

Education in Human Rights: Conceptions and Educational Practices

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Abstract: These paper article analyse the problem how the human rights are conceived and carried out made effective in the educational environment of two public high schools of the state system of education in Brazil, based on students' perceptions and teacher's opinions. Objectives of the study: Aligned to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) from 1948, as well as the fundamentals and the historical and legal milestones, the study proposes to identify youth perceptions and teacher's opinions about the implementation of human rights in the school environment and its manifestations in educational practices. Methodology: We used a questionnaire with open-ended and close-ended questions to students (45) and interviews with open-ended questions to teachers (17). The categories analysed were organised in: tolerance and respect to differences and diversities, gender equality, respectful attitude towards sexual orientation, age differences, environmental care, experience in peace and solidarity situations, valorisation and respect to cultural diversities. Conclusions: Research results analysis of both in students' and teachers' perceptions revealed that in schooling context, considering the established interactions between teachers and students, and students between themselves, pointed to occasional situations of discrimination and prejudice hidden into "pleasantries" and "jokes" emulating ideological strategies of concealment and dissimulation of attitudes regarding lack of respect to the human dignity, considered a universal principle to the establishment of human rights.

Keywords: Education in Human Rights, School, Respect, Educational Practices, Human Dignity

1. Introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is founded upon the principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, and anchored in the tripod universality, indivisibility and interdependence, consolidating a contemporary conception of Human Rights (United Nations Organization [UNO], 1948). "The fundamental role of human rights education in the defence of human rights is endorsed by the international community at large" [1]. It is understood that human rights are consequences of historical struggles and must integrate people's daily life, in a wide range of dimensions: civil, political, social, economic, cultural and environmental. The Article 26 of the UDHR that posits the universal right to education expresses a decisive paper assumed by its observance, aiming to develop competences,

capabilities and abilities that comprises knowledge, attitudes and values, comprehending human diversity, differences, similarities and the interdependence of human beings. In fact, consistent to the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), references that support the conceptions of human rights education are corroborated by diverse national and international instruments, notably stem from UDHR that, agreed by the international community, offers a precise definition of the concept of human rights education [2]. This paper referring to Human Rights Education is anchored in national and international conceptions and principles defined in Letters, Declarations, Agreements, Conferences, Covenants, Programs, Plans and Guidelines which start to require from federal, state and municipal educational systems, decision-making strategies and definitions of feasible and adequate initiatives, in order to the educational institutions articulate and adapt

possibilities of implementation of human rights education in its theoretical-methodological orientations. Research results point the existence of a long way to be pursued considering school as a leading promoter of changes towards human rights education to be carried out in scholar environment, throughout interactions and interdisciplinary projects developed in the context of schooling curriculum and into educational practices. According to [3], school must change to meet differences and singularities of students: “The school that seeks homogeneity, which is ruled by equal standards to all students and, that ostracizes differences, is certainly not the best life starting point to people that will participate in conflictive societies and that demand negotiation; it will not be, certainly, the best school to cultivate creativity and to open paths for cooperation”. The epistemological framework of this study was based on theorists who developed research and studies on education, human rights and human rights education.

Human rights educational policies aim to emancipate subjects by considering the diversity. As Eynga, A. M., Pacievtcha, T., D’Almeida, M. L. & Gisi, M. L. note: “A guarantee of equal rights, when associated with the recognition and appreciation of differences and diversities, enables socio-cultural identities to be strengthened and previously marginalized groups to find a voice and a space which promotes intercultural dialogue and respect for the subjects of educational processes in their similarities and differences, which occurs through an education that develops “in spaces marked by mutual understanding, respect and dialogue. These are challenges of Human Rights Education, which consider and respect cultural diversity among students and development of knowledge-emancipation”. [4].

Kingston (2014) tells us that human rights education has achieved many supporters as a tool to promote social responsibility. Human rights education has a lot of potential for positive change. For this reason, many universities include these concerns in the training of future educators. [5].

In this regard, Palau-Wolf (2016) tell us about the concept of transformative learning. We need to empower young people to achieve the objectives of the curricula of the 21st century. [6]. The social value of educational institutions are in adequate conceptualization of the human right to education. [7]. That's what we want to know in this article.

