

The right to education and art as an instrument for developing conflict management skills in youths in high school education

A arte como instrumento para o desenvolvimento das habilidades em gestão de conflitos em jovens do ensino médio

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Abstract

The right to education transcends the right to access to school and encompasses the full development of the human being as a social individual, citizen and professional with the skills that are indispensable to the demands of the 21st century (WEF, 2016; ACCENTURE, 2013), which can be understood as meaning the inclusion of conflict management skills. Given this context, the objective of the present paper is to demonstrate the potential of art as an instrument for developing conflict management skills, which is a way of realizing the right to education. The theme is relevant because of the connection with the role of formal education in the development of the individual based on the constitutional parameters provided for in CF/88. In regard to the methodology, an experiment was carried out in which students from two state schools of Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil were selected to participate in an artistic intervention, which took place from May to July 2018, culminating in a musical performance entitled "Dreams that we can be". The criterion used for the choice was the students' affinity with the project proposal, which did not require prior contact with the adopted artistic modalities (singing, dancing and theater), as the intention was to start from the inexperience of the students and their openness to something new. The field research was analyzed by the Ethics Committee, and a bibliographic research was performed. At the end of the experiment, data were collected through interviews and questionnaires. Data analysis pointed to the strengthening of self-confidence, empathy and teamwork, based on the experience of the youths in the "Peace on Stage" project. These are requirements that make up the ability to manage conflicts, confirming the hypothesis of the work.

Keywords: Right to Education. Conflict management. Science and art. 21st century skills.

Resumo

O direito à educação transcende o acesso à escola e abrange o pleno desenvolvimento do ser humano enquanto indivíduo social, cidadão e profissional com habilidades indispensáveis às demandas do século XXI (FEM, 2016; ACCENTURE, 2013), que se entende coincidir com as habilidades de gestão de conflitos. Diante desse contexto, o objetivo do presente trabalho é demonstrar o potencial da arte como instrumento para desenvolvimento de habilidades de gestão de conflitos, uma forma de efetivar o direito à educação. O tema mostra-se relevante pela conexão com o papel da educação formal no desenvolvimento do indivíduo a partir dos parâmetros constitucionalmente previstos na CF/88. Quanto aos aspectos metodológicos, realizou-se um experimento em que alunos de duas escolas estaduais de Fortaleza/CE foram selecionados para participar de uma intervenção artística, que aconteceu entre os meses de maio a julho de 2018, culminando em um espetáculo musical intitulado "Sonhos que podemos ser". O critério utilizado para a escolha foi a afinidade dos alunos com a proposta do projeto, não sendo exigido contato prévio com as modalidades artísticas adotadas (canto, dança e teatro), pois a intenção era partir da in experiência dos alunos e da abertura para algo novo. Enquanto a pesquisa de campo era analisada pelo Comitê de Ética, realizou-se a pesquisa bibliográfica. Ao final do experimento, coletaram-se os dados por meio de entrevista e questionário. A análise dos dados apontou para o fortalecimento da autoconfiança, da empatia e do trabalho em equipe, a partir da experiência dos jovens no projeto Paz no Palco, os quais são requisitos que compõem a habilidade de gerir conflitos, confirmando a hipótese do trabalho.

Palavras-chave: Direito à Educação. Gestão de Conflitos. Ciência e Arte. Habilidades do século XXI.

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1 Introduction

The right to education transcends access to school and encompasses the full development of the human being as a social individual, citizen and professional with the skills indispensable to the demands of the 21st century (WEF, 2016; ACCENTURE, 2013), which is understood as including the skills of conflict management. Conflict management is a theme that includes a multidisciplinary understanding of human relations, that is, it encompasses not only the ability to solve problems creatively, but also a consequent evolution of the individual from the perception of their emotions, the transformation of their relationships and the way they communicate and see the situations around them.

The theme is relevant because of the connection with the role of formal education in the development of the individual based on the constitutionally provided parameters in the Right to Education. What is more, there is a clear convergence between the skills developed from conflict management and the skills indispensable to the demands of the 21st century. These skills include: complex problem solving, creativity, emotional intelligence, communication and teamwork. Developing these skills is no longer an option in the face of changes in the labor market and formal qualifications are no longer sufficient. By 2020 more than one third of the skills that are currently considered essential at the time of hiring will be deemed as unnecessary, while the most valued skill by 2020 will be solving complex problems, as research by the World Economic Forum¹ shows.

Training in conflict management is demonstrated to be the path recommended by research on the future of the professions. To successfully manage conflicts, the doctrine recommends the need to positively observe and manage emotions (FISHER; SHAPIRO, 2009), the importance of self-knowledge (FISHER; PATTON; URY, 2018), active listening and communication as well as empathy. All of these skills when properly worked on and coordinated are capable of resolving complex conflicts, which corresponds to the aforementioned ability to solve complex problems.

