

The elderly statute at school: intergenerational challenges
Estatuto do idoso na escola: os desafios intergeracionais
Estatuto del anciano en la escuela: los desafíos intergeneracionales

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This is an experience report that aims to analyze the propositions that emerged from a workshop conducted in a private school, focusing on teachers and students from basic and elementary school, with the objective to highlight the work of the social worker from an intergenerational perspective. Considering the contribution of the dialectic method, the initiative provided and increased possibilities of an intergenerational link between children and elders in the process of formal education.

Descriptors: Constitution and bylaws; Education primary and secondary; Aged; Intergenerational relations.

Este é um relato de experiência, e tem como objetivo analisar proposições que emergiram a partir de uma oficina ministrada numa escola privada, com foco em professores e alunos do ensino infantil e fundamental, e vistas a ressaltar o trabalho do assistente social na perspectiva intergeracional. Considera-se, a partir da contribuição do método dialético, que a iniciativa proporcionou e ampliou as possibilidades de vínculo intergeracional entre crianças e pessoas idosas no processo de educação formal.

Descritores: Constituição e estatutos; Ensino fundamental e médio; Idoso; Relação entre gerações.

Este es un relato de experiencia, y tiene como objetivo analizar proposiciones que emergieron a partir de un taller impartido en una escuela privada, con enfoque en profesores y alumnos de la enseñanza en preescolar y escuela primaria, con el objetivo de resaltar el trabajo del asistente social en la perspectiva intergeneracional. Se considera, a partir de la contribución del método dialético, que la iniciativa proporcionó y amplió las posibilidades del vínculo intergeneracional entre niños y personas ancianas en el proceso de educación formal.

Descriptores: Constitución y estatutos; Educación primaria y secundaria; Anciano; Relaciones intergeracionales.

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INTRODUCTION

Interest in the theme of intergenerational relations is the result of a trajectory of experiences, discussions, and concerns from the Study and Research Group "Human Aging, Public Policies and Society". The group was started in 2010, recognized by the institution, and registered at the CNPq, aiming to study more profoundly, understand, search and discuss matters pertaining to the issue-process of a dignified and humane aging process, as well as the social protection for the elderly worker.

The Group had two thematic guidelines:

1) *Human aging and public policies*, whose goal is to investigate the concept of aging, the scope and implications of this process, the socio-economic conditions of the elderly person, as well as public policies that meet the demands and needs of those who become elders; 2) *Elderly people: social relationships, work and society*, which includes studies on the human, social and labor conditions of the elderly in the dimensions of many different social groups - family, companies, institutions and Government. It proposes conceptual studies and "case" studies in order to offer reflections for the continuous improvement in the treatment of the elderly in the various spheres of their human, economic, social and political relationships. The group is composed of researchers from various fields of knowledge, among which we can mention: social service, law, history, psychology, and others.

Population aging is a worldwide phenomenon that takes place gradually and continuously, influencing all areas of social life: health, welfare, social services, urban mobility, housing, family and community relationships, and the respect for the creation of links between generations.

In contemporary times, the Brazilian State has been demonstrating inefficiency regarding the provision of full care for the elderly. After all, in addition to the execution of public policies, the need for cultural changes also emerges, both in values and in Brazilian mentality. That is: we need a fresh critical look at old age, starting with the investment in changing the perception that

society has on the process of aging and old age, seeking to overcome the myths and prejudices that even today are the biggest responsible for the exclusion of elderly people.

To age well, even in the presence of prejudice and exclusion, which are inherent in the dynamics of societies and in the relationship between human beings and their lives, old age depends on long term social and cultural investments. One of these investments is in education, which consists in the development of a work to educate elders, adults, young adults and children, that is: a continuous process of development, that can build a new image of the elderly, as subjects and a citizens¹.

Thus, the construction of a paradigm which educates people to be citizens can create conditions to demystify and face prejudice, exclusion and lack of opportunity in all ages. It can contribute to increase income, promote quality of life, and to the genuine exercise of citizenship in a continuous process of learning.

Education, in its entirety, generates challenges and uncertainties that nowadays are very useful for the transformation of reality, since they are able to generate an understanding of the world, investigating objective and subjective dimensions that connect amongst themselves to generate collective actions and directly reflect on social relations, thus forming a new and nuanced reflection of relationships relating to school.

Therefore, this article aims to analyze propositions that emerged from a workshop held in a private school, to highlight the labor of social workers from an intergenerational perspective.

METHOD

This is a case study, because we understand that reality is a social construct in which phenomena are understood from a holistic and historical perspective, in the search for comprehension of for interrelations in a given context².