2. Education in Contemporary Society

The intense process of neoliberal globalization, expressed in transnational social relations, under the influence of factors such as humanism, nationalism, socialism and democracy have changed significantly the development of capitalist production processes. This fact contributed to the regulation of the educational systems of the countries. The intense process of neoliberal globalisation, translated in transnational social relations, under influence of factors as humanism, nationalism, socialism and democracy, modifies in a significant manner the development of capitalist productive processes, competing for the regulation of the

educational systems of the nations. In this perspective, globalisation: “presents as cornerstones, by one hand, a strategy of liberalisation and privatisation of the means of production and, on the other hand, the affirmation of the axiom of competitive advantages, underpinning a new concept of development, qualified as sustainable, that ends up bringing again to the foreground the neoclassical theory of human capital [8]. Thereby, upheld by Santos [9] studies, globalisation does not occur in a pure and genuine form, once the process is articulated to a given place, that will compete to succeed. The process creating the global is basically similar to the one which produces the local, in different hierarchical conditions. The same author establishes differences between the globalised localism – when occurs the globalisation of a phenomenon in a determined place – and the globalism localised, being the local impact of transnational actions consequent of the globalised localism.

Indeed, in this global context from the end of the 20th Century, the discussion on education points that international organisations that already occupy themselves of education should accomplish new functions, amongst them, “to protect minorities rights, caring simultaneously for leading them to adopt a speech that do not generate risks to public order. Regarding the contribution of this theoretical framework – the neoinstitutionalism –, it enables us to understand the wide resemblance amongst policies promoted by international organisations – which are considered by theorists of this strand the key diffuser vehicles for world culture” [10]. Therefore, paraphrasing Delors, education is organised in four pillars / principles of knowledge considered fundamentals for building a new educational paradigm which values life and people – the learning to learn, the learning to do, the learning to live together, and the learning to be – that interact and are supported by a wide conception of education, considered as mandatory for a new paradigm focused on the appreciation of people’s creative potential.

The school institution assumes a social and educational fundamental role for the effectiveness of these principles that support education. Carvalho, Brás and Gonçalves [11] highlights: “Knowledge in its point of view, differs from mere accumulation of information – instruction – but identification with knowing how to use information. This time, education must be understood as a social process of sharing experience, in which the existence of an effective correspondence among the theoretical nature of schooling programmes and the concrete experience of students must be constant”.

School as an institution where formal education is carried out, finds itself opened to the movement of changing of the contemporary society and the world, passing through a redefinition of papers, to meet new social demands. These transformations are consequent of the articulation of an index of factors and events that characterize new social, economic, political, cultural, historical and geographical realities.

3. Human Rights: Fundamentals and Historical Milestones

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. Human Rights, historically and socially constructed, refers to the struggle for recognition, effectiveness and universalization of respect and human dignity. Yet considered as a controversial matter in the 21st Century and after suffering uncountable challenges, it is conceived upon philosophical, historical and political dimensions.

The philosophical conception remits to *jusnaturalism* wherein men are conceived as naturally free, and these rights derive from the ontological nature of human: inasmuch being universal, transcend juridical dimension and pledge human peace. Thereby, Human Rights foundations are based on *jusnaturalism*, from the Latin *jus* meaning right, as postulated in the 17th Century by the philosopher and politician John Locke that defended that the “natural state would be the condition in which the executive power of the law of nature remains exclusively in the hands of the individuals, not becoming communal” [12]. Consistent with John Locke’s disciple, Bobbio [13] notes: “the doctrine of human rights was born from *jusnaturalist* philosophy, which – to justify the existence of rights belonging to the human being, independently from State – departed from the hypothesis of a state of nature, where human rights are few and essential: the right to live and to survive, including the right to property; and the right to freedom, which comprehends some essentially negative freedoms”.

By the end of 19th Century and in the beginning of 20th Century, the theory of Natural Rights was contested, emerging, therefore, historicist doctrines, sustaining that the “grounds of human rights do not fit in human nature, but they are substantiated in historical variables related to every historical context and according to the kind of society” [14].

Historical contextualisation permeates the understanding that human rights have historically been suffering significant interpretations and changes widening thereby the comprehension of democracy. The philosophical question: “of human rights cannot be dissociated from the study of historical, social, economic, psychological problems, inherent to its realisation: the problems of the ends may not be dissociated from the problems of the means. That means that the philosopher is no longer alone” [15].

