

Agricultural family schools in the «Pampa Gringa», historical traces between the particular and the universal

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Abstract: Agricultural Family Schools have been the way to concretize a model of pedagogy of alternation, an education modality that has been little investigated from a historical point of view. This article aims to present the emergence of alternating pedagogy in Europe, its influence in the South American territory, and to analyse in more detail its expansion in Argentina from the late 1960s. We are interested in dwelling on these alternative modes of conceiving and building schools not only because of their value as a contribution to agricultural education at the secondary level, but also as a contribution to research on specific historical experiences which constitute areas for inscription of school innovations, pedagogical debates, struggles and resistance (McLeod, 2014). Likewise, we are interested in analysing this alternative modality of schooling from the conceptual debate on the tension between the particular and the universal, which is expressed in this different way of conceiving teaching and learning and analysing the hegemony of the school format (Southwell, 2008). To do this, we carry out a historical analysis of the testimonies that recorded the emergence, debates and expansion of these institutions, as well as the educational concepts that were configured in the historical journey developed until today.

Keywords: Pedagogy of alternation; agricultural family schools; particularism; universalism.

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1. The emergence of alternating pedagogy in Europe

The background of the Agricultural Family Schools (AFS) begin in France. The first EFA arises in 1935 from the initiative of a priest and a group of parents who did not want their children to stop studying, nor did they consider the option of leaving Serignac-Peboudou (a small rural town, of 173 inhabitants, located in the region of Aquitaine, in the southwest of France) to Toulouse, where they could do their secondary level studies (Babin, 2016, Cragnolino, 2008, 2009; Gonzalez and

Costantini, 2011, Rio 2011). There, a father and his 13-year-old son, disenchanted with the approach they made to an agrotechnical school, where they saw a technology that was not in line with what was used and needed by small producers. Thus, they thought that the priest of the town could teach them some disciplines, and in this way «to think an educative idea overturned to the rural environment that allowed the young people not to deprive themselves of their family, of their indispensable labor force, looking for the integration between school, work and family (...) the pedagogy that best served the interests of an education oriented for the men of the countryside would be the one of alternation. In the proposed curriculum there was an appreciation of the rural world and of the reality experienced by the young people and their families» (Rio, 2011, p. 12).

Finally, «on November 24, 1935, four parents of children of 13 and 14 years old together with the Parish Priest of that humble town of France, began the human and intellectual formation of four adolescents» (Babín, 2016, p. 118). The priest Abbé Granereau took care of the teaching of the language, mathematics and Christian life; and the parents committed to transmit agricultural training. Together they developed a way of teaching that would be what we know as Pedagogy of Alternation. This proposal would allow them to overcome the difficulty of distances, avoid uprooting, migration to the city, preserve the relationship with the rural environment, and continue to provide assistance in family productive tasks:

The parents wanted an education that would provide technical and general education; the priest added the human and Christian. The substantial idea, not to uproot and not lose a fundamental help in the tasks of the field. The priest offered the parents that their children spend some time in the future school and another in the family, both spaces, as instances of formation (...) (Bacalini, in Rio, 2011, p. 11, our translation).

The original plan suggested alternation, that is to say, one week student presence in school and two weeks in their homes, being visited by their teachers during that period. Proposal focused on the importance of understanding research about the areas of life and rural environment study, as the two bases of the educational process. All this accompanied by instances of reflection and weekly review, understood as empowering a collective identity and solidarity. In turn, they formed a «school government», which would be coordinated by students parents, with supervision of teaching instructors as advisers.

In 1936 there were 17 students and in 1938 enrollment increased to 30, resulting in inadequate capacity of the parish. It was there that parents decided to hire teachers and buy a lot to create the first «maison de famille rurale» (Babin, 2016, p. 119). Then, the experience spread to the town of Lauzaum.

