

Educational Practice

“The more the people become themselves, the better the democracy”

PAULO: Education always implies program, content, method, objectives and so on, as I said yesterday. For me it has always been a political question, not exclusively an educational question, at what levels students take part in the process of organizing the curriculum. I know that this question has to have different answers according to different places and times. The more people participate in the process of their own education, the more the people participate in the process of defining what kind of production to produce, and for what and why, the more the people participate in the development of their selves. The more the people become themselves, the better the democracy. The less people are asked

about what they want, about their expectations, the less democracy we have.

MYLES: I use questions more than I do anything else. They don't think of a question as intervening because they don't realize that the reason you asked that question is because you know something. What you know is the body of the material that you're trying to get people to consider, but instead of giving a lecture on it, you ask a question enlightened by that. Instead of you getting on a pinnacle you put them on a pinnacle. I think there's a lot of confusion in the minds of academicians as to what you mean when you say you have to intervene.

PAULO: Yeah, it's very good that you said this because I use intervention exactly in the way you use it.

MYLES: Yes, I know you do, but you'd better try to explain it a little better, because other people will misunderstand you.

THIRD PARTY: Myles, in those early days, how did you see your role? How did you evolve your technique of intervention? What did you do?

MYLES: Well, I take the same position as Paulo, that you have the responsibility, if you have some knowledge or some insight, to share that with people. If you have a conviction, you have a responsibility to act on that conviction where you can, and if you're doing education, you act on it in an educational context.

I reacted to the way I was educated, which I thought was miseducation. I thought there ought to be a better way. I've always resented being put down by teachers showing their knowledge and presuming that I didn't have any. The truth about the matter was that I was

in situations like this when I was in school in Brazil [Tenn.], where I knew more than the teacher, and I knew I knew more than the teacher. I started experimenting with ways to get my ideas across without putting people down, with trying to get them to think and analyze their own experiences. So I rediscovered what's long been known, that one of the best ways to educate is to ask questions. Nothing new about that. It's just not widely practiced in academic life. I guess the academicians give you a lecture on it, but they couldn't practice it. So I just found that if I know something well enough, then I can find a way in the discussion that's going on to inject that question at the right time, to get people to consider it. If they want to follow it up, then you ask more questions, growing out of that situation. You can get all your ideas across just by asking questions and at the same time you help people to grow and not form a dependency on you. To me it's just a more successful way of getting ideas across.

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THIRD PARTY: Then it becomes their idea.

MYLES: It becomes theirs because they're the ones who come to that idea, not because I said it or because of some authority; it just makes sense. It makes sense because it's related to the process and the thinking they're going through.

THIRD PARTY: It's kind of subversive isn't it?

MYLES: Well yes, I guess, if you say being subversive is that you try to get your ideas across. I've never hesitated to tell anybody what I believe about anything if they ask me. I see no reason to tell them before they get ready to listen to it, and when they ask a question, then they're