This work was developed due to an invitation made by the school "Progresso e

Luz" (Light and Progress School) to the Study and Research Group "Human Aging, Public Policies and Society", from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (UNESP), asking them to develop a workshop on the issues of the Statute of the Elderly to the teachers and students.

The school, which is private, is located on the East side of the municipality of Franca, and offers basic and elementary education to children from four to nine years old.

Thus, the workshop entitled "Statute of the elderly in school: intergenerational challenges" was developed, and held in the second half of 2015 with approximately 50 students and 8 teachers.

The coordinator of the workshop was the leader of the study and research group, a professor of undergraduate and graduate degrees in Social Services from UNESP – campus of Franca. Two Social Service doctorate students who were under the guidance of the professor also participated.

RESULTS

At first, the workshop was presented, as well as those responsible for the workshop, the teachers and the students.

After that, aspects of the aging process and old age were discussed. Charts representing the age pyramid both on global and national levels were shown, as well as intrinsic and extrinsic determinants that influence one's course of life (consumption of alcohol and other drugs, work, basic sanitation structure, and other factors).

Then, the fundamental rights of the elderly person were highlighted (the right to life, health, food, education, culture, sports, leisure, work, citizenship, freedom, dignity, respect, and family and community life), and throughout this process, reflections were made on the social need to value the elderly person, in particular those with which the child has contact in their family, in order to strengthen the relationship between generations.

The students actively participated in the workshop, asking questions, recounting personal experiences with their grandparents and with their families, and

demonstrating understanding and curiosity. The participation of children was facilitated through the use of audiovisual equipment, videos, playful examples and simple and clear language.

The workshop was evaluated by a focus group and through participant observation, conducted by the teachers of the educational institution and those responsible for the children.

Some of the results pointed out were: a closer relationship through the dialogue between children and their grandparents, and a greater understanding of the need for autonomy and independence of the elderly, to promote dignified and active aging. The workshop also allowed the establishment of a greater bond between the direction of the school and the students and their families.

The theme proved relevant in the reality of the school, since grandparents became more involved in the school life of their grandchildren.

DISCUSSION

The theme "The Statute of the Elderly in School: Intergenerational Challenges" is relevant and current, because the changes in family dynamics reflect in the relationship among the family members, especially with regard to children and the elderly.

The Statute of the Elderly - Law 10,741/03³, concerning the relationship of the elderly with future generations, states in art. 3 of its single paragraph, IV, the "*availability of alternative forms of participation, occupation and coexistence of the elderly with other generations*" as a priority for the family, the community, the society and the public authorities.

Valuing the dialogue among generations helps to fight disrespect. Letting the elderly narrate their experiences, memories and wisdom, is good, as indicated by by militantes⁴:

"... I don't think it's difficult for an elder and a child to have a good relationship. Those in the relationship are the ones who can make it be good or bad, the intermediaries. The intermediaries in this case are the father and the mother".

When the parents of the children complain with their own parents about one thing or another, that influences the children to do the same.

Valuing the relationship between generations also refers to the ability of "listening to the elder". One of the greatest problems in society is the lack of communication. A considerable part of the differences and conflicts between people comes from the fact that they cannot communicate, they do not hear one another and do not accept their differences⁵. In the old age, the situation is worse, since the family tends to not want to hear the opinion of the elderly, even on issues that concern them.

Thus, in family relationships, it is important to try and involve the elderly person in the dialogue, giving them the possibility to participate in deliberations on subjects concerning their life. The child and the elderly should have space, and their opinions should be respected. In family relationships, clashes of ideas are common between parents, children and grandchildren. Time generates changes, and sometimes, people do not manage to place themselves within the reality in which the other was formed or is living⁵.

Another important aspect to give value intergenerational bonds refers to the care of the elderly. It is necessary to encourage the younger generation to take care of themselves and of the others, whether they are aged or not, basing their actions on ethical and human values. It is important to have a dialogue with the new generations, because obtaining quality of life is a challenge not only for those who are old, but also for those who will grow old. Having quality of life is a challenge for the individual and for society⁶.

Therefore, having or not having quality of life is not a matter of "individual responsibility". Economic, social and cultural factors interfere directly in the well-being of a population. In other words, the quality of life may be related to two factors: intrinsic and extrinsic. The intrinsic refers to the subjectivity of the person. The realization

and the achievement of positive expectations established by individuals throughout their lives can lead to quality of life: not smoking; not drinking; following a healthy diet with little salt, sugar and fat; frequent physical exercises; taking care of the stress of everyday life, and controlling emotions and thoughts.

The extrinsic aspect concerns the social policies that have developed over the years to meet the needs that have been highlighted by socio-economic and cultural development, and conquered through the claims of social movements.

