



## ACTIVE AND HEALTHY AGEING. EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE THROUGH INTERGENERATIONAL EDUCATION

Envejecimiento activo y saludable. Experiencia educativa a través de la educación intergeneracional

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### KEYWORDS

*Intergenerational Education  
Older Adults  
Experience  
Active Aging  
Grandparent Circle*

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### ABSTRACT

*This article purposes to describe intergenerational education experiences between 3 to 6 years old preschoolers and older people. Through the establishment of exchange-oriented links of appreciation and affective interrelation. These links contribute to revitalize the activity of those who have developed a long life experience, making them to feel useful, updated and less prone to suffer diseases, through the experience of intergenerational education "Grandparents' Circle" developed in the Padre Machado Educational Complex, attached to the Mayor's Office of the Municipality of San Diego in the city of Valencia, Carabobo State, Venezuela.*

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### PALABRAS CLAVE

*Educación intergeneracional  
Adultos mayores  
Experiencia  
Envejecimiento activo  
Círculo de abuelos*

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### RESUMEN

*Este artículo pretende describir las experiencias de educación intergeneracional entre preescolares de 3 a 6 años y personas mayores. Mediante el establecimiento de vínculos de apreciación e interrelación afectiva orientados al intercambio. Estos vínculos contribuyen a revitalizar la actividad de quienes han desarrollado una larga experiencia de vida, haciéndolos sentir útiles, actualizados y menos propensos a padecer enfermedades, a través de la experiencia de educación intergeneracional "Círculo de Abuelos" desarrollada en el Complejo Educativo Padre Machado, adscrito a la Alcaldía del Municipio de San Diego en la ciudad de Valencia, Estado Carabobo, Venezuela.*

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## 1. Introduction

According to Izquierdo (2005), the older adult, in general, is in a stage where living conditions are generally especially difficult, since they quickly lose opportunities for work, social activity and socialization capacity, and in many cases they feel postponed and excluded because they are considered lacking in capacity and little vigour due to the risk they have from diseases associated with old age (Alzheimer's disease, osteoarthritis, diabetes, cataracts, osteoporosis, etc.).

In developed countries, they mostly enjoy a better standard of living, are subsidized by the state and have access to pensions, health guarantees and other benefits. This does not happen in countries with lower economic income or social development, so it is praiseworthy to know that there are countries that grant work without discriminating by the age where experience and capacity prevail. It is now evident that "the increase in the number and proportion of older persons has generated changes in the structure of the population by age, it is necessary to realize that among older adults there are differences, characteristics of their own, which does not mean that each stage is absolutely rigid, but totally fluid" (García, 1995). From a demographic point of view, it is important, especially for educational purposes, to differentiate between adolescents and young adults, as well as between adults and older adults.

With the advances of preventive medicine, social security and the growing personal concern for the care of body and mind, the prolongation of life expectancy has remained on the rise, to the point that in Canada, for example, it is estimated that life expectancy has increased by twenty years, compared to that of forty years ago. And in Spain, specifically and at present, already placed among the advanced nations, the average of longevity, combining the woman and the man, is situated above the eighty years. On the other hand, García (2010) affirms that according to the basic indicators estimated by ECLAC (2007), the Latin American population of sixty years of age and over is increasing and therefore the percentage of them in the population pyramid is also rising. In addition, it considers that those who have passed sixty-five years of age increase their life expectancy by three months each year so that in the next forty years, life expectancy will have increased by another eight years, thus witnessing the consolidation of a new age group that each day will demand with greater force its space in the social sphere: people over sixty-five years old. The above indicates that physical, psychological and attitudinal changes are evident in a population of older adults benefited in quality of life, by technological advances embodied in medicine, biomedicine and the different disciplines that are oriented towards the search for improvements and advances in the prolongation of a healthy life.

