

The Project of Life for Adolescents: From Public and Private Schools

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Abstract – Considering the influence of school, family, friends in career choices, the research was conducted with 800 students enrolled in public and private schools in the city of Curitiba, Brazil. Quantitative variables were compared by using the T-test for independent samples after the conference of the normality assumptions (Lilliefors Test) and homoscedasticity (Levene test). In all statistical tests, we used a 0.05 significance level ($p < 0.05$). The results showed that young people care more about school education than with the family constitution. In public schools, there are higher expectations about work, and in private schools, there is greater influence of the family. In the construction of projects of life is fundamental analisar the influence of economic status in career choices.

Keywords – Adolescence, Project of Life, Subjectivity.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is important to reflect on the necessity of public policies that allow conditions for the adolescents to develop their projects of life with equality of rights in different scholarly contexts. Brazil has a population of 60 million youth under eighteen years old. According to Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira, this number represents the registration of 50.545.050 students: 83.5% in public schools and 16.5% in private schools (11).

From a theoretical matrix of historical social psychology, it is possible to understand adolescence as a part of the life of the subjects inserted in a historical and cultural totality that represents a society or a specific social reality. The reality must be the bottom line and the arrival point of psychology if it aspires to be relevant and to be faithful to its role as a social science. In addition, it cannot be apart from an idealistic reductionism and cannot abandon the firstness of things imposed for its own weight (10). In this regard, the young people and their projects of life and future represent the reality of their own experiences, whether in public or private school. Both are influenced by the social and cultural conditions of their time.

It is during adolescence that the confrontation of important issues happens in the life of a person including the taking of responsibility and the pursuit of the achievement of personal goals. The choices that will be made: taste, lifestyle, leisure, study, and work are based on different relationships that are woven throughout the life of the subjects. In this context, the project of life is structured, and it consists of identity and anticipatory behavior (4). Behaviors are concerned about showing significance and are recognized as autonomous. Despite the reduction of poverty, Brazilian society remains one of the most unequal society in the world. The acquisition of their worldview ends up being a product of these complex

interpersonal relationships that will culminate with the main objectives and career choices that manifest in their life projects.

The project of life makes known personal and social identity in relation to the adolescents' temporal dynamics and future development possibilities (6). Therefore, it is understandable as a number of essential dimensions in the life a person. It is an ideal model of what the individual expects or wants to be and do, defining his relationship with the world and with himself. The dynamics of the senses and in the projects of life and future, there are multiple procedural and complex historical facets (7). Therefore, one cannot refer in a single and absolute sense about the job, but the sense delineates an interpretation of the relationship between human beings and their world.

The World Health Organization (WHO) considers the adolescence period as the one between approximately ten and twenty years of age. In Brazil, the Statute of Children and Adolescents (ECA) considers adolescence the age group between twelve and eighteen years of age, and they have been considered a reference since 1990 for the creation of laws and programs that ensure the rights of this population. Historical social psychology considers that specific limits on adolescence cannot be imposed, and that this term corresponds to a social classification that varies both in its composition and in its implications.

Although handled differently depending on the cultural context of each individual, these changes that take place in adolescence are recognized and produce experiences that cause new demands on the environments of adolescents.

The adolescent is a human being inserted in reality in which each person, while producing history and building society, is built and modified by it (14). The adolescent expresses himself/herself through language, and in this language he/she conveys the effective components or the historical and social aspects of his thoughts on his/her project of life.

In these aspects that the representations regarding the future perspective bring issues to the dialectic that involve the inclusion and exclusion from the social inequality present in Brazilian social reality (18). Think of education as a gateway for individuals to social participation and competition (17). In addition, the influence of external educational agents (parents, teachers, peers, psychologists, counselors, etc.) in the construction of such plans and achievements play a major role in the career decisions of the adolescents (5).

It is during adolescence that the individual initiates the construction of his/her project of life (14). This project is understood as a set of desires, aims, predictions, and strategies. The project is essential, and it is built on the relationship of the individual with the society in which he/she interacts in a continuous and dynamic process of

reconstruction of social representations. This construction is necessarily interconnected to the project of life of each individual including the vision he/she has of himself/herself, of his/her qualities, and what he/she wants to achieve.

Several studies were conducted in order to identify how students construct their expectations for the future (19,17, 14, 7). Among these studies, some of the problems identified were the confrontation of new adolescent responsibilities and fantasies about an ideal professional future while the adolescent is not fully aware of the difficulties of insertion in the job market. This implied correlation between the motivation and the construction of expectations in which lack of motivation projects low perspectives of future; and therefore, low expectations likewise generate feelings of low motivation (5).

