context of integrated agriculture, they share the challenges and conflicts experienced by the farmers who, on the one hand, are pressured by the need for modernisation and improved production efficiency to compete against the subsidised agriculture of the developed countries, and, on

the other hand, face the constraints and unsuitability of the tools available, such as agricultural credit, inappropriate technology, etc. Out of this conflict a philosophy begins to emerge that conceives the overcoming of these difficulties not solely through access to financial subsidies. The use of suitable technologies and the appropriation of technical skills by farmers are beginning to be viewed as the way forward, which together contribute to overcome the difficulties that have held back the development of integrated family farming.

It is therefore in this perspective of endowing the youths with professionalism to carry out their agricultural work in a more qualified manner that the education provided by the Rural Family Houses is perceived and valued by its subjects. The successive periods alternating between the family environment and the school environment is understood under the logic of joint theoretical education and practical training. In this combination, while the school environment provides the technical-scientific knowledge, the family environment makes its practical application viable in the real and specific conditions of each productive family unit. This leads, in the background of this alternation, to more modernised segments of family agriculture whose survival, integrated with agro-industrial companies, will depend on a rise in the production and productivity of the family unit, which implies the need for more employment of the family workforce and a greater technical advances implemented in the rural property.

Articulated into this idea, and sustained in the relations that are built between school and family, we identify the features of an alternation method that, in the specific case of the Rural Family Houses analysed, is characterised by the association of successive periods of technical education in school and a practical complement undertaken in the family property. It is a model that in establishing complementary links between the educational activities undertaken at school and in the family environment, leads to a kind of alternation in which theory and practice, school and family, despite not being totally integrated, are brought closer to one another. The fact that the subjects have a common perspective of the purpose of the alternation, and a better understanding of the families regarding the educational dynamics, favours the establishment of a collaborative relation between the families and the school in the educational process. The frequent presence of the monitors in the family environment constitutes, in this process, one of the essential factors that makes it possible to bring about closer ties and interaction among the actors, consolidating the bases of school-family cooperation in the educational process. Nevertheless, it is a cooperation that is predominantly under the control of the school environment, in which the role and knowledge of the monitor is dominant. Moreover, the absence

of a more systematic and effective insertion of the family collective unit in the elaboration of the pedagogical project is another of the constraints holding back more effective interaction between school and family in the educational process.

However, in spite of different logics, purposes and practices of alternation, the representations of the group of participating subjects, both of the Family Schools and the Family Houses, reveal a common and central aspect: the valuing of these experiences as a different school and education, which, rooted in the culture of the countryside, has incorporated into the educational process the values, conceptions and lifestyles of these family farmers. In the arguments and logics that anchor this representation, the experience of the pupil in the boarding system, the action of the monitor, the educational environment and the bringing together of the school environment and the family environment are, among others, aspects that are viewed as original and with good potential to build a different school.

THE DYNAMICS OF EDUCATION IN ALTERNATION: NEW ROLES, NEW PRACTICES

The experience of the pupils in boarding schools was a common and original thread of the enterprises analysed. As a pedagogical principle of alternation, the experience of the pupil in the boarding school system during the week or fortnight in which he is in the school environment lead to the realisation that life incorporates the value of education, reflection, training. In other words, the breaking away and distancing from the usual life environment constitutes an educational strategy to provide the young with a better perception and consequently a reflection about their reality, stimulating a new vision of the family context, of property and of the everyday issues involved in the socio-economic environment, which hence become the object of education and their intervention projects (Rouillier, 1980). Moreover, in the perception of this educational structure characteristic of the Alternation Training Centres, the participants highlight as assets of the boarding regime the chance for pupils to carry out their school activities in a more intense manner — insofar as they are freed from their family farming occupations — as well as the opportunity to socialise and learn about collective life in a young group at school. Indeed, the life learning in a group is an aspect of the alternation enterprises that is highly valued by the subjects, who consider the discovery by the pupil of the basic rules of socialisation and the undertaking of the different tasks required to maintain the boarding school (cleaning the rooms, halls, helping in the canteen, etc.) as educational

situations that nurture the youths' sense of responsibility. Furthermore, as they are activities and tasks carried out in teams, they also encourage the establishment of a climate of service and solidarity among the participants of the school duties. As such, the tasks carried out, besides the experiences in the classroom, the mealtime, games and leisure and recreational activities are considered situations that contribute towards different moments and modes of meetings and interaction of the pupils among one another and the pupils with the monitors. They are situations that, although different from the context of a traditional school, stimulate and favour dialogue, a climate of friendship and confidence, amplifying relations between the pupils and monitors and contributing towards the creation of a favourable educational environment in the everyday school life of the alternation enterprises.

In organising and carrying out this educational regime, one has to highlight the nature of the multi-skilled role played by the monitors. It is precisely this educational responsibility of the monitors, of guiding and monitoring the pupils — in the school environment and in the family environment — that demands action in several fields and in several functions which, in assessing the subjects, constitutes one of the essential features of the identity of the monitors, differentiating their role in relation to the traditional teacher. As such, the skill of the monitors is not understood as resulting merely from the sum of their academic or specialised technical knowledge, but above all their attitude in the pedagogical mediation and the multiple skills in carrying out several different activities. Therefore, and above all in the interactions deriving from everyday life in the boarding school, more than an educator, more than a teacher, the figure of the monitor is understood through his/her ability to foster and encourage relations with the pupils. And here one has to point out that, both in the Family Schools and the Family Houses, there is an extremely positive educational environment, in which the interactions take place in a friendly, cheerful and relaxed climate. The group activities, the lessons outside the classroom, the intense socialising, are undoubtedly factors that make it easier to bring about greater interaction between monitors and pupils and which stimulate the building of more caring and personal educational relationships.