Thus, a new panorama of activity and changes in the conception of the older adult is shown, and therefore of new epochal requirements that indicate attention, being education a space where experiences and learning throughout life constitute fundamental elements for the qualification of intergenerational exchange, mediated through dialogue, present in that population of dynamic older adults that increases every day (Leveresque, 2005). The progressive increase in the population of older adults is pressuring us to reflect and take measures so that the incidence of these changes does not disturb the coexistence between generations (intergenerational), and a greater space is provided for older adults who every day will demand health, recreation, work, housing... in short, all social services, including educational policies according to the experience and needs of the older adult, leading to the incorporation in different countries of policies that guide the creation of new programs aimed at meeting these new demands.

From this ethical perspective, it is necessary to increase the value and recognition of older adults, which has led different countries in the international space to develop initiatives focused on addressing the biopsychosocial problem presented by this human group, such as the creation more than 30 years ago in the Republic of Cuba of the so-called Geriatric Education Centers, which are spaces for professional attention to the basic needs of older adults, and in which different activities have arisen, which have subsequently become intergenerational interaction strategies applicable to this type of education, and where the elders are given the opportunity to narrate their experiences in a free way, and even to represent the role played throughout life, as is the case of the Grandparents Circles, with the purpose of promoting the participation of this age group in activities of health prevention, recreation and sports, under the coordination of the National Institute of Sports, Physical Education and Recreation (INDER), constituting an integral model of family and community adaptability, as it promotes the creation of networks of significant relationships with close relatives, friends, co-workers, partners, among others.

Hence its applicability to the context of intergenerational education, since it constitutes a great opportunity for the establishment of links between infants and older adults, the former benefiting from hearing the narration and representation that these people make of their different roles developed throughout their lives; and the older ones feeling useful, current and active, directly strengthening their esteem and consequently their well-being and affective insertion in society.

From this position, the space of the nursery school is seen as an excellent opportunity for integration and bonding, both the exercise of being a grandfather or a close relative, who shares and supports through the narration of their experiences and experiences through living testimonies, the construction of conceptual and procedural knowledge of the infants, encouraging them towards the construction of values in favor of citizen coexistence

(Cárdenas-Palermo, 2021). Through this article we intend to describe the experience of intergenerational education between older adults and infants, through the establishment of links oriented to exchange, appreciation and affective interrelation, which contribute to energize the activity of those who have developed a long-standing life experience, making them feel useful, current and less prone to disease.

Thus, in search of this objective, the need to articulate teaching and learning strategies in early childhood education, mediated by the presence, experience and experiences of the older adult, which reports a baggage of experiences that can be conducive to the construction of new knowledge for children that contribute to improving their school results, in addition to demonstrating the importance and value of the experience and experience of the different roles played by older adults throughout their lives, and which are narrated and represented in their clothing, to children between the ages of 3 and 6 who attend one of the four childcare centres "Complejo Educativo Padre Machado", attached to the Mayor's Office of the Municipality of San Diego in the city of Valencia, Carabobo State, Venezuela.

## **2. Intergenerational education and active ageing in the elderly**

The conception of the elderly has been changing thanks to the contributions that in recent decades have been made in multidisciplinary research, which have been interested in the process of satisfactory and healthy aging, which depends largely on socialization, information and the ability to participate in activities of the community where they live.

