9 - THE MEANING OF THE COURSE OF GERONTOLOGY IN THE FORMATION OF UNIOESTE STUDENTS OF PHYSIOTHERAPY

JOSEANE RODRIGUES OF SILVA;
NADIA DUMARA RUIZ SILVEIRA.
University of the West of Paraná State - Unioeste, Cascavel/PR, Brazil
joseane_rs@yahoo.com.br

INTRODUCTION

The gerontology is a new area of knowledge, which its object of central study is the aging process, the oldness. As science, the gerontology searches to investigate and understand the subjects recurrent of the aging process, in view of the increase of the senior population and the compass (reach) of the human longevity.

This way, we can affirm that, in what it refers to its domains, the gerontology, like medicine, is enlarging its conceptions. Considering this context, the form of interdisciplinary approach and the domains of the gerontology, place the discussion of the physiotherapy, for dealing with a profession turned to the human being, trying to prevent, to cure, to rehabilitate and to educate all the individuals, regardless to age phase they are.

So, all the people that assist and live with seniors need knowledge and specific formation. The education in gerontology should be extensive to all. The physiotherapy in geriatrics is an area of performance specifically directed toward to the senior, and due to the current demographic reality, it has been, more and more sought (wanted). Considering that the objective of that specialty is the physical well-being of the senior, related to the maintenance and improvement of your movements, aiming the largest possible independence, it is necessary that the physiotherapist receives a formation in superior level, therefore to act next to the senior segment is indispensable a better training, as professional of this area, in the graduation course.

In this sense, this research sought, considering the theoretical bases of the gerontology, physiotherapy and education, to understand the meaning of the formation in gerontology for students of the physiotherapy course, in view of the necessary aptitudes to this professional for the accomplishment of its work next to the senior segment.

The accomplished study had as central reference the discipline of Gerontology, which has as programmatic content gerontologists themes, as objective to guarantee a formation of the students with specific grounding in the area.

PHYSIOTHERAPY, AGING AND OLD AGE

The Physiotherapy, as area of knowledge, in the year of 2007, completed 38 years. On October 13, 1969 it decides the Decree-law n° 938/1969 that defines the Physiotherapy as profession of superior level and it delimits as the physiotherapist's functions: to recuperate, to develop and to conserve the patient's physical capacity. The decree (ordinance) also describes other possible attributions of the category.

Nowadays who governs these graduation courses is the Resolution CNE/CES n° 4/2002, of November 19, 2002, that institutes the Guidelines National Curricular of the graduation course in physiotherapy.

The age is a very peculiar characteristic and important reference for the attendance to the health in physiotherapy. When we deal with child we use the nomenclature " physiotherapy in pediatrics ". To this specificity from the origins of the profession the largest evidence was always given, mainly because of the congenital physical deficiencies. While related to the seniors, the nomenclature is "physiotherapy in geriatrics and gerontology", which is constituted, partly, in the object of study of this research.

We understand that the physiotherapy as area of knowledge, is in development and, gradually, the conception on the attendance to the oldness in its totality, it is developing in its characterization, inclusion and dimensions of approaches, allowing a constant revision of the defined systematic in elapsing of the time.

The physiotherapy in its interface with the gerontology needs every time a formation that contemplates the available knowledge on aging, oldness and the senior person, having as central reference the ethical values of the human dignity.

Brazil is growing old, and in heterogeneous way associated to the unequal social conditions, observed at the country. The statistics show us that, long ago, we stopped being a young country. This information shows and projects the aging of our population (VERAS, 2003, p. 14).

We know that, when aging, we lost and won, like in any other phase of existence. But, for reasons, mainly of cultural order, our relationship with the age is, frequently, faced as a phase of loss, that should be faced by the senior and the society in general. Beauvoir, in *The Age*, points out this idea, when affirming that: "to be old is to struggle against the age" (BEAUVOIR, 1990, p. 372).

The gerontology is, as area of knowledge, the concrete possibility of the demystification of the aging and of the oldness, through the scientific interpretation of the facts, that allows to identify the challenges generated by the longevity, due to the transformation process by which we go through.

The study of the aging is a cultural construction. The gerontology turned to the social perspective it is that one that has for goal to transmit the knowledge, based in solid theoretical formation, in view of changes of personal, and social order.