The Law of Agricultural Teaching in France, dating from 1929, granted them a legal framework, allowing parents to take charge of the practical training of their children, within the scope of their exploitation. It provided for an official examination, organized by the Ministry of Agriculture, which guaranteed accreditation, and allowed the granting of official recognition to M.F.R., being subject to the control of the Director of Agricultural Services. From 1949 they were renamed «Family Houses

of Rural Learning», and agreed common pedagogical bases. These schools began to be supervised also by an Inspection Service, organized by the National Union of the M.F.R. (Cragolino, 2008, 2010). In this way, the pedagogy of alternation also meant a challenge to the homogenization of French education at the beginning of the century; to the extent that it did not remain as an experience in margins, but sought recognition of their certifications and contended for presence within the French school system, so the challenge to homogenization became more visible.

It is possible to think that it was not a movement that explicitly sought to move the pedagogy already consolidated, surely they would not have much awareness of the pedagogical or methodological depth of what they were designing, the change of conception involved holding families in the curricular decisions and school government, nor the central place that distribution of time spaces has in school discipline, and therefore did not bear in mind the profound transformation that this meant in the daily life of teaching. It was clear if they knew that they were making a different experience when they were recognizing community knowledge as those hierarchical knowledge should be privileged. This reminds us of the suggestive analysis formulated by Ian Hunter (1998) about the emergence and different adaptations, changes and reforms that make up the everyday school should not be analyzed as a product of the application of great principles, but as contingent trials, stressed, bets run to run; the result of the daily search to solve certain problems, expand a small experience and manage school expansion.

From 1960, after a restructuring of education in France, Maisons Familiales, had legal protection and were definitely included in the education system of that country (Rio, 2011, p. 12). From that moment, they expanded to become 500 establishments with 40,000 students. This degree of acceptance and expansion should be considered in relation to the fact that the French rural system was and is closely linked to agricultural education and, therefore, this school entered into connection with rural extensionism, with labor organizations of the rural sector and with private and official entities of diffusion of technologies in agricultural production and commercialization. It is even claimed that many rural leaders in France went through the formation of the Rural Family Maisons (Bacalini, 1998). On the other hand, its expansion seems to have gone hand in hand with a pedagogization of the movement, not only a resolution of problems and development of instruments, but an accompaniment of conceptual debates about how, who and for what to educate that kept active relevant pedagogical issues.

The practice of alternation transcended the French borders – restructured according to economic and labor demands of the time – spread throughout Europe in the 1960s (Abdala, 2004; Rio, 2011). From 1961, in Veneto, northern Italy (Rio, 2011), where the first Scuola della Famiglia Rurale (SFR) was opened outside French territory. In Spain (being the second European country in relation to the number of these schools) developed from 1963 – more strongly in the 1970s – and took the name of Agricultural Family Schools. In 1986, the first Casas Escolas Agrícolas (CEA) appeared in Portugal. The dissemination of this teaching model came to cover a new purpose: to respond to the new global economic articulations and strong technological development impacted on the production of goods and services in general (Vier, 2010).

The discussions, problems and adaptations that had arisen in European rural land were also expressed in Latin American countries in the second half of the 20th century. As Rio (2011: 12) characterizes, there was an abandonment of the agricultural regions, discouragement and exodus towards cities, an urban-industrial economic model, based on capital, industry and latifundio, turning towards an integration between field and modern industry, privileging large enterprises, thus suppressing an agriculture based on small production, because it did not generate significant lucrative differences and did not meet the requirements of export. In that context, the balance of production dynamics of small family units is broken.

2. The Agricultural Family Schools in the «Pampa Gringa»

The development of the MFRs in Latin America began in South America at the end of the 60s, initially in Brazil and then in Argentina, to culminate in the 1970s in Uruguay. The origin of the experiences varied from country to country although, in general, it can be said that the presence of European cooperation was decisive: it is the case of Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina and Uruguay that had the support of the French MFRs, while the school-family of Chile and Venezuela were supported by Spain.