Today it is stated that older people not only need to be educated and socialized, but also retain sufficient capacity to help better socialize other age groups. If education is a commitment throughout life and in every society, so too is that of older people, and therefore their isolation must be avoided because it is an indicator of the loss of social roles, rejecting the fact of being a burden for someone, and conserving responsibly their role before society. In this regard, García Mínguez (2004) affirms that belonging to a society fundamentally implies sharing the mentality of that society "being part of a society means having the same history, similar memories, having experienced analogous sensations, having had similar experiences, having been in contact with the same pedagogy, and having the same possibilities for the future" (p.45). Since the possibilities of socialization and the establishment of intergenerational relations are to a large extent subordinated to the periodic exchange of information, which the elderly possess too much, the appearance of new perceptions based on the need to relate socially increases, which has been strengthened from the disciplinary and legal theoretical foundations, These include the culture of active ageing, based on the idea that a society should be conceived for all ages, with the aim of encouraging the participation of older adults and fighting to ensure that they are not discriminated against. This is evidenced in the Declaration on the Rights of Older Persons, issued by the United Nations, in the General Assembly in 1991, in response to the consideration that this is the group subjected to greater discrimination, marginalization and lack of social protection, and in general, to the violation of their human rights through the restriction of access to health services, the impossibility of accessing decent housing and the right to social security coverage, among many others (UNITED NATIONS, 2002).

Despite the recognition of their human rights, most older adults are unable to cope with the daily problems of their lives because they do not have the resources to meet their basic needs, making them more vulnerable to violations of their rights. This group is confronted with social factors that marginalize or discriminate against them, phrases such as "they have already lived and have so little left to die"... that "they are no longer important" or "they are people who can be dispensed with..." reveal the place that society assigns to them, making them invisible to others. Their invisibility and the obstacles that allow them to have a dignified life are largely due to the loss of values and the dynamics that modern society has imposed on the younger generations: the culture of the individual and the young as the valuable.

In the field of education, the II World Assembly on Ageing, held in Madrid in 2002, established that intergenerational relations are of interest for the possible intergenerational solidarity that they can foster at all levels: in families, in communities and in nations, which justifies the implementation of policies that promote intergenerational relations, incorporating innovative elements of insertion of older adults in educational actions where they have the opportunity to interact with infants, adolescents and young people through the exchange of life experiences. From the perspective of progress and protection for older adults, the Third Intergovernmental Regional Conference on Ageing in Latin America and the Caribbean, held from 8 to 11 May 2012 in the city of San José, Costa Rica, issued the so-called San José Charter, with the aim of promoting the incorporation of the issue of ageing and old age at all levels of the curricula, facilitating access and active participation in recreational, cultural and sporting activities promoted by organizations, associations and institutions, both public and private. This institutional initiative further supports the vision of an educational process based on cultivating physical, intellectual and moral faculties in each generation, contributing to the progress of active aging.

### 3. Intergenerational education as the purpose of a pedagogy of everyday life

From the perspective of the development of intergenerational education in nursery schools, the need arises to think that this constitutes a space for substantive intergenerational exchange, where the relationship child - teacher - teacher - family - community is given preponderance, as an ethical relationship fostered by otherness, which is understood by Solla & Graterol (2013) "is the relational search of the I with the You, where transcendence is auscultated as an ethical bridge of the encounter with the other, [that is], the senses of the other in us, the individual in the citizen social competition of the other, the transcendence of the other, and the corollary as a section in which the encounter with the other is detailed as an environment where the ethical relationship is gestated. 402). In this situation, and specifically in the occurrence of daily human interaction within the learning space provided by Early Childhood Education, learning takes place alongside the other, in such a way that in relation to the other I take care of and deal with both my own performance and behavior as well as with the partner. In the space of a Pedagogy of the Daily life in the educational level that is approached, the teacher, also is another one that is in relation, the subject considers his contribution as essential so that the other one can achieve his objective to the same rhythm of the other members of the team. In fact, when infants work together, they learn the same way. When each member feels the right and obligation to participate in the activity, the cohesion of the team is achieved and therefore the pedagogy is resignified in the relationship and not in the curricular props (Linares, 2015).

In the space of Infant Education, affectivity practices are initiated that arise in the relationship with others as authentic people who reaffirm themselves in being, which does not mean tilting the balance towards what is excessively tolerant or arriving at an asphyxiating overprotection. For Martorell, González & Estellés (2009) the development of an education from affectivity is conditioned by the development of emotionality in the encounter between the educational subjects, which allows the infant to progressively reach the mature personality, therefore in the everyday space where the educational actors of Infant Education immerse themselves, integration is gestated and human dimensions are harmonized.