In this perspective, human rights are found to be in constant evolution, coherent to the distinct realities required by the historical context and the new articulations and human interactions, being therefore adapted to each moment, passing by improvement processes, towards serving the necessities required by society.

Regarding the political understanding of human rights denominated positivist reasoning, “human rights to remain ‘right’ in a strictly legal sense, must be gathered by a legal order of a given State, which means they must be constitutionalized or positivized” [16]. Thereby, human rights

refer, thus, to citizen rights specified in State Constitutions.

According to Lohmann, human rights converge to political rights, allowing the definition of men that dispose fundamental rights those who exert citizenship in a democratic society, translated by the effective participation in community. Aligned to this author, “a democratic State obliged to recognise human dignity and human rights must also recognise, firstly internally as human rights bearers, all men in its state scope” [17].

Harmonically, the conceptions presented by Cademartori and Grubba [18] highlights: “Human rights and fundamental rights, therefore, in its post-metaphysical rationale ground, succeed struggle processes to level access to material and immaterial goods, to a life worth living, regardless of what they are. The last foundation resumes itself to life, in its integrity and dignity”.

By the middle of 20th Century, the international conjecture presented a political scenario characterised by tensions and conflicts as results from the Second World War, which collaborated for a common global feeling on searching for alternatives to maintain world peace. The United Nations Organisation (UNO), under the influence of French Revolution ideals, based in the three principles from the Age of Enlightenment – liberty, equality and fraternity – approved the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), on December 10th, 1948.

The grounds of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were inspired in ideas conceived by illuminist philosophers such as Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Diderot and Locke, being constituted as references to back up philosophical and ideological concepts on human rights. Considered to be the Magna Carta of Mankind, the UDHR, determines in its first Article – “All human beings born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood” [19].

The Article 26 from UDHR establishes that: Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace [20].

Consequently, human rights are those considered fundamentals to every human being, with no distinction of sex, gender, nationality, ethnicity, skin colour, age group, social class, profession, physical and mental health condition, public opinion, religion, instruction level and moral judgement.

Thereby, the UDHR accomplishes its universal and international goal, once “whilst a set of juridical regulations, human rights became orientation and implementation criteria to institutional public policies in varied sectors. The State assume, therefore, a commitment of being the promoter of

this group of fundamental rights” [21].

According to Rosenfielde and Pauli [22], universality principle is articulated to world coverage and not only a determined territory, widening the conception of human dignity in defining economic, social and cultural rights, whereas the indivisibility principle refers to the warranty of civil and political rights, as condition to the compliance of the previously mentioned rights.

Paraphrasing Bobbio [23], the understanding of the Equality principle widens to the social dimension, collectivity, in other words, rights are equal for all, independently from the conditions, even though people finding themselves in inequality conditions due to the cultural, social and economic positions they belong, must be insured with equal rights, as they live in an equal society.

Regarding the principle of Freedom that anchors the Declaration: “May be comprehended under three significances: first the possibility to reach a wide variety of options; secondly, the interdependence of each one to decide upon the use of these options; and, thirdly, the liberty itself to establish one’s own values and priorities and live accordingly to them [24].

In what it refers to the Fraternity principle, must be considered the influence of the social doctrine of the Catholic church, “with a strong call to universal brotherhood: man was created by God, in His image and likeness, and all men are brothers because they are sons of the same Father; man has a special place in universe and has an intrinsic dignity” [25].

4. Human Rights Education

Education represents the locus where scholar curriculum, cultural conceptions and intersubjective relations converge to significant learnings in the life of children, youth and adults. Estêvão [26] postulates that: “Rights today are confronted with great ambiguities, which led some to proclaim their almost hagiographic character or else to integrate them into a system of ideological orthodoxies, while others prefer to emphasize, especially their fragilities and the contradictory speeches that sustain inequalities and injustices”.

Thereby, given the complexity of human rights in contemporary society, its effectuation in the 21st Century, presents a great challenge. The Brazilian Federal Constitution from 1988 “utilises the expression of fundamental human rights, as a gender, dividing them into individual rights species (Art. 5, in its majority), social rights (generically estimated in Art. 6), nationality rights (Art. 12 and 13), and political rights” [27].

The Art. 26 of the UDHR, which posits the right to education to all people is assured in Brazilian Federal Constitution in its Article 6 that determines: “Education, health, work, leisure, security, social security, protection of motherhood and childhood, and assistance to the destitute, are social rights, as set forth by this Constitution”.

