

## ***Martí's conceptions about popular education and their importance for the graduate in Sociocultural Studies***

**Ileana Jañez-Reyes<sup>1</sup>, Eyedelkis Medina-García<sup>2</sup>**

Universidad de Guantánamo, Cuba

**Correo electrónico:**

<sup>1</sup>[ileana@cug.co.cu](mailto:ileana@cug.co.cu)

<sup>2</sup>[eyedelkis@cug.co.cu](mailto:eyedelkis@cug.co.cu)

---

Recibido: 20 de julio de 2016

Aceptado: 21 de septiembre de 2016

---

**Resumen:** El proceso formativo de la carrera Estudios Socioculturales no incluye lo relacionado con las concepciones martianas sobre educación popular, lo que limita la formación de este especialista si se toma en cuenta los objetivos de dicha especialidad. Es propósito del siguiente artículo analizar las concepciones martianas sobre educación popular, y su valor pedagógico en la preparación integral de este futuro profesional con habilidades específicas para el trabajo con grupos de personas diferentes y en distintos escenarios comunitarios.

---

**Palabras clave:** Trabajo comunitario; Educación popular; Pensamiento e ideario martiano; Estudios socioculturales

---

**Abstract:** The formative process of Sociocultural Studies Major does not include Martí's conceptions about popular education, which limits the formation of the specialist, taking into consideration the objectives of the major. The purpose of the following article, is to analyze Martí's conceptions about popular education, and its pedagogical value for integral formation of a future professional, with specific abilities for working with groups of various people and in different community scenes.

---

**Keywords:** Community work; Popular Education; Martí's ideology, Sociocultural Studies.

---

## **Introduction**

The process of constant improvement of the Cuban Higher Education, aimed at being an appropriate University, according to the society necessities and interests, has been the objective of the Cuban government since 1959. Consequently, since January the first, some aspects have been taken for making possible that the students graduated from University, have cognitive qualities and professional skills that help their performance in different contexts.

The Cuban University has reached many achievements, placing it amongst the highest positions in Latin America and the world. There are some factors that make possible these results, among them, the pedagogical conceptions in which it is sustained, the didactic ideas that foster these results, and the

creative way in which the most important revolutionary, universal and Cuban thoughts have been included on the syllabus of the majors. Furthermore let's consider, in a privileged and natural way, the thoughts and works of the Cuban National Hero, José Martí, expressing his view of the world and the revolutionary project in different directions for creating an educative, political and cultural weapon indispensable on children and the young generation's education.

Related to these ideas Fidel Castro said:

Cuba cuenta con el privilegio de poder disponer de uno de los más ricos tesoros políticos, una de las más valiosas fuentes de educación y de conocimientos políticos, el pensamiento, los escritos, los libros, los discursos y la extraordinaria obra de José Martí. (Castro, 1975, p. 26)

Part of those thoughts is related with popular education, although the investigations about popular education reached splendor in the 20th century. Martí appealed on his revolutionary lectures to the unity and cooperation of those interested in the homeland independence, he used his own example and work to maintain coherence between theory and practice, ideas and actions, and for materializing independent thoughts. His qualities as a revolutionary, humble, talkative, cordial man gave him power to break old pacts, take advantage of valuable traditions and popular wisdom, and maintain an unswerving bond between what he said and did, indispensable for accomplishing that kind of work.

In the investigation carried out to analyze what was said about the theme by different authors, there were some studies related to other facet of Martí's thoughts and its integration with different syllabus and subjects. Some of them are:

- The connection between Martí's thoughts with the teaching of History in Secondary School (Pla, 1996).
- Martí's thoughts and the teaching of History in Higher Education Pedagogical Institutes (Carcaset, 2001).
- Creation of a strategy for improving the knowledge about Martí's thoughts related to the learning process of American revolutionary thinking in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Secondary School. (Navia, 2001).
- Martí's ideas studied in classroom (Ortega, 2002)
- Methodological Proposal for establishing interdisciplinary relationships taking into account Martí's thoughts, for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade of Secondary School. (Favier, 2003).
- The assimilation of Martí's thoughts in the Cuban University (Velázquez y Frómeta, 2003).