This is how the constituent that comes from the biology of each child, as well as the psychomotor, intellectual and social pulsates the scope of maturation. From this perspective, emotional education in the everyday pedagogical space of early education should be felt in interpersonal relationships, in the classroom climate, and in academic work in order to orient itself to the full development of children's personalities, with the teacher's model as the driving force (González, 2002; Padín Pujoldevall, 2020).

A pedagogy of everyday life within the classroom space of infants plays an important role in the generation of skills related to the maintenance, control and restoration of emotions, but this will only happen if the game of otherness generates the promotion of a positive attitude and does not degrade ethically before the entities of everyday life, from which to prevent interpersonal conflicts. However, these skills are traditionally little considered in formal education, mediated by an imposed curriculum and not by one that builds itself from teaching by teaching and learning by learning from which learnings related to socialization and the environmental relationship are achieved (Linares, 2015).

In this way, the current claim of the educational environment as a system acclaims the articulation of cognitive abilities with the care of the affective-emotional, it is a question of the infant reflecting, with the altered intermediation of their other identities where teachers, parents, representatives and members of the community, with the feelings and emotions of fear, love, rage, joy and/or sadness that he contacts about the position of the cognitions that approach him and not like until now it has been done in a superficial way towards the beautiful or the ugly, the good or the bad, without leaving that decision to the autonomous learning of the infants pulsed by the generating devices of phenomena of the aulic space.

From there, the family, in this case referred to grandparents, provides a more lasting founding affectivity, with which to go around the world to participate in other scenarios or social contexts that also shape the development of infants, within the relationship power / freedom (Cuevas Castro, 2017; Pinazo-Hernandis & Lluna, 2011). Likewise, immersion in school not only to cause immersion in scientifically and culturally organized knowledge, but to arrive at the socialization and individualization of the child, through the development of affective relationships, the ability to participate in social situations and interaction with other social beings, since infants, responding to their gregarious condition, need others to solve their basic needs, as is their affectivity.

From this perspective, it is the invitation to this new way of thinking the pedagogical as something daily that involves distinguishing in the affectivity, the emergence of emotions, feelings and passions, as elements that form an important role in our lives, which are biologically rooted by human nature and are part of us, whether we want to admit it or not, and what better opportunity to achieve it than to incorporate innovative and integrating activities for older adults, in a space conducive to the contribution and dignification of their life experiences, as guarantors of the validity of self-evaluation, validity and sense of usefulness for society.



## 4. Experience Methodology

This study focuses on the qualitative paradigmatic approach underlying an interpretative methodological approach, and where reality has a meaning that emerges from a spiral that supposes depth and understanding of events occurring throughout an ethnographic experience, contextualized in the intergenerational aspects derived from the interaction between older adults and children in early childhood education, and that according to the criteria proposed by Navarro (2003), it constitutes a research method oriented towards the understanding in the organization and construction of meanings of different groups and societies, therefore very useful in the identification, analysis and solution of multiple problems of education. For this purpose, direct and participatory observations were made of the interactions between the elderly members of the Grandparents' Circle who live in the "John Paul II" Senior Citizens' Recreation Centre, with the children attending the preschool of the "Monsignor Luis Eduardo Henríquez" Educational Complex, in addition to informal interviews with study participants (teachers, older adults), from which information was extracted that was subsequently collected through records; in addition to audiovisual material, such as photos, recordings, videos, etc. from the life stories of those people and from the comments of teachers and infants.

