Education and Social Innovation: The Reciprocal Formation

Ferreira Batista, Leonardo; Henrique Helal, Diogo

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Educação e Inovação Social: A Formação Recíproca

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Leonardo Ferreira Batista
Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Brasil
leonardofb.leo@gmail.com

Diogo Henrique Helal
Fundação Joaquim Nabuco e Universidade Federal de
Pernambuco, Brasil
diogohh@yahoo.com.br

Abstract:

Case context: This teaching case discusses the relationship between education and social innovation, based on one of the episodes of the Brazilian documentary series "Destino: Educação – Escolas Inovadoras" (Futura Channel), broadcast by Globoplay, reflecting how education is associated with social innovation in practice. The aforementioned documentary addresses the Projeto Âncora, a school located in Cotia/SP, due to its innovative characteristics highlighted in the Brazilian context.
The dilemma of the Case: With a Freirean perspective of transformative learning, the case, by emphasizing an autonomous education that contributes to the emancipation of those involved, seeks to answer the following dilemma: "Can Education generate social innovation?".
Case closure: The initiatives mentioned allow guiding the discussion in both directions: from Education to social innovation and vice versa. Teachers of Higher Education in Administration, Public Management, Pedagogy, and related courses can use the case in subjects that work directly or indirectly on the topics discussed.
Keywords: Education, Social Innovation, Freirean Approach, Social Change, Teaching Case.

Resumo:

Contexto do caso: Este caso para ensino discute a relação entre educação e inovação social, a partir de um dos episódios da série brasileira de documentários "Destino: Educação – Escolas Inovadoras" (Canal Futura), veiculada pela Globoplay, refletindo como a educação está associada à inovação social na prática. O documentário referido aborda o Projeto Âncora, escola localizada em Cotia/SP, em função de suas características inovadoras em destaque no contexto brasileiro.
Dilema do Caso: Com uma perspectiva freireana de aprendizagem transformativa, o caso, ao enfatizar uma Educação autônoma que contribui para a emancipação dos envolvidos, busca responder ao seguinte dilema: "A Educação pode gerar inovação social?".
Fechamento do caso: As iniciativas discutidas permitem encaminhar a discussão nos dois sentidos: da Educação para a inovação social e vice-versa. Docentes de Ensino Superior em Administração, Gestão Pública, Pedagogia e cursos afins podem utilizar o caso em disciplinas que trabalhem direta ou indiretamente as temáticas discutidas.
Palavras-chave: Educação, Inovação Social, Abordagem Freireana, Mudança Social, Caso para Ensino.

Resumen:

Contexto de caso: Este caso didáctico discute la relación entre educación e innovación social, a partir de uno de los episodios de la serie documental brasileña "Destino: Educação – Escolas Inovadoras" (Canal Futura), transmitida por Globoplay, que refleja cómo la educación se asocia con innovación en la práctica. El mencionado documental aborda el Projeto Âncora, una escuela ubicada en Cotia/SP, por sus características innovadoras destacadas en el contexto brasileño.
Dilema del Caso: Con una perspectiva freireana de aprendizaje transformador, el caso, al enfatizar una educación autónoma que contribuya a la emancipación de los involucrados, busca responder al siguiente dilema: "¿Puede la Educación generar innovación social?".

Cierre del caso: Las iniciativas comentadas permiten orientar la discusión en los dos sentidos: de la Educación a la innovación social y viceversa. Los docentes de Educación Superior en Administración, Gestión Pública, Pedagogía y carreras afines pueden utilizar el caso en asignaturas que trabajen directa o indirectamente sobre los temas tratados.
Palabras clave: Educación, Innovación Social. Enfoque Freireano. Cambio Social. Caso para la Enseñanza.

Introduction

This teaching case is empirically inspired by a school - a non-governmental organization (NGO) - that serves low-income people with social vulnerability (200 children), residents of the community in which the institution is inserted - and has the vision of serving all the audiences. This institution was chosen because it focuses on principles of social innovation and integrates them into education, such as student consultation, participation and dialogicity.

For a better understanding of SI, we need to see it as a collaborative concept that provides it with several actions and several purposes (Ziegler, 2017). It is a phenomenon present in the organizational, community and/or institutional spheres (Neumeier, 2012) that generates social and/or cultural capital in facing social challenges (Vercher et al., 2020). Social innovation results in social changes through its own social actors (Batista & Correia, 2021; Ibrahim, 2017).

In light of this understanding, in an innovative school pattern, self-knowledge and self-analysis guide students in interdisciplinary issues, which develop in them, as social actors, their own purposes, interests of research and acting in the world, considering even social and environmental issues.

