

Innovative pedagogical and learning experiences

F. Sadio Ramos

Politécnico de Coimbra, Escola Superior de Educação

sadoramos@gmail.com

The work corresponding to this text – *Experiences of Service Learning in Citizenship Education* – and its presentation to the Congress refers to the curricular component of citizenship education which is part of the curriculum of the educational offer of Polytechnic of Coimbra School of Education (ESEC). In the academic and professional training undertaken at ESEC, this educational dimension – essential according to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and thus consequently assumed in our curriculum –, the possibility of conducting projects and essays in which different dimensions of citizenship is often contemplated.

The works are realized during one semester and are the object of a public defence session in which its contents are presented and debated by the student's peers and the professor of the curricular unit/ discipline in question. Some disciplines are vocationally directed to these problems, such as "Citizenship Education" and "Themes and Problems of Today's World". However, this is a general and transversal concern of the pedagogical work of ESEC, having in mind both the above stated concerning the EHEA and the polytechnic nature of ESEC, that is, its holistic education perspective. In consequence of this educational/ educative vision, there's a wide range of themes addressed by the student's works, either they are theoretical approaches of the themes or service learning projects, in more or less involvement of the author(s) in the community, institutions or organizations (be it ESEC itself or the surrounding socio-geographical area).

Some possible works performed by the students have their themes related with food issues and attitudes, in different perspectives of approach: human rights issues, addressing hunger and distribution of resources, food behaviour facing, for instance, questions like obesity, anorexia and bulimia diseases.

In our experience, namely using the service learning perspective, some relevant projects have been conducted in the curricular unit of "Training of Trainers", ministered in diverse grades of ESEC. During the semester in which the training takes place, the students are confronted, among other curricular and assessment demands, with the necessity of producing an educative project of intervention. The semester's work is directed to the conception and production of the project, but the students have in mind its eventual application in the following semester if their internship provides the opportunity for its implementation.

Of the past projects, we chose for this presentation a brief reference to two service learning projects realized in that discipline of the grade of Social Gerontology and aiming at working with elder people.

Both projects have their starting point in the need to care of the increasing number of old people of our societies in what concerns their nutrition. One of the projects was directed to the definition of a programme of training of home-carers of elder people, while the other took into consideration the development of good nutrition habits of senior persons.

The development of these projects allowed the students a considerable pedagogical experience of facing the issues concerning the importance of good quality nutrition of senior persons in two directions: on one hand, the promoters of the project and, on the other, their colleagues participating on the public discussion raised by the process of their defence.

Two major ideas, industrially relevant and pertinent in what concerns knowledge transfer, raised on that discussion have to do with (a) the need of producing a senior-kit destined to the facilitation of the nutrition of the elder, containing both important simple nutritional information and diet suggestions specifically for that public and (b) the lack

of a range of food products conceived and appealing to this public, having in mind suitable quantities and prices.

Keywords: citizenship education; senior people's nutrition habits; nutrition care of elder people; service learning