### 4.1. Experience participants

The sample of this experience was made up of the group of boys and girls who attend the "Monsignor Luis Eduardo Henríquez" Educational Complex on a daily basis and the older adults who are attached to the "John Paul II" Recreational Center for the Elderly. The subjects participating in the experience were 30 boys and girls of Infant Education, with ages between 3 and 6 years and approximately 18 older adults members of the Circle of Grandparents attached to the Educational Complex "Monsignor Luis Eduardo Henríquez", in addition to four teachers (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Characterization of the participants

Participants	N
Children up to 3 years old	15
Children from 3 to 6 years old	15
Older adults	30
Teachers	04
Total	64

## 5. An experience of intergenerational education „The Grandparents Circle“

The "Monsignor Luis Eduardo Henríquez" Educational Complex was inaugurated on September 22, 2003, attached to the Directorate of Education of the Mayor's Office of the Municipality of San Diego in the city of Valencia, Carabobo State, Venezuela, which enrolls 312 boys and girls in the early education stage (3 and 6 years), and 1153 boys and girls in Primary Education (7 to 12 years).

In the operating statutes reflects the mission of addressing the integral evolution of the personality of the learner, through the development of their cognitive skills (intellectual, motor, affective) of personal balance, to live in a democratic society, fair and free, based on the welfare of the family, the community, environmental protection and quality of life. Its purpose is to promote the quality of Initial and Primary Education, through education where the integral formation of the student prevails, the formation for life, freedom, the promotion of values and social justice.

The development of classroom and community activities is based on guiding values: love, responsibility, forgiveness, loyalty, respect, justice, humility, freedom, generosity, patience, honesty, cooperation, solidarity, honesty, tolerance, morality, prudence and ethical constancy.

In this context, the center has become a methodological and administrative reference for the education sector, which is why it has participated in different local and regional academic training events, which has increased the predilection of many parents and / or representatives when selecting the school where their child is going to be trained for life.

During the course of the school year, great attendance and participation of mothers, fathers and/or representatives is observed, and especially of grandparents, which is why as an initiative of the Direction, and in agreement with the teachers, they planned the Annual celebration of Grandfather's Day, which took place for the third consecutive year in the open spaces of the institution during the month of June 2016.

The day lasted from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., with the assistance of 90 grandparents with an average age between 50 and 80 years old, who participated in sports competitions, games accompanied by children, dramatizations

and children’s songs in addition to receiving gifts made by their grandchildren and the recognition of all members of the educational community.

It was from then on, and in recognition of the high qualification and relevance of this activity, that the teachers, together with the Directorate, decided to invite the members of the educational community to form the Grandparents’ Circle with the voluntary participation of all older adults who were willing to do so and to contribute through their participation to the development of intergenerational education.

We proceeded to develop a series of joint activities, initially motivational and later of integration of the elders through:

- Sending motivational messages.
- Planning of special activities, walks, birthday celebrations, help to the teacher, special projects, cultural activities, dramatizations, among others.
- Publication of the chronogram of activities, in institutional billboards and in the Municipal Magazine.
- Integration in cultural activities.

### 5.1. The Grandparents Circle Creation Experience

In view of the great receptivity shown by the older members of the educational community, during the beginning of the September 2016-2017 school year, the Grandparents’ Circle was officially created with the objective of promoting the active participation of the members of the community and generating substantial changes in the behavior of the older ones, through communication processes that are established with the teachers and the children who attend the child care center.

It was also decided to seek the support and participation of health professionals, in case certain illnesses could be detected early, to reduce risks, to approach the problems of the elderly, giving them a solution in some cases, or support in others; in order to influence the attitude of the grandfather with respect to the Circle and in the same way, increasing self-confidence and being optimistic about the activity in which he is involved.

In the context of nursery school, the grandparents’ circle is a pedagogical strategy through which older adults are incorporated into the educational space of their grandchildren, for their real possibilities, lived experience, physical capacity and state of health, developing different activities, which significantly influence the state of mind, reducing the consumption of toxic habits and medications, stabilizing some pathologies and improving social relations, and in general, biopsychosocial aspects (Carbajom, 2011), since it also constitutes an important complementary support system for a group of elderly people and a substitute for those who live alone or who do not receive the desired family support, raising their esteem and affective bonds. This corresponds entirely to the fact that Early Childhood Education constitutes an educational stage with its own identity. Under the current Education Act, this stage is compulsory and its purpose is to contribute to the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of children from birth to six years of age.