In view of the reflections pointed out, the theme leads to questions about the process in which Education produces the social (or vice versa) and how this cycle can be operationalized. For a better understanding, the literature presents the Freirean perspective of Education (Freire, 1996) and its conceptions about an education that emancipates actors for the generation of SI.

This pedagogical approach by Paulo Freire brought, in his theory of transformative learning, the perspective of an education focused on awareness and emancipation, with problem-based learning, as well as participation and dialogue, developed in a cooperative learning environment between students and teachers (Yee et al., 2019). Furthermore, it is necessary to reinforce that, among the approaches mentioned, the one that most uses the understanding of the social context is the Freirean approach.

Generating political liberation and freedom of expression, Freire's work influenced the field of adult education with critical perspectives aimed at building people's ability to act in social, political, cultural and economic contexts (Yee et al., 2019). This phenomenon can be reflected in a transformation of people's view of the world, the interactions between them and the environments that serve as a scenario (Yee et al., 2019).

As an example of this, we bring to the discussion the innovative schools of the series "Destino: Educação – Escolas Inovadoras" (Future Channel), broadcast by Globoplay, whose objectives are to generate autonomy for students, guided by values such as respect, solidarity, responsibility, affection and honesty, which are operationalized in what is called learning in natural activities of life, which would be non-formal education, but adhered to the formal education in these schools (games, books, computers, etc.).

According to the creator, the series presents schools in various parts of the world that have adopted practices and methodologies in order to show educational practices that aim at student development in all dimensions of life, from structuring new teaching models to meeting demands and issues raised by contemporary society.

Specifically, Projeto Âncora, from the city of Cotia/SP, is presented as a *locus* of contextual discussion appropriate to the theme. In addition to being located in the Brazilian context, the institution has a new teaching model, which is divided into learning cycles. In this new style, students study together and learn through research and projects, without classrooms, walls and hierarchy, as the documentary defends (Globoplay, 2016). Thus, the practices of this emblematic case allow the discussion of the way in which

education is associated with social innovation from a Freirean perspective of transformative learning. Reports of the actors participating in these initiatives, which are substantiated within the literature on the subject, present an important pedagogical focus for future classes.

We argue that the theme presented in this case involves an interdisciplinary discussion that integrates SI, management and public education policies, in a theoretical and empirical design with a practical case of the Brazilian macro context. In this way, the present case can inspire teachers and direct classes at various levels of Higher Education in Administration, Public Management, Pedagogy and related courses, in courses that work directly on the topics discussed.

"Mom, I am strolling around. Here is school too!"

The day came up, she brushed her teeth and went to school. Mariana realized that the place where her mother would leave her for most of her life didn't even look like a school at all. It was, in fact, a garden, a place to walk with friends, a temple of meetings, a game room. She looked around and wondered: "Mom is not here, am I alone? Who will tell me what to do?".

To her surprise, no one proposed to be her superior, she was just there to hold hands with each other and present a world of learning that would promise to be the revolution. Mariana, then, began to understand what innovation would be without even knowing what to name it at first. For her, it was unlike anything she'd ever seen and the schools she'd been through.

Âncora is a different school, very different from what we were used to, because it values the **autonomy** of students. So, we need to have the five values, we work on the five values, which are: **respect, solidarity, responsibility, affection and honesty** (Mariana Feitosa – Student).

Figure 1: View of one of Projeto Âncora's spaces
Source: Globoplay (2016).

All of Mariana's estrangement and surprise happens because in her new "house" there are educational proposals and practices that may be associated with social innovation, a phenomenon that translates the act of innovating seeking improvements in social issues. This citizenship-based learning caught the media's attention and soon the Future Channel decided to create one of the episodes of the documentary "Destino: Educação – Escolas Inovadoras" (Globoplay, 2016) with Mariana's school, Projeto Âncora (Figure 1), from Cotia/SP. That's when we got to know Mariana's story and the other students, or socio-educated, who benefit from this initiative.

After an adaptation period, Mariana learned that learning about how to deal with what is public and its importance in society is a necessary path. And her participation in that space and her accomplishments would become increasingly important. She realized that it was worth studying in a different way; that the content is not just the scientific subject, or even better, that the scientific subject can be the social vision, it can be the happening of the neighborhood, it can be the vegetable garden that is cultivated, the person who needs help, the political change they need to see in the world and, even more urgently, in their community.

