



## Social-cultural and educational practices: is the university prepared for the social question of aging?

Camila Kuhn Vieira;Carine Nascimento da Silva;Ana Luisa Moser Keitel;Solange Beatriz Billig Garces;Patrícia Dall'Agnol Bianchi

### Abstract

We are living a period of demographic increase in the elderly population in Brazil and worldwide. Among the main causes are the decrease in infant and elderly mortality due to medical scientific achievements. This makes society and families increasingly live in their family and institutional spaces with older people. Situations such as the large concentration of people in urban centers, the liquid, individualistic, hedonistic and presentist society reflect as characteristics for the life of the elderly population, which wants to take advantage of the opportunities that life can provide, living in spaces public with different generations. In this sense, we understand that population aging has become a pressing social issue, which institutions such as the University, for example, have an obligation to account, especially in the sense of reflection, research in the area and opportunities for training / qualification for both the elderly as for the professionals who will work with this audience.

**Keyword:** Aging; Education; Socio Cultural Practices;

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## **Social-cultural and educational practices: is the university prepared for the social question of aging?**

### **Camila Kuhn Vieira**

MSc student of the Postgraduate Program (PPG) in Sociocultural Practices and Social Development, University of Cruz Alta (UNICRUZ). CAPES scholarship holder. Graduation in Nursing – UNICRUZ, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6303-4318>. E-mail: [camilakuhn1994@hotmail.com](mailto:camilakuhn1994@hotmail.com)

### **Carine Nascimento da Silva**

Master of the Postgraduate Program (PPG) in Sociocultural Practices and Social Development, University of Cruz Alta (UNICRUZ). CAPES scholarship holder. Graduation in Physiotherapy - UNICRUZ, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9908-5291>. E-mail: [kaca\\_nascimento@hotmail.com](mailto:kaca_nascimento@hotmail.com)

### **Ana Luisa Moser Keitel**

Master of the Postgraduate Program (PPG) in Sociocultural Practices and Social Development, University of Cruz Alta (UNICRUZ). Purse fee CAPES. Law graduation - UNICRUZ, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. E-mail: [analuisakeitel@hotmail.com](mailto:analuisakeitel@hotmail.com)

### **Solange Beatriz Billig Garces**

PhD in Social Sciences. Professor of the Postgraduate Program in Sociocultural Practices and Social Development at the University of Cruz Alta - UNICRUZ. E-mail: [sgarces@unicruz.edu.br](mailto:sgarces@unicruz.edu.br)

### **Patrícia Dall'Agnol Bianchi**

PhD in Biological Sciences. Professor of the Postgraduate Program in Sociocultural Practices and Social Development at the University of Cruz Alta - UNICRUZ. E-mail: [pbianchi@unicruz.edu.br](mailto:pbianchi@unicruz.edu.br)

### **Marcelo Cacinotti da Costa**

Doctor of Law. Professor of the Postgraduate Program in Sociocultural Practices and Social Development at the University of Cruz Alta - UNICRUZ. E-mail: [marcosta@unicruz.edu.br](mailto:marcosta@unicruz.edu.br)

University of Cruz Alta, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.

### **Abstract**

*We are living a period of demographic increase in the elderly population in Brazil and worldwide. Among the main causes are the decrease in infant and elderly mortality due to medical scientific achievements. This makes society and families increasingly live in their family and institutional spaces with older people.*

*Situations such as the large concentration of people in urban centers, the liquid, individualistic, hedonistic and presentist society reflect as characteristics for the life of the elderly population, which wants to take advantage of the opportunities that life can provide, living in spaces public with different generations. In this sense, we understand that population aging has become a pressing social issue, which institutions such as the University, for example, have an obligation to account, especially in the sense of reflection, research in the area and opportunities for training / qualification for both the elderly as for the professionals who will work with this audience.*

**Keywords:** Aging; Education; Socio Cultural Practices;

## 1. Introduction

We are living a period of intense demographic increase of the elderly population in Brazil and in the world, being able to affirm that we are experiencing a process of super aging. Among the main causes are the decrease in infant mortality and mortality of the elderly themselves due to medical scientific achievements, which generates a considerable increase in life expectancy.

