

Development of an Educational Strategy for Organic-Biodynamic Agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean

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Abstract

The paper summarizes the 20-year pedagogical experience of teaching and training organic-biodynamic agriculture in 11 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, looking for new educative strategies that will allow the generation of appropriate solutions adapted to specific contexts. Organic-biodynamic agriculture methods were developed and improved through many years of experience by farmers and technicians committed to change and innovation. This process was carried out without any external support. The design of modern educative strategies that will overcome the abyss between theoretical speech and daily practice will necessarily involve deep aspects of human beings, as it implies an existential position toward the world. Regardless of socioeconomic and cultural contexts, all human beings question themselves with regard to life and the world, and for more than 25 years the author's experience has verified that true change comes from a new way of thinking, an attitudinal change that will imply a new ethic and moral attitude toward the world. In this process, the adoption of the principles of organic-biodynamic agriculture is determinant.

The crucial bridge between existing and new forms of knowledge and experience in any educational endeavor is dialogue. Dialogue is the means through which one person gains access to the world of another person—as far as this is possible—and comes to re-create his or her own way of being in and with the world. Dialectical dialogue involves working along the learning process, with mixed groups of technicians and farmers. The union/closeness of both learners' groups with apparently different visions enriches the integrity of the pedagogical process. The elements of the methodology are: (1) the question; (2) recognizing the historical moment; (3) artistic and ludic activities; (4) practical living experiences; (5) audiovisual methods; (6) humor; (7) spiritual and existential approaches.

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In this way, farmers/peasants incorporate this living experience and knowledge not only in the technological change process, but also in a lifestyle change resulting in a new relation with the environment, strengthening other values such as solidarity and association. Technicians have the possibility to get closer to agricultural knowledge in a different way than they were used to in formal academic processes. In many cases, technicians rediscover their taste for agronomy. In companies involved in biodynamic food and beverage production, the pedagogical process has stimulated active participation of the staff of all the company's divisions (managers, human resources, marketing, etc.), and not only those of the agricultural sector. Eventually, organic-biodynamic agriculture and its principles are consolidated as an institutional policy for reengineering.

The proposed pedagogical approach from the biodynamic perspective through the different elements of the methodology that is used develops the dimensions of the person: psychological, affective, as well as social balance, expression and communication faculties, innovation and recreation, scientific and critical habits, a broadened spirit of sociability and humanity, openness to the transcendental, and a living experience of a mature and incarnated spirituality.