> Wow! This is really worth it. I want to continue here in high school, elementary school, I'm going to put my children here, because that's when I saw, well, that in addition to having a very strong proximity to the Portuguese language, I saw that it was making sense to me. Every day we are surprised, my mother is surprised, I am surprised by myself, I am surprised by my colleagues at how much we learn here. So I feel very secure about Âncora and my learning (Mariana Feitosa – Student).

At Projeto Âncora, a school where Mariana and her colleagues play, talk, smile, walk, dialogue, struggle with their ideals and consequently learn, their more experienced colleagues, the pedagogical coordinators Edilene and Claudia, explain that they were also surprised by the materialization of the processes and results that they have been following at school.

Edilene (Brito) explains that "the school is organized by learning centers. The cores are: initiation, development and deepening. And the transition criterion between the groups is the level of autonomy achieved in this process". In between these levels, there are different lives, stories, hearts and times of learning. There are, above all, people who live there and who, therefore, demand and have personalized tutoring (Figure 2) and constant monitoring of tutors that they themselves choose. After all, affinity personalizes learning.

Figure 2: Personalized Tutoring
Source: Globoplay (2016).

Mariana's surprise at such a difference in the new school is legitimate. Even her more experienced colleagues – and here the word colleague is emphasized, because the very structure of the school is based on the lack of hierarchy, on the social construction of learning, on collective construction – say that they went through a process of adaptation and today they believe in a teaching without traditional classes, in which the planning is done with the participation of the student. Claudia comments that time is a fundamental resource in all of this dynamic; something that is so scarce for adults, but that can be optimized from childhood.

> We don't do anything for, we do it with. So, here we don't plan for the student, we plan with the student. (...) We teach, because **we do it together**, the student plans. So, the student goes on planning, learns to plan his time, learns to manage his time, which is something very difficult. It sounds easy, but it's not, because, for me to manage my time, I need to know myself (Claudia dos Santos - Pedagogical Coordinator).

According to the conception of the school actors themselves, whether institutional or students, the focus of teaching is on attitude, it is to develop in all participants, in an unrestricted and collective sense, the ability to take significantly valid attitudes for the common good, for the development of people with the power to act in society. All of this is revealed in the conduct of non-traditional "classes", in *locus* not commonly used, such as the garden, the community, the game room, the family and living spaces. Everything can be useful to Education. Edilene explains:

> We have children who are in the literacy, reading, writing, mathematics and attitudes stages, because our work is based on attitudes and values. It is necessary to understand what these are and how we interact with them in this space. The time they remain in initiation depends on each one - it can be a week, a month, a year, two years, three years. (...) We can learn to **deal with the collective**, learn to deal with what belongs to everyone in a responsible, supportive, honest way, so that we can also, in society, be able to use the public restroom, be able to use the public payphone. For that to happen it depends on us. We need to learn to deal with what is public and we learn that here too (Edilene Brito – Pedagogical coordinator).

Mariana observes throughout her educational life that the discourses and intentions are broadly aligned among those involved in the project. Everyone has the view that the construction of learning should be something collective. In fact, this happens in this case. She learned to respect space and know how to deal with her colleagues. Helping is the main verb, since they are all students and educators, since, when talking about Education:

> (...) we are not talking about reproduction, we are not talking about accountability, we are talking about humanizing people, transforming human material in a relevant quality (...) we believe that anyone has the right to speak and anyone has the right to be heard (Vitor Lacerda – Tutor).

Fósforo agrees with Vitor and explains the dynamics in a very simple way, but significant in the process:

> In development, this is already given, right? So, the child who is there, he already has to know how to **respect the space.** She already has to know how to deal with another child. So, they will actually be learning the question of "does anyone need help?", "did someone raise their hand?", the child will. Not necessarily the educator, because when a child helps another, he is studying too, right? The child is being evaluated if they can explain. Teaching the other child means that the first is very good at what he is teaching (Fósforo Quadros – Tutor).

Fósforo's classes enchant Mariana, who never thought she could learn Mathematics and even other interconnected subjects with the help of games, such as Sudoku (Figure 3), a game that exercises human logic in cognitive reasoning challenges, and still has peer interaction. Which is more important: winning the game or developing my cognition, learning to interact with my peers and learning how to learn in different ways? Well, the arguments are all listed in the second alternative, and Mariana follows it.

Figure 3: Different model of class with a Sudoku game
Source: Globoplay (2016).