In the 1960s, the religious Humberto Pietrogrande, in the Jesuit mission of the agricultural region to the south of the state of Espírito Santo – Brasil – found himself in a situation of impoverishment of agricultural communities whose families were considering abandoning their plots and places of refuge. work. He installed the experience of Rural Family Maisons in Brazil, particularly in the towns of Anchieta, Alfredo Chaves, Iconha, Piúma and Rio Novo do Sul. In Espírito Santo they received the name of Agricultural Family Schools (EFAs) (Rio, 2011, p. 12). To promote and organize the EFA project, the Promotional Education Movement of Espírito Santo (MEPES) was founded in April 1968 as a civil entity (Rio, 2011, p. 12).

In the case of Argentina, it is emphasized that, although already in 1923, schools oriented towards the education of the children of the settlers had been organized, only towards the end of 1960, with the concern to bring education closer to the agrarian producers, the French experience of the hand of the ecclesiastical sectors, especially the Catholic Rural Movement, begins to become strong within the rural sector in the north of the province of Santa Fe (Dinova, 1997).

At the end of 1968, Jean Charpentier, an official of the French Union Nationale des Maisons Familiales, visited Argentina and explained about the opportunities of Alternation Pedagogy in the Ministry of Agriculture of the Province of Santa Fe. From this visit, he managed an internship in the alternating schools of France by the Engineer Oscar Aloatti and Professor Gerardo Bacalini in 1969. Bacalini left his testimony, about the reasons for that experience to grow in that area:

Several favorable factors were combined: the 70s were years of transformation; we worked in a very favorable province like Santa Fe, with a rich rural and educational tradition. The north of Santa Fe, with its epicenter in Reconquista, was a hotbed of development projects: an open and progressive bishopric with intense social work, an active and participating ruralist youth

and committed priests such as Father Pergolesi, a developed cooperative movement, a rural business with a transcendent social vision like Jorge and Silvia Pereda, creative and innovative teachers like Humberto Suligoy ... (Bacalini, 1998).

The Argentinean experience with this type of schools had a special impulse given by Jean Charpentier, a farmer's son, member of the Catholic rural movement, self-taught, in charge of promoting alternative schools in Africa and Latin America, he settled in Argentina, in the city of Reconquista. He did it with his wife Magui, biologist, responsible for the teacher training of the Family Maisons. They spearheaded the alternance pedagogy project in that territory and supported the development of the Agrarian Family Schools (EFA), a name they also adopted in Argentina (Rio, 2011, p. 13).

Towards the end of 1968, a first test was conducted with a three-month course, where the basic concepts of alternation were discussed. A year later, the first experience was carried out in the area of La Potasa, with a course for 24 young people structured on the outline of the traditional agricultural basic cycle. The initiative was jointly promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture of Santa Fe, the Ministry of Education and the Rural Movement. The first provided technical staff linked to groups CREA (Regional Consortiums of Agricultural Experimentation), the second local and teachers and the Rural Movement mobilization of the community. The Ministry of Education appointed educators who, apparently, did not share postulates such as self-discipline, permanent review, teamwork: that is why the experience was not very successful (Schioppetto, 2003, p. 31).

The experience of La Potasa ended in October in the same year. Finally, in 1970 in the town of Moussy the first school was officially born under the Alternation System, EFA (School of the Agricultural Family), which adopts the model of the M.F.R.; that is, a private management school promoted by rural families and managed by a Board of Administration legally organized in a Civil Association. According to Bacalini (1997, 1998 in Forni), the alternation found a favorable ground in the province of Santa Fe, which possessed a rich rural and educational tradition, an active rural youth and committed participants. Those features reinforced the need to have adequate educational instances for rural youth, with capacity to positively affect local productive, population and social dynamics. Those conditions – as Bacalini pointed out – were linked to the predominance of agricultural activity in relatively small-scale establishments, the existence of cooperative organizations and social groups with strong ties of belonging (ethnic, cultural and religious) (Forni, et al., 1998), the geographical area in which they initially emerged was one in which there was a strong rural and educational tradition.

