

# Revolutionary Education

## FRELIMO

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The setting up of an education programme entailed immense difficulties. The few schools which existed in our country were run by missionaries whom the Portuguese evacuated from the war zones at the beginning of the struggle in order to turn the buildings into barracks. We had practically no teachers, we had access to those who knew only how to read and write in order to start our courses. It was only slowly, through a system of seminars, that we succeeded in developing and raising the standard of new teachers.

The need for an educational programme was felt even in the military field. In fact, at a certain stage of the development effort, the administration of the commercial centres, all the many and varied tasks of national reconstruction could not be implemented without the spread of a certain level of knowledge. Thus, simultaneously with the literacy courses in the army, we organised accelerated courses of 6 months, one year and two years in order to enable the more capable militants to finish primary education and take on bigger responsibilities. Afterwards, people were selected to go to our secondary school on the basis of the level of political consciousness which they had demonstrated, on their dedication to the revolution and on their intellectual capacity. This system of selection proved highly successful; it reduced dramatically the number of failures as compared with those students who had attended more conventional schools.

The contents of the curriculum also demanded deep reflection and further elaboration. It was obvious that we had to eliminate subjects with a clear colonialist colour. (The history of Portugal, for example.) But the development of the educational work also showed that we could not organise our system by a mere touching up of an essentially Portuguese system. Our general line had to be conditioned by more fundamental questions: what is the objective of our education? In what way does it distinguish itself from the two other forms of education prevailing in our society, i.e. traditional and colonial education?

Again the answer to these two questions had to come from the general development of the struggle and from the political growth of the

organisation. It was the need for a new life and a more precise definition of our objectives in the liberated zones which gave to our education programme, its form and content. Our education, as our President said in the message he addressed to the Second National Conference of the Department of Education and Culture in August, 1970, 'must give us a Mozambican personality which assumes our reality and assimilates critically and without servility the ideas and experiences of other people of the world at the same time transmitting to them the fruit of our reflection and practice'.

It is necessary in turn to identify precisely the content both of traditional and colonial education in order to fight against their effects in our mentality and in our social life.

In traditional society, given the low level of knowledge which characterises it, superstition takes the place of science and blocks any scientific analysis of the physical and social milieu in favour of the supernatural. Through one of its mechanisms for survival, traditional education aims at creating in the new generation's passivity and respect towards acquired ideas; it encourages the belief in the infallible wisdom of the older generations personified in the elders. With regard to women, tradition tries to justify historically women's submission to men.

### **Mental Scars**

Colonial education is concerned with teaching only to the extent that it facilitates further exploitation. It aims at reinforcing division within the colonised society by separating those who are educated and those who are not. Among the former it encourages a feeling of shame and later a despising of their culture and traditions. The marks left by this type of education is an even greater obstacle in the establishment of the new types of relations we want to create among people. Moreover, even when the struggle against the policy of assimilation does become clear on the plane of principle, it retains many more subtle effects and manifestations. For one may strongly reject the idea of becoming 'a black Portuguese', but it is nonetheless certain this idea will continue to breed an inferiority complex among many Mozambicans. The conviction that our traditional culture has no value has been for a long time deeply embedded in the minds of many of our people. For these reasons it has been necessary to launch an intensive and self-conscious combat against this mentality. It was with this aim in mind that the Department of Education and Culture organises cultural seminars where an inventory is made of the cultural wealth of our people.

Today a new culture is being developed based on traditional forms with a new content dictated by our new reality. This reality is constituted first of all by the liberation struggle itself, but also, by the common effort of Mozambicans originating from different places and tribes who are united in the struggle for the construction of a new Mozambique. From this point of view, culture plays an important role in the reinforcement of national unity. The dances which are performed today in the liberated regions are no longer dances of Cabo Delgado, or Tete or Niassa. The militants from other regions

there bring their way of living, their dances, their songs, and from this a new culture, national in its form and revolutionary in content, is born.

### **Destined Leaders**

Revolutionary education must aim at destroying the corrupt ideas and habits inherited from the past; develop the scientific spirit in order to eliminate superstition; promote the emergence of a national culture; liquidate individualism and elitism.

These are not abstract problems: a hard struggle had to be waged inside the organisation against those tendencies when a superiority complex which was the result of an elitist mentality developed in our secondary school. Imbued with the ideas acquired in the colonialist society that those who had education were destined to be leaders, some pupils of the secondary school contemptuous of the masses, refused to participate in the war which they considered as a non-intellectual activity, they preferred to sit back and wait for victory in comfort.

The problem which is posed today is whether the progress of our country is the task of a few or whether it must be the result of the effort of the whole people. The answer which springs from the practice of our liberation struggle is obviously the latter. Without the active and responsible participation of the masses what could the few dozen FRELIMO militants have done? Our choice leads us also to reject formal academic education as the only legitimate kind of learning and to emphasise instead broader and more permanent forms of education. This shift in emphasis is also necessary if we are to undertake the general education activity which is implicit in our political programme.

It is obvious that such cultural conceptions bring potential political contradictions to the fore, both domestically and on the international plane. For the 'enlightened' minority which would lead our country would be the best guarantee of the maintenance of exploitation and the preservation of foreign interests in Mozambique. It is therefore not surprising that, as with other fighting organisations, Mozambican students in the western countries are subjected to all the reactionary pressures and influences which promote elitist sentiments. This remains for us a continuing problem.

One method which we have adopted in order to discourage the development of such elitist ideas is the encouragement of a liaison between the student and the masses. Thus, one of the most important innovations in our school syllabus has been the introducing of productive activities. Moreover, this has a second benefit beyond the crucial socio-political aspect which we have been underlining: it also ensures that primary education is at least partly operational, i.e. that it brings some benefits to the students and to their families by including the teaching of such artisan skills as carpentry, mechanics, tailoring, etc.

The education programme faces other difficulties as well, among them the resistance on the part of parents to sending their daughters to school. Parents tend to consider their daughters in terms of the wealth they will gain from dowries at the time that the girls marry. The risk that the girl's chance for a

profitable marriage will be spoiled by her going to school makes many parents refuse to send their daughters there. And initiation rites have a similarly negative role. In many regions, after the initiation rites, the girls must stay at home awaiting marriage, a practice which means the definitive cessation of their education. The Political Commissariat and the Women's Detachment are involved in the work of mobilising people and explaining the advantage of education in order to change this negative attitude of the parents towards their daughters.