The previous works evidence that the study of Martí's thoughts related to popular education is limited, and it has never been included in the Sociocultural Studies Major's Syllabus, despite of the need of future

professionals prepared with techniques and ways to combine the will to carry out important projects with the fulfillment of collective aspirations.

An analysis of the syllabus of the major allowed us to state that some of Martí's considerations about popular education, community work, the importance of the work with different groups of persons according to their social status and age, the need of dialoguing to raise public awareness about the creation of new ideals, or the characteristics of a community leader for making important plans, are just summarily included in the system of knowledge for the Cuban History Subject when the work developed by José Martí is studied, but narrowly confined to the preparation of The Necessary War, there, some of these aspects are mentioned.

The main purpose of this article is to analyze Martí's conceptions about popular education and their pedagogical value for the integral education of future professionals with skills to deal with different groups of persons and contexts.

## **Development**

During the last decades of the 20th century, as a consequence of the intensified economic blockade set by continuous North American administrations, and the difficult moments Cuba put up after the fall of the Socialist Alliance, a strategy was assumed for the communities; it contains the basic core of social organization, plays the main role and promotes self-sustained development.

The communities, understood as psycho-social-units, which were created as a multidimensional phenomenon in which a group of elements are involved, and ought to be respected and integrative to make a well prepared social organization (...) (Higher Education Ministry, 2000, p. 67), became a national theme in the decade of the 90's of the 20th century.

As a way of social life organization, those units occupy a particular geographic space in the community and involve everybody's interests, not just because of the importance they give to the individual and the group, but also for the potential they have for social development.

The strategic importance of these units and the need of fulfilling their integral development, prove the need of professionals with wide experience in Humanities and Social Sciences, who, from their location, have as main activity the communal work.

For fulfilling the purpose, there was created in the year 2000 the Social Studies Major. This major embraces the regulations regarding "(...) the object of study of these professionals, which is the sociocultural and communal work; their expected profile is the execution of a work focused on detection,

research and sociocultural intervention. Also, the object of the major is to make a sociocultural intervention in the community" (HEM, 2000, p. 12).

Considering those purposes it is indispensable the study of Martí's conceptions by the professionals and educating in them an opinion about popular education, which facilitates the purposes of communal work.

What is Popular Education?

Popular Education is a Latin American Pedagogy emerged in the decade of the 60's of the 20th century to contrast the educative design created by the bourgeoisie to develop the communities. According the Mexican author Núñez (1991) "(...) it is a methodological conception of educative work, and its main characteristic is to be politically intentional, also democratic, participative, popular and dialectical" (p. 24).

The new educative methodology is also understood as "the effort for mobilizing and organizing the communities for creating a popular power which constitutes an instrument for transforming the society and accomplishing important projects" (González, 1999, p.26).

The authors share the considerations of Freire (1998), one of the main theorists of this new educative methodology. He considers it as "a conception of life, work and struggle that aims at achieving unity between reflection and practice to turn each of the members of the community, and the different popular characters, into thinkers and creative makers of their own history" (p. 13).

Popular Education in the Sociocultural Studies Major context is understood by the authors of this article as the set of opinions and considerations related to the theme, present in the way of non- systematized ideas in Martí's texts and they are expressions of the particular way of this type of education, as part of its foundational project for Cuba and Latin America.

These judgements do not constitute a complete methodology, but they are used as a conception of life, proposed by Martí in order of reaching unity between reflection and practice, and becoming men who think and create their own history.

### **Popular Education in Martí's work and its importance for the educative process in the Sociocultural Studies Major**

In Jose Martí's literary work there is not a finished statement of a theory, law or concept related to community work or popular education, but possible alternatives for understanding and explaining the current social processes, in which there can be appreciated different views about group work in and for the communities. Better than showing a cognitive interest towards popular education, there is an

ideological-political interest in the revolutionary transformation, born from the social need to unite forces to start the Revolution and claim independence for the Island.

Martí wrote: " It is difficult to lead and manage, or teaching without influence, the authentic and ideal emancipator is based in educating human beings to be thinking subjects able to decide by themselves, the happiness of a people lies upon the individual independence of its inhabitants" (Martí, 1884, p.66).