In this context, the importance of human rights is emphasized to the life of all people to the practice of citizenship. Indeed, it is considered a citizen in a wide

perspective, a person capable: To participate politically in the choice of the representatives who are responsible for recognizing, protecting and enforcing the constitutionally recognized rights, whether in the legislative, executive or judicial sphere, but especially the person gifted with human dignity as a result of which he holds the essential rights for his own living and his life in society and State [28].

The United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) defends fight against gender, race and other stereotypes. It proposes human rights promotion athwart three dimensions, in educational campaigns:

a) Knowledge and skills: learning about human rights and mechanisms, as well as acquiring skills to apply them in a practical way in daily life;

b) Values, attitudes and behaviour: developing values and reinforcing attitudes and behaviour which uphold human rights;

c) Action: taking action to defend and promote human rights [29].

Thus, discussing human rights education extends beyond these rights and the mechanisms for protection translated in knowledge transmission, to technical domain and the development of the necessary abilities and skills to promote, defend and effectuate human rights in school institution, attested through educational practices and in daily life.

Therefore, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), highlighted in the Plan of Action (2010-2014) that: “Human rights education aims at developing an understanding of our common responsibility to make human rights a reality in every community and in society at large. In this sense, it contributes to the long-term prevention of human rights abuses and violent conflicts, the promotion of equality and sustainable development and the enhancement of participation in decision making processes within a democratic system” [30].

Despite advances occurred globally related to the effectivity of human rights, verified both in legal and normative milestones as in public policies and in social and educational practices, it is mandatory to encourage a widening of actions and attitudes to materialise these rights in people’s life.

5. Principles of Human Rights Education

The guiding principles of the Human Rights Education – HRE are consubstantiated in the foundations of an educational policy for the 21st Century in international level, in the perspective of promoting human development, owing to interventions in society for making social transformations possible. Education in Human Rights, according to Estêvão [31]: “is essentially a life policy and a global ethic, servicing democracy as human rights, in which all, but primarily educators/mentors, must be committed, recognizing that it is a given possibility to adjust the world to what, at every moment, is meant by human dignity.

For this purpose, based in the theoretical and legal framework that guide Human Rights and in the National

Guidelines for Human Rights Education (NGHRE), approved by the National Council of Education, through the Report CNE/ Conselho Pleno (CP) nº 8/2012, and the Resolution nº 1/2012, the HRE is based in the principles:

Human Dignity refers to the comprehension that human existence is based on rights, founded in equality and freedom. Consequently, human Rights require fulfilment of these two pillars of human dignity, although it is possible to admit that the emphasis given to them by the Universal Declaration caused, at a first moment, in a certain way an uncomfortable feeling to some nations, because freedom was perceived as a dream, something only reached by who had got economic conditions, likewise what was used to justify to equality [32].

Rights to Equality relates to the necessary equality condition in human relations. Therefore, the principle of equality is connected, thus, to the expansion of civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights to all citizens, aiming universality, with no distinction of colour, faith, nationality, sexual orientation, biopsychosocial and place of residence [33].

Recognition and valuation of differences and diversities are articulated to coping and fight discriminations and prejudice, ensuring, thus, that differences are not transformed into inequalities. Claude [34] notes: prejudice involves beliefs, feelings and postures. Prejudice is born from beliefs and attitudes that some people are inferior and must be treated unworthily or even with contempt. Prejudice is a fertile soil in which certain customs, habits and postures are rooted and evolve to systematic oppression.

Cohesive with the Portuguese sociologist Boaventura Santos referring to the principle of equality and difference, “we have the right to be equals when differences diminish us; we have the right to be different when equality disfigures us” [35].

Democracy in education, consolidated over the same foundation: liberty, equality and fraternity, that are expressed in promotion and effectiveness of civil, political, social, economic, cultural and environmental rights. Consequently, democracy is not concrete without respect to the human rights what, in educational context requires participation and implication of everyone involved in the educational process. Goulão [36] posits: “human being is only human in the truly word meaning, if he is given conditions to be fully inserted in the community, in order to participate and decide in it”.

Transversality and entirety suggests that human rights should be discussed from an interdisciplinary dialogue. The perspective of entirety supposes the engagement of all school community: students, teachers, employees, managers, families and local communities. Thereby, it is necessary to rethink the curriculum through a multicultural point of view, “functioning towards formation of identities opened to cultural plurality, to fight prejudice, at a horizon of education towards citizenship, peace, interpersonal relation ethics and criticism to social and cultural inequalities” [37].

