
THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR ADULTS OF EJA: ONE ECOLOGICAL APPROACH¹

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ABSTRACT. The aim of this study is to understand the meaning that mature adult students ascribed to their return to formal education at the Youth and Adult Education (EJA) and their perception of the changes arising from this educational path. The method selected was the collective case study and the subjects were four male individuals over 45 years old. Semi-structured interviews were carried out along with the creation of a timeline of educational history of each student, classroom observations and analysis of the school's Political Pedagogical Project for EJA. The information collected was submitted to Textual Analysis of Discourse, articulating studies of Urie Bronfenbrenner and Peter Jarvis. The results indicated the emergence of two categories that revealed the meanings attributed to the respondents' educational experiences at EJA, reflecting cognitive, behavioral, psychosocial and living habits changes. This production of meanings was mediated by constant intercom among micro, meso, exo, and macrosystems represented by reciprocal relationships and the social and affective support in the return to formal education. The theoretical perspective taken intended to present a new approach to EJA adult students, through a systematic approach for the development, emphasizing the individual and collective empowerment by means of the educational relationships as well as the potential of the educational act for mature adults.

Keywords: Youth and adult education; adult; bioecological model.

VIVÊNCIAS EDUCATIVAS NA IDADE ADULTA MADURA: UMA ABORDAGEM BIOECOLÓGICA

RESUMO. Esta pesquisa teve por objetivo compreender os sentidos que os estudantes adultos maduros atribuíram à retomada da educação formal na educação de jovens e adultos (EJA) e as suas percepções sobre as mudanças decorrentes desse percurso educativo. Utilizou o método de estudo de caso coletivo, tendo como sujeitos quatro adultos, masculinos, com mais de 45 anos. Realizaram-se entrevista semiestruturada e construção da linha do tempo da história escolar de cada sujeito, além de observações em sala de aula e análise do projeto político-pedagógico da escola para a EJA. As informações foram submetidas à análise textual discursiva, dialogando com os estudos de Urie Bronfenbrenner e Peter Jarvis. Os resultados apontaram para a emergência de duas categorias reveladoras dos sentidos atribuídos à vivência educativa na EJA, refletindo mudanças cognitivas, comportamentais, psicossociais e de hábitos de vida dos entrevistados. Essa produção de sentidos foi mediada por intercomunicações constantes entre micro, meso, exo e macrossistema, representadas pelas relações recíprocas e o apoio social e afetivo na retomada do processo de educação formal. A perspectiva teórica adotada pretendeu trazer um novo viés na forma de abordar o educando adulto da EJA, destacando, numa abordagem sistêmica do desenvolvimento, o empoderamento individual e coletivo por meio das relações educativas assim como as potencialidades do ato educativo para os adultos maduros.

Palavras-chave: Educação de jovens e adultos; adulto; modelo bioecológico.

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LA EXPERIENCIA EDUCATIVA PARA LOS ADULTOS DE EJA: UN ENFOQUE BIOECOLÓGICA

RESUMEN. Esta investigación tuvo como objetivo comprender los significados que los alumnos adultos maduros han atribuido a la reanudación de la educación formal en la educación de jóvenes y adultos (EJA) y sus percepciones sobre los cambios resultantes de este proceso educativo. Hemos utilizado el método de estudio de caso colectivo, teniendo como sujetos cuatro adultos, masculinos, con más de 45 años. Se realizaron entrevistas parcialmente estructuradas y la construcción de la línea de tiempo de la historia escolar de cada sujeto, así como observaciones en clase y el análisis de los Proyectos Políticos y Pedagógicos de la escuela para adultos. Las informaciones han sido sometidas al Análisis del Discurso Textual, dialogando con los estudios de Urie Bronfenbrenner y Peter Jarvis. Los resultados señalaron la aparición de dos categorías, revelando los significados atribuidos a la experiencia de la educación en la EJA, reflejando los cambios cognitivos, conductuales, psicosociales y los hábitos del estilo de vida de los encuestados. Esta producción de sentidos era influenciada por las intercomunicaciones constantes, entre micro, meso y exo- y macrosistema, representados por las relaciones recíprocas y el apoyo social y afectivo en la reanudación del proceso de educación formal. La perspectiva teórica adoptada desea traer una nueva visión a la forma de abordar al estudiante adulto de EJA, destacando, en un enfoque sistémico para el desarrollo, la potenciación individual y colectivamente por medio de relaciones educativas, así como el potencial del acto educativo para los adultos maduros.

