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"LLEGAR A ALGÚN LUGAR EN LA VIDA" – JOVENES MARGINADOS CON ÉXITO EN SUS TRAYECTORIAS DE EDUCACIÓN EN RIO GRANDE DEL SUR, BRASIL.

Resumen."Llegar a algún lugar en la vida" es el objetivo de muchos jóvenes salidos de grupos sociales marginales en Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil. Ellos han experimentado un ascenso social través de su inclusión a algún proceso formal o informal de formación, y fueron invitados a participar del proyecto de investigación internacional "Trayectorias de integración en el proceso de educación". Estos actores hablan de sus trayectorias personales y de sus éxitos profesionales en entrevistas narrativas. Este artículo presenta algunos resultados, re referencia a cuál es la importancia de la familia, de la religión, de la solidaridad y la identificación con respecto a la educación frente a una emergente sociedad del conocimiento.

Palabras claves: integración, educación, jóvenes, ascensión social.

"TO GET SOMEWHERE IN LIFE" – MARGINALIZED YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SUCCESSFUL TRAJECTORIES OF EDUCATION IN RIO GRANDE DO SUL, BRAZIL.

Abstract. "To get somewhere in life" is an aim formulated by many young people who are members of marginalized social groups in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. Through a process of informal and formal education they have achieved social advancement, and were invited to participate in the international research-project „Trajectories of integration in the process of education". In narrative interviews they reported their personal trajectories of educational success. The present article reflects some of their key issues, such as the importance of family, religion, solidarity and the identification with education against the setting of an emerging knowledge-based society.

Key-words: integration, education, youth, social advancement.

"ARRIVER À QUELQUE CHOSE DANS LA VIE" – JEUNES MARGINALISÉS AVEC SUCCÈS DANS LEURS TRAJECTOIRES D' ÉDUCATION AU RIO GRANDE DO SUL, BRÉSIL.

Sommaire. "Arriver à quelque chose dans la vie" est un but exprimé par plusieurs jeunes issus de groupes sociaux marginalisés au Rio Grande do Sul, Brésil. Ils ont atteint, à travers un processus formel et informel de formation, l'ascencion sociale et ils ont été invité à participer au projet de recherche international „Trajectoires de l'intégration dans le processus de l'éducation". Ils racontent leurs trajectoires personnelles et leurs succès professionnels dans des interviews narratives. Cet article présente quelques-uns de ces résultats, comme l'importance de la famille, de la religion, de la solidarité et de l'identification à l`éducation face à une émergente société de savoir.

Mots- clés: intégration, éducation, jeunes, ascencion sociale.

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"TO GET SOMEWHERE IN LIFE" – MARGINALIZED YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SUCCESSFUL TRAJECTORIES OF EDUCATION IN RIO GRANDE DO SUL, BRAZIL.

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1.- INTRODUCTION.

On an international level, the access to institutionalized education for juvenile members of marginalized social groups is limited. Yet, there are exceptions who achieve social ascension through a process of informal and formal education. The study of marginalized young people with successful trajectories of education gives insight to individual strategies of social ascension. These strategies show similarities despite of the specific socioeconomic or sociocultural situations of each individual. The international research project „Trajectories of integration in the process of education" compares the target-group of marginalized youth in Europe (Germany), North-America (California) and South-America (Brazil), taking into account, that an international comparison needs to consider the different social structures of the respective countries (cf. Iwasso, 2007)[1]. Unlike in Germany and USA, successful education in Brazil can not necessarily be judged by a higher standard of living, usually achieved by means of college education, as an indicator of social inclusion. On the one hand, this results from objective conditions of the society, with certain inherent mechanisms of exclusion, on the other hand from subjective conditions of the young people affected by exclusion, which finds expression in their attitudes to life.

In Brazil, the study was realized in Rio Grande do Sul, in the area of Santa Cruz and Porto Alegre with ethnic and social minorities, including young afro-brazilians, teuto-brazilians, or young people with other migration backgrounds, residents of peripheric and rural areas, like young farmers, descendants of quilombos (settlements of escaped slaves) and Indian reservations and as well with disabled young people. Within this sample of young people, there are rarely persons with a complete highschool or college education, because they are located at the margin of society, where it is more difficult to reach institutionalized resources facilitating successful education. The target group of the study was composed of these exceptions that managed to leave their marginalized position for a better social position through a process of education.

In narrative interviews, the participants described their trajectories of education, its phases, situations, critical moments and turning-points, as well as positions in the sense of attitudes to life which they found important for their educational success. Analysing

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their narratives from a sociological point of view, it became clear, how much these young people depended on public politics, but often this fact was not considered in their narratives. Apparently, these young people did not realize to which extent public politics could facilitate their lives, especially concerning social mobility, as a lot of their strategies were based on the support of their families.

