

Malala and the struggle for the right to education of girls and adolescents



<https://doi.org/10.56238/chaandieducasc-007>

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this work is to present the exchange of experiences lived by the executing team of a teaching project developed in a state public school in the municipality of São Bernardo/MA, whose objective was the implementation, reflexive and critical, of methodologies of Sociology teaching. From the interface with different languages – such as cinema and literature, as well as the insertion of social media – we sought to transpose the contents

taught in higher education to the language of high school. During the months in which the activities took place at the school, the institution's own materials were used, such as the book by Pakistani activist Malala Yousafzai, distributed by the government of the state of Maranhão. The young Malala's book contributed to the establishment of debates through the central concepts of Sociology, such as: social and gender inequalities, citizenship, equal right to education – related to the themes addressed in the textbooks and with the syllabus of the Sociology discipline. As a conclusion, it was possible to perceive that Paulo Freire's proposal, centered on valuing students' experiences, constituted a powerful tool to make the teaching of Sociology contextualized, interdisciplinary and plural.

Keywords: Education as a practice of freedom, Academic focus, Malala, Pedagogical practices.

1 INTRODUCTION

The actions developed in the school sought, from the insertion of new methodologies, to awaken in students a critical thinking about the discipline of Sociology, making them reflect on problems present in their daily lives, while exercising a direct dialogue with sociological concepts. To build this interaction between the students and the members of the project, she used as a methodological resource the book "I am Malala", by Malala Yousafzai, in view of the richness of the book, the language, the social and gender issues, discussed by the activist, but also due to the fact that this material was found, by the project team, forgotten in a corner of a room. The number of copies of the book allowed all students in a first-year class to receive one copy – used during the project.

At the time of handing over the books, a student asked if they could keep the book, considering that for most of them it was their first contact with a book, as many only had contact with the textbook or the Bible. Malala's book, in addition to allowing a direct dialogue with Sociology, because it has a more accessible language and closer to their reality, allowed us to enter into several crucial and basic issues of sociological thought. Malala's book tells the story of a young woman who fought for an equal education between girls and boys in her country. Because of his struggle, his life was almost cut short.



By discussing the story of the Pakistani activist, our intention was not only to address the gender inequality present in her native country, but also to lead students to reflect on the importance of education in their lives, a powerful tool for the social transformation of the reality of these young people living in the rural and urban areas of the municipality of São Bernardo.

The gender issue was a problem raised by the team, especially because the room was composed mostly of girls/adolescents. In one of our first meetings, the following question was raised: do women have the same rights as men? This questioning was made based on examples related to the reality faced by Malala, and women in general in Brazil and in São Bernardo/MA. When we asked the students that, if, for example, a student became pregnant, who would stop studying, whether it would be the student or her boyfriend/partner, the class was unanimous in stating that it would be the student/mother. These issues that we addressed in our meetings helped in the process of approximation with the class, since we were strangers to that reality, with a different proposal.

The interaction between basic education students and higher education students (members of the project) allowed us to reflect on their training as future teachers, since the contact between teacher and student is often restricted only to the school space, and the daily life of each student in the basic education network is unknown. We don't know what the day is like or the family relationships of these adolescents because we are often only focusing on presenting the content, and thus we don't have enough time to worry globally about this student. In addition, the lack of a multidisciplinary support team also has consequences.

The project allowed to deconstruct consolidated thoughts and practices among the students about the discipline of Sociology, since it was presented from another perspective, making them reflect on the social context in which they are inserted. The realization of the project strengthened ties between the university and the school community, opening possibilities for future partnerships, and establishing an interaction between the university and the school for future projects.

2 METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in the course of the project was implemented due to the various books available in the school, as we highlighted earlier. The applied methodology included debates, in which sociological concepts were related to the social context of the students, as well as dynamics to activities. As a culmination of the project, students were asked to write letters to Malala, telling her about their lives and how their personal trajectories resembled hers. This proposal, brought by a graduate student who was a scholarship holder of the project, translates the perspective of Paulo Freire, who emphasized:

The reading of the world precedes the reading of the word, so the subsequent reading of the latter cannot dispense with the continuity of the reading of the former. Language and reality



dynamically intertwine. The comprehension of the text to be achieved by its critical reading implies the perception of the relations between the text and the context (FREIRE, 1989, p. 9).

The letters allowed us to interact with the students, and to get to know their reality that we did not know – and we started to know partially. Here, however, we do not want to make a superficial criticism of the work of teachers, but to emphasize the importance of the partnerships established between the public university and basic education.