Palabras-clave: Educación para jóvenes y adultos; adultos; modelo bioecológico.

In Brazil scientific researches about the Education of Young People and Adults (Educação de Jovens e Adultos, EJA, acronym in Portuguese) is still incipient if compared to other themes related to education (Haddad, 2011). However, Soares (2011) has found that there has been a significant increase in the studies about this theme in the researches at the National Association of Post Graduation and Research in Education (ANPED, acronym in Portuguese) between 1998 and 2008. Corroborating this, the review of the state of the art in researches conducted in grad school in Brazil between 2011 and 2014 has shown an increase in the number of studies about EJA. Nonetheless, out of the 156 studies about the theme only 18 focused on adult subjects that attend to this type of education, considering the particularities and characteristics of it (Conzatti & Davoglio, 2016). One reason for this might be historical constitution of EJA. Considered to be a type of Basic Education, EJA represents a State's policy that develop educational action to those who have been excluded from the process of formal education. Its legal landmark reflects social, political and cultural conceptions, as well as the socio-historic conflicts in the fight to democratize young people and adults' education (Picawy & Wandscheer, 2006). The name EJA was instituted by the National Law of Educational Basis in 1996, in opposition to supplementary education, whose aim was to cover all processes of formation not restricted to education (Soares, 2002). In the year 2000, with the ratification of the Motion 11/2000 (2000) the National Curricular Guidelines for EJA were regulated, and it should attend to three functions: repair, equalize, and qualify young people and adults.

Even though EJA has been established as a type of Basic Education, currently a very diverse audience interested in obtaining the High School degree or to initiate their Professional Education has used EJA's spaces. Thus, departing from contemporary perspectives based on lifelong learning (LL) and on human development integrated to context, it is emphasized the need of new studies about the adult subject of EJA, which stir the debate and critical reflection about the specificities of the learning process, as well as the promotion of effective public policies to adult education in the country.

Lifelong learning emphasizes that learning takes place at anytime of the vital cycle, comprising various dimensions of the learner. According to Jarvis (2013), learning takes place when the person engages with the activity they perform, producing meanings through this interaction and leading to the modification of the individual and social sphere. However, effective learning only takes places when there is a "disjunction" (Jarvis, 2013, p. 36), that is, when the unbalance between the known and the unknown is equated via the sense attributed to this unknown feeling. Therefore, the conflict established internally is resolved through the influences of the context in which the person is inserted.

In line with the principles of Jarvis (2013) theory and to the conception of LL, the Bioecological Theory of Human Development (BTHD) considers that the development results from the interaction

between the subject and the diverse contexts through the influence of four interrelated elements: Process, person, Context, and Time (PPCT Model) (Bronfenbrenner, 2011). "Process" refers to the interaction of reciprocity between people in development with others and with objects and symbols that configure the immediate environment in a regular period of time. "Person" involves bio-psychological and those constructed throughout the interactions with context, responsible for the course of development, either thrusting it or hindering it. "Context" constitutes the place where dynamic and multi-directional interactions happen, and may be of four types (Bronfenbrenner, 2011): Microsystem (immediate context of the person in development; e.g.: home, school, workplace); Mesosystem (interrelationship between two microsystems; e.g.: the relationship between family and school); Exosystem (connections and situations between two or more levels in which the person in development is not necessarily interested, but might influence their development; e.g.: relationship parents and school); and Macrosystem (socially established patterns in a given culture or subculture that resound in development; e.g.: lifestyle, beliefs). At last, "Time", defined as the Chronosystem, relates changes and stabilities that have happened to the person in development throughout their life, being cumulative and meaningful during their development. In this sense, the PPCT Model understands the environments as embedded structures and allows the connection between the subject's dynamic relations to the context, the person's characteristics (biological, cognitive, emotional, behavioral), the ecological environments of human development and the time in its different temporal aspects (familiar, ontogenetic, historical) builders of the chronosystem.

Thus the present paper intends to contribute with a theoretical discussion about the theme of the subject who has returned to EJA under the scope of BTHD (Bronfenbrenner, 2011), aiming at understanding the meanings that these students have attributed to their return to formal education at EJA and their perceptions about the changes that have taken place during their educational process. In order to do so, the word "meaning" is here used in the sense of Smolka (2004) and has to do with something that emerges out of the relations between people and environment permeated by the baggage of experiences throughout a period of time and that, even though each there is one meaning for each person, meaning is construed collectively in the interactions they have ecologically. In this sense, the concept of field of affect (Maia, 2004) seemed more adequate, since it has to do with the affective space that exists between subject and world, important to the apprehension and the creation of meaning.

