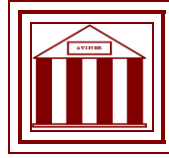


**Athens Institute for Education and Research  
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**Rural Education and Rural  
Extension: Paulo Freire  
Contributions to the Agrarian  
Residence Program**

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**Rural Education and Rural Extension:  
Paulo Freire Contributions to the Agrarian Residence Program**

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**Abstract**

In the recent years, In Brazil, we have been witnessing the consolidation of a national movement that, through dialog and initiative of social individuals in the rural areas, new principles and practices have surfaced in terms of rural education. An important tool in the construction of the Rural Education is the Agrarian Reform National Education Program –PRONERA. Among its actions, we highlight the Agrarian Residence Program, whose purpose is the training of professionals to excel in the rural extension, in the Agricultural Family and Agrarian Reform fields, simultaneously as subjects of change and rural educators. In this present framework, our goal is to present the Agrarian Residence Program in its political pedagogic principles, analyzing the contributions of the Freiran Pedagogy for the development of educational practices targeted to the social transformation. In methodological terms, the technical procedures of the research included interviews, bibliographical and documental analysis that, in its turn, were organized and systematized through the Analysis Content Method. Our observations revealed that the utilization of the Freiran referential in the Agrarian Residence Program has become a propeller of significant transformations, with emphasis for emancipatory educational practice constructions, as well as new social and political relationship between universities and social movements.

**Keywords:**

## Introduction

This work is based on the study program entitled *As Outras Faces da Pedagogia da Alternância na Educação do Campo* (The Other Faces of Alternation Pedagogy in Field Education). It aimed to present the *Programa Residência Agrária* (Agrarian Residency Program) and its political-educational principles. The program is one of the actions of the Movimento Nacional *Por uma Educação do Campo* (National Movement For Field Education), and special attention is given to the contributions of Freire's Pedagogy, which guided the political and educational practices adopted. In this respect, Caldart (2005, p.21) points out that Freire's Pedagogy was an important pillar of the theoretical principles and concepts of the movement that supports Field Education, mainly in his works "*Pedagogia do Oprimido* (Pedagogy of the Oppressed) and all pedagogical tradition of Popular Education, including the dialogue with the pedagogical bases of oppression and culture of human beings". For Freire, dialogue means (1983, p.28) "the loving encounter of men, who, mediated by the world, pronounce it, namely, transform it, and by transforming it, they humanize it, aiming at the humanization of all." The Field Education Movement has gained prominence in Brazilian society in the last two decades due to its struggle for the adoption of a new paradigm for education and field school, and a new project for the rural area and society (Molina, 2010). Rural areas are understood as an environment of life, culture and knowledge, where peasants are given rights and decent conditions to remain in the land (Fernandes & Molina, 2005).

It is therefore a movement that originally criticized Brazilian education scenarios, mainly those involving people who live and work in the Brazilian countryside (Caldart, 2008). One of the main characteristics of the Field Education movement is its struggle for public policies that guarantee the right of peasants to receive education **not only** focused on the rural setting; but fundamentally constructed with the participation **of the** subjects living in the countryside, as explained by Caldart (2002).

People have the right to be educated in the place where they live.  
People have the right to receive education that takes into consideration their dwelling place and accepts their participation, linked to their culture and human and social needs (Caldart, 2002, p.26).

Therefore, the *Field Education* movement relates the struggle for education to the set of social struggles aimed at the transformation of living conditions in rural regions; it values the modes of life production of individuals; emphasizes the countryside as a place of construction of new possibilities for social and cultural reproduction and sustainable development (Caldart 2008; Molina, 2011; Vendramini 2011).