2.- THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FAMILY.

An important influence on the life of these young people consists in the situation of the family. The majority of the interviewees appreciated the education provided by their families during their childhood, regardless of knowing, that many times essential resources for a more adequate education had been missing. Quite a few of them had experienced solidarity within the family from childhood on, in a situation of mutual support, trying to improve the situation of the family. There were various cases in which the parents worked a lot in order to gain access to higher education for their children, or the children helping the parents, working until being able to afford vocational education. A notable finding is, that this was the case in complete families as well as in families with single mothers or fathers. By this reciprocity, the interviewees learned, since childhood, an effective strategy in order to follow their ambitions, performing their task while achieving the common purpose of the family. Débora is a good example for this phenomenon.

Débora, student UNISC: "I am the only one of the family, the first one to take a college course. Who takes a college course after highschool. This is something they might not really know what I'm doing. But I go to college. So this is a reason of great pride. And that's why I am very well accepted. My opinion is of some importance where I live. They listen to me and keep asking a lot about college".

In this example, another typical characteristic can be perceived: The displacement from the original environment of the family by the process of education, which takes place on a spatial and an intellectual level. The future social position is a reality yet unknown by the majority of the group of origin. And quite a few of the interviewees admitted a certain anxiety to dare the attempt. But with the support of the family that conveyed a positive vision of the individual and a vision of the world that did not exclude the option to integrate in a social group outside of the proper, marginalized group, this step was facilitated (cf. Marotzki, 2006, 61).

3. -THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION.

An issue related to the question of „belief in oneself" is the importance of religion, that in many cases was initiated by the education within the family. Independent of their confession, many of the interviewees lived diverse forms of religiousness, on an

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institutional level, taking part in services, on a community level, engaging themselves in groups of the community, and, most notably, on a level of individual faith in a major, or transcendent power, as an internal reference, generating a self-security which procures an active attitude to improve life. By the identification of life-events – positive or negative – as duties assigned by God, one is able to face them unafraid, and can try to realize aims that seem out of reach. In this case, for example, going to college as a member of a disadvantaged social group. The following example shows the connection of family, religion and education.

Fábio Felício, student UNISC, "I have an uncle who is a bishop, too, he gives me a lot of support. I have completed a course as a technician already, and he helped me a lot to do this. And I also work a lot in the community of Nossa Senhora da Conceição, also in the quarter Bom Jesus; animating the service during the liturgy; we are inviting more young people to participate, because it still is difficult to have enough young people there. I am coordinator of the group „100% Palmares" which is a part of the group „Consciência Negra", which already exists for over 20 years, in order to educate the population about the history of the Negro people in Rio Grande do Sul. We are not creating a mafia against them [the White]. They think that, but it's not like that. The group only tries to educate about the value of slavery, the use of slavery, what has changed, which importance slavery had. Unfortunately, there was slavery in Brazil".

Anthony Giddens (1991) provides a sociological interpretation of the importance of religion, especially for disadvantaged young people growing up in a late modern society, „We see all around us the creation of new forms of religious sensibility and spiritual endeavour. The reasons for this concern quite fundamental features of late modernity" (ibd., 207). „In circumstances of uncertainty and multiple choice, the notions of trust and risk have particular application. (...) Trust in this sense is basic to a ‚protective cocoon' which stands guard over the self in its dealings with everyday reality. (...) Trust here generates that ‚leap into faith' which practical engagement demands" (ibd., 3).

4. -THE IMPORTANCE OF SOLIDARITY.

The previous example already shows that the individual project of social ascension by a process of education is included in a major context. It is part of a social project with a wider range within a solidarity group. The importance of solidarity could also be noticed in groups which were not religiously motivated. The interviewees participated in social and cultural projects, like for example the peace movement, sports groups, like Capoeira, or in groups with similar political interests, like initiatives of the Negro movement or NGOs of rural youth education.

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From a sociological point of view, this situation is related to a socio-structural context, in which, on the part of the state, benefits are missing, and the services in the field of education that are offered by the market are actually unaffordable for certain social classes. This results in a retardation of the educational process, or, in the fact, that many young people are working for a good amount of time and only later on will be able to continue their studies. This explains, why their trajectories of education are not linear and shows at the same time, that many keep pursuing their goal to complete their studies and enter college education. The question is, to which extent college education can fulfill the demands and expectations of these young people, especially in relation to the labor market. Some answers can be found in the following examples of young people who participated in projects of informal education.