Environmental sustainability, in which HRE must be committed to the promotion of sustainable development,

preserving life diversity, in the sense of assuring survival of mankind currently as well as future generations.

6. Methodology

This investigation aimed to analyse how the human rights are conceived and carried out made effective in the educational environment of two public high schools of the state system of education in Brazil – Maranhão State. Qualitative methodology was chosen for the realised investigation, characterizing as exploratory and descriptive, because “the approach of a qualitative investigation demands an examination of the world with an idea that nothing is trivial, that everything potentially constitutes a clue that allow us to establish a clearest comprehension of our object of study” [38].

Thereby, the use of technical instruments enabled data collection, through a survey by questionnaire with open-ended and close-ended questions to students (45) and interviews with predominantly open-ended questions to teachers (17), structured from a previous script. The interview requires communication and interaction with subjects, therefore, if “correctly appreciated, these processes allows the investigator to extract from interviews, rich and nuanced information and elements of reflection” [39].

This paper considered for analysis, the answers of the open-ended questions both for teachers and students. Coherent to Lakatos and Marconi [40] data were organised adopting two procedures: selection consisting in a meticulous data examination to detect failures or errors and codification, which is the technique used to categorise correlated data, being grouped onto categories.

Consistent with Esteves [41], in the process of systematization of interviews’ information, the technique chosen was content analysis, consisting in comprising and evaluating systematically a body text. Content analysis, “more than simply descriptive and attentive to the manifest content, intends to produce inferences and, thus, interpretation and, eventually the explanation of phenomena both conspicuous or latent in communication”.

7. Presentation and Discussion of the Results from the Survey with Students

The questions with open-ended answers driven to the respondents were analysed, being systematised, grouped and categorised in: insured rights, non-complied rights, discrimination and prejudice situations, environmental care, experiences related to peace and solidarity, themes on human rights dealt in classroom, and teaching strategies/activities adapted to cultural diversities.

In the perceptions of less than the half of students, insured rights comprises freedom of expression, voting and “speak one’s mind”. These rights are found to be into human rights of first dimension: civil and political rights (liberty). Students also mentioned education, housing, feeding, health and

safety. These rights include the group of human rights of second dimension: social, economic and cultural rights (material equality). It is noted that no student recorded rights of the third dimension: solidarity rights, clearly environmental (fraternity) [42].

It is verified a predominance of respondents that manifest themselves demonstrating knowledge about the non-complished rights:

a). In first dimension: freedom, ethnic and racial equality, religion.

b). In second dimension: safety, health (higher quality public hospitals), education, feeding, dignity to work, social equality, leisure, transportation and service to people with disabilities (wheelchair users).

The noncompliance of human rights, as mentioned by students, occur in a context of discrimination, prejudice, disrespect to people, labour conditions unfavourable to work performance, as, for instance, jobs in charcoal mining with no feeding, space and time for rest. This picture revealed through the voices of youth students show respect to human dignity, which constitutes one of the fundamental principles of human rights.

Regarding discrimination and prejudice situations experienced or observed in a classroom or at school environment, respondents registered prejudice of colour, race, hairstyle, and situations of racial discrimination translated in the exclusion of a black or mulatto person. It was cited as usual in school, with discrimination attitudes commonly described as “pleasantries” or “jokes” by the racists.

In relation to discrimination of colour and race, the students responded:

Table 1. Discrimination of colour and race.

Percentage%	answers
31	often
27	almost always
22	some times
13	rarely
7	never

Source: authors.

In what concerns to the environmental concern and care to promoting sustainable development, part of the students manifested themselves affirming that those exist and exemplified them through classroom garbage management, selective collection, as well as the concern about pollution. These attitudes are generally oriented by teachers that develop educational projects related to environmental protection, sustainability, adoption of postures and practices that lead students by example, translated in life examples through actions, habits and values, extensive to their homes.

As for the experience of situations related to Peace, friendship and solidarity, part of the students declared:

“In the relation between students and teachers a great part are true friends in classroom. We are disciplined to respect each other.”

“All students are united and partners, with no need or hypothesis of fighting.”

“Regarding special people (disabled), we have a huge attention in school.”