This qualitative research springs from a method of collective case studies (Stake, 1995). The selection of the samples respected were based on the records of servers with fellowship at a federal university was consulted, and it followed these criteria of inclusion: be an technician-administrative server; be enrolled and attend regularly to EJA; be awarded a scholarship from the Support to Qualification Edictal from the institution at which they work; be at least 45 years old. The Support to Qualification Edictal promotes the development of servers (technician-administrative and scholars at the institution) via the offer of educational and financial incentive in all modalities of education. This is particularly relevant to this study because it is associated to the protective contexts to the development of researchers.

The next step was to contact the subjects and invite them to take part on the research voluntarily, reassuring they would remain anonymous. The subjects who decided to participate were four mature male students between the ages of 47 and 68 years old, all male, attending to the 2nd year in High School at EJA, in a public school of the federal system of Porto Alegre/Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. All signed the free consent form according to the protocols established and approved by the ethics committee.

The information was collected via audio-recorded semi-structured interviews, which were transcribed; construction of a timeline of the education history of the subjects aiming at completing the information obtained in the interviews; observation of classes in order to capture the social context and the subject's school experiences; analysis of the political-pedagogic project of EJA. These were analyzed under the scope of Textual Discursive Analysis (TDA), understood as involving a cycle of deconstruction, reconstruction and production of new knowledge about the phenomenon in question (Moraes & Galiuzzi, 2011).

The contact with the material from the interviews and the subjects' school trajectory, via an TDA analysis, enabled the emergence of two categories producing meanings about the experience of the interviewees: 1) Educational experience at EJA, and 2) Affections by the process of education at EJA. To each of these categories, subcategories have been found, and they are based on the motivations, difficulties, the existence of a social and affective support network to remain at EJA, future expectations about what would happen after this type of education; as well as changes manifested in cognitive, behavioral, psychological and daily domains. All these subcategories are intertwined, causing modification in the people and in the context they are inserted and, consequently, in their development.

Category 1: Educational experience at EJA

This category is characterized by the existence of the subjects' narratives, in a network of approximations and specificities, showing common traits that refer, at the same time, to the subjects and the social place (mature adults, public servers, who have decided to resume their formal education process), as well as particular aspects of their relation with the new educational context. In spite the similarities in the subjects' histories prior to school life, each in their own way signified their education experiences at EJA, creating particular strategies to follow this path.

Thus, the subcategory Motivation is intertwined with social matters that have to do with the subject. This subcategory revealed different motivational factors both extrinsic and intrinsic to returning to education. Extrinsic factors comprise support from family, from co-workers and from the employer via the incentive of the scholarship and a reduced work time, rise in salary, daytime classes, and need to learn and to better qualify for the execution of tasks at work. The intrinsic factors comprise search for wisdom, mastering the lettered culture, fulfillment of a personal dream. According to Bronfenbrenner (2011), people's motivations concur to their bio-psycho-social development in an ecological perspective of the interaction with the environment, through dynamic and cyclic movement. In this movement, the person develops bio-psycho-socially, fed by socio-emotional, motivational, and cognitive aspects (Bronfenbrenner, 2011). So, beyond the rise of salary and the improve of quality of life, other motivations came into play:

I work inside a University where you have a chance to possess knowledge. This made me realize I needed to acquire more knowledge to improve in my workplace (Interviewee 1).

Everything motivates me: the knowledge that we will have some more money, right. And the incentive of my co-workers (Interviewee 3).

The second subcategory Difficulties is related to the hindrance face in the journey of education at EJA, such as conforming to the school routine, the necessity to balance family, studies and work, and the difficulties related to learning, mainly in the subjects of mathematics and Spanish. The decision to go back to school demanded they renounced various things, since the educational phenomenon is incorporated in active contexts of participation of these subjects, demanding new configurations in immediate environments, especially:

I had to drop a ton of things, some appointments that I had in service room. I had to choose. I had to choose: either I study or I get by otherwise, see. So I think it was better to drop and do this here (study) because I am going to take it forever, when I see my payment (Interviewee 2) .