Following these principles, the *Field Education Movement* has gained attention in the national political agenda in recent years. And among its many

achievements, we highlight the realization of the 1st National Conference: For a Basic Field Education, in 1998; the creation of the National Program of Education in Agrarian Reform (PRONERA), in 1998; Institutionalization of the Operational Guidelines for Basic Education in Field Schools (Decision and Resolution by CNE/CEB) in 2002; the creation of the Permanent Group of Rural Education (GPT) in the Ministry of Education (MEC) in 2003; the recognition of the Brazilian government issued in the Presidential Decree No. 7352 of November 4, 2010, by introducing the PRONERA program in the Field Education Policy (art. 11) and recognizing it, at the same time, as part of the rural development policy, and the launch of the National Program of Field Education (Pronacampo), in 2012.

Among all the achievements of the Field Education Movement, we highlight PRONERA, created in 1998, aiming to strengthen education in Agrarian Reform areas, based on education projects, conducted in partnership between rural social/union movements and Brazilian public universities, using participatory methodologies. It promotes rural and social development, seeking to widen democratic conditions (Santos et al., 2011).

Santos (2010) analyzed the PRONERA experiences developed in our society, in the dialogue with different subjects and institutions, and believes that its political relevance stems from a concept of education attached to work, production, culture, and life.

The partnership involving social/labor union movements, Brazilian public universities and government bodies, has supported PRONERA, which, over 13 years of operation, has provided education for illiterate people and students at elementary, high school and college levels for over 400,000 settled and camped individuals pursuing land reform. It is also important to mention the training of more than 300 technicians in technical, social and environmental assistance to be provided to agrarian reform settlers and family farmers. The courses were sponsored by the *Programa Nacional de Educação do Campo: Formação de Estudantes e Qualificação de Profissionais para Assistência Técnica – Programa Residência Agrária* (National Program of Field Education: Student Training and Professional Qualification for Technical Assistance - Agrarian Residency Program) (Santos, 2010).

### **Residência Agrária Program**

The *Residência Agrária* program was designed to train individuals to provide Technical, Environmental and Social Assistance (ATES1) and Technical Assistance and Rural Extension (ATER2) in Family Agriculture and Agrarian Reform areas. The Program aimed to enhance the training of

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<sup>1</sup>Technical, Social and Environmental Assistance Program for Agrarian Reform: created in 2003, aiming at providing technical, social and environmental assistance to families settled in the Agrarian Reform Settlement Projects, created or recognized by INCRA.

<sup>2</sup>Technical Assistance and Rural Extension. State ATER organizations started in 1948 with the support from public and private entities.

undergraduate students in various areas for the development of ATER and ATES activities, seeking to apprehend and meet the demands of Agrarian Reform and Family Agriculture. (Molina et al., 2009)

PRONERA had already developed partnership with a number of public universities, which were invited to join the *Residência Agrária* Program. According to Molina et al (2009), the program aimed to expand and strengthen the network of universities involved in the production of knowledge based on a Rural Education perspective (Molina et al., 2009).

Partnerships to promote the *Residência Agrária* Program were established with other organizations, besides universities, especially the Federação de Estudantes de Agronomia (Federation of Agronomy Students) (FEAB), which has fomented internships in rural areas since 1980; the ATES program and ATER teams. Importantly, in the Brazilian scenario of that time, another concept of extension was being constructed, from the guidelines of the new National Policy for Technical Assistance and Rural Extension (PNATER), which favored a strong connection with the *Residência Agrária* Program. (Silva & Miranda, 2011)

Some authors, including Caporal & Ramos (2006); and Diesel et al. (2009, p.309), claim that the recommended model for this new ATER is not something new for Brazilian society, especially relating to the extension action methodology, which is transformative and emancipatory. In this regard, they point out that the creation of a dialogic extension action was advocated by Paulo Freire, especially the classic “*Extensão ou Comunicação*” (“*Extension or Communication*”). In the 1990s, guided by this concept, some Brazilian states sought to make extension action more progressive. However, in spite of such initiatives in ATER, a participatory, dialogic extension practice, committed to social justice (Diesel et al., 2009, p.389) was not prevalent in our society.