Subsequently, as a result of the opening of new EFAs and to support their expansion, different associations were created: in 1970 APEFA (Association for the Promotion of Agricultural Family Schools) to coordinate, promote and advise new experiences. In 1975 the AIMFR (Association International Maisons Familiales Rurales), with 24 member organizations representing 19 nations, with a total of

750 MFRs. In 1989 was born in the province of Buenos Aires, the third initiative of training by Alternation for the rural environment. It was the Educational Centers for Total Production (CEPT) federated in FACEPT (Federation Educational Centers for Total Production) that although they adopted the model of the Educational Alternation System, they did it in official institutions. It was proposed as an alternative education for the rural environment of co-management with the public sector. The three federations since 1997, formed a National Organization of Alternation Schools (ONEARA).

In 1971, the first teacher training institute for EFA was set up, approved by the Santa Fe Ministry of Education, supervised and evaluated by the Provincial Private Teaching Service (SNEP). It operated in a building of the bishopric of Reconquista. The first students were from the provinces of Buenos Aires, Formosa, and the cities of Rafaela and Reconquista. In that institution a two-year training was dictated: the first one with alternation between the Institute and stays in the homes of rural families; and a second year with alternation between the institute and as teacher practitioner in an EFA. The evaluation of the candidates was carried out by the teachers of the institute and the family that participated in the internship. The title that was obtained there was Polyvalent Monitor. That family participation significantly transformed the teacher-family relationship on which traditional schooling was based.

Since its birth in the province of Santa Fe, EFAs have grown both quantitatively and qualitatively. The expansion and the roots of this educational novelty in Argentina, has led to today's experience being present in a large number of provinces: Santa Fe, Buenos Aires, Salta, Chaco, Corrientes, Santiago del Estero, Cordoba and Misiones (Schoppietto, 2003). The enrollment – in general – is still composed of children of small agricultural producers.

During the dictatorship (1976-1983), this growth was halted because the SNEP (National Superintendency of Private Education) did not authorize the opening of new schools and changes were made in its pedagogical proposal. During the first years, they were able to cope with the new context, but from 1978 the situation was seriously modified. There were violent raids of several EFAs, persecution of members, important administrative limitations, repeal of their curriculum, closure of some EFAs. The Institute in which teachers were trained with alternating pedagogical orientation, became integrated into the higher education system for teacher training. The Complementary Institute of EFAs (ICEFA) in Lanteri, which had been founded in 1977 to allow students to complete basic training, was closed in 1980, by Ministerial Resolution.

In 1980 a ministerial resolution determined the gradual closure of the EFAs and the immediate cessation of the Institutes where monitors studied. Some EFAs managed to remain open but adopting an official syllabus since 1981, a process that profoundly altered the conception from which those schools had been thought: the curriculum was organized according to traditional disciplines, working time was two weeks of attendance in the institution, the level of participation of parents in pedagogical decisions was reduced through a non-recognition of their attributions, replaced by decisions taken centrally by the Ministry of Education. The most alternative elements to the traditional format of the school were interrupted.

The most significant growth was promoted in the years immediately after the end of the dictatorship: between 1984 and 1989, 11 EFAs emerged and the experience expanded to other provinces: in the mid-80s, EFAs began to be established in the province of Misiones, taking as reference the Santa Fe project (Baranger, 2000: 16). As stated in the institutional history set out by the UNEFAM (Union of Schools of the Agricultural Family of Misiones), the Rural Movements of Misiones and Santa Fe, had a strong link. The relationship gained force once the Rural Movement of Missions decided to bring a training course for monitors inspired by the experience of Santa Fe Monitors Training Institute. According to the consulted oral sources (Viel, 2010), like Alberto, rector of the EFA of Capioviciño, without a doubt the primordial nexus in this story was the Catholic priest José Marx, due to his work with the aborigines of Misiones, he had a important network of links and contacts with INCUPO (Institute of Popular Culture), in the province of Santa Fe. The priest argued on the basis of the existence of several colonies with groups of young people unable to access school knowledge in the rural area of Misiones. That new initiative had the support of APEFA (Association for the Promotion of School of the Agricultural Family), and of the important impact of the schools with regime of alternation for the rural world.

