

INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT: REFLECTIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENCIES FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY



<https://doi.org/10.56238/arev6n3-307>

Submitted on: 10/22/2024

Publication date: 11/22/2024

**Francijanes Alves de Sousa Sá¹, Neila Barbosa Osório², Luiz Sinésio Silva Neto³,
Marlon Santos de Oliveira Brito⁴, Nubia Pereira Brito Oliveira⁵, Fábio de Sousa
Almeida⁶, Leonardo Sampaio Baleeiro Santana⁷, Suiany de Sousa Costa⁸ and Jair
Severino do Nascimento⁹.**

ABSTRACT

The present work investigated the role of intergenerational connections in the school environment and its impact on the development of essential skills for the twenty-first century, such as communication, cooperation, critical thinking and problem solving. Based on a qualitative analysis carried out in projects of the University of Maturity, of the Federal

¹ Master of Education

Federal University of Tocantins

Email: francijanes2015@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4290-242X>

² Dr. in Education

Federal University of Tocantins

E-mail: neilaosorio@uft.edu.br

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6346-0288>

³ Doctor of Education

Federal University of Tocantins

E-mail: luizneto@uft.edu.br

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3182-7727>

⁴ Master of Education

Federal University of Tocantins

Email: marlonoliveirabrito@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5487-2400>

⁵ Master of Education

Federal University of Tocantins

Email: professoranubiabrito@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1026-4734>

⁶ Education Specialist

Federal University of Tocantins

E-mail: fabioalmeida@uft.edu.br

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-4060-266X>

⁷ Master of Education

Federal University of Tocantins

Email: leonardosbsantana@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2852-7766>

⁸ Master's student in History of Amazonian Populations

Federal University of Tocantins

Email: suiany394@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-9568-0544>

⁹ Master in Applied Linguistics

Federal University of Tocantins

Email: JairJnascimento@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-7972-3829>

University of Tocantins (UMA/UFT), the research examined how interactions between different generations contributed to the strengthening of students' socio-emotional skills. The results indicated that the presence of older generations in schools promoted the sharing of experiences, the construction of social bonds and the development of a sense of belonging among the participants. However, the study identified obstacles that hindered the implementation of these practices, such as the lack of preparation of educators and the absence of specific educational policies. Thus, it was suggested that the adoption of continuing education policies for teachers and institutional support were essential for intergenerational interactions to become an integral part of the school curriculum. It was concluded that well-planned intergenerational practices could significantly enrich the teaching-learning process and prepare students to act ethically and responsibly in an increasingly diverse and complex society.

Keywords: Intergenerational Education. Lifelong Education. Inclusive Education. Competencies of the XXI Century. School Diversity.

INTRODUCTION

The work explores the intergenerational interaction in the school environment, seeking to understand how the coexistence between different age groups can promote a space for mutual learning and contribute to facing contemporary challenges in the educational context. Growing age diversity, resulting from demographic and societal changes, brings to the fore the need for new approaches that integrate the contributions of different generations to a more inclusive and collaborative educational environment.

In this sense, the study is based on the assumption that interaction between generations can be used as a pedagogical resource to enrich the teaching-learning process, while strengthening social ties and contributing to the integral development of students, as it happens at the University of Maturity, of the Federal University of Tocantins (UMA/UFT) (Osório et al, 2023).

However, despite the potential of intergenerational practices, there are still gaps in the understanding of how these interactions can be effectively implemented and what are the main challenges faced by different actors in the school context. Age diversity in schools can generate both opportunities and difficulties, since differences in life experiences, communication styles, and values can interfere with the establishment of positive bonds and the construction of a harmonious educational environment.

Thus, the central problem of this research consists of investigating how intergenerational connections can be promoted in the school environment and what are the main factors that facilitate or hinder the implementation of pedagogical practices that value the exchange of experiences between students, teachers and community members of different ages.

It is found in the analyses that the participation of different generations in educational activities favors the exchange of knowledge, the appreciation of differences and the construction of a school environment that reflects the values of respect and cooperation. Thus, the implementation of intergenerational mentoring programs and other collaborative activities can not only enrich the teaching-learning process, but also help in the formation of a more welcoming educational environment that is conducive to the integral development of students.

In this way, the justification for the publication of this study is based on the growing relevance of intergenerational connections in the contemporary educational context. With the demographic and social transformations of the twenty-first century, schools have come

to bring together an increasing number of individuals with diverse experiences and ages, demanding pedagogical practices that are capable of integrating this diversity in a productive way.