The education system must have visibly high quality education. There is strong evidence that social origin is tied to school performance, that is, the best students in each school are those with higher levels of cultural and intellectual capital (19). Thus, this study aimed to compare the expectations of projects of life among adolescent students in public and private schools in the city of Curitiba in Paraná on the assumption that these aspirations manifest differently depending on the school context in which the student exists.

II. METHOD

To historic social psychology, the school produces subjectivity. For Vygotsky, there is a relationship between human beings and their physical and social environment (21). The individual-society connection can only be understood as an inherent connection to another wider connection between the individual and generality (1). Thus, we believe that the school context is constituted as a legitimate observation space of research because it influences the construction of subjectivities.

After previous contact with the educational institutions and the appropriate authorizations of the coordinators of public and private schools in the city of Curitiba, we sought to investigate the links between the life projects of children from public schools and private schools. We used the quantitative method to look for similarities and differences between the two groups and also considered different influences in projects of life such as school, family, friends, jobs, and financial conditions. The researchers invited individuals to participate, and those who accepted signed the ICF (free Informed Consent Form) and were given a questionnaire. That data was quantitatively analyzed, and the results will be presented later in tables and graphs. We worked with a sample of 800 adolescent students, boys and girls aged between thirteen and nineteen, from two public schools and two private schools in order to identify possible existing concerns about the future and to analyze influences of economic status, the family, and school in the construction of their projects of life. The collected data was inserted in SPSS system, and it was submitted to a process of descriptive statistical analysis. After the descriptive

statistics the distribution of frequencies of the two groups were compared. They were analyzed using the Chi-Squared Test for independence. The quantitative variables were compared using the T-test for independent samples after the conference of the presuppositions of normality (Lilliefors Test) and homoscedasticity (Levene test). In all statistical tests, we used a significance level of 0.05 ($p < 0.05$).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is believed that the public school and private school environments are marked by social and cultural differences. Observations of standards, rules of conduct in learning, and how the school deals with projects of life are complex processes. Certain ambitions or hopes in the course of social processes are marked by behaviors chosen by individuals (3). Therefore, the choices in projects of life are marked by continuous confrontations with parents, friends, and other social influences. We should also consider that humans beings make their own history, but do not make it under circumstances of their choice but under those circumstances that are faced directly, their choices are given and transmitted from the past (13). This way, the different social circumstances allow social experiences that reflect guidance and career advice.

Modernity brought adolescents plenty of choices, making it seem like we live in a free world where people can make mistakes constantly and choose anything or change their minds at any moment (20). However, to perceive youth as a moment lived homogeneously that marks the exit from childhood and the entrance into adulthood is to ignore the historical and cultural conditions of the members of this category (20). Therefore, we must consider that the autonomy of the youth for their career choices is conditioned to contextual and complex determinations.

Postmodernism is the era of the temporary and the decentralized. It is a specific historical period in which, to see the world as contingent, free, diverse, unstable, unpredictable, a set of cultures or interpretations not united, and so generating a certain degree of skepticism about the objectivity of truth, history, and the rules in relation to the idiosyncrasies and identities of consistency (8). If Postmodernism brought with it some speeches and illusory identities for youth, then the responsibility acquired by the possibility of identification choices makes the youth responsible for his/her own products or defects. The present society is no longer governed by an agreement that relates to a common root based on the social context and the episodic character of individual life objectives (3).

Adolescents from both public schools and private schools have high expectations regarding the project of life. The analysis dimensions mainly relate to the school as a preparation for entering the adult world and the job market. In this sense, the priority concern of young people is the future and how they can prepare for it while in school. On the other hand, the family constitution for the future does not appear as a priority. The family institution is not the same anymore. Moral values have changed and

the youth concern with family creation has also changed. The conducts of the projects are revealed by a cultural context that may cause misuse of the idealization processes (4). This means not having a family could become a new ideal of youth.

However, significant differences exist in the categories of jobs in which students of private and public schools have expectations. We can see this in Fig. 1.0.

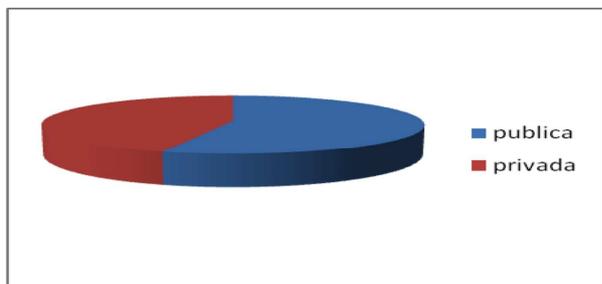


Fig. 1.0 Expectation of adolescents regarding the careers in their Projects of Life

Therefore, the identity behaviors of these young people bring meaning to their actions. The group of public school students concern themselves with not repeating the trajectory of their parents. Thus, project cultures translate the mentality of the concerned post-industrial society to find its legitimacy on drafting its own initiatives or attitudes practiced occasionally (4).

