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El activismo social y sus particularidades en la educación

Social activism and its particularities in education

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Resumen: El activismo, devenido proceso globalizador, se ha convertido en frente de lucha con intencionalidad política para lograr cambios y transformaciones a favor de intereses diversos, posicionándose de manera creciente en las redes sociales. En Cuba el activismo social es parte del proyecto social socialista, por ello es propósito de este trabajo caracterizarlo en el proceso de construcción de la sociedad cubana y analizar sus particularidades en la educación. Se emplearon métodos de investigación cualitativa, significándose el histórico - lógico, el análisis - síntesis, y la sistematización.

Palabras clave: Educación; Activismo Social; Educador Activista Social; Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación

Abstract: Activism, which has become a globalizing process, has become the front of struggle with political intentions to achieve changes and transformations in favor of diverse interests, positioning increasingly in social networks. In Cuba, social activism is part of the socialist social project, so it is the purpose of this paper to characterize it in the process of building the Cuban society and analyze its particularities in education. Qualitative research methods such as the historical-logic, analysis-synthesis as well as systematization were used.

Keywords: Education; Social Activism; Social Activist Educator; Technology of the information and communication

Introduction

Human activity must be understood as the specific way by which men exist and are linked to the objects and processes that surround them, which they transform, and also allows them to transform themselves and to construct the system of social relations in which they develop their life.

As a complex system, human activity is based on necessity, an objective basis for the action of man, which integrates interests, ends, means and conditions.

The history of mankind demonstrates objectively that the actions of men in their social struggles led to the transformations promoted in each concrete historical moment for the attainment of purposes in accordance with the interests of classes; in this sense education has been a propitious ideological vehicle.

From that perspective men have maintained the certainty of the power of education and have sincerely believed that it must lead the human being towards reaching higher goals. The social function of education, along with its content and essence, has varied in the course of history, determined by the conditions of material life and by social relations; hence every nation decides its society development project, which base is the education of its members.

The studies carried out in Cuba of the origin and evolution of education reveals the development of the processes of formation of nationality, patriotism and emancipation, elements that influenced, and still influence the sense of appertinence of the Cubans to their country, present in the ideas and educational actions that constitute the essence of Cuban pedagogy from foundational figures such as Varela (1788-1853); De la Luz and Caballero (1800-1862); Martí (1853-1895); Valdés Rodríguez (1849-1914); Varona (1849-1933), among others, who ratified the value of education as an essential way for the development of society; ideas enriched in the course of the historical events.

Significantly, since 1959 education has propelled the country's new ideology as a real engine, with the ultimate intention of achieving substantial changes in the new society, based on the participatory action of the people, and above all with a direct benefit to the most humble, a fact that encourages a growing socio-cultural development.

The promotion, development and improvement of an educational system with humanistic values, idealizing Martí's precepts, participative and democratic, that has maintained as its essence the integral education of personality, synthesized in the culture, has been achieved by citizens and is considered as a right of all.

It means a commitment assumed by the people and the leaders of the process of transformation, which entails the understanding of what represents human improvement, given the value of Martí's thoughts, known by the majority of Cubans. This allowed the massive incorporation of many young people willing to do and create, which leave traces in the society, the community and especially in the protagonists of each process of construction of the society at country level and at territorial level, solidifying its foundations.

According to Castro (2002), the cultural revolution initiated in 1959 focused on the creation of consciousness through ideological education, which had important scenarios in time such as teacher contingents, the literacy campaign, the First Congress of education and culture, the processes of improvement of the national education system, the Battle of ideas.

These actions are related to the active and massive participation of many protagonists of the country, evidenced by the conjunction of the people with their leaders. In correspondence with the above, this paper aims to characterize social activism in the process of construction of Cuban society and its particularities in education.

Development

Social activism has been studied from different angles and points of view. The term comes from the Latin *activitas* and etymologically it has several meanings, among them, "Movement, action, set of tasks, of functions, of actions", (Basic Dictionary, 2009, p.17). Activity occupies an important place in psychology and particularly in those related to the Marxist approach, because it not only conforms the psychis of man, but also influences the environment and other human beings.

