

Impact of professional schools in the development of rural and urban communities in Mozambique

What is the best strategy for promoting the development of the communities in the developing world? Since ancient times it is said that one should teach the poor how to use the fishing rod instead of giving him the fish. And this saying has been corroborated by many (Alves, Centeno, & Novo, 2010; Ambrósio, 2003; Azevedo, 1994; Cabugueira, 2002; Correia, 2008; Cremin & Nakabugo, 2012; Lopes, 2006; UNESCO, 2009), which also explains the reason why in most of the countries the education gets a large portion of the state annual budget (Cabugueira, 2002, p.194; Fox, Santibañez, Nguyen, & André, 2012; IMF, 2011; OECD, 2011; UNESCO, 2012; Alves et al., 2010; Barros & Mendonça, 1997; Correia, 2008; Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2004) and of the family budget as well (Gómez, Freitas, & Callejas, 2007). But on the other hand, the unemployment of many graduates, the problems of some other ones to adapt to their working environment and the non-improvement of the life-quality of some countries who made strong investments in education, strongly question the dogma of development through education.

In order to address the impact of the education in communities of the developing world, we took advantage of the Mozambican educational politics, which in 2001 started a project for the creation of 41 elementary professional schools through all the country. From those 41 we studied 2 schools located in urban regions, 4 in semi-rural and 4 in rural regions, with maximum distance between 2 schools of about 2500km. We then assessed their impact in the development of the community where they are inserted, 12 years passed after the beginning of this project. For that purpose we used a qualitative approach of observation after the observer was integrated in the communities, in-depth interviews, focus group, questionnaires and naturalist observation of the various players in the community, as young graduates and their families, teachers, directors and key-elements in the society.

The goal is to understand the impact of these schools on their students – degree of improvement of their socioprofessional self-esteem and of their integration in the community – on the inhabitants and on the mobilization of the full community for a better life.

Our aim is to answer to the following questions:

- The young graduates by the professional schools feel that the training they got altered them personally, culturally and in terms of their perspectives and attitudes towards the community, the work and the life in general? In which specific ways? And which were the essential positive and negative factors?
- The family of the young graduates reported changes in their familiar, economic and social life?
- The key-elements of the community (local leaders, administrators, businessmen) mention local alterations resultant from the opening of the professional school, in terms of social and productive dynamics?
- The school directors and the teachers of the technical disciplines consider that the graduation/professional school/its students and graduates are promoting local changes, in terms of social and productive dynamics? Why does this happen? Which aspect of the teaching-learning process may be influencing this dynamics? What is the potentiating/blocking factor of this change?

- Are there evidences of interaction and of interconnected dynamics between the school and the community?

- Does the school plays an important role in the community, active and promoter of positive dynamics?

In this talk we will present some preliminary data on the way these professional schools influenced the most rural communities and the most urban ones of the full study.

Method

We share the belief that development cannot be simply expressed by statistics (Lopes, 2006; Torres, 2011) because it involves a set of central values impossible to put in numbers, at least in a consensus way, like liberty, empowerment and self-esteem. In fact, many authors stand up for the difficult to quantify the contribution of education in development (Cabugueira, 2002). This is particularly true in the study of communities where little or no data exists, at least reliable. And for this reason we decide to use a qualitative approach to characterise the role of education in the development. Our goal is to assess reality by different angles, overcoming partial views, attempting to reach a more holistic view. Therefore, we used different approaches, like in-depth interviews, focus groups, questionnaires and naturalistic observation, and we involve different community agents, as young graduates and their families, teachers, directors and key-elements in the society. We gave priority to methods of data collection making use of orality, as respect for tradition markedly oral of these communities. We studied 10 schools in a total of 10 focus groups plus questionnaires with young graduates, and 128 individual interviews with the other community agents.

Expected Outcomes

In this talk we will present some preliminary data on the way these professional schools influenced the most rural communities and the most urban ones. We aim to understand the impact of these rural and urban schools on their students – degree of improvement of their socioprofessional self-esteem and of their integration in the community – on the inhabitants and on the mobilization of the full community for a better life. Our preliminary data indicates that the variables which determine the impact of the professional schools in a community are multifactorial. Nevertheless we observed that professional schools have a higher positive impact in the most rural communities

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