Between 1990 and 1995 the important expansion trend was maintained, with 17 new EFAs in 5 years and the influence was extended to other provinces. The training of monitors also increases their degree of influence, since in 1992 the Higher Institute of Teachers in Agricultural Sciences and Environmental Protection in Capioví (Misiones) emerged.

3. The pedagogical conceptions

The pedagogical model developed through these experiences was based on the belief that rural values should be educated. Among other affiliations, the EFA were heirs of the experiences of the school for life (Decroly, 1908, Depaepe, Simon & Van Gorp, 2003), the personalism philosophy of Emanuel Mounier (1965, 1995) and subsequently nurtured with the debates proposed by Luigi Stefanini (1996); of the classical school managed by the parents; of the unbreakable link between theory, reflection and action (Schön, 1983), with emphasis on the interrelation between theoretical reflection and more practical intervention, which involves handwork (Plencovich, 2007, 2010). Alternation pedagogy implied a change in the pattern of temporal continuity, a very substantive feature of the modern school system, likewise, alternance was established «between the training center, family, rural exploitation, community, parochial way of life, professional, associative links» (García-Marirrodiga & Puig Calvó, 2007, p. 22).

The family-school links were close and deployed in different aspects of institutional life. The most significant was families taking part in the curricular definition and in the teaching of some of the most hierarchical knowledge of the community. Another relevant aspect of family participation was its inclusion in decision-making in the Administration Council that met -and still does- when the period of permanence closes, to evaluate what has been done and to reflect on specific issues of school daily life. There, families have had significant decision-making power over school activities and have legal and economic responsibilities, linked to ensuring building

and equipment conditions. It is the families who always have the majority in the Administration Council. Their responsibilities also reach to political articulations – to integrate school to the community and to relate it with other institutions of the zone and the region – and pedagogical, participating in the decision making on the curricular definition next to the teaching team. This only aspect would be the reason for a very rich discussion about the place of the communities and the State in the curricular definition. Also, this aspect involves controversies and tensions around the «ownership of schools» that Elsie Rockwell (2005) has explored significantly.

Also, the participation of families included the fact that, sometimes, some of the parents are the ones who dictate the classes of some specific knowledge referred to the agricultural trade. On the other hand, often in small populations, the school is one of the few institutions that represent the public and the existence – in a reduced way – of the State. For this reason, the school became the seat and reference point for the various community activities and a place where ex-students and other adults were also linked for technical and cultural updating within the framework of lifelong learning¹.

The conceptions from which the organizations that promoted this type of school departed included the appreciation of the varied cultural richness given by the indigenous peoples and the small peasant producers. Likewise, an attempt was made to give educational value to this cultural heritage, traditionally undervalued by the hegemonic educational model (Civera, 2011). Also, it has been established as its pedagogical basis, the commitment of teachers and students to analyze the reality in which they lived, collaborating with the enrichment of the community. In this perspective, some principles of Paulo Freire's pedagogy were taken up, in relation to the importance of overcoming the educating-educating antinomy and the contrast of popular knowledge and scientific knowledge.

In sum, the most original and characteristic aspects of this type of school constituted the real responsibility of the parents and the family community in the management of the school and its involvement in the formation of the students; a model of training in alternating between structured periods in a succession of moments divided between the school and the socio-professional sphere; a pedagogy

