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A future for the Excluded? Learning from Brazil

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Raff Carmen explains the significance of the Brazilian sociologist and social activist Clodomir Santos de Moraes. Carmen looks at his theory and practice of job and income generating capacitation which has proven its feasibility, effectiveness and replicability on three continents for the last 30 years.

Key words: capacitation, de Moraes, IATTERMUND, income generation, interactive learning

Doing enterprises

While the fame of the Brazilian Adult Educationist Paulo Freire, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* travelled far and wide, few have heard of his contemporary Clodomir Santos de Moraes. One explanation is that de Moraes remained largely confined to his native Portuguese (whereas Penguin published Freire as early as 1972). Moreover, Freire, a Christian Marxist, was not only championed by the radical liberation theology wing of the Catholic Church but he also was the WCC Educational Advisor in Geneva during the 1970s.

De Moraes --whom Freire affectionately refers to as '*amigo irmão, velho de guerra*' (1987a: 135)-- shared the same prison cell with Freire in Olinda (Recife). They then parted paths due to enforced exile: while Freire became the great inspirational adult education innovator and alphabetization guru (rooted in critical consciousness or 'conscientization', a term he coined and made part of the English language), de Moraes, always the social activist, became intimately involved with workers' organization and peasant land reclamation movements.

Although an author in his own right, de Moraes never aspired to become a producer of literature. He has been all his life, and still is (1), a prodigious generator of jobs and income. When asked one day what kind of work the organization he founded, IATTERMUND (2), did, he replied: 'None whatsoever'.

What do you mean: "we don't work"?

Well, we do work, and work quite a lot.

Forgive me, but I don't understand.

Let me explain: we ourselves we don't do any "work", because we understand "work" as the kind of activities to which some Institutions and some people in those Institutions have been hanging on to for dear life for a year, for ten years, sometimes more, without any hurry, without any sense of urgency, without, certainly, any rush to get the job done and over with, because, if a Project is finished, so is the job of the operator, of the "doer-of-work". As for us (at IATTERMUND), we do not "do work", we, instead, "do enterprises" (Personal communication by de Morais).

In the end, it is indeed not the work that is 'done for' people, but the enterprises, jobs and livelihoods they can create for themselves and by themselves which, above all in situations of extreme hardship and/or natural disaster, are the sole realistic, solid building block of 'sustainable livelihoods'. Elsewhere, de Morais summarized his philosophy of development in the short Italian saying: *'Prima mangiare, poi filosofare'* (first eat, then do philosophy).

What usually lacking from the array of newly coined development policies of 'Capacity Building', 'Poverty Alleviation' and inspirational --but nevertheless static and abstract 'Capabilities and Functionings'-discourse (Carmen, forthcoming)-- is not 'the what?', as the appropriate, effective, tested methodologies 'the how?'. Just how are the hundreds of millions of the excluded going to capacitate themselves so as to ensure not just temporary 'alleviation' or 'a' job, but, indeed, a sustainable future?

Capacitation

The verb 'to capacitate' and the noun 'capacitation' are neologisms derived from the Portuguese/Spanish *capacitação/capacitación*. Just as in the case of *conscientização* (3), *capacitação* is untranslatable in English as existing English equivalents, without exception, are 'training'-related, i.e. reflecting the transmission of knowledge and skills rather than --as is the case with 'capacitation'-- interactive, creative-autonomous 'objective activity' learning processes. The theoretical roots for 'capacitation' can be traced to the Russian School of Social Psychology of the 1930s, i.e. Leont'ev, Luria, Vygotsky's concept of 'Objective Activity' (*Deyatel'nost'* --see e.g. Wertsch, 1981), which stresses the importance of active subjects whose knowledge of the pre-existing material reality is founded on their interactions with it. In other words, 'capacitation' denotes interactive (with 'the Object') learning in which it is not the teacher, the expert, the trainer, the communicator, the capacity builder or the instructor, but 'the Object which teaches'. The term 'capacitation' represents a generically different (adult) educational and social psychology concept (and practice).