Dealing with a multidisciplinary study, the gerontology search to integrate the different studies, areas, specialists and, this way, it is necessary to admit the importance of the diversity, in its multiple expression forms, and:

To understand the reality [...] it is to understand the present day-by-day activity in the cultural diversity and expresses in actions, in the human relationship. We must have the wisdom of noticing and it values the diversity, the particularities, and the specificities, living and learning with the different, recognizing the singular. (Silveira, 2004, p.204)

So, the gerontology is considered not only a new science, but also a new conception of multidisciplinary and multi-professional science, and so new demands point, in the sense of construction and reconstruction of the knowledge, generating new interpretations.

We should highlight, due to this reality, that the education, through the teaching institutions, as far in the phase of base formation as in vocational levels they should approach the theme aging, accomplishing studies that can include the resulting contributions of this science multidisciplinary perspective and especially of the gerontology.

We should struggle so that the study spaces and construction of scientific knowledge on aging and oldness are characterized formally, including as discipline in courses of superior level, assuring the professionals experts' of that reality formation and qualified to work in the senior people's attendance.

This idea is being incorporated for the public politics. In the case, the Senior's National Politics, in the part about the government actions, chapter III, it refers to the area of the education and it proposes, in one of its interruptions, the inclusion of the geriatrics and gerontology as curricular disciplines in the universities (superior courses).

In spite of these conquests, the challenges are many, in another meaning sense, to make a context and to interpret scientifically referring themes to the aging, oldness, old, aiming to provide a worthy life to the ones that are aging, what puts in prominence the role and the importance of the education as a possibility of a thought change, conception that we try to develop later.

On this paperwork (work), the education, in spite of all its specificities as one of the legitimated actions of the effective social order, it is considered as a form of construction of the " new ", and of improvement of the effective social model. It is included in these considerations the subject of the education turned to the professional training.

Regarding to the education and to the formation in the medical area seeking integrality and attendance, we tried to

contemplate on the part of the university in the physiotherapist's formation, and more specifically to analyze the possibilities of the reform of the thought development, in this type of education. Reinforcing this Morin conception (2004, p. 21) points out:

The necessary reform of the thought is the one that generates a thought of the context and the complex. The contextual thought always looks for the inseparably relationship and the inter-retroactions between any phenomenon and its context, and of this one with the planetary context. The complex requests a thought that captures relationships, interrelations, mutual implications, multidimensional phenomena, realities that are simultaneously sympathetic and conflictive [...], that respects the diversity, at the same time as the unit, an organizing thought that conceives the reciprocal relationship among all the parts.

On this paperwork (work), we understand that the physiotherapy course curricular guidelines have to be orientated by a complex and contextual thought, according to Morin. Besides, these guidelines should be considered as orientation to elaborate the course, contemplating local, regional, demographic and epidemic specificities.

The physiotherapist's professional performance in the oldness is a reality. Considering the phenomena of the epidemic and demographic transition, as the increase of the senior population, whose expectations and needs are constituted in great challenges for professionals of all areas, we conclude for the need of studies on courses and disciplines of professional formation, that propitiate the analysis of this reality, considering the specificities of the context in which interferes.

OBJECTIVE

The general objective of this study was to identify the students of the discipline of Gerontology knowledge in the Physiotherapy Course of the State University of the West of Paraná - Unioeste, on gerontology, aging and oldness (age) seeking to interpret the meaning of this formation, in its professional training. We believed that the results of the research would contribute so much to the enrichment of the plan of professional's formation, as for the grounding and the students' competence in the sense of accomplishing works, with the senior people.

The specific intentions, in view of the most general objective they converged for the characterization of the knowledge of the students to begin and finish the study of the discipline of Gerontology. We also try to verify the influence of this discipline on the learning and acquisition process of the students' knowledge.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The accomplished work is characterized as qualitative research, this modality adapted to the theoretical-methodological definitions of reference of the project.