¹ Regarding the link with the State, the EFAs were developed as social management schools, regulated as private management schools, which allows their supervision through the Directorate of Private Education, and through it, the official recognition of the certificates that it grants. During its history – and depending on the provincial jurisdiction in which they are – the link with the State was erratic, problematic and subject to contingent negotiations. Regarding its location and the maintenance of its infrastructure have arisen as an initiative of the communities and from some pre-existence (an abandoned rural school, a shelter, sheds, a disused structure) and then for their support have appealed to foundations, ecclesiastical funds and sometimes to specific public programs, often more linked to rural development organizations (Secretariat of Agriculture, Institute of Agricultural Technology) than to educational authorities, for their support. Thus, although they were private management institutions from the beginning, they rely on subsidies and subsidies from the State (Cragnolino, 2010). Although at some moments in its history, the State withdrew its support – for example, in the dictatorial period – as we have outlined in the article. But, towards the end of the 20th century, the development of public policies aimed at the expansion and compulsory nature of secondary school, and the necessary diversification of school modalities, significantly helped the State to recognize and support these institutions that already had a time of existence.

that extended to the global development of young people as a model of training in alternating periods structured in a succession of phases divided between the school and its own farm; a continuous and responsible involvement in the life of the local community, whose development the EFA contributes in a concrete way with a set of cultural, promotional and associative initiatives.

On the other hand, the methodology of alternation was proposed to associate general education of the school culture with the professional experience of the family and the community within which the student lives. In this way, he gave daily form to his objectives of favoring the young person's attachment to the rural environment, and thus improve the conditions of production and work. The courses of the school-family provided for a balanced and complementary alternation between a period of school boarding and one in a family space. The formative value lies between the two experiences, a system of continuous training in the discontinuity of the type of activity.

For this they distinguished four phases:

1. See = observation of reality
2. Judge = discussion, reflection, theorization, critical analysis, evaluation
3. Act = application in the real context
4. Verify = verification and evaluation of what was experienced

For that, they included explicit tools in the curriculum: the reality notebook, the tutoring, the search plan with its instances of sharing, the study visit, the external intervention, the technical course and the general training. There are also complementary instruments such as: visits to families, a person responsible for alternation, weekly synthesis, study trips, thematic stays, a relationship book, exercises and evaluations (Puig, 2006). Through the plan, the students carry out an investigation in the two-week period that they live with their family and look for emerging topics that interest them and are related to productive, social or cultural situations. When they returned to school, they shared their work and developed a synthesis that was returned to families. In this way, issues of interest to the family were rescued and bridges were built with schools. In the period that the young people lived, worked and studied with their families, the teachers visited them. The students recorded what they had done and their observations in the Reality Notebook, which allowed the student to analyze family and community situations, make comparisons and interpretations. It was an intellectual exercise that was open to the use of metacognitive strategies that allow to become aware of learning, to see its evolution and to modulate reflective processes, etc. During the third year of studies, the students developed a final work based on the student's choice of a productive topic. The student chose a tutor among the monitors and defended the work orally before a jury composed of teachers, members of the rural community and guests from institutions linked to the environment. Another tool was the productive project, which included a set of learning situations that integrated knowledge and activities to solve real problems of the productive environment. Internships were also organized with families or companies. These schools have not had, in general, experimental fields because the students developed their projects in their own farms.

The curriculum was originally composed of four areas: an instrumental, another in relation to the social sciences, another of elementary sciences and, finally, one of applied sciences. That organization was varying in its contents according to the multiple educational reforms. Despite this, a central point of the EFAs that has been maintained over time was the so-called Search Plan (Viel, 2010). It was a pedagogical tool that allowed to link the two moments of alternation (school and life in the own farm). In addition, its function was to favor the research and communication of the student both with his family and with the community. The Search Plan was aimed at the young person identifying issues and issues that would interest his environment, in order to share them and problematize them together within the school setting. For this reason, the teaching role in the EFAs was crucial, since he was expected to act as a guide to the learning process. For his activity to be effective he had to know not only in depth the pedagogy of alternation, but also that he needed to know the environment to which his students belonged and that he had a high commitment to the rural environment (Viel, 2010).