Classes are just one of the activities performed at Âncora. Edilene continually seeks to show Mariana and her other colleagues that school is a space for decisions, a space for action, for political discussions, in the noblest and most technical sense of the word. It is a space for coexistence and generalized assimilation of content. Mariana, our main character who represents others on an equal level, continues her journey of discovery and enchantment with everything she is learning. Not only did she have different classes and learned from games, she now had power, a power formed from the group; she feels ahead of her time and important in her space. This aroused curiosity and the need to apply everything she learned in her living spaces. But first, let's understand what Edilene has to say to Mariana and to us.

> These meetings to decide on simple things and also complex things of the project, all of them we seek the involvement of all children because, if we are talking about people, we are talking about preparing these people for **social change**, for social transformation, then we have to start here in our day to day. How will she politically participate in the decisions of her neighborhood if she does not participate politically in the decisions of her school? So, what we are looking for is this, this **political formation**. So, she starts looking at the world differently. Not with the look of the complaint and "what they didn't do for her", but "what was my role? what is my role in this improvement? in this change?". We place great emphasis on meetings, assemblies, reflection circles, collective decisions, because that is where we are looking for the citizen we want for our society (Edilene Brito – Pedagogical Coordinator).

Mariana reflects on what Edilene, a person with much more experience than her, has to say about her life, education and her training as a political being and comes to the conclusion that it is not only within four walls that she will with total effectiveness improve her community (Figure 4). So, how? Tutor Marcel explains that Mariana is correct. It is necessary to explore, know and integrate all the places we attend and that we seek as a school.

> In addition to dealing with the cognitive, learning, content, what the school does or tries to do is not staying at school, it is going out, going to the neighborhood, to the community, working outside it, involving other people within the school and getting involved outside of school. I see that the goal is for the school to be just a reference, but it is not necessary to be at school to study, it is not necessary to be at school to learn or relate to other people. We are at a time when this is still necessary, we do it here, but the goal is to increasingly dissolve this, for the **community** to become a big school (Marcel de Sena – Mathematics Specialist Tutor).

Figure 4: Visit to the community
Source: Globoplay (2016).

It was just a school that Mariana's parents were looking for, but they found a portal to life. Mariana follows her path learning and teaching them what she learns. Her future ambitions as a child are more than having a profession. In several fields of teaching, she learns how to be an agent of social change. Increasingly, this responsibility is included in the education of students, or as they are called, "socio-students", and, with this, there is empowerment, critical vision and a more effective and contributory participation of those involved (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Active voice and students' participation
Source: Globoplay (2016).

Everything that happens in Projeto Âncora comes from a management aligned with the principles of social innovation, even if indirectly, since it has the basic pillars of the phenomenon, already listed throughout the text. The child grows up with basic learning through a broad education focused on what can be called its life project.

Here in the project, we are looking for **horizontal management,** but we know that you don't leave one place and go to another as if by magic. Scaffolding has to be built, right? The team is constantly thinking and rethinking how we can manage this space, deal with bureaucratic issues, administrative issues, pedagogical issues, but as a team, not in a hierarchical way,

where the solution comes from the top down, but that everyone, yes, be responsible for all issues of this project, including families through the parents association (Edilene Brito – Pedagogical Coordinator).

To better understand this, we once again count on Edilene, who explains in an objective and exemplified way how Education for social innovation takes place. Mariana, Edilene, Vitor, Fósforo, Claudia and everyone else involved in the project play a major role in this journey, which culminates in motivation, engagement and the desire to see the world as a better place to live, using tools for this purpose, knowledge tools and the feeling of collective well-being.

When the child presents a desire, a need, a dream, you know, which is where we start, there we start to do an investigation. Why do you want? Why do you want to end the garbage in the world? What bothers you? But how do we end up with this garbage in the world? Where do we start? What do you already know about it? And then we start to answer the question, which is what I want, why do I want it, who am I going to do it with, how long will I need, right? What materials and resources will I have available to carry out this work? And what I have to learn, basically. So, from there, what I have to learn... We'll navigate through the areas of knowledge. So, the areas of knowledge, Portuguese, Mathematics, History and Geography will have a meaning, a meaning in this process, they will not be isolated, isolated knowledge that will be forgotten because they do not make sense. So the search is for the **meaning of learning** (Edilene Brito – Pedagogical Coordinator).

The State cannot always supply what we need and few individuals think collectively. However, many Marianas are served by the project and there are many new members of a fairer, more political and more adequate society to our reality. This brings the reflection that Education is an operational instrument in its most multiple facets. José, Mariana's indirect godfather, talks about the world in which she entered some time ago and is already part of her life.