The subjects of this research, which correspond to 21 of the 40 students of the Gerontology discipline of the Physiotherapy Course of Unioeste, will be identified with the letters from A to U, considering the number of participants, in way not to personalize them. The investigated group was selected, according to the following criteria:

1. To be matriculated in the Gerontology discipline of the Physiotherapy Course, what means being in the 1st grade of the course, whose curricular schedule integrates the structure of the new political-pedagogic project.

2. To accept to participate in the study and, then, to supply the free and cleared consent in writing, as well as the authorization for the application of the questionnaire.

3. To answer the questionnaire, in two moments, which are, before attending to 1st class of the discipline, after the conclusion of the schedule of the discipline.

This study includes, in a first moment, the results of a revision of the existent literature on the theme, particularly about the theoretical production existent, regarding the physiotherapy and gerontology history, as presented previously. This theoretical-conceptual sustenance, made possible the systematic of important concepts for the procedure of data analysis.

The data collection was given through the use a half-open questionnaire elaborated by the author. Its application was held in the dependences of Unioeste, in the schedule of the Gerontology discipline, in the first and last day of class.

The analysis of the 21 students' obtained answers gave a support on the theoretical reference of base and in the delimitation of feasible categories of the interpretations, pertinent to the qualitative research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The questions on gerontologist themes were referred to the knowledge of the subjects regarding to: aging and gerontology. We requested, also, that the students explicit the way they acquired these knowledge.

Referring to the knowledge on *aging*, the answers obtained in the first stage of the field research, indicate that 07 subjects associate it to the experience and the life quality, although that process is, admittedly, stigmatized in our society.

Medeiros (2003) states that aging is a process and the oldness (old age) is a stage of life, adding to these phenomena are not just a biological subject, but matter of cultural construction. Because the oldness is not homogeneous, it is not the same for all. The author points out the possibilities of the aging built with the existence and the individual and collective experience.

Three answers point another type of understanding, in other words, they associate aging to the old age, as one of the stages of life and they let implied the sense of the process.

Authors, like Martins, understand that the chronological is a mark, however we don't grow old, exclusively, for the lived years; actually " [...] we are not *chrono*, we are *kairós* ", understanding *chrono* as: “chronological time, different from the time lived” (MARTINS, 1998, p. 11).

Other fellows (people) highlight as outstanding aspects the physical decline, the biological aging. To approach the aging as centrally characterized by declines it reinforces the stigmatization of the oldness (old age) as something not wanted, associated to diseases, limitations, and incapacities. It is what we find in the following answers:

As to the origin of knowledge for them revealed in this first stage, the fellows (subjects) attribute, essentially, to the influence of the family and the means of communication. These statements let clear to us that the approach regarding the aging hadn't even been discussed in the ambit of the school.

In the second stage of the field research, still regarding the data on aging, we observed that the answers include very similar ideas, to the ones of the first stage, being demonstrated an understanding of the aging as a natural process of development. Added, even, as it's a process that involves experience and knowledge being planned in way to consider the biopsychic and social aspects. The aging is pointed, also, as phase of life.

Authors, like Medeiros, who study the aging, introduce it as part of the development process, the one that allows review the myths about the condition of whom that grow old, such as the old people do not learn, do not change and they are unproductive. The same one states the old age that is seen as "a time of losses, where there are not acquisitions" (MEDEIROS, 2003, p. 189).

Different from the answers found to portray the origin of the knowledge in the 1st stage, fellows (subjects) point, now, the classes of Gerontology influence, considering as much the theoretical paperwork as practical, readings and discussions of the texts on the theme and still including the conviviality with the seniors, as pointed in the following speeches:

The answers showed that the students had two great discoveries, in other words, the age as a natural phase of the life and even that the old person is a present being in our day by day, in our time. It is important to detach that this understanding was not observed in an isolated way, but associated to each individual's existence and at the chronological time.

When investigating on the knowledge on gerontology and its meaning for the subjects (fellows, people) we obtained, in the first stage of the field research, three groups of answers. The placed ideas related gerontology to factors as: a branch of the physiotherapy, to the aging and oldness(old age), and to the process of health and disease in the oldness (old age). For the first time we got some blank answers.

Regarding the answers in white, four overall, we considered them significant to understand that the students didn't have any

knowledge on the theme. This aspect is comprehensible, because, besides dealing with a new theme, the specific publications are still scarce. It is common we find people that have no idea what is gerontology, in this case, grad and masters degree students that including intend to work with the senior segment, as well as professionals of several areas.