According to Potrony (1989):

"activity takes the following forms: the vital activity, related to the economic, the modes of production, the tastes, the valuations, finally, the way of life; the objective activity, related to the processes of objectivation and disobjectation, with the motive - objective relationship; and activism, as mediation of the reflection of the external at the level of personality psychology, as the internal force that generates orientation toward an end" (p.2).

In fact, there is a close relationship between the different forms of activity mentioned above. It coincides with Kagan (1989) when he ponders activism about activity, since activism includes activity as one of its manifestations, that is, activism is primary and activity is secondary.

The proposal supports the ways in which activism manifests itself from the transformative, communicative and cosmovisive point of view, and its expression in the most varied types of activity, behavior and communication characteristic of the vital activity and consequently in the object.

Social activism, on the other hand, is generally related to issues of a political nature because in its essence it leads to the ideological education of citizens; for this reason it is widely used as a function of working with the masses and assumes different forms to defend projects, face realities, combat situations.

According to Oliver (1984), social activism is capable of promoting participation and plurality to levels necessary to confront the tensions and challenges of development in our times with results and, as a result, unleashes enormous potential for the benefit of human development.

While Jvoschev (2008) considers that social activism is an important strategy to achieve participation in social change and development. It can be decisive in policy-making, decision-making, but it can also promote social change by providing elements for individual transformation, as it makes people who have a greater understanding or awareness of a situation modify their ideas, approaches and behaviors.

The positions of both authors are consistent with the very essences of popular participation strategies initiated in Cuba since 1959, systematized in the course of the years and with which significant transformations were achieved at the macro level, while the subjects were transformed evidencing greater commitment and better results.

Thus, in this growing process of construction of a new country we can identify diversity of forms of activism: pedagogical, scientific, cultural, health, sports, ecological, finally, in so many areas of life as development necessities exist and possibilities of participation exist. However, social activism has been modified and updated in relation to its own scientific and technological development and trends towards globalization.

At present, social movements in the world occupy greater spaces in social networks. According to Tascon (2011), social networks (and blogs) have become the focal point for ideas, propaganda, citations, and dissemination of slogans. In this sense activism is generally manifested from the verbal, from the incitement to others to perform; this is mainly the media effect evidencing a divorce between thought and action.

On the other hand, taking into account that social activism is associated with people's ability to promote and generate benefits that improve the lives of the population (Torres, 2008), and popular participation as a form of democracy to contribute to the solution of certain problems, or to promote certain policies depending on the type of society (Valdés and Toledo, 1999), then it will be agreed that dealing with both activism and participation is done with a political intentionality, seen in governmental and non-governmental organizations.

In Cuba, the development of social policies directed by the State and the Government to upgrade the levels of life of the population in the course of the revolutionary period has been accompanied by a high level of convocation that has led to the participation of the people through mass organizations enhancing the process of building socialist society and the social activism of many actors in organizations such as education, that endorsed these policies and contextualized reality.

According to Fernández (2008) when he cites Castro (1981), "the educator must also be an activist of the revolutionary politics of our Party, a defender of our ideology, our moral, our political convictions (...) "(p.11), as an expression of the ideological content of education, aimed at achieving the integral education of citizens in correspondence with the interests of the socialist society that is being built and defended.

In this order Carreño (1997) conceives the political function of education from the "influences directed to the formulation of consensuses, the acceptance of norms of coexistence, the promotion of leaders and leaderships, the identification of political programs" (pp. 113-115).

On the other hand, Blanco (1997) reflects an interesting analysis on the functions of the educator from the perspective of education in its broadest sense, seeing the functions as synonymous with utility for society. It identifies the political role assigned to the preparation of students for the fulfillment of their rights and duties as citizens and the disciplinary norms of the educational system, not only in the school, but in society in general "(...) as vehicles of the political function, since they contribute to educate children, adolescents and young people in the system of social relations in force (...) "(p.83).