4. The particularism-universalism tension as an interpretation matrix

The description of the modality that we have presented allows us to interpret the tension that manifested itself in the development of school experiences and expressed a paradoxical movement: to differentiate or disrupt the school model, to serve a particular population, but at the same time that differentiation did to seek to guarantee a universal right. There arises another way of articulating with the signifying equality, messing up the traditional format to enable common goals to be reached. We could think there was an operation that put the formal education system in front of the imperative of transforming itself in search of equality, which differs in the path it offered, but without ceasing to offer a common point of arrival. In this search, the imperative of change was not in the students, who met certain particular conditions, but in the institutional system that must develop different strategies to achieve a common right.

We wonder if these new formats democratize the school experience. The schools described started from unmet demands and develop strategies aimed at particular groups to guarantee a universal purpose of fulfilling the right to education. This does not mean losing sight of the experiences carried out, opening other tensions and also building other exclusions. It does so, for example, when the exclusionary nature of being a peasant farmer to attend an Agricultural Family School is considered, a criterion by which there have been cases – related by the principals of the institutions – who have not admitted other young people not meet that condition. On the other hand, the EFA had as a concern to avoid the uprooting and the formation and experimentation in other types of knowledge and ways of life that enabled distancing students from their community of belonging. In that logic, the possibility of the school having expanded the perspective of traveling, knowing and exploring other communities and cultural dynamics was seen as a negative feature and even as a failure of its own functioning. There was a narrowing of the notion of community where the local, the surrounding, was transformed into the world of

belonging, making it impossible to pass through other experiences and cultural contacts.

A community is defined as such through the concretion of a unity among a group of people who define and share a «we», the principle on which they sustain their identity. That «we» implies a «they» from which to differentiate, beyond the similarities manifested by the existence of shared features. The question posed by the communitarian dynamics questioned the processes by which the differences were constructed, mainly the motivations associated with this process and the consequences derived from being part of a group of «equals». In some cases, the community may imply the absence of confrontation among its members, excluding negotiation and assuming the existence of the same motivations and values. In others, the weight placed on the differences concludes in the confrontation and expulsion of those who are more like «others» than «they», in an operation that defines security poles and, in the opposite direction, insecurity that must be combated.

Thus, the delimitation around the local poses a paradox because although it strengthens the subjects in their daily locations, it also ties horizons to the limits of proximity. If the local is limited to the resources available in the territory, contextual realities and unequal educational circuits are validated in terms of the production of social and cultural capacities. In the process of «localization», institutions «adapt» to, and receive demands for, the surrounding reality, but they also configure – contribute to form – that community of reference. Thus, they build a «map» about what is their own, about what is possible and what is desirable, about demands and expectations. On the other hand, it must also be said that the local scenario contains potentials to break with unjust and totalizing identities and practices of the constitution of social life. However, the participation enclosed in the walls of the territory, and based only on the close solidarity, runs the risk of limiting the problems, issues and interests of the subjects.

From the existence of the hegemonic school model, it prevails as the dominant pattern and social image of what a school is. It is usually referred to as the universal reference with which one confronts experiences that are qualified as particular or particularistic (Southwell, 2018). However, as the political theory has taught us, it must be remembered the universal is the symbol of an absent fullness, and the particular exists only in the contradictory movement of asserting a differential identity and at the same time, canceling it through inclusion in a non-differential medium. The construction of differential identities on the basis of closing up completely is not a *progressive political alternative* per se (Laclau, 1996, p. 57). The right to difference has to be affirmed inside a global community, i.e. within an area in which the group in question has to live with other groups. For example, those who are engaged in a struggle for internal reform of the institutional framework, if – at the same time – they refuse to recognize the rootedness in political and cultural values of the traditional or dominant sectors, they cannot articulate their demands in any broader hegemonic operation. This condemns them to a peripheral and ambiguous relationship with existing institutions which can only have paralyzing political effects (Laclau, 1996).