We are in an institution that I can call innovative. And when we talk about innovation, we will have to think about the definition of the concept of innovation. Innovation is everything that is unprecedented, that is new and that somehow brings quality, improvement, benefit, usefulness. This already distinguishes Projeto Âncora from what is generally considered to be innovation. It's not innovative to give every student a laptop. It is not innovation to replace the regular board with a digital whiteboard. It is not innovation to move from year to cycle, from cycle to year. It is not innovation to improve classes. A class must not be improved, a class must be eradicated. Where there is class, there is no innovation. So, what is fundamentally needed more than, in short, all these modifications, which are only palliative, is to conceive and develop a new social construction of learning, because art, the teaching profession, is not a solitary act, it is a sympathetic act. We are not condemned to a profession of loners in the classroom. And solitary is not autonomous. We are only autonomous with others, as a team. To really consider that not everything passes through the cognitive, it passes through the attitudinal. That's it, for the emotion, for the affection, for the ethics, for the aesthetics, and even for the spiritual, if you want (José Pacheco - Co-idealizer of Projeto Âncora School).

Observing Mariana's path, can we say that Education generates/produces social innovation? What is social innovation? Does social innovation also support education? Claudia brings a speech that can help in this understanding. Is it possible to enhance teaching with elements of innovation?

Have you ever seen teaching platform? So, we dared to build one of learning and not teaching. So, on this platform there is everything that needs registration, guidance, organization, everything, everything, so that the student and the educator can relate to each other and that the evaluation is really formative, continuous and systematic, which is our evaluation, which is the evaluation that the LDB law [Law of Basic Guidelines for Education] talks about, but that few people know how to apply. Not here; it actually happens in the process. And, for us, as everything is learning, everything is also evaluation, because evaluation is a synonymous, for us, of learning (Claudia dos Santos - Pedagogical Coordinator).

Well, we can discuss this cycle of self-support between social innovation and education. We already have elements and practices in our hands and even an example of social technology, but we are going little by little, for today we have learned a lot and Mariana is tired. She went to sleep, because the day was full. Now, her mother can ask herself what her daughter has learned and she can answer herself: she has learned to live, she has learned that in a class she must understand what her role is in the world, in society and, more precisely, in the community in which she is inserted. Or will Mariana teach this to her mother, who probably didn't

have the same education as her? Is it possible to have an Education for social innovation and/or to have the help of social innovators in Education? So, what do you think?

TEACHING NOTES

Purpose of the Case

Social innovation linked to educational ecosystems, led by all types of educational institutions, brings formal education closer to communities and civil society as a whole (Giesecke & Schartinger, 2021). Its characteristics and discussions hover over well-defined social actors: traditional and "non-traditional" educational actors – social movements and civil society, social entrepreneurs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

These actors undertake efforts to create innovative solutions with the intention of satisfying unmet social needs within the scope of Education, empowering people and creating social and practical structures (Giesecke & Schartinger, 2021). At this core, it is important to say that the collaboration of actors in the processes opens doors to diversity.

Formal and informal classrooms integrate students of different ages, origins, ethnicities, learning abilities and worldviews, among other aspects. There is, then, a learning process with a greater possibility of developing empathy, tolerance, and, therefore, social skills (Giesecke & Schartinger, 2021).

With this understanding, this case for teaching aims to discuss the relationship between education and social innovation, based on one of the episodes of the Brazilian documentary series "Destino: Educação – Escolas Inovadoras" (Future Channel), aired by Globoplay (2016). Through the episode "Projeto Âncora - Cotia/SP", due to the innovative characteristics of the school highlighted in the Brazilian context, we can reflect on the association between education and social innovation.

As a data source, the series created by the Future Channel in partnership with the Social Service of Industry (SESI Nacional), features 13 episodes of 52 minutes on average. With pedagogical consultancy by Porvir, Instituto Inspirare and production by Cinegroup, the work directed by Márcio Venturi portrays schools from various locations, such as Curitiba and Manaus (Brazil), Rosário (Argentina), Cusco (Peru), Redwood City (USA), Ottawa (Canada), Barcelona (Spain), Pulheim (Germany), Hadera (Israel), Vaatsa (Estonia), Sydney (Australia) and Bali (Indonesia) (Futura, 2018).

Supported by the literature, this analysis contributes to the dilemma of generating social innovation through education and vice versa, having the potential to stimulate the teaching and practice of new types of education, management and thinking about society. From the reading and the proposed activities, a link is created between the management and public policy of education and society, making use of theoretical and practical artifices on social innovation and the tools that compose/surround it. In the meantime, educators/ school managers can make the debate more challenging, adding questions from their own experiences and consolidating the collaborative nature of the theme, which intensifies the achievement of the objective of this case for teaching.