Three answers, affirm that the gerontology constitutes a branch of the physiotherapy. We believed that, although the students ignore the gerontology as area of knowledge for being the name of one of the course disciplines, they ended for pointing it as an element that makes part of the area of specific formation itself.

In these answers we found an approach with the one that, on this paperwork, we understand as gerontology. Metchnikoff, as previous reference was the first one to use the word gerontology, which is a term composed by the radical *geron*, that means " old man ", and *logy*, that means, " study of ". So, the gerontology is known as an investigation field dedicated to the study of the aging, of the old age and the seniors (Lopes, 2000).

Connections (relations) between gerontology and the seniors' reality health / sickness can be observed, what differs from our thought considering gerontology as area of knowledge, because, actually, they emphasize one of the approaches, more specific, of one of the branches of studies on aging and oldness (age), which is the geriatrics. This area of studies, although historically older than the gerontology, it is part of it, for being just related one of the aspects of the reality of the aging and of the oldness (age).

The statement of Beauvoir (1990, p. 30) about the connection between the geriatrics and the gerontology, explicit the previous statements: " [...] beside the geriatrics, it grew a science that we call gerontology nowadays: it doesn't study the pathology of the age, but the own process of the aging ".

The researched students' answers, in the 1st stage, relative to the origin of their knowledge on gerontology, they point that the first contact with the term was when they realized that they would have a discipline in the course with the name Gerontology. For them not knowing about it's meaning, they looked for information from other students of the course, some teachers and family.

About the relative data to the knowledge on gerontology still, the answers obtained in the second stage of the field research point out the sense of gerontology as a study field related to the aging process.

The answers point a differential considering the data collected in the 1st stage as regard to the understanding on gerontology, when including the multidisciplinary and multi-professional character, of the gerontology as area of study of the aging process. As emphasized in the editorial of a specialized magazine in the area: The Gerontology reports itself as a area of knowledge that investigates the aging process and the old age starting from the interdisciplinary perspective " (Côrte, Medeiros, 2003, p. 15).

The students declared to have obtained this knowledge during the classes, detaching mainly the importance of the first class as base for the understanding of the basic concepts on the theme. The analysis of the class plan confirms that many of the linked concepts to the theme were discussed, to provide conditions so the students have a better use of the discipline.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

To be prepared to assist the people that grow old, especially, the old ones started to demand an appropriate formation and theoretical and methodological competence.

The physiotherapy courses include, in general, the discipline geriatrics as programming destined to the studies of the matters that involve the seniors. However, this approach is restricted to focus the health, demonstrating the necessity of a knowledge area that takes care of the reality of the oldness (age) in comprehensive way.

The Gerontology discipline was introduced in the Physiotherapy course of Unioeste, in view of assisting the specificity of this demand, in what it refers to the senior and the old age. The receptivity of this innovation overcame the expectations consolidating the existence of the discipline, which allowed the accomplishment of this research.

The discussion of gerontologist themes, allowed the development of reflections, based on the specific contents of this area of knowledge, which presents interfaces with others, among them the physiotherapy.

The data of the research point that before these studies; the great majority of students didn't know what gerontology was. However, we observed a growing curiosity, in the search of this knowledge because, when questioned about the origin of its knowledge, in the first stage of the research, many of them answered that they tried to learn more about the subject, from friends and teachers of the university.

Even accomplishing this search, the answers pointed the no-knowledge of the theme properly, allowing us to affirm that in the university, there is a general ignorance on themes relative to the gerontology and considering the meaning of this area of knowledge. The existence of the discipline and the accomplished paperwork (work) allowed the students to familiarize themselves with the gerontology and they understand the physiotherapy as a similar (kindred) area.

The results of this research allow us to reinforce the idea of the necessity of the gerontologist formation for physiotherapists, and they demonstrated that the inclusion of the Gerontology discipline in the physiotherapy course represented a progress for the relationship physiotherapist-senior inside and out side of the university, as students and, later, as professionals, seeking demystification the predominant conceptions, and the paradigms, considering what we think of the old age, not only of the other one, but also of ourselves. It was a great challenge, considering the complexity of the discipline implantation and its implementation.