This is borne out by the Thesis on Educational Policy (1975), where political-ideological education responds to the principles of education, partisanship as a basic principle, the scientific character of teaching, the linkage of theory with practice, the link with the masses and the concrete historical approach.

Therefore, the work of educators is considered an eminently political task as teachers are the representatives in the school of the interests and ideology of the class to which they belong, in each activity they must be consistent with convictions and the influence it exerts in the formation of the revolutionary consciousness of students, as well as taking advantage of situations, circumstances, and experiences to influence this important sphere of personality, education or ethical reaffirmation.

In fact, about the conception of education in its broad sense, it coincides with Blanco (1997) because, from this look:

(...) education necessarily entails "getting out" of the teaching-learning process and therefore of the school framework, extending educational influences to other contexts and levels of participation, which necessarily leads to the expansion of its spheres of action, it must assume the functions and tasks of other educational agents such as family, social group, state institutions, which can be extremely useful and of immediate social benefit (p.56).

These elements are appreciated in the Cuban educational work because it has been constant in linking the school, the family and the community in the fulfillment of educational objectives, favoring the involvement of socializing agencies and agents in a dynamic, creative and utilitarian way in achieving the ends proposed.

By the way, Freire (1979), from a substantively political and adjectivally pedagogical perspective, makes clear the political character of education, and the partisanship of the educator: "I think, therefore, that educators are posed as politicians and politicians, as educators ... to recognize what spaces exist within society that can be filled politically in an effort of popular education ... "(p.132). The above places educators in society; based on their partisanship, they influence the understanding of the changes necessary to achieve the socio-cultural transformation of communities and society in general.

Hence, the communal activity of educators is understood by us as a process of social activism to reach the goals that, from the interests of the classes, contributed and contribute to the participation of other agents and socializing agencies in the necessary changes through a bi-univocal relationship between social activity and educational potential for social change.

In this sense, Martínez (2004) agrees that the more socialized the subject, the better the assimilation and objectification of social contents, which allows the student's personality to be richer and more developed; his life is more full and happy, while it enriches society and achieves more originality in each subject. As well as the more recognized the individual differences, the more ensured the conditions for its expression.

Hence it is considered that education can contribute decisively to achieve these aspirations for the benefit of a more just society and a more educated and therefore freer man.

The systematization carried out allows us to conclude that the actions of educators in correspondence with class interests, whether they have a militancy in a given party or not, make them agents of change in society and in the lives of individuals, families and communities, and are carriers of the policy that drives their educational action in terms of human improvement as an end. That is why Drullet (2010) stated in the issue dedicated to the 50th Anniversary of the Appeal to the Volunteer Masters on April 2, 1960, recognizing that this event was "(...) an unprecedented mass action (...), an unprecedented pedagogical experience (...) but its most striking impression was on the human enrichment of those who participated in this revolutionary socio-cultural crusade (...)" (p.2).

In this sense it is necessary to recognize that in the process of construction of the current Cuban society, the mass actions developed as a characteristic of the system itself and in which popular participation is seen as a distinctive feature, the educator is a truly active subject manifested in the dynamism that impresses its activity from the creativity through the use of diverse procedures in dissimilar situations and different conditions.

Based on the above arguments, a social activist -educator can be defined as "the subjects committed to the necessary changes and social demands of the historical moment in which he has to live as a partisan and bearer of class ideology; active participants in the achievement of the goals leading to the transformation of the context, known and recognized by the majority as agents of change given the cognitive, practical and axiological value of their educational work and the creative, dynamic and utilitarian legacy of their actions in the school context and outside of it" (Reyes, 2017, p.6).

From this definition essential features can be distinguished:

- commitment to social changes and demands of the historical moment.
- active participation in the transformation of the context.
- recognition as an agent of change.
- the cognitive, practical and axiological value of their educational work.
- the creative, dynamic and utilitarian legacy.