Pedagogical Aspects

For the beginning of the class, it is necessary to organize the content in stages, since the articulated theme is new in most academic discussions. Therefore, we suggest dividing your teaching into four stages. In the 1st meeting, we suggest the presentation of the theory on social innovation and its applications/congruences with Education in the literature and the literature on Education suggested in the theoretical guide of this

case: conceptualizations, general and specific applications of the themes, actors and practices and contextual discussions of the phenomenon. This class can further explore the theoretical guide of this case.

During the second meeting, after a brief introduction on the topic discussed in the previous class, episode 1, "Projeto Âncora – Brasil", from the third season of the series "Destino: Educação – Escolas Inovadoras" is presented, focusing on Brazilian schools, once the context variable is decisive in the study of social innovation. We suggest that the teacher pauses during the documentary's viewing so that he or she can articulate the theory with the presentation of the practices, as well as indicate to the students to optionally watch the episode again at another time.

After that, an explanation and examples of the place where the teacher/student is inserted are presented, plus the experiences of the students. Comparisons between cases can be encouraged, as well as between the cases explained and the literature. Some questions can guide this second moment: Is there social innovation in these cases? What can it offer as an advantage for Education?

In the third meeting, it is expected that the students already have basic knowledge to discuss about the applications of Education for social innovation and the debate is intensified and counts on the understanding of the operationalization of the processes, through the *framework* (cycle) presented still in this section.

In the fourth meeting, the teacher can present a review of the content covered and hold a seminar in groups to discuss what has been debated so far, bringing to the surface a new layer of discussion for the subject, guided by the following reflection: Of social innovation through Education, however, in which aspects, processes, practices can we observe the feedback of the cycle? Does social innovation also generate Education? Like what?

Still in the fourth meeting, the model already discussed can be filled in with practices from schools known to the students, which will enable the analysis of the phenomenon in practice, the classification of processes and a critical view of educational processes in different contexts.

For shorter classes, the four moments can be presented in a summarized way, as long as students are informed in a previous class that they must research and bring questions about the topic and prepare short seminars for the moment. We suggest focusing on the application of the theme, making students understand that, no matter how new the theoretical discussion is in some senses, what is discussed is seen in practice and can guide Education in a beneficial way.

For this, the teacher has an important role of mediator, provoking in the students the critical view that the themes demand. Didactic resources such as boards, slides, mental map constructions, simple debates or formulated from groups can be used at the indicated times. In this sense, participation is fundamental, the voice of the subjects, counter-arguments and the ability to absorb content, seen through reasoned answers, contextualization, intriguing questions and reflections on the advantages of practices in their training and in society. Assessments can be done individually, through open essays, or in groups, in conjunction with group assessments.

Questions for Debate

1. In Mariana's school, is there an Education for social innovation?

2. Understanding José and Claudia's last speeches about innovation, how can we understand what innovative teaching really is and the contributions of social innovation to Education?

3. What does the teaching called by Edilene "attitudinal", focused on social change, provoke in the students?

4. Mariana is surprised with her learning at school. According to her, the keyword is autonomy. Do you know schools or similar spaces? What are the elements of this school that refers to social innovation as a product of Education and as a support for this practice?

5. "Am I in Brazil?": Is the Brazilian context conducive to education for social innovation?

THEORETICAL GUIDE FOR ANALYSIS

The Innovative School and Its Inspirations

In face of a scenario of inequality and social vulnerability, in which the State does not meet all needs (Helal & Rocha, 2013), Education is a vector for reducing social inequalities (Loogma et al., 2013; Pocklington & Wallace, 2014; Schröder & Krüger, 2019), which can be the target of social management practices in addition to public administration. In this thinking, educational systems are not always able to effectively contribute to social innovation and the consequent fight against inequalities, largely due to inadequate pedagogical projects and bureaucratic processes with obstacles that prevent the functioning of an emancipatory education, focused on social innovation (SI) (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014; Correia et al., 2019; Loogma et al., 2013; Ziegler, 2017).

To answer the first question, it appears that, unlike purely technological innovation (Engelbrecht, 2017), social innovation acts as an innovative solution for various social actors, mainly grassroots actors (Batista & Correia, 2021; Ibrahim, 2017), for social problems (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014), in the forms of process and/or product (Neumeier, 2012), being directly related to a given context in which it is inserted (Lubelcová, 2012; Voltan & De Fuentes, 2016). This phenomenon translates into alternative governance (Galego et al., 2021; Unceta et al., 2017) and/or corporate structures, which aim at social change (Portales, 2019; Schubert, 2018; Van der Have & Rubalcaba, 2016), which is present in Projeto Âncora, a case presented for analysis.

