

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE FREINET MOVEMENT IN BRAZIL

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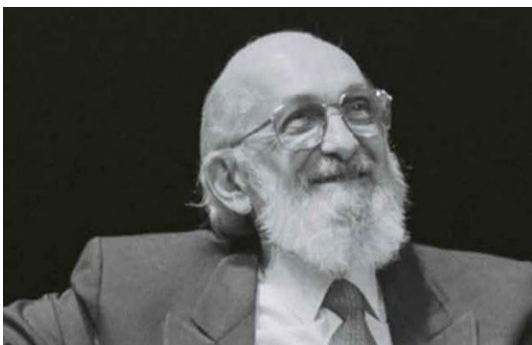
“We reject the illusion of an education closed in itself, that ignores the great social and political currents that condition it.” Modern school letter

The REPEF (Freinet Education Educators and Researchers Network) was created in September 2011 by a group of educators, researchers and managers who already had long experience with Freinet Education. To understand its emergence, it is necessary to go back in time and understand a little of the paths and deviations of Brazilian education and, although in very general lines, a little of our country's political history.



Brazil experienced, from the 60's to the 80's, a repressive regime that lasted 21 years: a military dictatorship. Brazilian education then suffered strong American interference, due to educational cooperation agreements signed with the USA, whose technical characteristics were linked to economic liberalism. In 1964, Paulo Freire was arrested and then exiled. In 1968, in exile, he published his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Pedagogia do Oprimido)*.

It is in this context of repression and censorship that, from 1972 to 1976, the french university professor Michel Launay, came to Brazil to teach Latin Language classes at the University of São Paulo. There he forms groups and makes small meetings, showing the film about the story of Freinet. Launay brings other professors from the French Freinet Movement like Roger Ueberschlag and Michel Bertrand, for lectures and workshops. Thus, in a university and elite environment, Freinet Pedagogy begins to be known in Brazil. Freinet's ideas circulated in a small, camouflaged manner. At a time when declaring oneself to the left could lead to imprisonment, torture, death, the entire political and emancipatory aspect of this pedagogy was omitted and the emphasis placed on its humanist character, essentially linked to constructivist pedagogies. This aspect makes the Freinet pedagogy spread, above all, in private schools. The subsequent emergence of the Brazilian movement will contribute to its entry into public school. But they were still isolated groups and suffering difficulties of interaction / communication that operated in Brazil.



Since the late 1970s, with the failure of economic policy, the military has lost some of the support of the national bourgeoisie. Social movements for redemocratization are gaining strength. The Amnesty law was enacted by the military, allowing the return of political exiles, but also, unfortunately, the forgiveness of torturers under the dictatorship. Our teacher Paulo Freire returns to Brazil and his presence among us encourages educators to innovative and

libertarian practices.

In this phase, the creation of alternative schools will be seen, some of them formed as cooperatives of parents and teachers in the states of Minas Gerais and São Paulo.

In 1981 the Freinet International Pedagogy Seminar takes place in Blumenau, SC, with the presence of around 25 teachers from the International Movement (France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany) giving workshops and visiting schools in Brazil. In the state of São Paulo, a group of educators promotes meetings, but it is not yet legally formalized. Even so, teachers like Rosa Maria Sampaio, Maria Lúcia dos Santos, Gláucia Ferreira, Ruth Joffily, Leila Arruda and others do a work to publicize the Freinet Pedagogy.



At the same time, after the fall of the dictatorship in 1985 and after large demonstrations bringing together millions of people across the country, Brazilian society is progressing in its struggle for rights and democracy. In 1988, a Constituent Assembly is elected, which will promote the expansion of the rights to education. The new openness policy finally makes possible to organize meetings and congresses where educators can discuss their practices.