The right to difference has to be affirmed within a global community, that is, within a space in which the group in question has to live with other groups. For example, those who are engaged in a struggle for the reform of institutional frameworks, if at

the same time they refuse to recognize the rooting in political and cultural values of the traditional or dominant sectors, they can not articulate their claims in any broader hegemonic operation. This relegates them to a peripheral and ambiguous relationship with existing institutions that can only have paralyzing political effects (Laclau, 1996). If democracy is possible, it is because the universal does not have a necessary body or content; On the contrary, diverse groups compete with each other to give their particularisms a universal representation function. Society generates a whole vocabulary of empty signifiers whose temporary senses are the result of political competition. It is this final failure of society to constitute itself as a society, which makes the distance between the universal and the particular insurmountable and, as a result, puts the «concrete social agents in charge of this unrealizable task, which is what makes the democratic interaction» (Laclau, 1996, p. 68).

At this point, there are a number of aspects that make us think that new formats not only are the affirmation of a particularity but they put in evidence some gaps and exclusions of the traditional school model, and knock on its door with a few different tests that, of course, are not exempt from power relations and exclusions. Therefore, there stand out some of the places the traditional school could not reach or the subordination and injustices it established in some cultures and lifestyles. Thus, the exclusion is positioned on the characteristics adopted by the model and not in those subjects who have been removed from it. The existence of these schools may serve to question the system as it reveals the mechanisms by which schools systematically exclude some students and ways to solve them, but it can also legitimize the existence of a parallel circuit that is responsible for those the other schools ejected. Many of the differences in the proposal are related to changes and flexibilizations of the traditional plans that could be designed for the whole population and which would try to address some problems of the secondary school in general.

Democratization, then, is linked here with new practices that had restricted the universalism of our political ideals in our society to limited sectors of the population. It is possible to retain the universal dimension while extending its areas of application, which in turn redefines the concrete content of that universality. The universalism, as a horizon, expands while its necessary bond with all particular content breaks. It would be a mistake to assume that the interaction between the hegemonic school format and the new emerging experiences has no effect in them. In these conditions, the school institution has certainly fallen into an awkward position. Yet, we do not intend to re-establish new totalizing formats, but to show that the capacity of openness reached so as to name the exclusions and deficiencies of the school format may also be an opening to start a dialogue with other communities, and what it gets to connect may reach the forms of the plural and the collective.

In its very long history, the school has been absorbing changes and reorganizations that, also, have given it new strength. But it is also evident that new problems are knocking at her door and she will be able to benefit from a thorough review. It will be an occasion to question the story of the inclusion we met, the narrative that held that this school system was (and is) the only way to democratize societies.

With the history of education, we have learned that the middle classes have benefited greatly from the school that modernity established, since it has adopted

modes of life, interests and productive orientations – among other aspects – of the middle classes. This allows us to conclude what is usually presented as universal, common, the very image of school is, in fact, a particular cut, which at a certain moment became hegemonic and has maintained that hegemony by rearticulating with new demands and problems.

The analysis carried out allows us to relativize the boundaries between the particular and the universal and, therefore, the tensions that these experiences had in their conformation. We must also say that the modern school format had the same tensions around the particular and the universal but built a hegemony on the basis of some particularisms that became an inscription surface for all that was meant as a school and, even more, as education. We have spoken that these formats challenged this discursive construction, disputing why other signifiers absorbed a plurality of meanings around the diversity of the formative experience and therefore, relocating other particularisms in a new hegemonic conformation. There was a dispute so that the notion of school would not continue to be equivalent to middle class, urban, organized around nuclear families but could accommodate young people, rural workers, holders of the family economy. But in addition, another question that was put in evidence is that the school form could be modified so that its transformation would make other experiences possible. Its effectiveness and not that of the individuals that should have been put under the spotlight.

Every educational project of knowledge transmission is included in power relations, which define what is transmitted and how; as a relationship of power, it implies a degree of violence and imposition on another, and runs the risk of committing injustices. Those who believe that the fiction of equivalence can be realized completely and transparently forget that all inclusion implies exclusions, more or less dramatic and more or less crystallized. In any case, it is about thinking about the modalities of democratization that will help to attenuate some of the current injustices, and how mechanisms and institutions can be thought of that avoid crystallizing them permanently and turning them into a total and absolute otherness.

5. References

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