Elder people face personal, social and physiological losses, and suffer a process of devaluation, marginalization and social exclusion. Hence the importance of creating projects, programs and plans to assist the elderly in coping with the process of aging and old age.

The rights of the elderly must be defended, to ensure their place in a society that is changeable and driven by technological advancements that could exacerbate social and generational inequalities.

Therefore, professionals who deal with elders must assume the role of providing information on their civil, political and social rights, aiming to encourage a dignified and active aging process.

From this perspective, the bonds between generations are recommended for the creation of a positive image of old age. In addition, there should be a political and social recognition of the contributions that the elderly can give to the younger generations, as mentioned in the statement: "educating young people about aging and caring for the maintenance of the rights of older people will help reduce and eliminate discrimination and abuse"⁷.

However, in these times of "split" people, of fragmented human life, there are many challenges in the way to human emancipation, the revelation of humans in their entirety, men beyond the merchandise.

Social services are presented with numerous challenges, but the biggest one is the ability to decipher reality and propose

creative alternatives to counter this one, alternatives that are able to preserve and enforce rights in pursuit of human emancipation⁸.

To this end, professionals need to propose new actions, break away from the bureaucratic and routine activities, seeking to comprehend the movement of reality and detecting possibilities that can be advanced by the professional.

Relationships between generations are a major challenge to Social Service professionals, who should consider the dynamics of reality and their relations of production and social reproduction, marked by work exploitation.

The challenges posited to the social worker include: lives dictated and supplanted by time, productivism, the commodification of social rights, consumerism in a time where social relations are met with human resistance, conditions that influence directly in the establishment of intergenerational links.

Conviviality and the necessary respect and learning that an intergenerational relationship can provide are possibilities of emancipation. However, it is difficult to achieve them, as it is to turn them into action. There is a rupture, a fragmentation between the several phases of life. It is common to have no identification with others, and the presence of resistance is latent, especially in a society in which youth is understood to reign supreme over other stages of life. In this sense, what can the old offer?

Contemporary reality is dynamic, with approximations and departures, conflicts and resistance, with children, young people, adults and elders as equal or different subjects, in relationships with the self and with others, "whose existence and reality defy the established understanding of the world, with its values, beliefs and dominant order"⁹.

Both children and elders, in contemporary times, are targets of educational procedures aiming at the homogenization of these stages of life. That is because both childhood and old age are

targets of comparisons in the educational process, because:

"It is not without reason that, in this day and age, similar to what happened and happens with the child, the so-called 'third age' is a new educational step inside of modern societies"⁹.

The child and the elder are devoid of autonomy and independence, to be socially determined:

"With that, one discovers that the problems of this 'other' - child or elder - are in us and in the image that we build of ourselves as a standard being, full and complete"⁹.

Children and old people are rich cultural and social assets, and highlight the stratification and the permanent classification of things and people determined by modern society. As a result, there is a focus on productive adults, considered by their attributes to be in a higher position, a model to be followed and respected⁹.

Modernity, in the name of the capital, for the supremacy of profit, trashes human lives, leading children and elders to live their lives ahead of time: children become adults before time, and adults get old early. This is a violence from society.

Thus, it is necessary to rescue children and elders from the models imposed by modernity, propelling the elder and children to identify themselves as historical subjects capable of generating transformation, precisely because they are able to experience another condition in addition to the one that is conventional to the molds of modernity.

The task of bringing the family, as it ages, close to school, is not new and not easy, due to the misunderstandings of the educational process, which includes the limits and the inclusion of school, according to whom both parties, students and parents, have their responsibilities.

The challenges posed to Social Services regarding intergenerational relations are complex, because for them to really become praxis, a transformation of reality, it is necessary to include in their practice the fundamentals and theoretical-methodological, ethical-political and

technical-operative dimensions of the profession¹⁰.

CONCLUSION

The challenge of the 21st century is to ensure active and dignified aging for the population, seeking a society for all ages in such a way that older people have full participation in social life, fighting social issues that compromise active aging, such as: social inequality, loneliness, social isolation, illiteracy, abuse and exposure to conflict situations, social vulnerability, non-effective social rights, and others.

The elderly population is increasing and, in time, especially in Brazil, the number of elders will be expressive.

This requires greater dedication from the professionals of various areas that have a commitment to the cause of the elderly. They need to join efforts, for the Brazilian elderly population not to feel or be seen as a "social problem", but as subjects that must have guaranteed access to their social rights, in addition to decision-making power on the issues that concern them.

Thus, even in a context that is adverse to the expansion and emancipation of aged social subjects, it is necessary to invest in horizontal educational actions aimed at building a culture of ethical citizens, as is the case of projects developed with a population of children and young adults, dealing with and living with the elderly.

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CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors worked together in the elaboration, writing and analysis of the article.

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