Framework on the relationship between Education and social innovation

The second question suggested brings up the operationalization of the relationship between Education and social innovation. The literature on this congruence allows for a broad debate on educational innovations, since Education is the starting point for the production of social innovation. The two fronts together can be considered as a resolute approach to social issues, through creative, effective, collaborative and innovative methods (Chow et al., 2019).

In the same way that Education manages to incorporate social innovation into its scope, the opposite is true. There is a feedback process in which this is presented as social technologies (Brisola et al., 2020; Dagnino, 2014) and/or public policies favorable to educational policies and practices. The authors Duque and Valadão (2017) conceive social technologies as community constructions that aim to solve social, economic and/or environmental problems with the social inclusion of those involved (Duque & Valadão, 2017). This study corroborates the thinking of these authors, reaffirming the argument that social technologies are tools for social innovation and, therefore, can also incorporate the scope of social innovation to support education (and vice versa).

The initiatives are the most varied, as an example from the literature itself: the social companies called InterBoxes, which Chow et al. (2019) argue that contribute to the development of new technologies aimed at facilitating access to education, through internet access boxes and mobile libraries for students in rural China. In addition, there are several other examples in the literature. See the references.

From the articulation presented, the following cycle (Figure 6) manages to represent the operationalization between Education and social innovation.
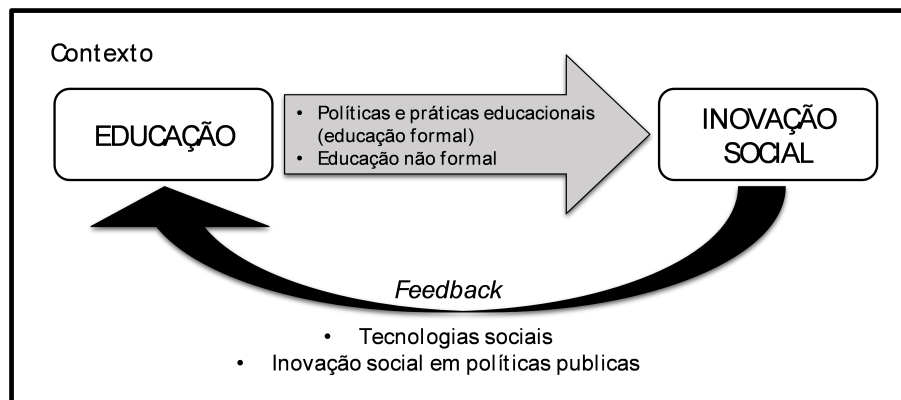
Figure 6: Framework – Operationalization of education in line with social innovation
Source: Created by authors (2022). (Traduzido da esquerda para direita, cima para baixo: Context
– Education – Educational Policies and practices (formal education) – Non-formal education
– Social Innovation – Feedback – Social technologies – Social Innovation in public policies)

The central argument of the presented *framework* (cycle) is: Education is a source of social innovation, which feeds back, depending on its configuration and context. The whole dynamic takes place through educational policies and practices, in addition to non-formal education practices, guided by a kind of transformative learning. The results of these processes are the emancipation of social actors, multi-agent and innovative solutions for social change and the improvement of Education as an end. The following topics present the discussion that underlies the model proposed.

Social Innovation and its Application in Education

To answer the third question, there is an understanding of the phenomenon called social innovation, in which social actors engage in actions aimed at collective well-being (Correia et al., 2019; Gerometta et al., 2005; Portales, 2019), which involve governance mechanisms such as learning and empowerment of the participants themselves (Correia et al., 2019; Windrum et al., 2016). Due to its breadth, it is present in the organizational, community and/or institutional scopes (Neumeier, 2012).

The social innovation has a concept formed from various collaborations and purposes (Ziegler, 2017). In this sense, it can be understood from two perspectives: the institutional view, which conceives it as the result of the interaction between mobilized social actors; and the structuralist view, which understands it as a collective effort of actions for controlled social results (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014).

However, the phenomenon does not necessarily constitute only civil self-organization, given the fact that some narratives also mention the need for public support (Vercher et al., 2020). The public sector, for example, facilitates the exchange of knowledge between communities in the rural sector through training, co-learning and co-creation activities, providing the indistinct connection to the socio-political environment (Vercher et al., 2020).