This is therefore “One of the greatest cultural achievements of a people in their humanization process” (BRASIL, 2019, pp. 1), which reflects the improvement of living conditions. Data are projected in relation to the doubling aging in the coming years of this population, reaching almost two million elderly people. In 2017, we already had 30.2 million elderly people in Brazil and it is projected to reach around 28.3 million by 2020, and in this scenario there is a special highlight to the feminization of old age.

This makes society and families increasingly live in their family and institutional spaces with older people. Situations such as the large concentration of people in urban centers, the liquid, individualistic, hedonistic and presentist society reflect as characteristics for the life of the elderly population, which wants to enjoy the opportunities that life can provide, living the life in public spaces and private, with different generations.

In this sense, we understand that population aging has become a pressing social issue, which institutions such as the University, for example, have an obligation to account, especially in the sense of reflection, research in the area and opportunities for training / qualification for both the elderly as for the professionals who will work with this audience. Therefore, the objective of this research is to discuss the socio-cultural and educational practices in the context of contemporary aging, and to reflect through the intergenerational actions developed at the University of Cruz Alta/RS, Brazil.

## 2. Methodology

The research is characterized as a reflection sustained through bibliographic review, linked in the discipline of Citizenship and Social Insertion for the Elderly from the Postgraduate Program in Sociocultural Practices and Social Development of the University of Cruz Alta - UNICRUZ and the Interdisciplinary Group of Human Aging Studies - GIEEH.

For the theoretical basis of this article were used the authors: Camarano (2014), Bauman (1999), Lipovetsky (2004), Cachioni and Todaro (2016), among others.

### 3. Results and discussions

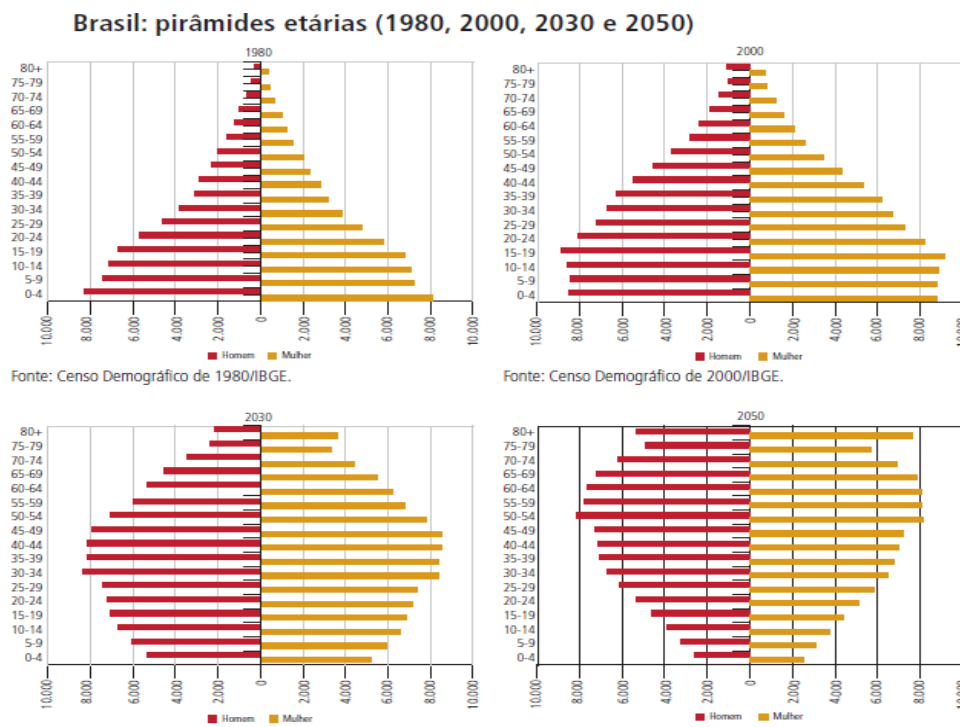
#### 3.1 Challenges of Contemporary Aging

As we saw earlier, the accelerated aging process of the Brazilian population is a reality. As explained by Camarano (2014, pp. 15):

“ [...] Life expectancy at birth, an indicator of the average duration of life, increased by 27 years and can be considered one of the greatest social achievements of the second half of the 20th century. Today, a Brazilian lives an average of 75.2 years, and it is recognized that there is still a lot of room for new gains in this indicator. These two processes occurred in a short period of time and, simultaneously, in almost all developing countries”.