Only developing an education in the sense of thought reconstruction and reform, is what we can count on professionals that assist, with competence, the crescent demands of this population segment, for which is still a need for study, research and specialized professional performance.

KEY WORDS: Gerontology, Professional Formation, and Physiotherapy.

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End: Rua Mato Grosso, 1680 ap 1601 Centro CEP 85812-020 Cascavel/PR Brasil
Tel: (45) 99179771; Email: joseane_rs@yahoo.com.br

THE MEANING OF THE COURSE OF GERONTOLOGY IN THE FORMATION OF UNIOESTE STUDENTS OF

PHYSIOTHERAPY

ABSTRACT

The understanding of the senior as social being inserted in the family and in the community in general, is indispensable to the physiotherapist for your professional performance, in order to contemplate the expectations and expressive demands recurrent of the population demographic alterations and subjects of social, cultural and epidemic order. The National Curricular Guidelines of the graduation course in Physiotherapy orientate and guide the elaboration of the pedagogical project that should contemplate the specificities of the effective reality, among them the oldness. The demographic transition, in view of the increasing senior population, generates great challenges for professionals of all the areas, besides the physiotherapists whose formation needs to assist these necessities. The gerontology, as area of knowledge, offers subsidies to these professionals for the demystification of the oldness, through the scientific interpretation of the facts, answering to the countless subjects pertinent to the longevity and the aging, recurrent of the transformation process for which we go through. The accomplished research had as objective to verify the knowledge of the students of the discipline of Gerontology of the Physiotherapy Course of the State University of the West of Paraná - UNIOESTE, on gerontology, aging and oldness, in view of contributing for the evaluation and reformulation of the programs of these professionals' formation, so that they are better based and prepared to accomplish their work in association with senior people. The results of this research allow us to reinforce the idea of the gerontologist formation necessity for physiotherapists, how to point out for the possibility of other interventions and attendances to the senior, since that these professionals are qualified properly. We should assume the necessity of studying forms of improving (enriching) the professionals' formation.

KEY WORDS: Gerontology, Professional Formation, and Physiotherapy.

LA SIGNIFICATION DU COURS DE GÉRONTOLOGIE DANS LA FORMATION D'ETUDIANTS DE KINÉSITHERAPIE DE L'UNIOESTE

RESUME

La conception de la personne âgée en tant qu'être social inséré dans la famille et dans la communauté en général, est indispensable pour le kinésithérapeute pour son activité professionnelle, de façon à respecter les attentes et les demandes expressives provenant des altérations démographiques de la population et des questions d'ordre social, culturel et épidémiologique. Les Directrices curriculaires Nationales du Cours de Formation en Kinésithérapie guident et orientent à l'élaboration du projet pédagogique qui doit respecter les spécificités de la réalité en vigueur, parmi elles la vieillesse. La transition démographique, en vue de l'augmentation de la population des personnes âgées, gère de grands défis pour les professionnels de tous les domaines, y compris les kinésithérapeutes dont la formation a besoin de s'adapter à ces nécessités. La gérontologie, comme domaine de connaissance, offre des aides à ces professionnels pour la démystification de la vieillesse, à travers l'interprétation scientifique des faits, répondant aux nombreuses questions en relation avec la longévité et le vieillissement, dûs au processus de transformation par lequel nous passons. La recherche réalisée a eu comme objectif de vérifier les connaissances des étudiants de la discipline de Gérontologie du Cours de Kinésithérapie de l'Université de l'État de l'Ouest du Paraná UNIOESTE, sur la gérontologie, le vieillissement et la vieillesse, en vue de contribuer à l'évaluation et la reformulation des programmes de formation de ces professionnels, afin d'être mieux formés et préparés à réaliser leur travail auprès des personnes âgées. Les résultats de cette recherche nous permettent de renforcer l'idée de nécessité de la formation gérontologique pour les kinésithérapeutes, comme de montrer la possibilité d'autres interventions et traitement aux personnes âgées, à partir du moment que ces professionnels soient correctement formés. Nous devons assumer la nécessité d'étudier des formes d'enrichissement de la formation des professionnels.