In 1988, the Freinet group from the South region organizes the 17th RIDEF in Florianópolis, SC. Among the 300 participants, about 200 were Brazilian educators. There we were able to meet groups from other regions of the country and, on the occasion, the first “Assembly” of Brazilian Freinetian educators was held. Then, a period began in which we sought to articulate the different groups and National Meetings were held every two years. The first ENEF was in Campinas, São Paulo, in 1989. The period from 1988 to 1999 was marked by attempts to bring different groups together, but also by the realization of the enormous difficulties we faced, both in terms of distances and economic difficulties, as for the differences of understanding in relation to Freinet's own thought and work.

In 1989, in the city of Bauru (São Paulo), a pedagogical and administrative experience began in a public school, the Center for Renewed Teaching of Early Childhood Education and Primary School, coordinated by Prof. José de Arruda Penteadó. As an Experimental School, a democratic and inclusive school was experienced, in a unique project in Brazil, which was dismantled in 1996 with the edition of the new Law of Guidelines and Bases, which made it a common school and, with that, dismantled the teaching staff that had made history until then. This did not affect the individual and group work of the Freinetian teachers, who would continue to meet and do the work possible in each community in which they worked.

The Brazilian social context continues to advance in democratization and this stimulates and encourages a small number of educators to seek emancipatory and critical educational practices.

The publication of books on Pedagogy Freinet contributes to its diffusion. Among them we highlight the book by Rosa Maria Sampaio, in 1989: *Freinet, Historical Evolution and Current*

Events. This book was widely and positively disseminated, making Freinet better known in the country. The teacher Maria Lúcia dos Santos (whose work was notable in public education) also publishes her book, *Free Expression in Portuguese Language Learning*, in 1991. The work of Anne-Marie Milon de Oliveira, professor at the State University of Rio de Janeiro, UERJ, published in 1995 entitled, *Célestin Freinet: Social and Political Roots of a Pedagogical Proposal* is of great importance, as it addresses political aspects of Freinet's work.

There is an effort to consolidate the Freinet movement by holding Meetings such as in 1996, the Symposium to commemorate the Centenary of Freinet, at the Pontifical Catholic University (PUC - SP), organized by Marisa Elias, Rosa Sampaio and Maria Lúcia dos Santos and in 1999 the National Meeting in Belo Horizonte, MG when Maria Lúcia dos Santos is elected to be a candidate for the CA of FIMEM.

In 1999 several members of the Northeast region separated from the North North Movement and joined groups from the South and Southeast regions. The idea of a Movement was strengthened that would group people by affinities of thought and not by regional proximity. Thus, in 2000 the Brazilian Association for the Dissemination of Studies and Research of Pedagogy Freinet was created, ABDEPP, which was soon officially accepted as a member movement of FIMEM. At Austria's RIDEF, Maria Lúcia dos Santos was elected to the FIMEM Board of Directors, holding the position of Secretary until RIDEF in Bulgaria in 2002.

Thus, from 2000 to 2011, three Freinet Educator movements started to exist:

- ABDEPP/Freinet (Brazilian Association for the Dissemination, Studies and Research of Pedagogy Freinet).
- MEMNN (North and Northeast Modern School Movement)
- MRFSC (Regional Freinet Movement of Santa Catarina)

ABDEPP starts to organize ENEFs every two years, dedicating efforts to bring together Freinetian educators and disseminate their practices.



Brazilian democracy was beginning to consolidate and, for the first time a left-wing party, the Partido dos Trabalhadores PT won the presidential elections in 2002, adopting a policy of conciliation with the bourgeoisie. Despite the limitations, many achievements were made possible through public policies aimed at reducing inequalities and overcoming exclusion.

The Ministry of Education implements guidelines for inclusive education, whose challenges lead educators, trainers and educational institutions to turn their eyes to alternative proposals, as was the case of Escola Curumim, which already had long experience with inclusion. In 2003, the team from Escola Curumim released the book *Palavra de Professor (a): groping and reflections on the practice of Pedagogy Freinet*, organized by Gláucia Ferreira.

In 2005, at the VIII ENEF, held in Campinas, SP, a new board of directors of ABDEPP / Freinet was elected, composed of members from the Southeast region. In 2006 ABDEPP launches REVISTA FREINET, the movement's first publication.

