

## **Critical Pedagogy and Community Self-Development. Theoretical foundations of the non-formal educational dimension of local development**

Yorleidis Parra Diburt<sup>1\*</sup> <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7715-8493>

Celia Ledo Royo<sup>2</sup> <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4695-8260>

Luis Roberto Jardín Mustelíer<sup>3</sup> <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0738-6930>

<sup>1</sup>Dirección Municipal de Educación, Santiago de Cuba. Cuba

<sup>2</sup>Universidad de Oriente. Cuba

<sup>3</sup>Ministerio de Educación, La Habana. Cuba

\*Autor para la correspondencia: [yparradiburt@ps.sc.rimed.cu](mailto:yparradiburt@ps.sc.rimed.cu)

### **ABSTRACT**

This article addresses the theoretical foundations of the non-formal educational dimension of local development from the perspective of sociological sciences. From the analysis-synthesis, induction-deduction and content analysis, the submission of the educational aspect was revealed, as well as its non-conception and explanation as an independent dimension, in the evolution of the dimensions related to this type of development. As a result of the theoretical systematization carried out, it is based on the Sociology of Education, in the field of the non-formal educational modality, Critical Pedagogy and Community Self-Development as the theoretical trends that support it.

**Keywords:** Sociology of Education; Critical Pedagogy; Community Self-Development; Non-Formal Educational Dimension; Local Development.

## **Introduction**

At the international level, historically, a series of efforts, resources and actions have been devoted to promoting development. The intentions and directions of application of agendas, models, approaches and paradigms have led to a marked variety of typologies of development: economic, social, endogenous, sustainable, and local. In this sense, the various conceptions of development and the adjectives it has received are merely sides of the same process, which emphasizes one or another dimension or principle of development. The multidimensionality is accentuated when it refers to its local particularity.

Researchers and scholars at the international level emphasize in the look at local development (LD) notes associated with the dimensions in general in which economic issues have been prioritized, not educational ones. Their study has allowed the more or less coincident assumption of dimensions such as structural, economic, social, cultural, sociocultural, political and administrative, environmental, technological, political, legal and political-institutional; in the face of which, the educational dimension appears subsumed as one more aspect in its generality, in the social, cultural or sociocultural dimension.

In Cuba, both the doctoral research in the last three years with emphasis on Díaz-Canel (2021), the policy that regulates the National Economic and Social Development Plan until 2030, Draft Guidelines of the economic and social policy VI Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba (CCP) and its promotion by several institutions and organizations reaffirm the explicit demand on the work with the DL. In them, the look at education has been limited to social and cultural studies. They stand out in their particular approach as a category, in sociology, Romero (2013), Rivero (2014), from studies that address the educational reality of school networks and centers, defended in the Cuban context as doctoral theses.

These analyses have in Sociological Sciences, particularly education, as a starting point. In this sense, the authors ratify that in this field, and not only in the Cuban context, there are still limited studies from this particular sociology, in relation to the DL and the non-formal educational modality, while it has not been substantiated as an independent dimension. The study of the Non-Formal Educational Dimension of the DL (DENFDL) becomes then a necessity, to overcome the traditional reductionisms of formal contexts par excellence and the opening of the sociological look to these processes, from the Sociology of Education and Development, since there is a unitary conception of

methodologies, procedures, techniques or methods that until now have served as explanatory basis of the referred dimension, which requires a response from the Social Sciences.

These are the reasons that justify the research problem that responds to the question of which theoretical tendencies from Sociology support the non-formal educational dimension of the DL. Hence, the objective is to establish the theoretical tendencies that support the non-formal educational dimension of the DL from the Sociology of education.

## **Development**

Talking about development is a topic of historical interest and concern for society in general. The term has been one of the most widely used definitions in scientific research. The vision of development varies according to disciplinary approaches. Its conceptualization has favored the passage through various views until its concretion in the spatial dimension, which has led to its adjectivation and the appearance of developments such as: territorial, regional, local economic, local, decentralized, endogenous, and exogenous, and each one with its own identity.

In their local particularity, such arguments also condition the dimensions that each of them may be defining. This translates into the coincident recognition of four or five: economic, cultural, political, environmental, social, the integration of more than one element as a condition for the conception of new dimensions. The assumption or approaches to the dimensions associated with the LBP discussed above ratifies that the educational element is indeed an explicit absence in its approach as such. They account for its closest expression and the inference of its treatment within the social or cultural aspect.