It can be concluded, from the letters, that our team began to have a greater understanding of the students' attitudes in the classroom during the meetings of the project, in addition to promoting a reflection on the difficulties and challenges of teaching in the basic and public school system, especially when we teach Sociology, at a time when we see an attack on the presence of the discipline in the high school curriculum. Thus, training for citizenship, deepening the understanding of the human, promoting the dissemination of Human Rights, requires not only a solid knowledge of sociological thought and the themes that permeate the discipline and are with reality, but also dialogue with the historical, social and economic context of the student.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The project, which aimed to think and apply methodologies, using different languages, focused on translating the language of knowledge transmitted in higher education into the language of high school. Our compass was Malala's book, which allowed us to build a dialogue on topics such as education, law and gender equality, creating bridges of understanding and understanding.

Teachers ask about the differences between their language and the language of the students, which would be an obstacle to dialogue. This is sometimes discussed as the social relations of discourse, as a political conflict between the standard language and the colloquial language (FREIRE, 1986, p. 89).

Language plays a fundamental role, since through it the content is inserted. However, there is a materiality of the word, and of sociological concepts, which need to be in constant dialogue with the social, historical, political, cultural and, above all, economic contexts – especially when it comes to the Lower Parnaíba Region of Maranhense. In this sense, the project and especially Malala's book, made the students reflect on the importance of education, in view of the lack of knowledge about the activist's country of origin, Pakistan. The prohibition of access to school for women in that country allowed us to reflect on the obstacles to access to education for girls and adolescents in Brazil.

With the threat of school closures quickly becoming a reality, I began to enjoy attending classes even more. In the days before the last one, they decided that wearing a uniform was too dangerous, so we had to go with ordinary clothes. I decided that I would not cower in the face of Fazlullah's wrath. I would obey the instruction on the uniform, but that day I chose my most flashy pink *shalwar kamiz* (YOUSAFZAI, 2018, p. 80).



Education is everyone's right in Brazil. Thus, by presenting this story of resistance against the Taliban regime (which forbade women from attending schools), it rose in the students, but also in the students, the importance that the school had in the life of that girl (recently graduated from Oxford) and how the belief in education can be able to transform the reality, not only of Malala, as well as many women, settling gender inequalities.

For the team, the project allowed a subjective interaction with the students through the letters, at the time of reading, as in Ismael's letter¹.

Well, in relation to what happened in Malala's story and my life, I would say that it has to do with the education that happened to my mother, who did not have the opportunity to study because of her father, in this case my grandfather, who did not let her or my aunts study because he said that the daughter of a caboco do mato has no future. That's why my mother didn't finish her studies, and today she doesn't have a profession, a professional job, but she always tells us what she didn't achieve we can and have the chance to achieve through studies. Because after my father passed away, when I was still very young, I told my mother that it was very difficult for us to raise without a job, without a home, because even that my deceased father's bum left nothing for her and us. And that's why I would say that I'm lucky to have the privilege of studying, and who knows, in the future of a lifetime, succeed in professional work, since my mother didn't have it.

From the letters, we have access to the experience of these students, and perceive how distant contexts dialogue and approach each other in everyday experiences. This is the case of Ismael, who seeks to change his mother's life as soon as he gets a good job, repaying her for the chance she didn't have

I also went through a bad time in my life. I dropped out in the hospital when I was born, because my mother had a lot of children to raise, and with the crisis she didn't have enough money to be able to raise all of us. So my grandmother took me to raise me, I lived with her until I was 16, until she passed away. The pain was very great because it was just the two of us who lived together, we had very good times when she was still alive. So I had nowhere to go. So my uncle took me to live with him, because my mother didn't accept me again, but I'm going to overcome all this, I'm going to be someone in life. Today I work, I'm a car mechanic. I want to be an engineer, I have a purpose in my life: to know (Jesus). I don't have anyone to lean on, my family is only God and that's where I'm going to stand on.

It should be noted that the names presented here were changed to ensure the anonymity of the students, to protect them – a detail emphasized with them during the development of the project – and that, at all times, we passed on the information to the school. Due to the pandemic, we have not yet been able to give the return we wanted. However, this fact will be resolved soon. The months we spent at the school and the trust of the Sociology teacher from the state of Maranhão in our work allowed us to reach this result.

¹ The names used are fictitious, to respect the identity of the students.



4 FINAL THOUGHTS

As final considerations, we highlight the importance of combining theory and practice in undergraduate training, also reflecting on the possibilities and limits of this practice. The more unfavorable the context, the more languages, methodologies and imagination are necessary for the teaching of Sociology. Without this, classes fall into the traps pointed out by current research, presented in the Curricular Guidelines for High School (2006), which are: uncritical translation of the ways and means of teaching of undergraduate teachers. In this way, using tools, such as literature books, contributes to making the discipline more attractive, enjoyable and attractive to students.

With the development of the project, and the application of the letters to Malala, it allowed a reflection on the performance of the regent teacher (teacher of the state network), on the daily life of the students, in addition to providing a high reflection on our own insertion in the school environment. The cards allowed the establishment of a specular relationship and the establishment of otherness. To conclude, we conclude that the project allowed us to understand the educational reality more closely, from within, beyond the theoretical notes.



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