In order to prove these demographic issues, Camarano (2014) presents a compilation of age pyramids from 1980 and 2000 and a prediction of the age pyramid from 2030 and 2050, based on the demographic predictions of the human aging process in Brazil.

Figure 1- Brazil: age pyramids (1980, 2000, 2030, 2050)



Source: CAMARANO, 2014.

With that, it is highlighted that the contemporary population growth occurred basically for three events: demographic transition, migratory processes and the phenomenon of presentism.

In the period from 1940 to 2010 there was a population increase motivated by expressive migratory movements in Brazil, also, this period there was a decrease in fertility and an increase in life expectancy, impacting on the significant expansion of the elderly population in the urban environment, characterizing contemporaneity as a she was over-aged (CAMARANO, 2014).

In this sense, Bauman's liquid modernity (2001) starts from the principle of the transition from heavy and solid modernity to light and fluid modernity. “[...] Fluids, so to speak, do not fix space or arrest time. While solids, they have clear spatial dimensions, but they neutralize the impact and, therefore, diminish the significance of time (BAUMAN, 2001, pp.08). The author also points out “[...] Fluids are not very attached

in any way and are constantly ready to change it (BAUMAN, 2001, pp.08).

With the transition from modernity described by Bauman (2001) and the contemporary demographic transition, the characteristics of society are modified through globalization and presentism. The phenomenon of presentism refers to living in today, that is, living in the present, and not the 'after' (future). Lipovetsky (2004, pp. 59) points out that "[...] This is the phenomenon that changed us: it is with the revolution of everyday life, with the deep convulsions in the aspirations and in the ways of life stimulated by the last half century, that the consecration of the present ”.

With these assumptions, it can be considered that contemporary society is constantly changing and at an accelerated pace, mainly with demographic growth, expansion of urbanization and increased longevity. The fact is that we need to face and adapt to this population rhythm through proposals/implementation of public policies for this Brazilian reality.

### ***3.2 Sociocultural and educational practices of aging: A social problem***

With the increase in longevity and the contemporary population dynamics, basic assumptions about this stage of the human cycle stand out, such as ensuring active and healthy aging with quality of life.

Thus, this concern is highlighted in Brazilian policies aimed at the elderly in various contexts and segments of society: Liberty, Respect and Dignity; Education, Culture, Sports and Leisure; Cheers; Social Security and Assistance; Home; Transport. In the education segment, the Ministry of Education released the following report:

#### **EDUCATION POLICY FOR THE ELDERLY**

##### **Ministry of education**

In Brazil, the proportion of people aged 60 or over in the total population in 2009 is 11.3%, but in the population with up to 7 years of schooling, this proportion is approximately 30%, which represents a low level of education in this group in relation to the other age groups. This proportion of elderly people increased by about 30% in the population with 0 to 3 years of schooling between 2001 and 2009 and approximately 50% in the population with 4 to 7 years of schooling. The increase in the proportion of people in these lower schooling categories occurred because in that period there was an increase in the level of education in the younger age groups, which meant that they started to represent a higher proportion in these categories. In addition, the proportion of elderly people among the most educated has increased mainly in the Southeast region, due to the increase in life expectancy.

**Source:** Ministério da Educação, 2012.

The National Policy for the Elderly, under law No. 8,842, of January 4, 1994 provides in the area of education:

- a) to adapt curricula, methodologies and didactic material to educational programs for the elderly;
- b) insert in the minimum curricula, at the different levels of formal education, content aimed at the aging process, in order to eliminate prejudices and produce knowledge on the subject;
- c) include Gerontology and Geriatrics as curricular subjects in higher education courses;
- d) develop educational programs, especially in the media, in order to inform the population about the aging process;
- e) develop programs that adopt distance learning modalities, appropriate to the conditions of the elderly;

f) support the creation of an open university for the elderly, as a means of universalizing access to different forms of knowledge; (BRASIL, 1994, pp.01)

The Statute of the Elderly states in Art. 22 that: “[...] In the minimum curricula of the various levels of formal education, content aimed at the aging process will be inserted, [...] in order to eliminate prejudice and produce knowledge about the matter ”(BRASIL, 2003, pp. 01).