The previously stated can be achieved according to the training from popular teachers, who must be responsible, reflexive, talkative, and achieve things through conversation, dialogue, and highly profitable methods for fulfilling participation, a key aspect in methodology for the popular education. Martí considered dialogue very important, not to convince, not to persuade about what someone else considers the truth, but as a way for enriching the truth systematically, making it a dogma, saved by constant reflection.

Martí compelled all men not to let that others control their ideals, because this could endanger their freedom to think by themselves and to reach full development of their own faculties.

Rafael Bellido, an important investigator of the theme thinks, in relation to popular education, that it must be taught as Martí did, and he says:

(...) human beings should be granted the conditions to select what's useful. The common people that are part of the people should be given ways they can follow, and they must also be allowed to participate and reflect (Bellido, 2003, p. 23).

Martí's statements also determine as a constant compass the need of taking into account the transformational processes to obtain experiences(...) the experience must be alive and creative, it cannot be dogmatic or infertile, a vivid experience must be taken into account and prevail over other easily obtained experiences (Martí, 1963, p. 72).

Martí's works also observe as permanent compass the concern of having a coherence between speech and action, he considered that"(...) the theory and practice must prevail in social processes, there must be a coherence between what is said and done, or proposed to do" (Martí, 1963, p. 75).

According to the characteristics community leaders must have, Martí wrote:

"Popular leaders do not make an inappropriate use of the community resources, the only reward they should wait for is to see the people growing and developing free thinking and creation, so they must be an example of love and commitment with the oppressed" (Martí, 1963, p. 32).

"Friendship and culture are pillars in which the work of popular teachers must be sustained, they must walk with the truth in mind and heart, and listen carefully to what is said, and participate, and they cannot be leaders full of wrong feelings" (Martí, 1963, p. 97).

There are innumerable and convincing referents in Martí's work related to love as the only pedagogical law, education and understanding: "Love must prevail over authoritarianism, and for accomplishing participation, conviction, liberation, and happiness" (Martí, 1963, p. 47).

That criterion the author Bellido (2003) reaffirms when he states:

"(...) the distinctive sign of power and authority is the strength of love; love is a way of growing. What other way popular education we may have? -The way of living for ourselves and the rest, tributing to the growth of community" (p. 74).

The methodology of popular education, together with investigation and action-participation, has to start from the development of a work full of love. The complexity and great difficulties present at the time to develop the purposes of the communities must be sustained in the love among the members of the community. Related to that subject, each popular teacher must proclaim the importance of common sense, practice in contrast with excessive theorizing; knowing the advance of science and technology, and, most importantly, not underestimating popular knowledge, starting from inconclusive practice of experiences, values, traditions and culture in each community.

Taking into consideration Martí's conceptions for promoting the community development, there must be established as starting points the knowledge and necessities of the subjects and the group, the awareness of resources, problems, and values, before acting, practicing or improving in pursue of transformation.

The main objective of an authentic process of popular education is the material and cultural emancipation of the people through participation, personal and common growth and the integral development. The accomplishment of that objective demands, among other aspects, the successful organization of work in the communities, and active participation in the identification of problems, needs, resources and even dreams. This work will be successfully done if the popular teachers follow the ideas of Martí's literary work.

The popular education implemented by Specialists in Sociocultural Studies, sustained in Martí's ideals, must have in their plans the achievement of a close relation between members of the community to develop values such as solidarity, collectivism, preparation of the members to make decisions, execute, evaluate the projects, and as final factor reach the goals in the way of love against oppression.

## Conclusions

Included in different publications and speeches of Jose Martí, there are some ideas and concepts that sustain the beginning of popular education and work in the Cuban real life situations, a need for the professionals of Sociocultural Studies able to assume the different challenges of each community.

