

Teacher Education as Resistance: Lessons from Brazil's Rural Education Movement for Global Contexts

This study examines how teacher education can function as a site of resistance and social transformation. Drawing on Brazil's LeCampo program, it explores how Freirean praxis supports the preparation of teachers embedded in minoritised rural communities and considers its implications for rethinking teacher education in global contexts.

In this study, rural marginalised contexts are not understood as spaces of deficit; they are recognised as sites of knowledge production, political struggle, and pedagogical innovation. It draws on the Brazilian experience of the Licenciatura em Educação do Campo (Bachelor in Rural Education), known as LeCampo, to examine how praxis operates as a critical pedagogical and political force in the preparation of teachers working in rural and historically marginalised contexts.

Grounded in the work of Paulo Freire, the discussion engages with praxis as the dynamic relationship between reflection and action in the pursuit of social justice (Freire, 1976, 1992, 2005). LeCampo emerged from sustained collaboration between universities and Brazil's Rural Education Movement in response to long-standing struggles for agrarian reform, land rights, and educational justice (Caldart, 2000; Antunes-Rocha & Martins, 2009). Rural education in Brazil is not defined merely by geography, but by a political project shaped through tensions between the State and social movements, asserting education as a right for those who live in and from the land and as a space of ongoing struggle (Carvalho, 2020).

The study draws on qualitative analysis of curriculum documents, movement archives, and narrative accounts from graduates of the LeCampo program. It also engages with key pedagogical structures such as alternance pedagogy (Begnami, 2004), which integrates university-based study with community-based learning, and socio-territorial journeys that position the territory as a central site of knowledge production (Almeida Martins, Antunes-Rocha, & dos Santos, 2020). These approaches enable an examination of how teacher education is constructed in direct relation to lived realities and community struggles, rather than abstract or universalised models.

Findings show that LeCampo operationalises a pedagogy of resistance in which graduates act not only as teachers but as community-based intellectuals and activists. They co-construct curricula with local knowledge, engage in collective organising, and act within their communities to confront structural inequalities. Graduate narratives demonstrate the development of critical consciousness, shifting perspectives from individualised aspirations toward collective responsibility and social transformation (Carneiro, 2025). Concepts such as indignation, hope, and emancipation are enacted as forces that shape pedagogical practice and sustain engagement in social change.

The program challenges dominant models of teacher education by disrupting hierarchical knowledge structures and centring territoriality, collective identity, and political agency. At a time when education systems worldwide continue to reproduce inequities while claiming commitments to inclusion, LeCampo demonstrates the transformative potential of designing teacher education from and with minoritised communities rather than for them. In doing so, it resists approaches that adapt communities to existing systems and instead repositions teacher education as a space where knowledge is co-constructed, identities are affirmed, and structural injustices are actively confronted.

By bringing this experience into international dialogue, the study contributes to global debates on teacher education by offering a concrete example of how Freirean praxis can be institutionalised within higher education while remaining accountable to social movements. It calls on educators,

researchers, and policymakers to move beyond technical and depoliticised approaches to teacher preparation and to engage in forms of education that are explicitly committed to justice, solidarity, and the transformation of unequal social conditions.

Keywords: Critical pedagogy, rural teacher education, praxis, minoritised communities, Brazil, social movements

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