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Global 1968: Implications for Adult Education in Social Movements

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Abstract: May 2018 marked the fiftieth anniversary of one of the most revolutionary moments of the 20th Century. We will address the pedagogical aspects of the movements around the world.

Keywords: social movements, adult learning in social movements, activism, protests

May 2018 marked the 50th anniversary of one of the most revolutionary moments of the 20th Century. We have grown accustomed to think of the date as one that refers to the short-lived French student movement for university reforms and one that almost toppled the French regime. It was the result of a vibrant and spontaneous student movement, which was joined by French workers who held the largest general workers' strike in history up to that point (Singer, 2013). What tends to be overlooked is that, although portrayed by some as the catalyst, the French one was not the only movement of 1968, but, rather, one among many with which it shared similarities. As author Katsiaficas (1987, 2018) has claimed, there might have been a sort of "contagion effect" taking place that made students and others rise in protest pretty much all over the world.

The key moments of 1968 started with the Tet offensive in Viet Nam. In Mexico, the Tlatelolco massacre of students and the Olympics protest by African American athletes marked 1968 forever in the collective memory of those events. In the U.S., uprisings followed MLK's assassination, and repression became violent in Chicago. More activism followed in 1969 with Italy's "hot Spring" in Europe. In 1970, the Black Panthers' Revolutionary Peoples' Constitutional Convention (RPCC) signaled the culmination of the "American 1968", which had seen student strikes on countless campuses, a National Organization for Women call for a general strike of women, and Vietnam combat veterans become leaders of the peace movement. The Chicano Moratorium on August 29 brought together different sectors of anti-war activists in Los Angeles. In Philadelphia, activists joining the Black Panthers called for a new constitution (Katsiaficas, 2013).

In Asia, Mao's Cultural Revolution, 1960 Korea, the Naxalbari uprising of 1967 in India, paralleled movements in the West; at the same time, they provided inspiration to their counterparts in the student movements in the West, as in the case of the toppling of dictator Syngman Rhee in Korea influencing the founding of SNNC and SDS, as claimed by Tom Hayden. These instances seem to give credence to the notions behind an "international movement" which was facilitated by the media ("the whole world was watching") and one that might have expanded for several decades.

If 1968 was a synchronized global phenomenon, what role did education play in it? Is there a continuity, as it has been argued, in later movements and, what has been the influence of the initial pedagogical efforts on the subsequent movements? What lessons do these movements hold for the field of Adult Education in social movements?

Our presentation centers on three major areas of the world: Latin America (Chile), the United States (Civil Rights Movement), and China (Mao's Cultural Revolution). While portraying what was happening in 1968 in these areas, we attempt to show some of the connections and common themes running through the different movements, as well as their connection to May 1968 and later movements. The emphasis is on the educational efforts going on in these social movements, and how these relate to and impact adult education learning in social movements.

The French May of 1968 and Latin America

Guillaume Cuchet (2018) claims that the "cultural revolution" that the French May appears to have embodied actually started with the Vatican Council II of 1962-1965. The influence of Vatican II in Latin America could give credence to that assertion. In Chile, for example, the claim was that the struggle for university reforms there had been launched before the French revolt, an assertion that might have its basis on the brewing rebellion in different quarters of Chilean society, some of which can be traced to the influence of Vatican II on large segments of the Catholic youth and of Catholic priests and nuns. The Movement of the Young Church in Chile, which led priests and nuns to occupy the capital's Catholic Cathedral in August of 1968, is an example of that influence. This occupation appeared to have been spearheaded by the visit of the Pope to Latin America in June of 1968, and shared similarities with the sectors that promoted Theology of Liberation in other places in Latin America. The Movement of the Young Church (young because all of its members were under 30 years of age), as an early and unexpected revolt, initiated a new way of protesting by connecting to and participating in the more radical forms of protest such as the "tomas" (land occupations) in marginal neighborhoods.

As an independent movement (from party association), the Movement of the Young Church was short-lived, since most of its members joined the parties of Unidad Popular (Popular Unity), the conglomerate of parties that had Salvador Allende elected to the presidency of Chile in September of 1970. In the Chilean context, the differences inside the government of Popular Unity (1970-1973) exemplified the radicalization of those sectors dissatisfied with the limitations of the movements of the sixties, but they also made evident how those movements had raised the hopes for a total overhaul of the system.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Coincidentally, Paulo Freire lived in Chile during the period 1964-1969 and participated as a consultant in the Agrarian Reform of the Christian Democrat government (1964-1970). As John Holst (2006) has emphasized, it was in Chile that Freire finished *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1968; as it was in Chile that, by his own admission, Freire radicalized his pedagogy due to his connection to the Agrarian Reform work and to the young Chileans involved in ICIRA. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and other texts Freire worked on during his stay in Chile, are reflections of the sixties' period both in Brazil and in Chile, as well as texts that connect to later struggles in the hemisphere.

Freire radicalized his pedagogy both in contact with the members of ICIRA as with the peasants ICIRA worked with in the Agrarian Reform efforts, although it was most likely not only this work that helped radicalize him but the atmosphere of reform, first promoted by the Christian Democrat government that had invited him to collaborate, and then by the more contingent struggles he witnessed there, such as the ones protagonized by the Movement of the Young Church in August 1968, which had been preceded by the first "toma" of a marginal

neighborhood in “Herminda de La Victoria” in 1967. One demanded the Church become a church of the Poor, while the other demanded a system that honored the right to housing. Both were placed in an anti-capitalist framework.