MOTS CLÉS: Gérontologie, Formation Professionnelle, Kinésithérapie.

EL SIGNIFICADO DEL CURSO DE GERONTOLOGÍA EN LA FORMACIÓN DE LOS ESTUDIANTES DE FISIOTERAPIA UNIOESTE

RESUMEN

El entendimiento del anciano(persona mayor) como ser social insertado en la familia y en general en la comunidad, es indispensable al fisioterapeuta para su actuación profesional, de la manera de contemplar las expectativas y las demandas expresivas originadas de las alteraciones demográficas de la población y de asuntos de orden social, cultural y epidémico. Las Directrices Curriculares Nacionales del curso de graduación en Fisioterapia orientan y guían la elaboración del proyecto pedagógico que debe contemplar las especificidades de la realidad en vigor, entre ellas la edad. La transición demográfica, teniendo en mente el aumento de la población de ancianos, genera los grandes desafíos para los profesionales de todas las áreas, además de los fisioterapeutas cuya formación necesita ayudar esas necesidades. La gerontología, como el área de conocimiento, ofrece los subsidios a esos profesionales para el desmitificación de la vejez, a través de la interpretación científica de los hechos, que contestan a los diversos asuntos pertinentes a la longevidad y el envejecimiento, originadas del proceso de la transformación por el que pasamos. La investigación realizada tuvo como objetivo verificar el conocimiento de los estudiantes de la disciplina de Gerontología del Curso de Fisioterapia de la Universidad Estatal del Oeste de Paraná - UNIOESTE, en la gerontología, envejecimiento y edad, teniendo en mente contribuir para la evaluación y reformulación de los programas de la formación de esos profesionales, para que ellos sean bien basados y preparados para lograr su trabajo ante las personas mayores(ancianos). Los resultados de esta investigación permiten reforzarnos la idea de la necesidad de la formación gerontológica para fisioterapeutas, cómo señalar para la posibilidad de otras intervenciones y asistencias a la persona mayor, desde que esos profesionales están propiamente calificados. Nosotros debemos asumir la necesidad de estudiar formas de enriquecer la formación de los profesionales. PALABRAS CLAVE: La gerontología, la Formación Profesional, la Fisioterapia.

O SIGNIFICADO DO CURSO DE GERONTOLOGIA NA FORMAÇÃO DE ESTUDANTES DE FISIOTERAPIA DA UNIOESTE

RESUMO

O entendimento do idoso como ser social inserido na família e na comunidade em geral, é imprescindível ao fisioterapeuta para a sua atuação profissional, de modo a contemplar as expectativas e demandas expressivas decorrentes das alterações demográficas da população e de questões de ordem social, cultural e epidemiológica. As Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais do Curso de Graduação em Fisioterapia norteiam e orientam a elaboração do projeto pedagógico que deve contemplar as especificidades da realidade vigente, dentre elas a velhice. A transição demográfica, tendo em vista o aumento da população idosa, gera grandes desafios para profissionais de todas as áreas, inclusive os fisioterapeutas cuja formação precisa atender essas necessidades. A gerontologia, como área de conhecimento, oferece subsídios a esses profissionais para a desmistificação da velhice, através da interpretação científica dos fatos, respondendo às inúmeras questões pertinentes à longevidade e ao envelhecimento, decorrentes do processo de transformação pelo qual passamos. A pesquisa realizada teve como objetivo verificar os conhecimentos dos estudantes da disciplina de Gerontologia do Curso de Fisioterapia da Universidade Estadual do Oeste do Paraná UNIOESTE, sobre gerontologia, envelhecimento e velhice, tendo em vista contribuir para a avaliação e reformulação dos programas de formação desses profissionais, a fim de que sejam melhor fundamentados e preparados para realizar seu trabalho junto à pessoas idosas. Os resultados desta pesquisa nos permitem reforçar a idéia da necessidade da formação gerontológica para fisioterapeutas, como apontar para a possibilidade de outras intervenções e atendimentos ao idoso, desde que esses profissionais sejam devidamente capacitados. Devemos assumir a necessidade de se estudar formas de enriquecer a formação dos profissionais.

PALAVRAS CHAVES: Gerontologia, Formação Profissional, Fisioterapia.