In doing so, the human essence is a social historical product, not biological, and needs to be appreciated and objectified for every man throughout his life in society. It is thus becoming a social and historical being that created the sense of humanity in the singular man. The private-universal dialectical relationship is fundamental, and therefore, it is also fundamental that one can understand the complexity of universality that is realized in the singularity (1).

With regard to the main influences over adolescents, the school and family together play a fundamental role in their choices for their life projects. Circumstances in the family, school, and community may be motivating and justifying the choices that the adolescents make in regard to their futures (15). That is, a situation of helplessness about the future can arise if the school and family do not position themselves to help the youth in the construction of their project of life. Educational policies should seek to create a balance.

On a scale of zero to ten, we seek to evaluate the influence of family in the decisions of the life project. An average of 71.9% of public school students, versus 87.3% of students in private schools, are highly impacted by this influence. Therefore, we can see that this high influence occurs more in private school students. Although adolescents used to talk about their future interests with family first, many adolescents have turned to first consulting their friends. This can be seen in Fig.1.1.

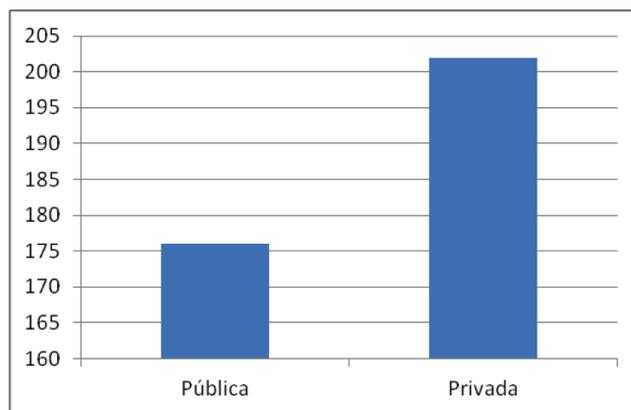


Fig. 1.1 Adolescents that chat with friends about their Project of Life intentions

Other concerns that appeared with the professional future are related to finances. The difference between the students appears regarding the financial independence, with which adolescents from public schools have higher concern. This is seen in Fig. 1.2.

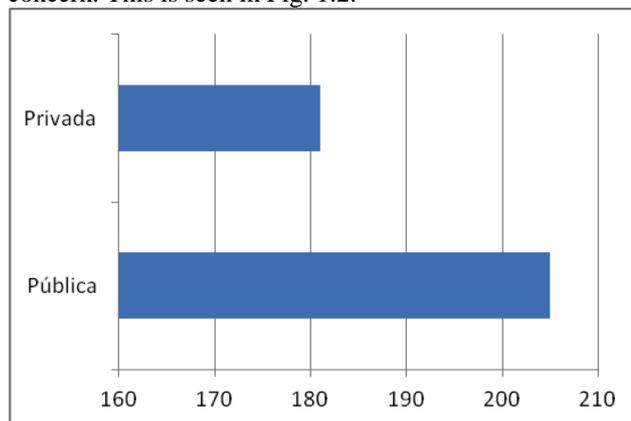


Fig. 1.2 Concern about financial independence

The school learning is important in this process of the construction of the life project. Moreover, when asked about the influence of economic status in the choices that the students make in their life projects, more private school students admitted to being confident in their choices because their economic status. This is illustrated in Fig.1.3.

