

Editorial

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The University Overflowing: Education and Pedagogies of Protest

*It matters what stories we tell,
to tell other stories.*
Donna Haraway

Studies in education have been constituted in an interdisciplinary way in an effort to explain the complexity that inhabits educational spaces. Analyzing and understanding places, individuals, circumstances, and educational practices, which go beyond the space of the school, requires broad and interconnected theoretical frameworks because student and teacher identities themselves are made up of many facets as well.

For this reason we believe, in this issue of *Diálogos sobre educación*, that our reality demands urgently to be considered in the light of the social movements that are interwoven with education. A particular example of this is recent events in university campuses around the world, but especially in our region; namely, what has happened in the United States with the demonstrations in favor of Palestine and against the American government's support of the State of Israel. Since late 2023 we have witnessed, after the conflict between Israel and Gaza –that has derived into a genocide – grew worse, a wave of student protest that has shaken universities in our neighboring country. Although it started as isolated demonstrations of solidarity with the plight of Palestinian people, in the spring of 2024 it gradually became a political movement driven by students that demanded educational institutions take a position about the war and the violations of human rights in Gaza. Students organized marches and set up tent camps, which was responded with suspensions of students and teachers, evacuations, and arrests. But these protests were not an isolated phenomenon: on the contrary, universities showed, once more, the political character and the tensions that constitute them.

This can be read as an educational process in itself, a form of pedagogy that emerges from the students themselves and questions the ways in which universities produce, reproduce, give value to and distribute knowledge. Demonstrations – this time in favor of Palestine but in the past, as it happened in 1968 against the war in Vietnam and in the particular case of Mexico aga-

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inst an authoritarian government, police abuses, and in favor of university autonomy – become eyeglasses to observe education as a political practice, universities as spaces in dispute, and students and teachers as historical subjects with agency who take part in shaping the common.

Thus, in this reflection that aims to recognize the scope of education, in this case university education, as a possibility of shaping the public, the political, and dignity, we link the protests with the notion of creating awareness proposed by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (2022, 2022a), for whom education meant a process of liberation that enables the oppressed to interpret critically their reality with the aim of transforming it. In this framework, education is far from being a practice of domestication, just like a university is not an entity detached from social conflicts. At any rate, it is a path towards an ethical, political, and human formation.

Students who mobilize politically are doing a critical reading of the world that entails questioning the structures of colonial power, gender violence, and social inequalities, to mention a few, as well as university funding, censorship, and authoritarianism within the educational institutions themselves. In this sense, there are political actions that exceed this prism and become pedagogical practices. They learn in the praxis, teach by challenging, and constitute new forms of expressing dissent.

In his proposal about public pedagogy, American cultural critic Henry Giroux (2003) argues that social movements may act as forms of non-formal education that contend for the prevailing popular wisdom and make space for new horizons of the possible. In the case of student protests, this pedagogy is expressed in the encampments, assemblies, marches, self-managed classes, off-classroom workshops, and performative interventions that recognize other narratives of the conflict.

Hence, social movements in their link with education account for diverse epistemological and disciplinary horizons. Through sociology, the actions mentioned above bring into play the role of youths as political actors. Far from the normative – and violent – idea of the student as a passive receiver of knowledge, student protests in different moments of history allow us to dimension the student, this subject of education, as producer of meaning and agent of the collective, concerned with the need for changes to happen.

Students and teachers occupy university spaces with music and banners, with their own bodies, reshaping the educational institution. Following Chantal Mouffe (2013), we argue that the university is not a neutral space: to the contrary, it is a territory of diversities and antagonisms where the political, the present, and future possibilities are in dispute. As it happened – and happens – in some countries in South America as well as in Mexico, universities are also spaces for memory, for dispute of the historical narrative, and for the defense of inclusion and compliance with human rights. In sum, political actions produced in university campuses by actors of education constitute a phenomenon that articulates political action, critical pedagogy, and epistemic dispute.

Finally, we believe that social movements cannot be considered nationally because they demand a reading across borders, sensitive to local struggles and open to local links in which education becomes transparent as a flexible, multi-situated process, that goes beyond the university or constitutes it in ways other than the hegemonic ones we have known throughout history. That is why we are thankful to Dr. Itzel López Nájera for having proposed this always pertinent debate that we believe has not been highlighted enough yet in the field of studies in education. Her effort and scholarly rigor assures us that this issue of *Diálogos sobre educación* will be of great interest and lead to a very enriching dialogue.

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