At present, various activities have been carried out in the Infant Education Centre, attached to the educational complex, with the participation of the Grandparents’ Circle, which is made up of thirty grandparents, who from the experiences lived throughout their lives through the exercise of various roles, have lent themselves with much dedication, willingness and courage to develop innovative activities through which they have strengthened their esteem, feeling strengthened and made themselves visible in the community.

The various activities carried out by these older adults in interaction with infants are shown in table 2. Intergenerational activities, below.

**Table 2.** Intergenerational activities

Activities
Storytellers with clothing
Role-playing with children
How do I learn to meet useful limits?
Attending to my Grandparents (Pedagogical didactic project)
A day of beautification and aesthetics
Care of the environment
Making puppets and theater with grandparents
Ginkanas and contests
Ephemeris with grandparents (Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Grandfather’s Day, Municipality Day, Tree Day, Earth Day, among others)
Laughter Therapy Activities
Dance Therapy

The exchange activities carried out between grandparents and children were carried out through the development of four visits, and with the participation of two groups of preschool children, attached to the „Monsignor Luis Eduardo Henríquez“ Educational Complex. The participation of older adults (grandparents) in the activities has increased, creating a space for intergenerational bonding, which contributes to establishing and strengthening communicational, affective and alterative bonds between older adults, children, teachers and other members of the community that integrates the educational space, including generating exchange ties with other community members.

## 6. Conclusions

At present, we are witnessing an increase in the number of people who leave their working lives earlier and earlier, which translates into better health, youth and a willingness to develop an active life, far removed from the perspective of the image of a sick and marginalized person. Today, older adults detach themselves from family relationships, broadening their social spectrum to include other social groups near or far away from their age. It is for this reason that the so-called intergenerational education arises in this context, aimed at projecting and promoting processes of intergenerational relations, making possible the encounter and interaction between members of different eras, promoting the exchange of behaviors, ideas, feelings, values, attitudes, etc., and starting from lifelong learning through the experiences that have taken place (Enjuanes, 2016).

In this order of ideas, it was evidenced in this intergenerational experience of educational linkage of the circle of grandparents, the willingness and dedication of older adults to give from their experience for the construction of knowledge and knowledge in children's education, coming to establish harmonious relations of exchange, affection, dialogue and finally of human enrichment, from the valuation and the meaning that have all the experiences occurred throughout the life of grandparents, and that form a reservoir of wisdom, and orientation for future generations.

Definitely, it is observed in this transforming process of the labeling until now of the older adult, the emergence of new needs, oriented towards the willingness to remain active, useful, collaborator and above all in generational harmony, as a guarantee of survival. This indicates that the school will have to incorporate these new requirements in the planning of actions aimed at giving weight and meaning to the talent developed by these people, who have made a life journey, and who from their kindness and integrity wish to share their experiences gained in that journey.

For this reason, it is necessary to analyze the current early childhood education curriculum and in line with the development of competencies aimed at strengthening ethics and citizenship, by valuing the older adult as a reservoir of knowledge resulting from their lived experiences, so that this talent of older adults is incorporated into practices at this level, enriching and innovating in terms of designing pedagogical strategies that guarantee intergenerational linkage, that contributes directly to the integral development of children who live together in this current complex space that merits the construction of a pedagogy of everyday life based on otherness, affectivity and dialogue of knowledge, as fundamental pillars that include intergenerational linkage between children and older adults legitimized in their family and community integration.

It is worthwhile to advance in the reflections of those who wish each day to be better educators and creators of spaces for the construction of knowledge of a social nature, through the incorporation of motivational strategies where the older adult is definitely dignified from its protagonist in the development of ethical values and citizens.

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