Schools carry out talks addressing those themes, even though some students interpret them as “speeches”; they promote educational campaigns and develop projects to enable peace, in view of living and respecting each other. These adopted practices and measures translate the effort of school management, teachers and students to promote peace, however do not represent the involvement and the effective participation of the majority of the school community.

Regarding the approach of some teachers in classroom when dealing with human rights related themes, the majority of the respondents highlighted that it occurs within the context of the disciplines, through educational projects or the use of different methodological strategies, notably by the disciplines of Sociology, Philosophy and History.

In relation to teaching strategies/activities adapted to cultural diversities, there was a shy manifestation by the students, in other words, a minority reported: “With plays and activities in the classroom opened to all students”; “Different works. Different lecture dynamics”; and, “Creative and interesting activities”.

8. Presentation and Discussion of Teachers’ Interview Results

In interviews realised with teachers about practices in Human Rights, referring to the effectiveness of rights in school and in which situations, opinions were divergent: just a minority affirms that rights are not accomplished. A group of teachers representing the majority considers that this effectiveness occur through “the conviviality relations of managers and teachers; teachers and students”, of “situations linked to freedom of speech”, of “respect to the differences and vicissitudes of the students, independently from colour, race, beliefs, social condition”, and also through “dialogues, understanding and respect, because they are taught for citizenship” and “interdisciplinary actions that arouses students to live values as solidarity, tolerance and respect to differences.

Regarding the effectiveness of human rights in classroom in pedagogical context, a minority of the respondents alleged that they are not addressed, but the majority mentioned real situations in which they are addressed, grouped into three categories: pedagogical interactions, interdisciplinary content approaches and into planning.

According to the minority of teachers, speaking and contextualising human rights in the classroom in a transversal form in curricular components, requires certain complexity. Teachers emphasized the approach possibility in some disciplines, as History, Geography, Philosophy and Sociology, “through transversal themes related to Human Rights, taught in interdisciplinary”, and “with the use of methodologies that allow students to reach a human and

holistic formation in which they notice themselves as subjects endowed of individual and collective rights and duties”.

In relation to the relationship based on the respect for differences and diversities, the speech of the teachers predominates the allegation of a conviviality of everyone based into good relationship, mutual respect and good interaction. However, they demonstrated a school concern encompassing managers and teachers, in a sense of being attentive to conflict situations and overcoming prejudices, with an adoption of educational measures, when needed, in view of strengthening ties of “solidarity, tolerance and respect”.

Some teachers state that differences and divergences exist, notably between students that in certain situations use “jokes about the hairstyle or the lipstick of black women”, amongst other questions referred to prejudices, being a permanent object of attention for the school, in the sense of adopting measures and initiatives capable of promoting changes in social and educational relations.

Thus, coherent with Ramos [43]: “Respect to the difference, approached as diversity, plurality, cultural mosaic, multiple original identities with the right to have their own dignity recognised by express the richness of the human being, conduces to the proposition of conviviality practices based in acceptance and tolerance”.

On the subject of ethnic and racial relations, teachers indicate strong discrimination and racial prejudice amongst students manifested in several manners as in the conviviality at scholar environment, in conflict arguments, as in jokes and pleasantries with the use of pejorative terms, like “nigga”, “monkey”, “marginal”. Facing these situations, teachers consider relevant an adoption of diversified strategies in classroom, such as: specific conversation, talks about the theme, and differentiated classes.

Regarding gender treatment in equality, there was unanimity by the teachers to assure that all are treated as equals, with no distinctions, once rights and duties extend to both genders, with no verified prejudice in their relations. Teachers alleged that the competitive activities intend to stimulate “in equality the intellectual capacity of our students” and that “social constructed relations bound spaces of men and women”.

In what concern to the consideration of students’ cultural diversity in curricular approaches, the majority of teachers ensures the establishment of an articulation between curricular content and the reality of life of the students, adjusting language to the level of the class, thereby as they develop projects on cultural diversity that particularly contributes to the formation of these students.

Teachers considered important to approach Afro-Brazilian culture, establishing commitment with social, ethical and equalitarian questions, dealt notably in periods of the year with higher cultural manifestation, for instance, Festas Juninas, Carnival, amongst others. They also emphasize a search for highlighting daily questions regarding identities, stimulating “self-esteem and intellectual autonomy for the

perception of content taught in classroom as means that enable a better meaning for life”.