I get home and I want to do my papers. My wife just doesn't like it much (laugh). She says: "Now you want to live on these books!". Yeah, but I study! (Interviewee 3).

I faced difficulties in everything! Studying changed a lot! (Interviewee 1).

The formation of a support network built by classmates, teachers, and family was an important aspect to ensure the permanence of these subjects in EJA, because the cognitive losses of the pulling

away from school demands a more express help. The literature on adult development (Palacios, 2004; Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2010) asserts that psychomotor abilities decrease with age, especially involving matters of agility, precision, speed, and motor coordination. What is more the limitation to access to knowledge socially institutionalized and the lettered culture, since the early ages, brings with it aspects that should not be considered to understand the insertion of adult subjects in formal means of education, and, above all, the unexpected experiences in going back to studying.

The third subcategory Social and Affective Support Network represents the universe of people, meanings and affections that integrates the relationships present in the subject's life. According to Brito and Koller (1999), this network of support influences directly the development and for sure it is through it that the person in development acquires the necessary resources to face hindrance from the social environment.

The reports from the subjects who were interviewed show the interplay of different elements integrated into the network, represented by the following enablers: reduced work time to go to classes, the offer of scholarships, classes during daytime, the offer of a Learning Laboratory whose purpose is to aid students with difficulties in specific subjects, such as Portuguese and mathematics.

I realized that after I started studying I had a lot of incentive from the teachers, my co-workers, and the institution too, that incentivized a lot, gave support. But I saw here at school and at the institution where I work that there was incentive of warning, passing information along, and incentivizing people to go back to their studies (Interviewee 4).

This opportunity won't come again! And above all there is also the incentive to study. Where is this gonna happen again?! Ludacris! Where will you get a place that will give you an incentive to study, hun? (Interviewee 2).

On the other hand, affective ties built throughout the journey at EJA seem filled with proximity and mutual help in facing challenges. The relationships established seem to favor the cognitive and the socio-emotional development, considering that the learning process is more effective when people engage in affective and supportive ties (Santos, 2012). In this sense, the (trans)formation and development are enabled to their maxim if a network of stable support is present during the educational journey, mediated by people and meaningful systems acting in cooperative form throughout this process.

The fourth and last subcategory Future Expectations has to do with the subjects' future projects after they conclude High School at EJA. Some subjects informed the desire to go to college, to receive the diploma, to retire and take on the project of keeping up with the school garden alongside with children and other teachers. In this project, the idea would be to multiply the incentive to gardening organic produce among kids, as well as use the crop in school meals.

I think that even next year [2016], even if I graduate, I will keep up with gardening. I want to see that youth, all those kids gardening! It is so good there. An empty space, what for? It can be used even in school meals (Interviewee 4).

Look, you can probe that I have the idea of keep studying. I will do everything I'm entitled to do until I'm old enough, and I don't start to become a senile, right (laugh) (Interviewee 1).

The experiences at EJA were permeated with important elements, such as self-confidence and sociocultural mobility via the access of education, and it resulted in converging supporting forces from the environment and of the social, emotional and cognitive characteristics of the subjects involved (Bronfenbrenner, 2011). The excerpts show that long-term expectations also incorporate learning from other social contexts, so the school is not necessarily the only responsible institution for the processes of teaching and learning. The conception that it is possible to learn in all spaces converges with a more broad and integrated conception of human learning proposed by Jarvis (2015). In this perspective leaning happens throughout an individual's life and it involves "body and mind", enabling the

transformation of the contents in the cognitive, emotional and empirical spheres, which constitute the transformation of the person in development.

Category 2: Affections by the education process at EJA

Attributing meaning to experiences of integration of different aspects (emotional, affective, sensorial, perceptive) that enable the subject to be absorbed by and in the world (Toassa, 2011) establishes new relations with the environment and with the self. In this sense, the field of affection (Maia, 2004; Espinosa, 2013) and its derivations seem to be the more adequate name to explicate the category Affection by the educational process at EJA. The word affection here is adopted has to do with the reverberations provoked by influences of educational experiences, in a cyclic movement between the letting oneself being affected and at the same time propitiate affections in the context one lives. Thus, in a dynamic process of interactions, transformations take place in the cognitive level, behavioral, psychosocial, and healthier habits of life.