On the other hand, the specific analyses of the modalities or types of education allowed the study to be located in the non-formal educational modality, as a response to the inertia that the formal educational contexts have in terms of the DL. In addition to this, there is the possibility of entering a disadvantaged educational scenario in terms of the analyses in this sense and its real possibilities of contribution, from the educational action for this purpose.

The non-formal in the framework of the present study refers from the educational, to its presence, not in opposition to formal education with normative superiority in practice, organization and social recognition regarding the practice of DL. All of which has led to the emergence of training programs, projects and methodologies that focus their attention on a non-school aspect, but just as necessary. It is associated with community and civil society groups and organizations (being the one that at the time was considered to be able to make a special contribution to training in developing countries) (Barreiro, 2015, p. 2).

The systematization of the research references allowed determining regularities in their realization:

- ✓ In Cuba, topics such as the look at educational participation in elementary school, proposals of procedures for the management of the link: subsidiary-Ministry of Higher Education (Mes)-municipality, popular education, and methodologies for the development of professional competences in social communicators for the DL are privileged, so that an absence of approach to the educational processes that take place in non-formal contexts is recognized.
- ✓ Other analyses in relation to the dimensions of DL, exposed in the research, show the submission of the educational element and its limited approach in this sense, seen from the formal practice of knowledge management from the universities.
- ✓ The maintenance of centralized control mechanisms, working styles and methods that do not aim at integration and articulation predominates, despite the development discourse on decentralization and the achievement of participation.
- ✓ There is evidence that the actors with the necessary knowledge for the DL are not always located in the formal educational institutions, and that they have insufficient influence in terms of the DL, as opposed not only to the presence, but also to the actions of educational agents in particular contexts.
- ✓ The school, without distinction of levels, is the scenario par excellence for research, although it does not deny its possibility of being carried out in other contexts.

These expressed contradictions ratify not only the need, but also the possible potential of the participating educational agents and subjects to confront the DL processes. This is where the DENFDL is located. It is necessary to understand it as that which:

It reinforces learning as an added value and main gain derived from any cultural process, which transversalizes the rest of the dimensions conceived for local development, promotes the development of functional-complementary social relations and participatory educational processes from endogenous potentialities and in coordination with exogenous actors from information, training and formation (Isalgué, 2015, p. 5).

Based on this, it is agreed that education is present in society, regardless of the type or modality of education. When we talk about DENFDL, then, it acquires particularities in the DL, due to the participants. In the traditional logic of locating the actors and agents of the DL, in relation to educational actions, it is common to find the idea of their recognition as beneficiaries, which implies that they are depositaries of the actions and not subjects of the action itself, a conception that we try to overcome from the theoretical assumptions that are assumed. It is understood that the individual or collective educational agent is the coordinator, facilitator of the processes and actions, while the individual or collective actor is the participating subjects, with direct action in the DL, even when these roles can be interchanged.

The study not only of educational processes, but also of the social relations involved in them, leads us to Sociology. This science acts as a theoretical and methodological basis for the sociology of education. It starts from the transcendence of educational processes, whether institutional or not, in the internalization that the individual makes of society, as well as in the configuration of his personality and social relations (Rivero and Proveyer, 2005, p. 3). In this same sense, the aforementioned authors point out that:

The sociological interest in the school has generated various theoretical and methodological frameworks, which, despite coinciding in starting from the education-society relationship, differ according to the functions and effects attributed to it, as well as by the methodological perspectives assumed to explain its development. In this sense, there is consensus that four fundamental frameworks stand out: structural-functionalism, Critical Sociology, the New Sociology of Education or Emerging Sociology, and the Sociology of Education of the 1990s (pp. 3-4).

The analysis-synthesis as a method facilitated the realization of a summary by the authors based on the consultation of (Rivero and Proveyer, 2005, p. 6), which reflects three main

aspects applied to education within structural-functionalism (Technological Functionalism, Human Capital Theory and Reformist Functionalism), theoretical perspectives that are parallel. Structural-functionalism (post-World War II) seeks conservation and social equilibrium. It constituted a great educational expansion, under the perspective that schooling is an important process in the development of society understood as a tool for social action and control.