In view of this, Senate Bill n°. 501/2015 (Authored by Senator Omar Aziz- PSD / AM, Brazil), establishes that the theme of aging must be based on the curriculum of basic education, involving the essential care of aging and respect for the elderly, being taught by trained and qualified professionals, in gerontology, thus changing the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education (SENADO FEDERAL, 2015).

However, this population dynamics increasingly reflects the coexistence of young and old. In the labor market, Camarano (2004, pp.11) points out that “[...] It is common in Brazil for the retiree to continue in the labor market”. Thus, with this (re) insertion of the elderly in the labor market, a period of new and / or old discoveries begins that motivates this elderly person to learn, to qualify, either with a technical course or continuing with his studies (teaching elementary and high school), as well as with a higher education.

Thus, through qualification programs, undergraduate and / or graduate courses at universities, we experience intergenerational coexistence (different generations). “All people live with people of the same and different ages [...]. But for each one the same time is different time [...] (MOTTA, 2010, pp.230 apud MANNHEIM 1928, pp.124)

Thus, Cachioni and Todaro (2016, pp. 176) emphasize that “[...] In Brazil, permanent education, in the context of aging, is found in the learning spaces for formal and non-formal education”. Still, the authors state that youth and adult education - EJA is a formal modality in the educational context and may be “[...] aimed at illiterate people or those with little schooling, it serves the elderly, but it cannot be considered as a program educational program exclusively for this segment ”(CACHIONI; TODARO, 2016, pp. 176).

In view of this, Cachioni and Todaro (2016, pp. 181) highlight the concept of non-formal education as “[...] a set of activities or programs organized outside the regular education system”. Non-formal education is related to educational activities linked to higher education institutions (private) for the elderly population, being called Open Universities for the Elderly (UnATIs) (CACHIONI; TODARO, 2016).

And that the main objective of UnATIs “[...] is not to certify or professionalize elderly students, but rather to open to them the world of knowledge and the possibility of learning throughout their lives” (CACHIONI ; TODARO, 2016, pp. 181).

Regarding education to the elderly, whether formal or informal, we contemplate that it is a fundamental right and that this social / educational inclusion of this elderly population guarantees equality and dignity in contemporary society.

### ***3.3 Intergenerational possibilities and perspectives at the University of Cruz Alta - UNICRUZ***

The University of Cruz Alta is a community HEI with the mission of “[...] producing and socializing knowledge qualified by a solid scientific, technological and humanistic base, capable of contributing to the formation of critical, ethical, solidary and committed citizens. sustainable development ”(UNICRUZ, 2018,



pp. 23).

With this in mind and the emerging assumptions about contemporary aging, the Interdisciplinary Group on Human Aging Studies (GIEEH) was created in 2002, with the aim of researching and reflecting on various themes associated with human aging. Currently, the group has more than 40 researchers, including doctors, masters and academics from UNICRUZ's Undergraduate and Graduate Studies. The GIEEH presents three lines of research: Culture, health and lifestyles, Health status and Physical-Functional changes in Aging and Public policies, social practices and elderly populations.

It should be noted that UNICRUZ has acted in a participatory and effective way, since 1999, with the implementation of the Municipal Council for the Elderly in the municipality of Cruz Alta-RS (Brazil), contributing to issues related to aging and public policies. There is also the insertion of GIEEH professors / researchers in the State and National Council for the Elderly, participating in conferences and debates on the theme.

An example of this refers to the Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil) Forum of the HEIs that takes place each year, with an HEI being chosen to host the annual event. Thus, this event is aimed at discussions of actions aimed at human aging and its challenges. Highlighting the following themes and editions:

At the II Rio Grande do Sul Forum of the HEIs in 2002, it was discussed “The professional training of students in matters of aging”. The third edition of the event (2004) discussed the “Statute for the Elderly and the IES of RS: challenges and commitments”. In the fourth edition (2006), it was highlighted “The elderly in IES / RS: realities and perspectives”. Thus, this event contributes through debates and reflections on the aging process and the HEIs commitment to the elderly population.