The first subcategory, Cognitive, denoted the domain of school knowledge, showing advances in the acquisition of knowledge:

Before I started studying I read almost by spelling. I almost didn't understand what I read, because I would start reading the first line and by the time I got to the middle of it I couldn't remember what it said. But today it's different! Today I can read faster and I can understand what I read (Interviewee 3).

The different abilities developed by the subjects did not include only the acquisition of written language, but also the development of psychomotor skills. According to Soares (2008), the acquisition of reading and of writing comprise linguistic and cognitive dimension of appropriation of meaning that involves social practices of uses of reading-writing. The affection provoked by different people and situations sprung the need to be better situated in time and space, so the domain of the written code takes on a relevant role of sociocultural insertion (Klein, 2008).

The contact with a foreign language also posed great difficulties when the individuals started EJA, and the learning of mathematics instigated anguishes to remember formulas. However the methodology used by the teacher and the affective ties enabled the student to face cognitive challenges to abstract knowledge.

The report from subjects indicate that their way of relating to knowledge in mature age is different from the way they experience in their early years, and they were explicit in saying that the context and time experienced reflect this new reality and they have become products and producers of an environment that influences and is influenced by the subjects' practices, a process of "becoming" (Jarvis, 2013, p. 40)

The second subcategory, Behavioral, involved the learning of "be me", according to Jarvis (2013), that is, the interrelationship between objective and subjective aspects involved in the act of learning that belong to human nature. In the interviews we have identified elements that caused the reflection about the transforming role of education in the lives of the subjects. Far from a romantic and naïve perspective, one in which the main idea is that only education transforms the world (Freire, 2011), transformation by education acknowledges possibilities but also its limitations. Among its possibilities, we have found that the educational act had the role of changing attitudes, behaviors, thoughts and new comprehensions about ordinary phenomena.

You know that even talking to people was hard. I felt embarrassed. Not anymore. We learn to loose up (Interviewee 1).

With study I got more communicative and more docile. When I began studying here I started seeing people differently (Interviewee 3).

Learning, as a consequence of the interrelationship between people and contexts, is achieved in social interaction and does not follow only from psychological aspects but mainly from the fullness of human nature: body and mind (Jarvis, 2013). In the same vein, Bronfenbrenner (2011) postulates that the result of human development displays an interrelationship between subjective and objective aspects of human action. In this sense, the properties of people and environment – in this case the school environment –, through the interaction of process, person, context and time, has produced changes and stabilities in the psychological characteristics in people throughout their experience at EJA.

The third subcategory, Psychosocial, revealed a production of new meanings at EJA and endorsed new forms of actions and interaction with the social environment. The acknowledgement from the institution, more autonomy, self-confidence, good self-image, occupation of new social roles and moment of socialization were key elements to the possibility of (re)construction of these subjects' identities.

A lot has changed with the studies... Because when you're not doing anything, when you only go to work (and people know that we are not qualified in anything, that we don't have education, we didn't make progress in the studies) it seems that they see you as someone who's not interested in anything, see. And in the moment you're working hard to make something people see you differently. They see that you're interested, that you are working hard. They even provide incentive! Even that has changed! (Interviewee 2).

Well, before I had to come to people and ask them to retrieve my payment, ask for a favor. Not anymore! Everyday I go into the computer and I check it. And at my job I have free access. I can go into the director's office if I need to use it! There's no problem with it! [proud]. And our Gardening Project, when I have a full head, I go there. I have to go to the garden everyday! I may not work there, but just looking at the plants is good! And I have the key to the gate. They say I'm the boss of the garden. But I say I'm not. Who planted has to water, has to care for it. It is about 7 kilometers far from my place, so I take it as my walk (Interviewee 4).

The reports are coherent with Caldeira's study (2011) about the adult student who goes to EJA looking for reconstructing their self-image, not only as a way to make up for loss time or improving their financial situation. The educational relationship at EJA is a way of life for those interviewed (Giovanetti, 2003) in order to overcome inequality imposed from familiar, educational and social spheres, producing important transformations in self-perception and in the way they interact with the world.