The critical sociology of the 1960s, inspired by the theory of conflict, is also inscribed in this path, shifting towards social conflict. It insists on cultural and social reproduction. With the New Sociology of Education or Emerging Sociology, the micro-sociological visualization of processes and the idea of the hidden curriculum appeared, taking interest in issues of educational inequality, social and racial movements and the real lack of educational opportunities. It is a questioning of the functionalist conception of society, moving towards political and social conflict. It defends society as divided into classes integrated by political, economic and cultural hegemony, social class in the school system.

The Educational Sociology of the 90s of the 20th century has theoretically and empirically redefined the relationship between education and employment and the Human Capital Theory resurfaces. It speaks of training as a fundamental factor for economic evolution and international competitiveness, emphasizing not quantity but quality, and the training ideal appears to be linked to the world of work. Within this framework, Critical Pedagogy gains strength and with it the subject as the center from which it claims to be the maker of its own history and stresses the importance of differences for emancipation and the need to break with the equivalence between these and inequalities (Rivero and Proveyer, 2005, p. 19).

These constitute the theoretical perspectives that are inscribed in this special sociology. The analysis of the main theoretical trends made it possible to expose that:

- ✓ After the 1990s, there is a stage from which it has been difficult to establish a single path, nor the distinction of a specific theoretical framework.
- ✓ There is a tendency to position studies based on structural-functionalism at the macro level or to demonstrate its existence in educational practice as a reproducer of social asymmetries.
- ✓ In connection with the DL, the regularity is in placing knowledge management (Sociology of knowledge) as a theoretical positioning for its explanation with

educational processes and not the sociological theories of education, as another possible path.

- ✓ The theoretical positions that are mostly linked to principles or axes of the DL such as equity, gender, participation, are located from the 60's, mainly the 90's of the last century.
- ✓ The application of their respective conceptions is generally applied to the school as an educational scenario.

From the previous analysis, critical pedagogy was selected. Now, why does this positioning contribute to the foundation of the DENFDL, what does it contribute?

It arose as a result of the work of critical theory during the 1980s and 1990s. Critical theory was the product of the influence of several scholars of the Frankfurt School. It is an essential element for the construction of a new man, taking into account that this man is the main subject of the process of change.

López (2010), regarding what is understood by critical pedagogy, defines it as an emancipatory approach to training to understand and solve problems related to pedagogical practice, through research, critical reflection and awareness aimed at transforming praxis, where truth is questioned in the field of practice, not theory (pp. 8-9).

All of the above summarizes the principles (López, 2010, pp. 15-18) (the Theory and Practice Relationship, Dialectical Critical Rationality, Contextualization, Collaborative Deliberative Action-Research and Ethical Purpose) and aims (López, 2010, pp. 20-33), to achieve a moral and political foundation in the learners, towards a conscious praxis in conjunction with a transformative reflection. The dialogic instance as a pedagogical encounter. To promote participation, radical democracy and empowerment in the students. The educational context and the social context as a place of intervention. The vital experience and the desire on which it is based.

It is recognized, from the content analysis, that it contributes in this sense to the DENFDL:

1. An approach from which interaction is based on the fact that the subject is the center of the process and not the object of it.
2. Ratifies the need for the social reproduction of internal and external relationship structures for the sustainability of the subjects within it.

3. Facilitates the explanation of the social dynamics given in non-formal educational processes, as participatory and dialogic flexibility.
4. It enables a micro view of the educational processes, as local and communitarian.
5. It addresses social structures that perpetuate inequality and injustice, and therefore serves as a basis for explaining the inequities found in the DL.
6. Analyzes inequalities in education, intertwined with the local reality. In this case, expressed in the non-exploitation of the potentialities of the agents and subjects in the field of the non-formal educational dimension.
7. Promotes active participation, critical reflection, empowerment of individuals and social transformation, all of which are necessary in educational scenarios aimed at the DL.
8. It has an integrative nature in terms of theory and practice; it invites reflection of the subject in relation to his/her practices, the environment, the reality of the context and the subject him/herself. This particular has a direct relationship with the LLL, which is essential, especially because of the necessary multidimensional vision and transversalization of the dimension.
9. It allows the observance of the social relations contained, as an object of analysis in addition to sociology in any of its special branches and particular subjects.