Opinions of teachers on how sexual orientation (male and female homosexuality) is dealt in school, evolve different perceptions and it is noted a demonstration of indifference by a group of professionals, while for others, the question is addressed naturally, “even some colleagues point out the existing differences between homosexuals and heterosexuals, citing the different manner one speaks or get dressed”. For some teachers, situation is treated with respect in relation to choices. Therefore, school promotes orientation to a respectful conviviality, elaborating talks and seminars on themes articulated to the curricular content.

Regarding the manifestation of discrimination in relations between different generations, teachers agree about them, but present several views. At school, there are situations in which the age of a teacher is respected. At the same time, in some other contexts, students make “jokes” about these teachers and refer to them like “that professor is already aging”. In the view of other teachers, the degree of disrespect related to the elderly is minimising due to the development of interdisciplinary projects at school, once they promote values, what require reflections, maturing and change of posture for the students.

9. Conclusions

The deep social changes that occurred in the last years as notably consequences of the accelerated globalisation process that reflect in scientific and technological developments tended to incite society and educational environment contradictions, that started to require from education, a reconstruction of conceptions and practices, based in democratic fundamentals and principles that contemplates a myriad of diversities in social groups. According to Santos [44], philosophy of democratic education points to a civic society, multifaceted in its inclusiveness, promoting simultaneously a minimisation of inequality and a maximisation of respect for the difference, a high intensity democratic society, namely, democratizing way beyond the political system, in family relations, community and productive space.

In the implementation of this philosophy of education formulated by the Portuguese sociologist, the school institution starts to perform challenging functions in the contemporary society, what requires an acting that comprises multiple social views, a school of everyone and for everyone, widening the level of quality to serve diverse demands and expectations from students and families.

Studies in Human Rights realised by different scholars and researchers, based on the principles that guides the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, suggests that these rights are not complied in totality. It is noted that the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, coherent to Cazuquel and Bobbio, are manifested in social practices in determined contexts in an equal and fair manner, but just for a small part of the population.

The School from 21th Century must prepare children and youth to the future, without ready and finished models, because (un)fortunately this future is uncertain and unknown. Rodrigues [45] assumes that: “the safest, should be to secure a better quality of education as it is currently possible and known, in a moment where we need to have information, knowledge, understanding of the world and to be solidary citizens embracing values that make us useful and happy. Education of the future is today”.

In this global context about school role in modern society, the educational institutions face complex challenges about the effectiveness of human rights education. The school space constitutes the *locus* in which education professionals, students and families interact, each one of them with their very own historical, social, cultural and religious identities that, commonly may lead to conflicts and contradictions or may promote respect to the myriad of points of view about the local environment they are inserted in, as well as in a global context, forefront to the world.

Social inequalities, injustice and discrimination still perpetuate in situations of the educational context, especially in those populations with lower socioeconomic power that have access to lower quality public and educational services. Practices of inequality, social exclusion and discrimination for racial, gender and other conditions, despite being fought against continue to perpetuate in society, (re)produced in social institutions, such as school.

School environment constitutes itself as a space where cultural variety is constantly moving, being, thus, mandatory that school increasingly strengthen multicultural education, in the perspective of guiding students to establish interactions at school space surrounded by several values, based on respect for human dignity. A democratic, humane, supportive school is therefore defended, guaranteeing the students' learning, considering their interests, needs, potentialities, knowledge and cultures.

People detain multiple itineraries, diverse and contradictory life spans, understood, misunderstood, known, unknown, declared, hidden, invisible, well succeeded, failed, peaceable, conflictive, filled with love or lacking it. Attitudes may mask dominant ideological conceptions based in prejudice and discriminations or, on the other hand, may lead to a transparent posture, fluid, flexible, based in solidarity, peace and respect for human dignity. In conclusion, we agree with Bloemraad citizenship is a relational process of making membership claims on polities, people and institutions [46].

Human rights education is a relevant issue that should be integrated in the training of teachers. The study of Koc & Köybasi, goes in this direction. Demonstrated that the attitudes of multicultural education of teachers vary significantly [47].

This study focuses on two public schools in the State of São Luis do Maranhão. We recommend more exploratory studies: compare this study with private schools and apply this study to other states of Brazil and in other countries. It would also be interesting to give depth to the problem of citizenship (historical perspective).

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