In order to understand the human development it is necessary to relate "biological and social forces" (Bronfenbrenner, 2011, p.93), that is, understand it in its context. The school, as a social environment that exerts a fundamental role in human development (Poletto & Koller, 2008), can become a meaningful space for experiences that promote the development of self-esteem, self-confidence and social and affective skills. The school also produces meanings, and, in this particular study, it has provided support to the positive reflexes on the subjects' journey at EJA, since it contributed to the assertion of their new identity to themselves and to society. The attempt to overcome the reverberations from social outcast and previous school experiences could be materialized in new configurations and references in human relations built over processes of socialization in which "I recognize myself" and at the same time "I am recognized by the other". What is more, in the interviews, subjects mentioned the importance of people who actively participated in the process of change in the familiar, educational microsystems. The connections between these microsystems and the processes involved in the consecution of the offer of a daytime class at EJA and the macro-context of an institutional project for a major part of the servers without Basic School degree also highly influenced the course of development of these subjects, besides the filling of new roles at work and at the school. In this sense, we can see the social relevance of the educational actions developed in school environment, enablers of the development of affective and social relations that allow the adults to recognize themselves in the spaces they circulate, in a continuous process of self-discovery.

The last subcategory, Life habits, represents the incorporation of healthier habits to the life of the subjects. The preoccupation with risk behavior to health, such as the consumption of vegetables and

fruit with agrototoxic, smoking and drinking, as well as the development of the habit to study were promoted by the EJA context.

Processes of learning make reference to the story of life, to the integration of the body to the mind, to the educational experiences, to thought and reflection, to emotion and action. In a more simple way, this would be the cycle of transformation of a person through learning, according to Jarvis (2013). However, for this change to be effective, it is necessary for there to be modification in the person, in their completeness, based on the meaningful experiences memorized mediated through the senses. Take a new attitude before life demonstrated that the change in the way the subjects saw themselves was thrust by new encounters and relationships based on respect and affection. Still, the incorporation of the habit of studying resulted in a new type of family relation that seems to instigate the desire of others to return to school. In this sense, we could cite the influences of a father's action of studying over his sons, or the husband's over the wife. According to Bronfenbrenner (2011), all members of a microsystem mutually influence each other, just as the relation among family members exerts over one another. In this perspective, the influence of going back to formal education caused by the person in development can exert influence over the process of development of other family members, and the contrary is also true.

Attending to a formal educational institution meant, for some of the subject, the opportunity to keep updated and to "use the brain". After being outcast from the educational environment for a long time, the adult students experienced life-moving situations that reverberated in the search of healthier habits. To this respect, Freire (2011) states that being an "agent of learning" (p. 99) corresponds to "... an autoformation from which might result an acting stance of the man on his context" (p. 100). Therefore, the educational act has to do with transformations that occur at the cognitive and psychosocial level, an act that empowers the subject in the individual and collective struggle to better actions.

Figure 1 represents the mutual relations and social and affective support in the return to the process of education, as well as the healthy processes, such as changes in the cognitive, behavioral, psychosocial spheres and positive life habits on the subjects. Enrolling all the aspects that caused the meanings to emerge in the educational process experienced at EJA was only possible after the immersion in the reports, gestures and expressions of the interviewed subjects. The two categories represent the universe of meanings experienced by subjects in formal education that reverberate in different contexts of their lives.

The Bioecological Model allowed us to integrate the different elements (Process-Person-Context-Time) that form the development of the life of the mature adult interviewed throughout their educational process at EJA. Figure 02 represents the processes of interaction among the four ecological levels permeated by symbols, objects, people and environments of the subjects. The dotted lines that mark each system of the model show the constant articulation between them, which is indispensable in the bioecological perspective. It further allows us to see that the changes in the subjects were caused by the existence of a support network that promoted the conditions for this development to occur.

Formally educating adult people requires an understanding of all these nuances and their reflection of the development of the phase of the vital cycle, so adequate pedagogic practices may be formulated. Educational processes represent constant transformations towards new tendencies requiring new social roles to be taken by a systemic subject, in a dynamic process of relations.

Final Considerations

The attempt to understand the meanings of the education experience of mature adults that have returned to formal education at EJA, as well as the perceptions about the changed that have taken place make it evident how important educational are actions destined to this type of public in specific. To make formal spaces available for those who were not given the change to study during their young years is a necessary and urgent public policy, considering that Brazilian population is growing older and

life expectancy is increasing. What is more, it is important to consider that the development is a constant for human beings and the development is processed in the dynamic interrelationship between Process, Person, Context, and Time. To disregard the potential of mature adults and of older people is a mistake, considering that learning processes take place throughout a lifetime, with the exception of cases in which diseases and severe impediments are in order.