Another position is considered, which serves as a basis for the present study, this time, from the DL, particularly the community approach to relationships: the community perspective, a theoretical-methodological conception developed by the Center for Community Studies of the UCLV, the Paradigm of Community Self-Development. This is conceptually assumed as: the process of gestation of the community expressed in a growth in health where participation and cooperation are increasingly conscious (Alonso *et al.*, 2004, p. 1).

"Perspective of analysis of reality and alternative for the solution of problems; that is, the community treatment of problems from the gestation of participatory solutions that are based on the symmetry of the social relations that are stimulated" (Alonso and Diaz, 2021, p. 331). It starts from its own positions in which it is specified as: critical awareness as a premise of willingness to change and a new attitude towards reality, critical overcoming of relations of social asymmetry through participation and cooperation, gestation of transformation projects gestated from critical awareness and modification of community



reality as a creative act taking into account the circumstances and internal potentialities of individual and collective subjects.

According to Alonso, Riera and Rivero (2013):

In the face of that which is dominant, our conception of community self-development is then the emergent, the response that, from the already existing potentiality in reality to wage the emancipatory struggle, we apply as a tool to make possible the transformation of reality from the mobilization of the oppressed. (p. 14).

Its contributions to the foundations of the DENFDL are given as follows:

1. Promotes the emancipation of individuals, dialogue and symmetrical social relations.
2. Establishes the collective project, as a mechanism of expression of participation and collaboration, so necessary in the DL.
3. It allows the analysis and expression of the community, as a transversal axis, particularly in the complementary social relations in its maximum expression.
4. It facilitated the operationalization of complementary relationships from a theoretical and methodological point of view and the particularity of the integral vision of the dimension, by containing not only the formation of capacities or training (traditional view), but also integrating information and training.
5. It allowed identifying participation within the dimension, as a type of social relationship necessary in the educational processes within the DL.
6. It encourages the identification of their own educational needs, problems and possible solutions.
7. It contributes to the expression in social networks of the educational agents.
8. Encourages the use of participatory methodologies in educational processes.

All this makes it possible to deal with

1. Vertical, sectorial logics, even though they often arise from the encounter with the other.
2. Instituted formal logics that generate social asymmetries.
3. Concentration and reproduction of power logics.
4. Permission of obstacles from the instituted that slow down the instituting.

Its location in this section is possible, since the authors consider it to be a higher stage than Critical Pedagogy, within the Sociology of education, particularly for the analysis in relation to the DL. It faces, from these conceptions, logics and relations contrary to the community ones.

The DENFDL becomes an emergent, inherent to the DL, and in view of the need to overcome the tendential explanations of the theoretical treatment of this topic from knowledge management, or at least to demonstrate its possibility of explanation from other theoretical positions, both from Sociology (education and development) contribute to explain it.

In their contributions it is possible to appreciate coincidences between them, so that they can complement each other effectively in their foundation from the strengthening of educational agents within the dimension for social transformation, active participation from reflection and action in decision making in the DL and criticism of their environment. They support the analysis of inclusive educational processes and horizontal social relations and question the power structures, so necessary to confront the bureaucratism and centralization prevailing in the DL, despite the discourse of decentralization.

The first position, in the sense of the research, is the focus for understanding the importance of the subject as the center of the educational processes in terms of the DL and the approach to other educational modalities that privilege their attention. All this will contribute to overcome the contradiction with the explicit demand on the importance and actuality of the training processes to face the DL within the framework of the updating of the economic model from the guidelines and the social relations between these actors linked to the DL.

## **Conclusions**

The Sociocritical Paradigm, in the particular framework of Critical Theory from the Sociology of Education, with emphasis on Critical Pedagogy, and Community Self-Development, contribute to situate in the sociological view and explain the DENFDL. These positions manifest common aspects in the observation that is made, such as the foundations and purposes, the subject as the center of the process, the importance of dialogue and participation among and of the subjects, and the development of critical

consciousness as aspects also included in the structural and functional logic of the dimension being worked on.

In connection with the DL, the foundations contemplate from the definition of DENFDL, its operationalization as a variable, operational definition of non-formal educational processes (information, training and formation), functional-complementary relations based on participation, as structures that sustain it. All this configured the application of such perspectives under the intention of unveiling education as a transversal axis of the DL, and the subject as a participant and maker of his own transformation process from critical reflection.