There is one other connection of Paulo Freire to 1968. In June of 1968, “one month after all that had broken out” (Freire, 2007, p. 90) when “the uprising in Paris and in the rest of the world had happened in May- and it was still going on” (Freire, 2007, p. 90), Freire was able to find 25 works that dealt with the May uprising. This brought home to him the evidence of “a written culture. The uprising had just happened, it was still happening and the French and their allies from all over the world were already writing History. It perhaps points to the “contagion effect” and its lasting effects in later struggles.

The Civil Rights Movement in the Context of the Sixties and of 1968

Much before the French May, and before Vatican II, the Civil Rights Movement in the United States helped organize a number of movements and anti-establishment protests in the US. The student movement in Berkley, for example, was a direct result early on, when some of its leaders became involved in the literacy efforts in the South. Civil Rights leaders had long been connected to educational efforts at the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee. Septima Clark and Bernice Robinson were in 1959 at Highlander in their fifth year of training teachers for the Citizenship schools (Horton & Freire, 1990). By 1964, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee had created the Freedom Schools and Community Centers as part of the Freedom Summer project in Mississippi.

In 1961, the Southern Christian leadership Conference (SCLC) took over the training program for the Citizenship Schools. Martin Luther King took literacy training for citizenship beyond its immediate goals for voter registration to incorporate “a mastery of the various interrelated principles of a socio-political economic nature that determined the conditions of the African American citizenry of the South.” (Holst, 2009).

The interconnections between the Civil Rights Movement and the student movement of the sixties in the U.S. are many. Less studied are those influences on and connections with other places in the world. To give an example, in 1959, in a memo to the SCLC leadership, Ella Baker outlined a plan called “Crusade for Citizenship.” This was a plan for a radical training, which, according to Holst (2009), bears striking similarities to the 1980 Sandinista National Literacy Crusade in Nicaragua: both used the term “crusade” to indicate its mass nature; both used education for building local capacities; both viewed education at the local level as key for the decentralization of popular power and the creation and sustaining of social change.

When the Black Panther Party is founded in 1966, the struggle is taken to another level. Their analysis of white supremacy includes an analysis of capitalism in the United States as well. In their ten-point program they incorporate the main trends in leftist analysis of the late 1960s.

1968 in China: The Cultural Revolution and its Social Impact for Adult Education in China

From its foundation in 1949 until 1976, the Chinese administration remained under Mao’s leadership. Mao’s new educational system also legalized the establishment of various schools and correspondence schools for remedial purposes. Under the principle that education should serve workers and peasants, a major effort was made to build and develop adult education programs for workers, peasants, and cadres. Thus, many literacy programs, evening schools, adult elementary and high schools, and the evening, correspondence higher education etc., were

established and offered to working adults. These efforts and practices greatly improved their education levels. During Mao's leadership, China mobilized and experienced several social, political movements, and economic transformations.

The development of a nation's education, in general, is strongly influenced by its political, social, and economic developments and transformations. So too is its adult education. In return, the enhancement of education and adult education contributes to national improvement. As Freire (1970) acknowledged, there is no such a thing as neutral education. Authentic education is unquestionably political action. Education is either for domestication or for liberation. This has been evidenced in Chinese education, of which adult education plays a substantial role.

The goal of Mao was to enable workers and peasants to become literate and to produce intellectuals who would be socialist minded. There were both practical and theoretical needs in doing so. In practice, it met the social developmental needs, which were the needs for revolution, for socialist construction, and for cultivating new socialist laborers. Theoretically, education to Mao was social ideology, which functioned through the influences on human consciousness, through the knowledge it transmits, and through the training of working skills (Sun, 2001). To realize these goals, Mao used education and adult education to play important roles in helping cultivate the correct viewpoint of learners, the viewpoint of the working class, the masses, the collectives, and the socialist laborers. In 1968, Mao issued the Supreme Directive, which made young adults go to the countryside to be re-educated by poor and middle-class peasants. The same directive sent cadres and intellectuals to the countryside to do manual labor. This was aimed at making them connect with the broad masses so that they would overcome their bureaucratic tendencies and "official airs" (Sun, 2001). Consequently, "schooling was virtually suspended for the sake of 'revolution'" (Li, et al., 2004, p. 452). Adult spare-time schools/universities, evening schools/universities, correspondence schools, and the University TV were shut down. A few remained, but were used for political purposes in advocating class struggle such as literacy programs and spare-time schools, workers colleges, 7-21 Workers' University² and Five Seven University (Dong, 1990).

In summary, Chinese adult education during the Cultural Revolution was utilized as ideological indoctrination for the political movement, indeed undermining the previous 17 years of educational development" (Li, et al., 2004, p. 452). It is estimated that "by the end of the Cultural Revolution, about 80% of the workforce had not finished lower-secondary education; technicians in industry only accounted for 2.8% of the workforce; and managerial personnel did not have appropriate training" (Cited in Xiao, 2003 p. 492), which left an enormous gap for the development of adult education under Dong Xiaoping's leadership starting from 1978.

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