Applied to *moraisean* large group (4) learning in the context of the Organization Workshop (OW), it is the activity of becoming engaged in a complex productive activity (enterprise) which 'teaches' the participants to become organizationally and entrepreneurially 'literate'. 'Literacy' is a purposely chosen metaphor here, as we are in the presence of a genuine cross-cultural transition from one 'culture' of organization and production (i.e. the 'simple artisan's, or small producer's), to another, complex one (i.e. the worker's). By contrast, dominant Lewinean Organization Development (OD) modules of communication and learning (e.g., 'the Learning Organization') are behaviourist-based and typically take place in small groups of relatively affluent, literate employees in existing Workplaces. De Morais' social psychology operates with persons with lower levels of literacy in situations 'where there is no workplace' (5): a point which 'Human Resource' Developers in economies under duress would do well to seriously ponder.

One of the more unfortunate aspects of the apparently endless casting around for solutions to the ever worsening problem of mass poverty and mass unemployment which has brought into the limelight a panoply of micro-approaches as solutions for what, after all, remains a macro problem, is that both a theory and a method of --autonomous and macro-scale-- job creation and income generation not only does exist but has been applied successfully for 30 years on three continents.

What is equally perplexing about this apparent dearth of basic knowledge about Third World theories of management, organization and enterprise generation is that this particular approach (i.e. Organization Workshop) has been operationalized in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe with the active co-operation (and hence definite knowledge...) of International Development organizations such as FAO, ILO and UNDP as well as NGOs (such as CRS) over many decades (Carmen and Sobrado, 2000: Index)

Capacitating Workshops which start from the fundamental principle that 'a massive problem needs massive solutions' (i.e. not just 'micro', although the micro may and does help), need not 'cost the earth' in terms of hyper expensive 'Aid' programmes and projects, either. In a 1997 article in *RUMBO* magazine entitled 'Conquerer of Poverty', Marielos Campos summarizes de Morais' 'capacitating' solution to a mass problem thus:

- It is the duty of the State to create favourable conditions for Civil Society to organize itself into self-generating enterprises It is only in this way that the
- most intractable problem of poverty can be solved - without the need for
- direct intervention by the State.
- The legislation favouring the creation of such enterprises is sorely needed.
- The only way in which those trapped in poverty can escape is by organizing in solidarity --not competition-- with each other.
- All the money of all the Banks will never be enough to satisfy the insatiable clamour for 'Aid': those who give 'Aid' give it pointlessly.
- Unemployment is a massive problem. It therefore needs massive solutions (Campos,1997:27).

An introduction to de Morais and the OW

A Future for the Excluded (just released in May 2000), is primarily intended as an 'Introduction to de Morais' in order to give his ideas and his life's work a wider airing, especially in the English-speaking world. This will hopefully generate the necessary knowledge and critical mass of practice for further and necessary sustained research and theory building. What de Morais has to offer constitutes 'a genuine hope for the rapid transformation, on a massive scale and at a low cost to the public purse, of large groups of people, especially in the countries still referred to as 'underdeveloped'. As well as in the 'World without Work' (Rifkin,1996) in the (post)-industrial societies.

From 'excluded' and objects of 'poverty alleviation' (negative qualification) they become promoters of income and jobs, 'ambassadors of new work opportunities' (Walter Barelli in Rifkin, 1996:192). What 'those who do not eat' need first and foremost, are jobs. People, Citizens, do have 'capacities' and 'capabilities', no doubt --what is lacking most often is a definite theory and a tested method to operationalize them.

Notes

- (1) He is at present working on a national job and income generation scheme (PROGER) in Mexico.
- (2) Acronym for Institute for Technical Support to Third World Countries, based in Brasilia.

- (3) *conscientização*: Paulo Freire did not want to see the term he coined devalued (as well as misunderstood) as 'awareness raising' (Freire, 1987a: 185).
- (4) Workshop participants are always at least 40, and up to 1,000 and more, as many as the local facilities allow. The OW is practical learning experience as well as a real enterprise over which the participants have full ownership and control (Carmen et al, 1999).
- (5) In the words of Thomas Sankara, the president of Burkina Faso (murdered in 1987), he was --as the country's president-- one of the 0.0038 percent of Burkinabè who had a 'Workplace' to go to. 'Human Resource Development' needs real spaces for Human Resources to be developed 'in'. Without the latter there is little point in the former.

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