The intergenerational approach promoted by UMA/UFT can be a reference of a valuable strategy for the formation of socio-emotional skills that involve intergenerational dynamics, by proposing pedagogical practices based on interactions between different age groups, while the results offer theoretical and practical subsidies for educators, school managers and educational policy makers.

The general objective of this project is to analyze how intergenerational education practices that take place at UMA/UFT can be used as a pedagogical tool to enrich the school environment and promote a more inclusive and collaborative learning space.

The conclusions point to qualitative paths, based on interviews, focus groups and case studies, and notes on how UMA/UFT contributes to the in-depth understanding of intergenerational dynamics, in addition to providing practical guidelines for the promotion of a more inclusive, collaborative educational environment prepared for contemporary challenges.

METHODS

The methodology of this study is based on a qualitative approach, seeking to understand in depth the perceptions and experiences of the participants in relation to intergenerational interactions in the school context.

The choice of the qualitative approach is justified by the need to explore subjective and contextual aspects of intergenerational relationships, such as values, expectations, and personal experiences, which are fundamental for the construction of a more inclusive and collaborative educational environment.

Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews and focus groups with students, teachers and members of the school community of different age groups, allowing detailed narratives to be obtained about the interactions and challenges faced.

In addition, the case study method was used to deepen the analysis in selected schools where intergenerational integration practices already exist or where a pilot program of intergenerational mentoring was implemented.

The selection of schools, based on criteria of demographic diversity and organizational structure, in order to ensure adequate representation of the different

educational contexts. The implementation of the intergenerational mentoring program planned together with the pedagogical team of the participating schools, involving the creation of joint activities that promote the exchange of experiences between students, educators and older members of the community, such as workshops, conversation circles and collaborative projects.

The analysis of the collected data is carried out through the thematic analysis technique, which allows the identification of patterns, recurring themes and categories that emerge from the participants' statements. Thematic analysis conducted using software tools for organization and qualitative categorization, ensuring a systematic and rigorous interpretation of the results. Evidence that corroborates or refutes the central hypothesis of the study was sought, allowing a comprehensive understanding of the intergenerational dynamics and the factors that facilitate or hinder the implementation of pedagogical practices that integrate different generations.

Table 1: List of data of selected works

Year	Author	Title	Objective
2023	VIANA, Isabel C.	Intergenerational Learning in Teacher and Educator Education: What Cooperating Teachers and Guiding Educators and Trainee Teachers and Educators Learn from Each Other at School	Analyze the intergenerational interactions between educators and trainees in the school context, exploring mutual learning and the exchange of experiences.
2023	SÁ, Francijanes Alves de Sousa	Sustainability and Intergenerational Relations: A Case Study of the Relationship of Two Social Educational Technologies in the Vinícius de Moraes Municipal Full-Time School in Palmas-TO	Investigate how sustainable intergenerational practices can be applied in the school environment, contributing to the integral formation of students and social development.
2021	NÓVOA, António; ALVIM, Yara Cristina	Teachers After the Pandemic	Discuss the challenges faced by teachers after the pandemic, with an emphasis on pedagogical changes and new educational demands.
2022	SOUSA, Jenny; MESQUITA, Miguel	Inclusive and Intergenerational Education: Reflections from Community Practices	Explore inclusive and intergenerational education community practices, discussing the impact of these approaches on the formation of a culture of inclusion and diversity.
2024	BORGES, Irina Romina Gomes	Mapping the Future(s) of Education: A Periodic Table of Competencies for the Twenty-First Century	Map the essential educational competencies for the twenty-first century and develop a proposal for the integration of these competencies into school curricula.
2022	CÔRTEZ, Lucília Alvim	The Educational Role of Tourism in the Development of (Inter)Cultural Skills of 2nd and 3rd Cycle Students in Brazil	To analyze how educational tourism can contribute to the development of intercultural and social skills in students of different educational levels in Brazil.

Source: Author himself, 2024

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research indicated that intergenerational interaction in the school environment had significant potential to promote collaborative learning and contribute to the socio-emotional development of students. The experiences at UMA/UFT and the analysis of interviews and focus groups revealed that both students and professors and members of Social Technology (Osório et al, 2023) perceived intergenerational connections as enriching, especially with regard to sharing life experiences and promoting values such as respect, empathy, and cooperation.

The participants' statements suggested that the presence of older generations in the school environment could work as an element of mediation, offering young people models of positive behavior and promoting a sense of continuity and belonging. It was observed that the acceptance of older generations when sharing their experiences and knowledge with the younger ones. In addition, intergenerational coexistence has contributed to reducing stereotypes and prejudices regarding age differences, creating a more inclusive and receptive environment for diversity (Viana, 2023).