In this sense, in 2008 the UNATI / UNICRUZ project was created, which “[...] offers activities through workshops such as water aerobics, walking, nutritional and nursing guidelines, dance, plastic arts and digital inclusion” (GARCES, 2013, pp.20). Thus, Garces et al. (2016, pp.49) emphasize:

“[...]The Unati project, from the University of Cruz Alta, aims to serve independent elderly people who participate in other projects and programs of the institution, as well as organized groups in the city of Cruz Alta, such as the elderly who attend the Elderly Reference Center of Cruz Alta City Hall and the Sesc elderly group. It seeks to provide opportunities for the elderly to participate in activities linked to the University, allowing elderly people access to a differentiated space. Therefore, it proposes to the elderly citizen the incentive to find other forms of social (re) insertion and valorization of their life experience” (GARCES et al., 2016, pp. 49).

The UNATI / UNICRUZ provides a set of interdisciplinary actions aimed at promoting and preventing health in order to improve the quality of life of the elderly population. Also, activities are developed in some health units and in a Long Term Care Institution for the elderly (LTCF) in the municipality of Cruz Alta-RS.

Concerned with this rapid demographic growth, UNICRUZ establishes specific areas of human aging in the curricula of undergraduate courses and graduate courses (PPG). In the PPG in Sociocultural Practices and Social Development it is offered as an optional curricular subject: “Citizenship and Social Insertion for Elderly Populations”. The objectives of this curricular subject are: To understand the aging process as part of the life cycle and as a social issue interwoven in contemporary society; Identify practices for the social insertion of this population in actions that prioritize their recognition, dignity and protagonism as a subject

that builds their citizenship from the area of performance of each master's student; Enable the construction of interdisciplinary projects that show social practices focused on citizenship with respect to Human Rights and citizenship.

In addition, on October 10, 2019, in room 101 and in the corridor of Building 7 of UNICRUZ, there was the “First exhibition on old age: With maturity you become younger”, with a total of 46 event participants, coming from the curricular subject of Citizenship and Social Insertion for Elderly Populations and supported by GIEEH.

Thus, the activities carried out at the 1st Mostra on Old Age were:

- Exhibition of photos of the elderly (personal photos sent by UNICRUZ undergraduate and graduate students and teachers); photos of research and extension projects linked to the issues of aging (Cinoterapia- Therapy with the dog, Universidade Aberta da Terceira Idade - UNATI / UNICRUZ).
- Exhibition of paintings and artistic canvases from UNATI / UNICRUZ- Momentos de Artes.
- Exhibition in Varrais: Artistic drawings, culinary recipes, homeopathic recipes, poetry, phrases and excerpts from literary works.
- Exhibition of manual arts (knitting, crochet)
- Video exhibition created specifically for this event.

Some photos of the event:



Figure 1. event organizers and collaborators 2019.





Figure 2. Event collaborators.

**Source:** authors' personal files.

Finally, it is noteworthy that holding academic events directed to the demographic reality (aging) collaborates with the (re) knowledge of public policies existing to the elderly and mainly contributes to the effective exercise of citizenship.

#### 4. Conclusion

The rapid demographic growth in Brazil and in the world, brought in contrast significant changes related to the characteristics of the population, such as the phenomenon of presentism, over-aging and liquid society. Thus, with the demographic transition and liquid / fluid society, aging becomes a pressing social issue, in which the population increasingly lives in public and private spaces with different generations, mainly in universities.

The (re) insertion of the elderly in the labor market reflects in their educational segment, whether formal or informal, through EJA, educational programs, such as UnATIs are fundamental for the social / educational inclusion of this elderly population, guaranteeing equality and dignity before the society.

Thus, it is concluded that aging is a mandatory theme to be discussed and implemented in the disciplines of undergraduate and graduate courses in universities, in which reflecting and researching the process of aging under different perspectives makes it possible to ensure more fully the principles respect, protection, dignity and well-being of the elderly guaranteed in the Federal Constitution of Brazil of 1988 (force in currently ), Statute of the Elderly and National Policy for the Elderly.

#### 5. Acknowledgement

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