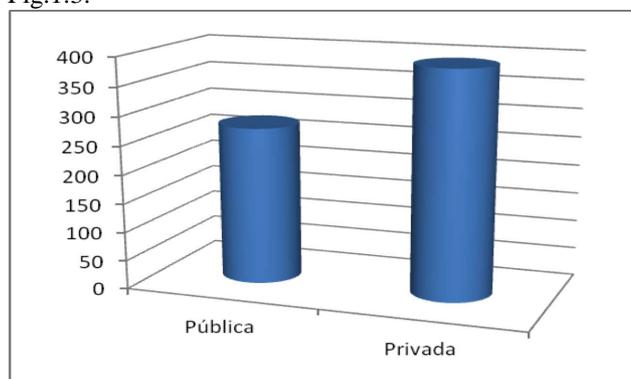


Fig. 1.3 Influence of economic conditions in the choices of the Project of Life

The differences found in expectations among students from public and private schools occur in cultural context. Deviations emerge in the processes of idealization that are as follows: delusions (poorly educated young people who create a reality front of a quick and artificially idealized future); hypomania (individuals and organizations show themselves susceptible to the actions leading to the construction of new projects that face the existence of escape to the non-existent); mimicry (actors of previous made projects rather than taking into account its own uniqueness); narcissism (mimicry that reduces the project to an exact copy of an induced obligation not taking into consideration the individual uniqueness); technological obsession (imposition of preparing techniques, evaluation tables, organization charts, and others, in which the creative imagination is subverted in order to camouflage the need for uncertain management); technological subjection (projects with vague concepts generating complexities); and utopic deviation (the regulating action of the project becomes pure abstraction and turns into promises) (4).

The concern with financial independence could be influenced by the traditional way of life of the student. It can generate individuals with anti-project and without-project (4). Without the possibility of financial rise, aspirations coming from higher financial resources seal the fate of many students from public schools.

The project of life choices are essential to the individual as a social being. Understanding for an individual means he/she can aim himself/herself at an exact possibility and, through the project of life, keep that possibility open (4).

The current concerns in the context of civilization are characterized by appropriation, monopolization, and joy through discharged knowledge and consumed objects. These are contrasted by social differences between students from public and private schools. Students are forced to choose to ambiguous projects directed both for subsistence and to impossible ideals (4).

IV. CONSIDERATIONS

When comparing the expectations of projects of life among adolescent students in public and private schools in the city of Curitiba, Brazil, it was considered that the school context constitutes itself as a space for research and constitution of subjectivities. In this sense, the school environment contrasts the multiple manifestations of social differences present between students from public and private schools. However, their life projects and future possibilities are ambiguous. Objectively, this stage of life could produce feelings of insecurity, helplessness, loneliness, and anxiety about their life expectancies and future.

During the research, a major concern of young people from public schools about their future jobs was observed. This greater concern with the job is a reference point that directly effects life expectancy and the future of youth who have an unfavorable economic condition. Social differences produce objective and subjective conditions of differentiation between groups of young people.

Regarding school and family influences in the construction of life project, all students undergo influences from both contexts. The different behaviors are the ones that bring meaning to the actions of young people (4). At this stage of their lives, they enter into an intensive search for distinctions and a quest toward personal decision-making.

When relating with whom the young people spoke to about the construction of their life projects, there was a big difference between students. The data reveals a singularity of family participation in the decisions made by young people from private schools. It can be said that from the perception of young people, they talk more with their parents about their career choices and their future projects. This is quite different from the group of young people from public schools who say they do not talk to their parents about their plans.

When questioned about how each youth group constructs projects of life and what allows them to face or not face their daily life obstacles in pursuit of their personal achievements, youth concerns in their projects of life relate to the following: obtaining financial independence, being able to achieve personal goals, and making good choices. In this respect, there is a significant difference between students in financial independence. Adolescents from public schools have revealed a greater concern. Such concern with financial independence could be influenced by the social position of their family and the way of life of their parents.

What is common between the students of both schools is the fact that they have some expectations regarding the project of life and the importance of education. In general, both groups believe that school and education are essential tools to achieve their goals. The research showed no significant gender differences between boys and girls in their construction of their projects of life. Comparing age, adolescents over sixteen years old are more concerned with establishing priorities in their projects, and they claim to undergo less influence of the family. Both public and private school students under the age of sixteen years old generally reveal a desire for autonomy and financial independence.

With regard to construction of the life project, the public school students believe mostly that school reasonably influences the projects. Yet for students from private schools, this influence is exercised by the school along with the family. Both groups of young people do not have concerns with having a family, or the data did not reveal the significance of this item for young people. Students from both public schools and private schools believe in the influence of education in their professional future or believe that through education they can construct a better future.

It was observed that the economic status had great influence in the projects of life of the students. In the case of private school students, they already have more resources to pursue their projects, therefore, they say the economic condition of their parents provides them with better career choices. The schools' teachers and faculty members who do not have access to information on the

parents of the students point out that the economic conditions of the parents do not influence the students' career choices. The objective of seeking financial independence is more relevant for the youth from public schools than for the youth of private schools.

This research allowed us to find that the school and family must stand together to help the youth in the construction of the projects of life. By doing this, they can help avoid a sense of helplessness and insecurity about the future. The school should propose to expand the opportunities to connect the youth with different professional models since the professions are becoming more complex and diverse. There is a wide range of social relations that support the ties of man with the world of employment, and similarly, the educational policies should propose the attendance of these young people in professional choice situations.

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