It is accompanied by the definition of elements that particularize the manifestations of social activism in the different historical moments through which education has transited as a social phenomenon, taking into account other social processes that emerge from the improvement and transformations of educational policy, evidenced in the changes in social relations that are related to socializing agencies (school, community and society) and expressed in the actions of educators such as:

- The defense of the country, freedom and national sovereignty (through the action of educators in the country or outside it, in the fulfillment of internal or external educative missions).
- The assumption of legal responsibilities, (based on concrete actions developed in coordination with the Ministry of Justice, either during the National Literacy Campaign or currently as members of the Labor Justice Base (OJLB) in the workplace).
- The management of processes at different levels in social organizations (since many educators, in parallel to their teaching activity, conduct political processes in their workplace in organizations

such as the Union or the Party, and also because they become the main quarry for occupying positions at the municipal, provincial and / or national level in these social organizations or in others such as the Cuban Workers' Confederation (CTC), the National Union of Workers in Education, Science and Sport (SNTECD), the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR), or the Popular Power (Government).

The above points out social activism among educators, not only in the beginnings of the revolutionary process in which the significance of the work deployed, seduced an engaged youth to bring to a concrete way the materialization of the first revolutionary measures adopted by the leadership of the country under Fidel Castro and that marks a milestone in the History of Cuban Education, but also in the processes developed to consolidate the construction of the current society, as one of the sharpest ideas of the Revolution concept defined by the leader of the Cuban Revolution, related to the meaning of the historical moment and the changes that this entails.

This idea clearly expresses the movement as a historical necessity in the modification, updating and contextualization of social processes attuned with the current circumstances, being enduring and transcendent, given the possibility of being applied to new conditions such as those that mark the 20th century in Cuba, for the purpose of advancement and the assurance that educators will always be active with chalk in one hand, book in the other and their country in their hearts.

Consequently, the globalization of information and communication technologies becomes a new form of social activism, adapting to the demands of the new century as protagonists of social movements, of it Cuba is not excluded, and about it Castro (2002) recognized the changes in the last decades and with it the emergence of fabulous means of transmitting information and knowledge, as well as its consequences among other things to deform and alienate minds, to destroy even the best in children and adult teachers, and parents themselves, who are or should be the first educators. Although the media war of those who want to impose power by force, hegemonizing the world, show increasingly present scenarios with modern platforms for the de-virtualization of truth, the accommodation of ingerence, and to encourage ever more strongly the ideological subversion particularly towards young people, then the challenge for social activist educators is increasing.

That is why its role, adapted to the new conditions, must be manifested through a greater presence in social networks: twitter, facebook, youtube, and other more and more modern are gaining greater spaces in the country. In this sense, it becomes necessary to consider the usual consequences for young people of the imposition of capitalist models which purpose is to impose the culture of

possessing goods above the culture of being human; which requires an elementary sense of discernment not to get confused.

That is, the professionals of the education in exercise and those who are in training have in social networks a permanent ally as long as they achieve:

- To be updated in relation to advances in computer science and communication.
- Use channels of information that allow them to get a clear idea about how the world sees Cuba and how Cuba is seen in the world.
- Establish bridges for the exchange of information that will enable them to disseminate the truth of Cuba at a time when the country is establishing economic and social development policies until 2030.

This will contribute to exercising the sense of responsibility sustained in the participatory action and the conviction of being an actor in the continuous process of transformation of society, and also to use the tools of thinking as a Cuban, consequently with Pogolotty (2012), and thereby maximize their creative potential, cultivate mind and heart, make honesty the norm and compass of life to have the courage to combat and protect the nation.

Conclusions

Social activism as a political movement demonstrates its transformative force to achieve benefits in improving citizens, as long as it is prosecuted with successful strategies by activists committed to change for the better.

With that intention it can be ensured that social activism in Cuban reality is distinguished by permanence and sustainability, aimed to create and build a society that is constantly renewed in amidst adversity, but also attuned with the trends of socioeconomic development, cultural, scientific-technical, new information and communication technologies in the region and the world, which requires dynamism and creativity without forgetting the roots that distinguish us, as social educators.

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