It is added that as well as the activities in the school environment that involve the monitoring of the young, the teaching activity and teamwork, among others, the systematic action of the monitors in the family environment contributes towards anchoring, above all in the context of the Rural Family Houses, this representation as regards the multi-skilled action of the monitor. The presence of the monitors in the everyday lives of the families is also understood and extremely appreciated

as a factor of sustenance and support for the pupils in carrying out their technical projects on the property, as well as being considered an opportunity for strengthening ties between the families and school. This interaction, in turn, encourages greater involvement of the families in the educational process, so as to participate in the definition and assessment of the content that is of interest and necessary for the development of the property and the reality on the ground. It also favours the acknowledgment and valuing, by the monitors, of the know-how and experience of the farmers, as well as being a crucial factor in the better understanding and insertion of the families into the dynamics of education through alternation.

This monitoring of the pupils and their activity in the family environment is considered by advocates of the alternation pedagogy (Bachelard, 1994; Gimonet, 1985; Malglaive, 1992) as the most important phase in the alternation educational process. There is a consensus among them that this insertion of monitors in the family environment constitutes an excellent means of establishing greater articulation between the two moments of education, insofar as the exploitation of the experience and activities of the pupil in the family environment enables more suitable planning of the activities and content to be carried out in the school. As such, the monitoring of the pupils in the family environment, knowledge of their living and working conditions, perception of their difficulties and potential are factors that help the monitors to build a didactic programme that is truly rooted in the reality. Nevertheless, this insertion of the monitors into the life of the pupils has brought some weaknesses to the surface, i.e. while in the Family Schools certain difficulties prevent the assiduous presence of the monitors in the family environment, thus compromising the very principle of alternation, in the Family Houses this insertion has consolidated the bases of cooperation between the school and family in the educational process. Albeit, in a framework of cooperation that is still predominantly under the control of the school environment. If we consider, as pointed out by Chartier (1986), that true alternation is effective in strengthening articulation between the means involved in the education, in a twofold perspective, relating its contents, complementing them and enriching them reciprocally, we have one of the common challenges linking the experiences analysed: implementation of true alternation, i.e. an integrating alternation.

CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES OF THE BRAZILIAN CEFFAS

While in traditional education the elaboration of the educational process belongs foremost to the school,

this conception is not the most suitable when seeking an integrating alternation, in which the successive family-school periods should constitute the basis of the whole educational process. Therefore, it becomes indispensable to fully include all those involved in the educational process as co-producers of education, thus avoiding, in true conventional pedagogical style, that the families become merely spaces for socialisation and/or implementation of the school content. In contrast, the alternation runs the serious risk of becoming just another pedagogical recipe and another form of authoritarianism that is unable to fully apprehend the pedagogical process. The effective inclusion of all those involved in the education presupposes the building of new relations between the school and the family in implementing a true partnership. The notion of partnership here takes on the meaning presented by Clénet and Gérard (1994), whose overriding idea is to share the power of education, in a complementary dynamic of differences, in which each subject — farmer, monitor, student — has their place in line with the conditions, functions and power befitting of them.

In this construction of new relations, geared towards the socialisation of the power of education in a dynamic of complementary differences, one has to highlight the potential of the Associations run in each CEFFA. Association and participation of the families are notions that cannot be separated from each other and which are fundamental in expressing the realities on the ground, needs and challenges in the socio-economic, cultural and political context of the school, and in the articulation with the organisations, entities and movements found in the local community, geared towards building a project not only for the pupils' future, but also for the future of the community and region. This is why Gimonet (1985) believes that true alternation cannot survive without the school opening up to the outside world, in order to permanently strive to incorporate and rebuild in the pupils' educational process the knowledge historically created and recreated in the struggles and experiences of the families, their organisations and their movements. It is in this articulation between school, families and the socio-political context that we find the essence of an integrating alternation. Moreover, this combination of the educational project with the reality of social struggles and movements is what sustains the principle of alternation as a development tool of the environment, thus avoiding the reproduction of old fallacies that claim that education, in itself, is able to bring about social transformation, to impede the exodus from the countryside, to encourage better living conditions for farmers, among others, which end up reproducing the old liberal discourse in relation to the social function of the school. Hence, one of the challenges of the experiences analysed is to build true alternation, that

integrates into the educational process the content and experience of the pupils in the school environment and the family environment, in a dynamic that is able to recognise the differences and paradoxes in the school universe, of the family and its movements, aimed at implementing a common project in which the whole is something more substantial than the sum of the parts.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In order to encourage the debate and discussion as regards countryside education and alternation pedagogy in Brazil, I would like to conclude restating three main ideas that guided this talk: the countryside, in Brazil, is in movement! There are tensions, social struggles, organisation and movements of workers of the land that are changing the way society looks at the countryside and its subjects. In this social dynamic, in this movement, that is also a socio-cultural movement of the humanisation of the people who participate in it, an original and innovative educational project is being produced, which in its different initiatives has led to new school practices. The Alternating constraints, have sought to confer other meanings to the pedagogical, political and social function of the countryside school.

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