In 2007, at the IX ENEF, held in Caruaru, PE, the ABDEPP board was re-elected, whose balance sheet started to have a positive financial balance. ABDEPP publications are maintained and disseminate practices and studies consolidating ABDEPP as a reference for Freinet Pedagogy in Brazil.

Brazil breathed a climate of economic growth and a reduction in social inequalities. In 2010, Dilma Rousseff is elected the first female president of Brazil. In her “Pátria Educadora” Program, she proposed investing in education the Petroleum Royalties from the recently discovered deep water reserves on the Brazilian coast and of priceless value.



With the spirit of promoting the rotation of ABDEPP management, the X ENEF, in Paraná, is held in 2009, electing the group from the South region. At the XI ENEF (2011) held in Teresina, PI, the meeting presents the report of the management and a series of inconsistencies are evident. Thus, for various reasons (set out in a long letter), a group of educators abandon ABDEPP in August 2011 and decided to form a network: an alternative organizational structure. A new entity was born there, REPEF, which brought together young and former activists of Pedagogy Freinet in Brazil. Some premises inspire us:

- The idea of favoring the exchange of experiences and reflection on the practice aiming at the improvement and understanding that the teacher is a researcher of his practice;
- The conviction that a movement in tune with the spirit of Pedagogy Freinet commits its affiliates to a vision of education and an emancipatory society aimed at the interests of students, especially those of the popular classes, in favor of a formation of democratic citizens and individuals committed to their time and their planetary becoming.



Foundation meeting of REPEF, Limeira, SP, September 2011.

In 2012 REPEF presented itself to FIMEM at the RIDEF meeting in Spain and proposed its affiliation. In 2014 our movement was accepted by vote of the Assembly in RIDEF of Italy.

In Brazil, the last four years (2016 to 2020) have been marked by profound and serious setbacks. We live in a "Democracy in Vertigo"¹. The coup d'état against President Dilma Rousseff in 2016 accelerated and deepened the aggression, the most abject, against our (unfortunately fragile) democratic institutions. The political imprisonment of former President Lula da Silva was the result of a Lawfare process. The trial, based on what is officially called "award winning injunctions" does not present any legally valid evidence, and the sentence mentions only "undetermined facts". Even so, Lula was prevented from participating in the 2018 elections, when he had the vast majority of voting intentions in the polls. A huge Fake News campaign bombarded by millions of robots completed the "job" and led to the election of Bolsonaro, whose plan for the destruction of democracy is becoming more explicit every day. All of this puts Brazilians in a situation of profound fragility and instability, in a real political disorder that has only aggravated the pandemic. Completely denied by the President of the Republic, the pandemic favored only his plan to destroy the sovereignty of the Brazilian people. Faced with huge job losses and in the absence of almost any State aid, the poor, who are the vast majority, find themselves unable to maintain confinement and must imperatively seek "informal jobs" to survive. In number of deaths, Brazil is now the second country in the world, right behind the United States. These are very difficult conditions for the emergence and generalization of political awareness.

We increasingly understand that unity is of vital importance for the survival of progressive forces, not only at the national level, but also at the international level, in order to give visibility to the dramatic struggles that our times are facing. We must build the means, still largely new, to resist the advance of neoliberalism that everywhere threatens democracy and the rights of living beings of which humans are a part.

A question that is addressed in particular to us educators, to all members of our movement. More than ever, "we reject the illusion of an isolated education in itself, apart from the great social and political currents that condition it".

¹ "Democracy in Vertigo" is the name of a film by Petra Costa, released in 2018, which traces the entire process of removing President Dilma Rousseff. Many people see this removal as the start of the scam that continues today. One of the deputies who voted for this resignation, Jair Messias Bolsonaro, explicitly dedicated his vote to one of the most cruel torturers of the military dictatorship, Colonel Brilhante Ustra, who was, according to him, during the vote: "the terror of Dilma Rousseff". In her youth, she really was part of a movement to resist the dictatorship. She had been arrested and cruelly tortured.