The theoretical perspective presented here intended to approach the adult who seeks EJA under the perspective of individual and collective empowering through educational relations. What is more, the potentials that the educational act is able to propitiate to adults in a systemic approach of development. The results show that education, understood as a human phenomenon, has created the opportunity for possibilities of being and living. The intention was to bring forth a discussion of aspects that reflect, in a significant manner, the life and the context of these people, based on a transforming experience that strengthened new ways of being and of living in the world. Better yet, the importance of a social and affective network in this dynamics.

It must be pointed out the particularities of those investigated, considering that they have had the conditions and opportunities for this dream to come true: scholarship, classes during daytime, specific pedagogic activities, and the support from family and institution. This network of support was essential so that barriers could have been overcome with more ease. In the same fashion, the results presented here may not be generalized to other contexts; however, it is insisted on its value precisely for this prerogative: that of producing knowledge about a limited group of subjects, allowing for other hypotheses to be (re)formulated.

The chosen theoretical-methodological approach chosen proved to be innovative and assertive in proposing studies and producing knowledge in the area of adults and older people in the field of formal education, since it allowed us to show that human development is established through an interaction and reciprocity in human relations and in those involving symbols, objects and environments that permeate it. To the educational institution for adults is given the challenge to build educational proposals that are aligned with the sociocultural, cognitive, physical and biological peculiarities of these students.

Learning presupposes change. From the transformation occurred in people's lives, in the environment and in people close to them, and in those representative to the ones in development. In this sense, learning also constitutes a continuous process, a lifetime process, since the human being is not finished and requires, in their essence, constant perfecting.



Figure 1. Sense of educational experiences for the mature adult in the Youth and Adult Education

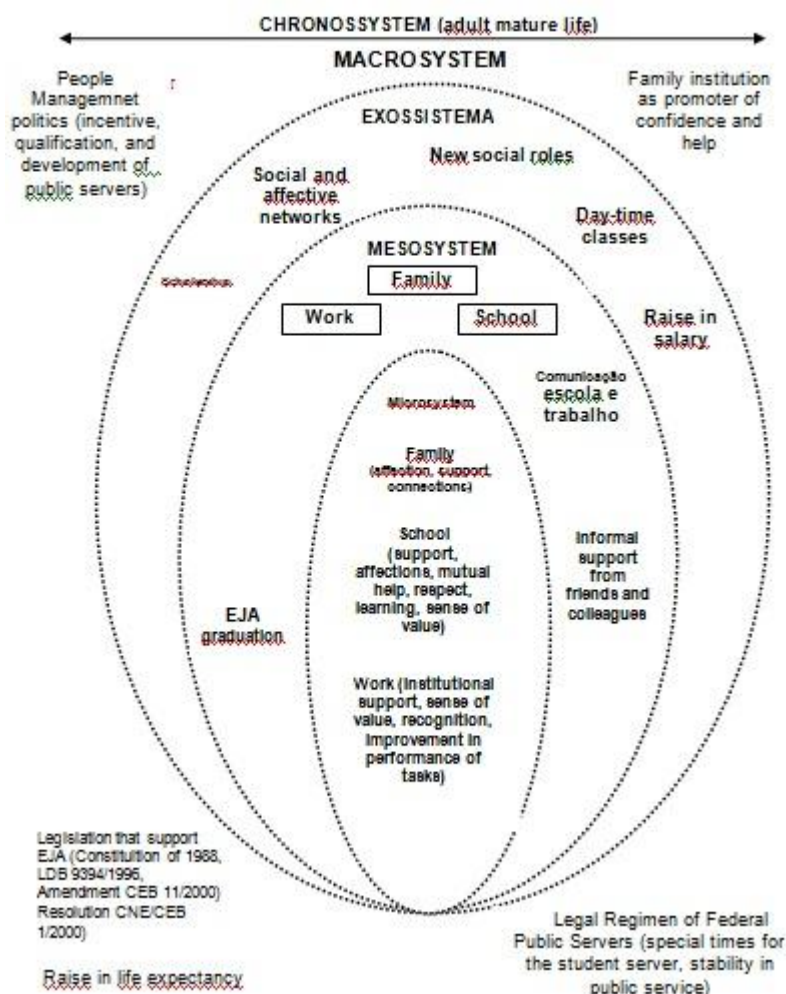


Figure 2. Network of the senses of educational experiences of the mature adult in the Education of Young and Adults according to Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological Model

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