Historically, it is possible to observe that extension services based only on the conventional farming model developed technology diffusion practices based on the the power of technicians over farmers. Therefore, most of the times, the knowledge and determinations of technicians prevailed over the rights, knowledge and demands of farmers (Caporal & Ramos, 2006). The current PNATER proposal for Family Agriculture and Agrarian Reform is the result of critical assessments of this traditional rural extension practice in our society, as well as historical claims of rural social/trade union movements.

Specifically for Agrarian Reform in Brazil, data provided by the Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária (National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform) (INCRA)<sup>1</sup> show a population of 906,878 settled families, with an average of 3.5 million people living in rural areas conquered for Agrarian Reform (INCRA, 2015).

In this context, in 2004, the Programa Residência Agrária ( Agrarian Residency Program) was created. The title of the Program explains its most important goal: becoming a professional training policy for the promotion of rural development and improved living conditions in the Brazilian countryside.

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<sup>1</sup>Available at: [http://www.incra.gov.br/reforma\\_agraria](http://www.incra.gov.br/reforma_agraria).

Due to its main operation strategy – the insertion and permanence of college students in areas of settlement and family farms for extended periods, the designation *Programa Residência Agrária* was adopted (Molina et al., 2009).

The program activities are based on five axes: countryside and development; family and peasant economy and solidary socioeconomics; agroecology, production and sustainability; field education and development; participatory methodologies and research as an education principle.

The professional training was elaborated for the *Residência Agrária* program, considering the material aspect of the work conducted in the areas of Agrarian Reform and Family Farming, based on the actual challenges generated by the political and ideological decision to create a rural development model different from the hegemonic model. It affects the implementation of public policies, especially regarding their social and environmental impacts.

Under the auspices of the Field Education Public Policy, the *Residência Agrária* program agrees with the ideologies and goals of the national movement, mainly focusing on the training of professionals in Agricultural Sciences that will become extension agents in areas of Family Agriculture and Agrarian Reform settlements (Bruziguessi 2010, p.192).

Thus, following field education principles, the *Residência Agrária* program was strongly influenced by Paulo Freire's pedagogy. In this respect, Molina et al. (2009) points out that the methodological strategies of the Program were designed and targeted at the cultivation of dialogic practices, considering the ideas, knowledge and values of peasants as legitimate as the ideas, knowledge and values of all *Residência Agrária* program team (Molina et al., 2009).

The *Residência Agrária* program was developed in two stages: in the first, an experience internship (EV) was conducted and undergraduate students in their last term of the agrarian sciences program experienced immersion in the everyday life and work of settlers and farmers, accompanied by ATER or ATEs technicians. In the next step, the Specialization Program in Family and Peasant Agriculture and Rural Education was conducted. It lasted two years and aimed to train professionals of Agricultural Sciences and related areas to work in ATEs and ATER programs, following a humanistic education, committed to understanding and transforming the living conditions of family farmers and settlers of the Agrarian Reform program.

The methodological approach of the *Residência Agrária* program, which is based on the Alternance Pedagogy<sup>1</sup>, aims to aggregate the activities of the different training times and environments of the two stages. Thus, students participate alternately in college training time (School -Time) and in Family Agriculture and Agrarian Reform training time (Community - Time). At the end of the specialization program, all students are required to present a paper on the work developed (Silva & Miranda, 2011).

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<sup>1</sup>See Silva (2008; 2010)

In this alternating training dynamics, it is possible to identify Freire's concepts (1992), and see how necessary and important it is for professionals working in rural areas to be more than technicians; they should also be educators committed and involved in farmers' struggle for transformation, as social subjects, in a dialogue with other subjects. Thus, there is search for an organic training for the technicians of the *Programa Residência Agrária*, with shared belief in men and in their capacity for reflection, as uttered by Freire:

Let us begin by stating that humankind alone, as beings that work, have thought-language, operate and can reflect about themselves and their own activity, apart from themselves. They alone have been creatures that relate to others in a world of relationships. Their presence in such a world, a presence that means being together with others, leads to a permanent encounter with themselves. (Freire, 1992, p.39).