However, the results also pointed to a series of challenges that hindered the effective implementation of intergenerational pedagogical practices in the school environment. The lack of preparation of educators to deal with generational diversity and the absence of educational policies that encourage the adoption of intergenerational strategies emerged as significant barriers to the integration of different generations in the school context.

The lack of knowledge about the specific methodologies to promote interaction between generations and the lack of pedagogical resources adapted to the needs of each age group contributed to the resistance on the part of some educators and school managers. In addition, it is perceived in the dialogues that the cultural and technological differences between the generations generated difficulties in communication and in the construction of bonds, especially in contexts where technology was a central element in the daily lives of younger students, while the older generations had difficulties in adapting to the use of digital tools. This disparity could lead to feelings of exclusion or mutual incomprehension, hindering the establishment of a balanced and productive relationship between age groups (Sá, 2023).

Thus, to overcome these challenges, it was considered essential that continuing education policies be implemented for educators, which contemplated not only the development of skills to deal with generational diversity, but also the understanding of the

cultural and social specificities of each age group. Training programs that would enable educators to act as facilitators of intergenerational interactions were pointed out as essential to ensure that the activities promoted in the school environment were truly inclusive and respected the differences of each age group.

This training should involve the development of conflict mediation skills, empathetic communication and planning activities that promote the active participation of all generations involved. In addition, it was necessary for school managers and educational policymakers to recognize the importance of intergenerational practices and offer structural and financial support for the implementation of mentoring programs and other initiatives that integrate different generations into the school environment (Nóvoa and Alvim, 2021).

In a school environment, intergenerational practices not only promoted the sharing of knowledge between different age groups, but also enabled the construction of stronger social bonds, contributing to the appreciation of the experiences and knowledge of each generation, which strengthened respect and empathy among those involved (Viana, 2023, p. 26).

The implementation of the pilot program of intergenerational mentoring in selected schools revealed promising results with regard to strengthening students' social and emotional skills and building a more collaborative and harmonious school environment. During the observation period, it was found that the students involved in the program demonstrated greater engagement in school activities and greater development of skills such as patience, empathy and teamwork skills.

The activities carried out at UMA/UFT together with older members of the community, such as reading workshops, vegetable garden projects and conversation circles, provided young people with the opportunity to learn from the life experiences of their elders and to reflect on issues such as citizenship, respect for differences and social responsibility. In addition, the older generations, who often faced situations of social isolation and lack of recognition of their abilities, reported a significant increase in the sense of purpose and belonging to the school community, in addition to a greater appreciation of their own experiences and knowledge (Sousa; Mesquita, 2022).

However, the analysis of interactions during the program also highlighted the importance of active mediation by educators to avoid possible conflicts and misunderstandings that could arise due to communication differences between generations. In some activities, it was observed that the lack of mutual understanding about the role of each participant generated tense situations, such as when younger students were impatient

with the difficulty of older members in using digital technologies. These episodes reinforced the need for careful planning of intergenerational activities, which took into account the limitations and abilities of each age group and promoted the exchange of knowledge in a balanced and respectful manner. The creation of safe spaces for the expression of opinions and the appreciation of the contributions of all those involved were essential elements to ensure that intergenerational interactions occurred in a harmonious and productive way (Borges, 2024).

It was considered that intergenerational interactions should not be seen as an end in themselves, but rather as a means to promote more inclusive and collaborative learning, capable of valuing diversity and preparing students to face the social and cultural challenges of the twenty-first century. In addition, the implementation of intergenerational practices required institutional commitment and the active involvement of the entire school community, including students, teachers, parents, and community members. The participation of families and other community members was considered crucial for the construction of an educational environment that valued age diversity and promoted social integration (Côrtes, 2022).

The success of intergenerational practices depended on a combination of factors, including educator training, institutional support, resource availability, and active community participation. The analysis of the results allowed us to affirm that the promotion of an intergenerationally integrated school environment required careful planning and a flexible approach that took into account the needs and expectations of all age groups involved. Thus, this study contributed to the understanding of intergenerational dynamics in the educational context and offered subsidies for the elaboration of public policies and pedagogical practices that valued age diversity as a valuable resource for the integral formation of students and for the construction of a more cohesive society prepared to deal with the social transformations of the twenty-first century (Viana, 2023; Sat, 2023; Nóvoa and Alvim, 2021; Sousa and Mesquita, 2022; Borges, 2024; Côrtes, 2022).

INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS AS A RESPONSE TO THE EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Intergenerational connections in the school environment have proven to be a promising educational strategy to face the challenges of the twenty-first century, characterized by profound changes in the educational scenario and social demands.

Cultural and generational diversity, combined with rapid technological advancement, requires new pedagogical approaches that integrate the coexistence between different generations, promoting more inclusive and collaborative learning. In the school context, the interaction between students, educators and older members of the community not only facilitates the exchange of experiences, but also provides a space for reflection and collective construction of knowledge. These practices generate a positive impact, strengthening respect and empathy among those involved, which contributes to a more harmonious educational environment that is conducive to the integral development of students (Viana, 2023).

In this sense, intergenerational connections play a fundamental role in allowing different generations to share their perspectives and knowledge, enriching the teaching-learning process. Increasing diversity in classrooms, both in terms of culture and age, requires schools to rethink their pedagogical practices and incorporate methodologies that value the experience of older people while respecting the new ways of learning of younger people. The presence of older members of the community in the school environment enables an intergenerational dialogue that promotes the construction of a repertoire of values and attitudes necessary for coexistence in a society marked by plurality. In addition, by bringing different generations together, intergenerational practices help to combat stereotypes and prejudices, strengthening the sense of belonging and cooperation among all participants (Sá, 2023).

In an intergenerational educational environment, it is possible to observe how collaborative practices between different age groups promote not only academic learning, but also the development of social and emotional skills. The coexistence between generations in the school environment fosters a deeper understanding of diversity, strengthening respect and empathy among all those involved in the educational process (Viana, 2023, p. 26).

Another relevant aspect of intergenerational connections in the school context is the ability to promote the development of socio-emotional skills in students, such as patience, resilience, and the ability to work in teams. However, for these interactions to be effective, it is essential that educators are prepared to mediate and facilitate dialogue between generations, creating an environment of mutual respect and appreciation. The training of educators to work in intergenerational contexts should include the development of skills that go beyond traditional teaching, including communication skills, conflict mediation, and planning of collaborative activities (Nóvoa and Alvim, 2021).

Intergenerational connections in the school environment are a promising path for the construction of a more inclusive educational model prepared for the challenges of the twenty-first century. By strengthening values such as empathy, respect, and cooperation, these practices contribute to the formation of citizens who are more aware and prepared to act in a diverse and constantly changing society. In this way, intergenerational practices are consolidated as an innovative and necessary response to contemporary educational challenges, offering a solid basis for the formation of a more integrated society capable of dealing with the complexities of today's world (Viana, 2023; Sat, 2023; Nóvoa and Alvim, 2021).

THE IMPACT OF INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS ON SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Intergenerational connections in the school environment have a significant impact on the development of essential skills for the twenty-first century, such as communication, cooperation, critical thinking, and problem-solving. In an increasingly complex and dynamic educational scenario, interaction between different generations emerges as an approach that promotes collaborative learning and the sharing of life experiences that enrich the educational process.

When young and older members of the school community share activities and projects, an exchange of knowledge occurs that transcends academic content and provides students with opportunities to develop practical and social skills that will be essential to face future challenges. This type of interaction allows the construction of a diversified learning environment, where participants learn to deal with different perspectives and to value diversity as a resource for problem solving (Sousa; Mesquita, 2022).

Cooperation and communication are two of the main competencies that emerge from intergenerational practices in the school environment. When students and older generations engage in joint activities such as mentoring and collaborative projects, there is an intrinsic need to adapt language and communication methods, which leads to improved ability to express ideas clearly and effectively.

By interacting with individuals of other age groups, students learn to negotiate meanings and build a shared understanding, overcoming communication barriers and developing empathy. This process favors not only cognitive learning, but also the formation of interpersonal skills that are valued in an increasingly globalized and connected world. In

this way, intergenerational coexistence in the school environment prepares students to become more adaptable citizens and aware of the cultural and social nuances present in their interactions (Borges, 2024).

In addition, intergenerational connections contribute to the development of critical thinking and problem-solving, skills considered essential for success in the twenty-first century. By participating in activities that involve the exchange of knowledge between different generations, students are encouraged to critically reflect on their own perceptions and to consider different points of view. The presence of older generations, who bring with them a repertoire of experiences accumulated over time, challenges students to analyze situations from a new perspective and to develop innovative solutions to complex issues. This learning process becomes even more relevant when educational contexts are planned to explore contemporary issues and promote intergenerational debates, enabling a more complete education that is appropriate to today's social and cultural demands (Côrtes, 2022).