Regarding the diffusion of social innovation, there is a need for new narratives for the emergence and adhesion of social actors. These narratives, which represent the identities of the initiatives, must be cohesive and compelling and provoke the so-called activation of the community, with a view to reducing imbalances in power relations (Vercher et al., 2020). They must also translate the interactions between the actors, the intended social transformations and self-transformations, such as the educational processes reflected in the learning of those involved, which demonstrates a natural approximation between social innovation and Education.

The field is open, then, for an articulation between social innovation and Education as an area of knowledge, in the sense of inspiring educational practices in theoretical and empirical contributions. In this sense, debates or projects in various layers of society, including community actions (Moulaert et al., 2007), strengthen the reach of social transformation (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014; Portales, 2019; Van der Have & Rubalcaba, 2016), to the detriment of a purely technological innovation. A discussion is now in order about how we should effectively intertwine these paths.

Further deepening the discussion that arises with the third question, it is argued that the articulation between Education and social innovation is still not very present in the literature and is based on the need for sustainable systematic approaches that help in social transformation and the consequent improvement of society (Gurrutxaga Abad & Galarraga Ezponda, 2019; Alden Rivers et al., 2015; Biggeri et al., 2017). Internally, more critical perspectives on the promotion and integration of all stakeholders result in an emancipatory educational process (Santos, 2019; Schröder & Krüger, 2019).

The praxis of Education for social innovation

To answer the fourth question, practical elements foreseen by the literature can be presented only as a basis for students to seek new examples. Thinking about how to bring social innovation and education together in a practical way is the challenge. Non-formal education and in the social educator can be rooted in the thought of the triad proposed by Paulo Freire (1996): naive curiosity, criticality and epistemological curiosity. Developing these pillars generates dialectical thinking, dialogue between conflicting ideas; *praxis*, the practice of ideas; and dialogicity, the results arising from the convergence of dialogues. In this context, there is a coexistence of rival logics that give dimension to social innovation (Voltan & De Fuentes, 2016).

In an educational system, social innovation can be strengthened through the efforts of actors from different segments of society: educators, government, civil society and companies (Bellandi et al., 2021), which corroborates the concept of the quadruple helix of production of knowledge by Carayannis and Campbell (2009) and the link between knowledge and innovation by Schröder and Krüger (2019). In this context, this type of innovation runs through both formal education and other non-formal *loci*. This is due to learning based on co-creation and co-development (Windrum et al., 2016).

In this aspect, there is a reflection for the answer to the fifth question. The emphasis repeatedly given to context is significant when one wants to understand how the processes discussed in this case are carried out. A Brazilian example, among many others, is Education in the countryside, in which the student experiences the learning of the curricular basis added to the sustainable development that the countryside can offer, in line with the needs of the community, in this example, in the Amazonian context (Andrade & Valadao, 2020). Andrade and Valadão (2020) argue that, in this type of learning, youth is formed from their own experience in the field combined with human, intellectual, professional, social and even spiritual aspects.

Within the formal dimension, there is the example of Higher Education institutions (Monteiro et al., 2021). These institutions develop research related to the emerging knowledge of society, and can be widely useful for community development (Bellandi et al., 2021). Contemporary debates even advocate for changes in the curricula of Higher Education courses with a view to understanding the social role, interdisciplinary collaboration and social and environmental impacts. There is an effort by some institutions to train students with basic humanist principles, guided by knowledge, creativity and innovation, aiming at social well-being and sustainable development (Monteiro et al., 2021).

In the new curricula, participatory processes and social responsibility are foreseen in exploratory learning (Nunes, 2017; Vodeb, 2015). In this operating logic, there are the so-called learning and open innovation laboratories - a learning environment in which individuals think, discuss and learn together (Gómez Zermeño & Alemán de La Garza, 2020); open distance courses (EAD), with interactive forums that form discussions on community thinking (Siddike & Kohda, 2016) – except for the contexts of lack of internet

access by some students (Reveley & Peters, 2016); social innovation networks and social design, an alternative model of education through project for professional organizations (Easterday et al., 2018).

Each educational locus will have its specificities, with the fifth question having several lenses for analyzing the phenomena discussed here. In the different perspectives, the context is the key factor for the definition of practices to be adopted. The applications of Education for social innovation must be the result of the social, economic and political conjunctures of the place (Lubelcová, 2012; Monteiro et al., 2021). Societies with a low level of well-being, for example, reveal barriers imposed to collaboration, which demand more challenging actors in relation to the structures (Bozic, 2020).

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