And in this respect, the *Programa Residência Agrária* was designed in two steps - internship and the Specialization Program – also under the influence of Freire's ideas (1978, p.69) and the perspective that "Education is communication, dialogue, in the extent that it is not a transfer of knowledge, but a gathering of speaking individuals who seek the significance of meanings".

We also highlight the importance of Freire's dialogic education concept (Freire, 1978) for the development of the Pedagogy of Alternation. Lima (2009, p.162) claims that the relationship between School-Time and Community-Time showed all individuals involved (professors, students and technicians) the importance of the dialogue between college training and real life. For the author, the inclusion of interpretive, reflective and practical actions in the knowledge construction process is supported by Paulo Freire (1992), who considers that the relationship between theory and practice has consequences.

In summary, our experiences and analyses of the *Programa Residência Agrária* lead to the conclusion that, since the program involves partnership and dialogue between the social subjects in rural areas, universities, ATER and ATES institutions, there is a new paradigm for the training of professionals in Agricultural Sciences and related areas, aiming at strengthening family farming, sustainable development and agroecology (Molina et al., 2009). According to Bruziguessi (2010), such training plays an strategic role in the consolidation of the Agrarian Reform movement in our society, since it favors cooperation processes and makes students and teachers involved overcome prejudices.

In addition, the students of the *Programa Residência Agrária* highlight the rich human relationships built during their internship. In this respect, according to Bruziguessi (2010), the the “adoption” of students by families of peasants during the Community-Time results in a very close and affectionate relationship between these individuals, especially a strong "loveliness" that, in Freire's (1978) perspective, means life: life shared with rural individuals, their struggles, dreams and aspirations. In this case, affection turns into commitment with each other.



This potential to share lives and the interaction with peasants, their social movements and the university are important achievements. Their different impacts must be maintained and expanded on a daily basis. According to Gadotti (1998), this potential of the *Programa Residência Agrária* and other PRONERA projects led universities to change from an old to a new model, in which professors and students go beyond the walls of the institution, even as the peasants occupy a territory, so as to learn while teaching. In this process, another university ideology has been constructed, step by step; a more pluralistic and dynamic university, mainly committed to justice and social equality.

## **Conclusion**

In spite of challenges and contradictions, the analyses of the *Programa Residência Agrária* show a number of advances and achievements in Agricultural Sciences professional training, aimed at improving the performance of technical assistance and extension to benefit farmers and their social/union movements present in the Brazilian rural areas. In this process, besides the insertion of the *Residência Agrária* program in the PRONERA, and consequently, in the struggle for field education, there is a strong heritage and influence of Freire's ideas. Such ideas, based on the principles of dialogical, liberating and emancipatory education, led to significant changes in the training process, teaching strategies and practices within the public universities undertaking the *Programa Residência Agrária*.

The implementation of the program has allowed professors, students and researchers to develop different relationships with farmers, their communities and social/union movements. This resulted in the expansion of other projects - involving research, teaching and/or extension, focusing on family farming and agrarian reform. At the same time, changes are observed within the universities and undergraduate programs involved. For example, internships that had been previously conducted in agricultural companies and/or large farms alone, will be carried out in small farms and Agrarian Reform areas. In this movement, new research and extension projects are also being implemented in areas of agrarian reform; issues related to the Program have been routinely discussed in traditional agricultural sciences undergraduate programs, etc. (Costa, 2009).

Consequently, altogether, our analyses, reflections and experiences related to the *Programa Residência Agrária* reveal the several transformations that arised from it, mainly the construction of emancipatory education practices and the new political and social relations between universities and social movements. So, in addition to dialogic and collective training processes, the program has offered college students experiences and reflections on the family farming and agrarian reform environments. It promotes an active participation of these professionals in our society and increases the commitment of universities and higher education to social justice.

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