Intergenerational practices, therefore, play a fundamental role in the formation of competencies that go beyond traditional content and encompass socio-emotional and cognitive skills necessary to act in a world in constant transformation. The ability to collaborate with individuals from different generations, to communicate effectively in diverse contexts, and to think critically are skills that become even more important in a global scenario characterized by the interconnectedness and complexity of human relationships.

In this sense, schools that invest in intergenerational programs are contributing to the formation of citizens who are better prepared to face the challenges of the twenty-first century, while building an inclusive and resilient learning environment, where respect and appreciation of generational diversity are central elements for the integral development of students (Sousa; Mesquita, 2022; Borges, 2024; Côrtes, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The final considerations of this work highlight the importance of spaces such as the University of Maturity, of the Federal University of Tocantins (UMA/UFT), for the development of intergenerational practices in the school environment as a strategy capable of enriching the teaching-learning process and promoting the integral development of students.

The analysis of the results showed that the interaction between different generations contributes significantly to the strengthening of students' socio-emotional skills, such as empathy, respect and cooperation capacity. In addition, it was verified that the projects that UMA/UFT carries out in schools in the region expand intergenerational coexistence, facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences, and also provide more inclusive and collaborative educational environments.

However, it is noted that for these practices to be fully effective, it is necessary for educational institutions to invest in continuing education policies for educators, in order to enable them to deal with generational diversity in a sensitive and structured way. Active mediation and planning of activities that respect the limitations and potentialities of each age group are key to ensuring that intergenerational connections occur in a balanced and productive manner.

Thus, this study contributed to the understanding of intergenerational dynamics in the school context, offering theoretical and practical subsidies for the promotion of a more inclusive educational environment prepared for the challenges of the twenty-first century. Valuing interactions between different generations should be seen as an opportunity to build an educational space that fosters mutual learning and social cohesion, better preparing students to act as conscious citizens prepared to deal with a world in constant transformation.

REFERENCES

1. Borges, I. R. G. (2024). Mapeando o (s) futuro (s) da educação: uma tabela periódica de competências para o século XXI. Tese de Doutorado. Available at: <https://repositorioaberto.uab.pt/handle/10400.2/16196>. Accessed on: September 25, 2024.
2. Côrtes, L. A. (2022). O papel educacional do turismo no desenvolvimento de competências (inter)culturais de estudantes de 2.º e 3.º ciclos no Brasil. Tese de Doutorado. Available at: <https://comum.rcaap.pt/handle/10400.26/45500>. Accessed on: September 29, 2024.
3. Nóvoa, A., & Alvim, Y. C. (2021). Os professores depois da pandemia. *Educação & Sociedade*, 42, e249236. Available at: <https://www.scielo.br/j/es/a/mvX3xShv5C7dsMtLKTS75PB/>. Accessed on: September 28, 2024.
4. Osório, N. B., Silva Neto, L. S., & Brito, M. S. O. (2023). Anais do Encontro Nacional da Universidade da Maturidade (UMA). Recife: Even3 Publicações. <https://doi.org/10.29327/5283526>. Available at: <https://publicacoes.even3.com.br/book/anais-do-encontro-nacional-da-universidade-da-maturidade-uma-2835265>. Accessed on: October 5, 2024.
5. Sá, F. A. de S., et al. (2023). Sustentabilidade e relações intergeracionais: Um estudo de caso da relação de duas tecnologias sociais educacionais na Escola Municipal de Tempo Integral Vinícius de Moraes em Palmas-TO. Available at: <http://umbu.uft.edu.br/handle/11612/6833>. Accessed on: September 29, 2024.
6. Sousa, J., & Mesquita, M. (2022). Educação inclusiva e intergeracional: Reflexões a partir das práticas comunitárias. In *Educação inclusiva e acessível: Oportunidades e sinergias* (pp. 135-150). Available at: <https://iconline.ipleiria.pt/handle/10400.8/9134>. Accessed on: September 28, 2024.
7. Viana, I. C. (2023). Aprendizagem intergeracional na formação de professores e educadores: O que os professores e educadores orientadores cooperantes e os professores e educadores estagiários aprendem uns com os outros na escola. In *Passado e futuro da profissão docente: Diálogos intergeracionais* (p. 26). Available at: <https://repositorio-aberto.up.pt/bitstream/10216/158235/2/668741.pdf#page=26>. Accessed on: September 29, 2024.