Carlos, student CEDEJOR, "Right now I go to the informal school CEDEJOR, an institution of young people that tries to resettle the youth in the country, due to the fact that the country-youth is quite depreciated, for many times not having support, let's say this real support of education; education doesn't reach him. In school, he is only being prepared for the city, only to get a job, and the country is being abandoned. Being the principal sector of agriculture, primary sector, which sustains a culture, sustains the country. The only way for the young people to manage this, individually is difficult. Therefore he needs to cooperate, he needs to unite with institutions, to search for support in youth groups, take over leadership, to get more support".

Miguel, student CEDEJOR, „I came with the objective to learn a lot in order to help in the rural area, because it's really difficult. With everything. The young people don't want to stay any more, and there are many with complete high-school education, unemployed. They work at home. That's why I came with this objective to learn, who knows, later, if I like it, and if I finish school, who knows, I will attend a course in agronomy or something, in agricultural technique, who knows, later go to college for professional qualification".

Young residents of quilombos (settlements of escaped slaves) reported a similar problem, which they also faced by informal education, at the EJR, School of Rural Youth, like Patrícia.

Patrícia, student EJR, *"*I was born here, I live here, too, since I was born. Many things have changed here. Since I was little until now. In the beginning it wasn't like that. In the beginning we weren't even recognized as vestiges of quilombos. Later, I think about one or two years ago, unless I'm mistaken, that we are recognized as vestiges of quilombos. Before all that, in 2003, I completed the EJR, School of Rural Youth. There I got to know many people, made many friends, with persons I didn't know until then. And from that time on I started, we started to integrate more. To get to know people, to achieve, to try to achieve our dreams and try to realize them, fight for them. I am pretty motivated, I plan to go to college still. And I will make it. Wanting or not; I will make it. I want to, I will give it a try. Working. And my family, too, my mother, motivates me

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a lot. She motivates all of us that we have to study, go to school, to strive for our goals. And to get somewhere in life".

There were various other forms of solidarity groups that provided a certain informal education, teaching the participants values and orientation. Interestingly, this phenomenon occurred even in sports groups. For example, some of the interviewees practiced Capoeira, an afro-brazilian dance-fight, and for them, the martial arts' philosophy had an important meaning beyond the aspect of informal education. Fábio, Capoeira teacher, formulated the following.

Fábio, Capoeira teacher, „At the age of twelve I started having problems in school, in relationships, friendships. Capoeira and the project itself, my life with my professor, was what motivated me to practice Capoeira. He ‚pulled my ears' for the first time, ‚This is the way you need to follow. You need to look forward to stay on the right way. I don't want to see you, nor your fellows, now or later, in the middle of street corner gangs, with no good job in the future'. I always got by – I didn't always get it the way I wanted – but with Capoeira, working hard, I keep going and making it. So I leave a message, too, so to say, Let's not give up. Even if the ways are blocked, when sometimes you don't get something, you go to one side, and you can't get to the other. You try, sometimes you try to get a job and don't get it, you start getting hopeless. But it doesn't cost anything to insist. You need to insist, persist for what you want. And study, too. That's what's most important. If you don't study, you won't get anywhere in life.

Generally, young people participating in solidarity groups obtained informal education, like spiritual, social or cultural education. Many young people reported that this informal education helped them to aim at higher education, in order to find an economically and personally satisfactory job, opening an access to more resources. Brecher e.a. (2000) point out the reciprocity of the individual task and the one of the group which coincide in common activities.

"Seeing that other people share similar experiences, perceptions, and feelings opens a new set of possibilities. Perhaps collectively we can act in ways that have impacts isolated individuals could never dream of having alone. And if we feel this way, perhaps others do, too. This group formation process constructs new solidarities. Once a consciousness of the need for solidarity develops, it becomes impossible to say whether participants' motives are altruistic or selfish, because the interest of the individual and the collective interest are no longer in conflict; they are perceived as one" (Brecher, e.a. 2000, 20).

According to Gilberto Velho (1999) this form of solidarity can be understood as a "social project",

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> *The possibility of individuals forming a group with a social project which encompasses, synthesizes or incorporates the different individual projects, depends on the perception and experience of common interests which can be varied, (...) social class, ethnic group, status group, family, religion, neighborhood, occupation, political party etc. (...) The projects constitute a dimension of culture, by means of always being symbolic expression.*
> *Being conscious and potentially public, they are directly linked to social organization and to processes of social change (cf. Velho, 1999, 33, 34).*

The social change Velho refers to, also takes place in terms of access to social capital. The accumulation of social and cultural capital within the framework of "social projects" can play an important part in the process of social inclusion, especially, when it comes to an exchange of these forms of capital, e.g. in associations, culture clubs, trade unions or universities. Based on their activities in these formal or informal settings of education, the individuals gain access to economic capital through qualified professional work, and also, in the terminology of Pierre Bourdieu, symbolic capital, which generates from the other forms of capital above mentioned, and finds an expression in respect, trust and power (Bourdieu, 1993, 218).

