

La Ruralización de Piaget

by Orlando Lugo

In the peruvian altiplano, more than 4000 meters over the sea level, among people with a low level of literacy, low income, affected by a high rate of infant mortality and malnutrition, speaking only indian languages, Quechua and Aymara, it is being developed one of the most original and unique educational experiences in Latin America and maybe in the world: The ruralization of Piaget.

Anastasio Mamane Diaz spends his weekdays in the "Wawa-Wasi" (Quechua, nursery school) where he works with the local children aged up to five years applying Piaget's theories on cognitive development. Anastasio, who is a native from Coata (small town in the department of Puno in southern Perú), has been elected by his community to run this basic non-formal educational programme in his town. While his wife helps him to tend his herds he works on a voluntary basis with the children!

Anastasio, who has attended only primary school, receives training through periodical courses and radio programmes from the PROPEDEINE team. PROPEDEINE, pilot programme on basic non-formal education, depends from the Puno Chapter of the Peruvian Ministry of Education. Its technicians have taught Anastasio how Piaget, a leading psychologist on cognitive development, has identified three major stages through which the child's intelligence passes: sensorimotor, concrete-operational and formal operation period. During the first stage the child deals with differentiating between himself and concrete objects; during the second he engages in making relationships among concrete objects and during the third he starts considering relationships among abstractions.

Anastasio has defied those experts who assert that Piaget's theories can only be applied by professionals, and this is what makes this experience more valuable.

The local primary school teacher has congratulated me, ^{Anastasio} he said, because she has observed a significant difference between the children who have gone to the "Wawa-Wasi" ^{primary school} and those who have not. Passing through the Wawa-Wasi has made children less timid and more skillfull when compared with the others. This difference has been observed by a recent and more controlled evaluation of this programme, made by a professional reseacher.

Anastasio, like the other 167 promoters working on the same programme ~~along the department of Puno~~ ^{in the} ~~of~~ ^{provinc} Puno, are aware of the benefits they are bringing to their children and, to their communities, ~~however,~~ they still do not realize the scientific and social impact of this marvelous experience.

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Anastasio Mamane Diaz worked with children up to five years old in the local Wawa-Wasi (Quecha for nursery school) in Pune, Peru, applying the theories of Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget. He was congratulated by a local school teacher, who found the children under his care were better prepared when they started school: less timid and more skilful than other children.

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