---

## Bibliographic References

- Báxter Pérez, E. (1995). *El trabajo comunitario: reto del presente*. Curso 45. Congreso Internacional Pedagogía 95. Palacio de las Convenciones. Ciudad de La Habana.
- Bellido Aguilera, R. (2003). *El oro nuevo: José Martí en la Educación Popular*. La Habana: CIE “Graciela Bustillos”, APC.
- Carcaset, R. (2002). *El ideario martiano y la enseñanza de la historia en los ISP*. (Tesis inédita de doctorado). Instituto Superior Pedagógico “Frank País”, Santiago de Cuba.
- Castro Ruz, F. (1975). *Educación en Revolución*. La Habana: Pueblo y Educación.
- Chávez Rodríguez, J. A. (1990). *Acercamiento necesario al pensamiento pedagógico de José Martí*. La Habana: Ministerio de Educación.
- Centro de Estudios Martianos. (1976). *Ideario Pedagógico. José Martí*. La Habana: Pueblo y Educación.
- Favier, E. (2003). *Propuesta Metodológica para el establecimiento de relaciones interdisciplinarias a partir de la obra de José Martí en el 9no grado en la secundaria básica*. (Tesis de Maestría). Instituto Superior Pedagógico “Enrique José Varona”, La Habana.
- Fernando, C. (1992). *La animación sociocultural. Una propuesta metodológica*. SA, España: Editorial Popular.
- Freire, P. (1998). *Selección de lecturas sobre Metodología de la Educación Popular*. La Habana: Editora AP.
- Gómez Felipe, M. (1997). *Estrategia de extensión universitaria en el Instituto Superior Pedagógico de Holguín “José de la Luz y Caballero”*. (Tesis de Maestría). ISP “José de la Luz y Caballero”, Holguín, Cuba.
- González Rodríguez, N. y Fernández, A. (1999). *Selección de lecturas sobre trabajo comunitario*. La Habana: CIE “Graciela Bustillos”, APC.

- Mañach, J. (1999). *Martí el Apóstol*. La Habana: Editora de Ciencias Sociales.
- Martí, J. (1963). *Obras Completas*. La Habana: Editora Nacional de Cuba.
- Medina de, C. (1985). *Participación y trabajo social. Un manual de promoción humana*. B. Aires: Humanitas.
- Ministerio de Educación Superior (2000). Carrera Estudios Socioculturales. Modelo del Profesional. La Habana.
- Núñez, C. (1991). *Educación para transformar. Transformar para educar*. La Habana: Pueblo y Educación.
- Ortega, A. (2002). *El trabajo de las aulas martianas del ISP de Guantánamo*. (Trabajo de Diploma). Instituto Superior Pedagógico “Raúl Gómez García”, Guantánamo, Cuba.
- Pla, R. (1996). *La vinculación del pensamiento martiano con la enseñanza de la historia en la enseñanza secundaria, en la provincia de Ciego de Ávila*. (Tesis de doctorado). UNICA, Ciego de Ávila, Cuba.
- Rodríguez Cruz, J. C. (2007). *El patrimonio identitario campesino y su proyección axiológica en el proceso docente- educativo de la secundaria básica suburbana*. (Tesis de doctorado). UCP “José de la Luz y Caballero”, Holguín, Cuba.
- Rubio Méndez, D. (2006). *Participación Social y Comunitaria, un debate teórico desde la cultura*. (Tesis de Maestría). Universidad de Oriente, Santiago de Cuba.
- Tamayo Rodríguez, I. (2003). *Concepciones teóricas de Fidel Castro en torno a la identidad cultural*. (Tesis de doctorado). UCP “José de la Luz y Caballero”, Holguín, Cuba.
- Valdés Navia, M. (2001). *La elaboración de una estrategia para perfeccionar la integración del pensamiento histórico de José Martí al proceso de asimilación del contenido de los procesos revolucionarios americanos hasta el siglo XIX en la secundaria básica*. (Tesis en opción al título de Doctor). Universidad de Sancti Spiritus, Cuba.
- Vecino Alegret, F. (1986). *Algunas tendencias en el desarrollo de la Educación Superior en Cuba*. La Habana: Pueblo y Educación.
- Velázquez López, A. y Frómeta Fernández, A. B. *Recepción del ideario martiano en la Enseñanza Superior Cubana*. Editorial del Centro Universitario Vladímir Ilich Lenin, Las Tunas, Cuba.