5. -IDENTIFICATION WITH EDUCATION.

A surprising finding was, that for the ones who had managed educational success in spite of difficulties, this success did not end in itself once having achieved their personal aim, but the process of education was perpetuated. Even though they had struggled to overcome social barriers, many times distancing themselves from their original environment, in terms of space and also intellectually, they maintained a feeling of belonging to their origin. In various cases, the identification with their original social group continued until after having completed their education, resulting in a determination of wanting to return to the place where they grew up in order to spread their knowledge or to share their successful trajectory with the other group members. As good examples, they motivated their companions in misfortune that social ascension can be realized by a process of education, be it formal or informal. Although having succeeded in growing beyond their social space, they did not lose their roots in their original social group.

Carla, student UNISC, „It is important to get education and also manage to perceive and feel where you came from. I come from Santo António, this is my reality. There the kids don't have a video-game. And if there was one, in all likelihood this video-game would get stolen. So, let's make this step of education and value this place, too".

Ana Lucélia, student UFRGS, "I like my city a lot. I feel my roots there. I go back there quasi every weekend I can, to see my family, to be with my friends, to help in the youth club that we built up there. Because we used to go to the youth-club there. And

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today, as we're no longer there, me and my friends here tried to build up a new youth-club that will continue the work with the church, the community. This group is also a way to think about how to leave something there. To go away, but to leave something for this community. We're dreaming, 'Let's come back with an NGO, some kind of cooperative...'. But you have to be stable before doing that. This is a different way than you're used to seeing, of capitalism, a neoliberal vision. Everybody does his own thing, in his own place. And when you're in a situation of need, if you don't help each other, if you don't talk to each other, ... you won't be able to survive".

Sandro, Hip Hop teacher, „I already had various social projects. The way I see this need, I believe that I want to be a social worker, because I feel that the people need me. I work with 40, 80, 100 pupils. I think I'm showing them, that college is not a beast. You go and ask them like this 'What are you going to do in the future? Are you going to study?' – 'No, I'm afraid. This is just for the rich.' – It's not like that. God put me in this world to show this".

Those who had achieved educational success in spite of difficulties, developed an identification with education in order to overcome social exclusion in general. This tendency gives reason for hope of a social change from the bottom up, For years the Brazilian society grew a lot with very little investment in education, which led to a professional development without great scholarship (cf. Iwasso, 2007). Thus, young people needed to find other ways of education, as already mentioned, informal education. What is quite alarming, in the course of a knowledge-based society (cf. Willke, 2001, 391), of technological innovation, at a vertiginous pace, that the young people and the proper future of the Brazilian society are quite compromised. And in this respect, as the study reveals, it is important to perceive the ways of achievement in the trajectories of these successful young people in order to benefit from other forms of social organization and the construction not only of citizenship but of the proper Brazilian society itself.

The situation of abandonment, not only in Brazil but also in Latin America, in a situation of unemployment, poor professional qualification, evidently affecting the quality of labor, results in a vulnerable economy and society itself, for example in terms of social cohesion. And when the Brazilian society imagines its future generation, it should invest a lot more in education. And, speaking of education, institutionalized education, and in the qualification of these young people, in order to guarantee a future, not only for the youth but for the whole society, thinking about its place in an emerging knowledge society.

Representing 20% of the total population, the Brazilians between 15 and 24 years of age encounter various difficulties obtaining institutionalized education offering competences that facilitate a satisfactory occupational integration. However, one of the challenges to the Brazilian society is to liberate the young people from the necessity to work, favoring their posterior professional insertion, in jobs that allow both personal

and professional realization. Therefore, obviously the investment in institutionalized education must be a priority of the Brazilian society, as well as the implementation of public politics which are capable of promoting the access of young members of marginalized social groups to institutionalized education and to refrain from a precipitate entry into working life (cf. Pochmann, 2003, 239). As yet, the process of integration of marginalized young people is strongly influenced by traditional forms of organization like, for example, families or religious communities. These communities generate a network of solidarity, a supply of resources, a reference-system providing motivation, self-esteem and identity for the young people, and, in some respects, a substitute for the welfare state which never was consolidated in Brazil.

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