Given this context, the objective of this work is to demonstrate the potential of art as a tool for developing conflict management skills, which is a way to realize the right to education. To this end, we used the musical theater show entitled “Dreams that we can be”, with the students of the Young Leaders Project,² to measure the effectiveness of this instrument. It was hoped to demonstrate that art enhances learning in conflict management by arousing sensations, learning and skills that coincide with the requirements that compose it, for example self-confidence, and at the same time it is an instrument capable of preparing the individual for the labor market demands as communication, creativity, teamwork and emotional intelligence are developed.

This experiment, conducted from May to July 2018, was attended by 35 (thirty five) young people aged 14 to 16 years. There were eleven weeks of preparation, from the morning of integration until the day of the show, composed of singing, dancing and drama, rehearsals, scriptwriting, creating the set, reflections on costumes and makeup. It can be considered that what was experienced in this period was an immersion in art, through the intensity with which the works took place.

To gauge the results, a few months later, the students answered a questionnaire and underwent an interview. The research results were analyzed from the answers offered by the young people and the daily monitoring of the preparation for the show.

2 The right to education

The right to education is protected by the Federal Constitution of 1988 (CF/88), which is based on the sovereignty, citizenship and dignity of the human individual. CF/88 is aimed at building a free, fair and

¹ Complete study available at: <http://reports.weforum.org/future-of-jobs-2016/>.

² The Young Leaders Project (Projeto Jovens Líderes) is a human empowerment project using the development of conflict management and 21st century skills in high school youth from the State Education Network in Fortaleza, Ceará. The project has been in operation since 2009, having already worked with over 200 young people.

egalitarian society for national development and its principles are the prevalence of human rights, the defense of peace and the peaceful settlement of conflicts. Therefore, education is the path through which it is possible to build a society based on values such as freedom, equality, citizenship, and justice, and in this way achieve social peace and dignity.

According to Souza (2010), the right to education is composed of the concept of the existential minimum to live with dignity. Article 6 of CF/88 places education as a social right, which means that “what individuals can demand from the State is no longer a behavior of abstention, but an active participation in civil society, through positive benefits from it”. (SOUZA, 2010, p. 24).

Article 205 of CF/88, states that education aims “for the full development of the person, their preparation for the exercise of citizenship and their qualification for work”. Thus, education aims to guarantee to those involved experiences that develop them as a human person, to work on the impacts of their relationship with society (citizenship) and the professional competences that insert them into the labor market. This educational program justifies the placing of education within the context of fundamental and social law.

Article 206 determines that teaching should be carried out from the principles of “freedom to learn, teach, research and disseminate thought, art and knowledge”. The legal text points to a freedom in the teaching-learning process, necessary for education to reach its main objective.

The National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (LDB) is the legislation responsible for establishing the guidelines that education will follow in the country. It foresees that education is completed through the process of the formation of the individual and this formation includes knowing how to live not only in the school environment, but also at work and in society, which requires the individual to be able to project what s/he sees in school into the reality of work and its social practices (art. 1). The LDB promotes the creation of an educational environment based on human freedom and solidarity (art. 2) while determining the teaching of art, demonstrating the importance of disseminating culture, but also of encouraging learning through visual arts, dance, music and theater (art. 26). As for high school, the Law emphasizes the importance of the critical sense of the student in the adaptability to social and professional challenges (art. 35), as well as the autonomy to position oneself and make decisions more safely.

The transversality, as proposed by the Parameters of the National Curriculum (PNCs), allows for an escape from traditional teaching and broadens the paths taken by the student within the classroom. It is made clear that the contents are not limited to those offered by the teacher as curricular content. “Using transversal themes is a way of ensuring interdisciplinarity in teaching and learning and enables the learner to find meaning in what s/he learns” (BARBOSA, 2007, p. 10). That is, these themes are useful to make teaching meaningful and striking, transcending the obligation of the contents, and thus enables perception and apprehension.

In this regard, it is important to mention the document entitled “Learning: the treasure within”, the result of a report for UNESCO from the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century, which addresses the objectives of 21st century education and the essential learning necessary for it to fulfill its role in the life of the individual.

The document emphasizes that students need to build their educational path based on four pillars: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. “Learning to know” means finding pleasure in the teaching-learning process and understanding that knowledge requires curiosity, motivation and practical application. “Learning to live together” requires communication, respect and empathy, all being skills which are also necessary for conflict management. This learning skill involves discovering the importance of collaboration for personal and professional growth. “Learning to be” relates to human complexity, encouraging the student to become aware of his or her human condition and potential.

In the mid-2000s, the Parameters for the National Curriculum for High School were created. The document is based around three areas: languages, codes and their technologies, nature sciences, mathematics and their technologies, and human sciences and their technologies. “The structuring by knowledge area is

justified by ensuring a science and technology based education, in which concept, application and solution of concrete problems are combined” (PNCs, 2000, p. 19). Thus, the first version of the document already pointed to the importance of the practical application of knowledge regarding solutions to problems as one of the primary functions of high school.

According to data from the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), in regard to the new high school education, 70% of students do not know Portuguese and mathematics to their satisfaction and 41% of young Brazilians drop out of school before graduating.

A survey was conducted in the years 2017-2018, entitled “work or study?”, With the aim of investigating young people who neither work nor study and some aspects that may interfere with this reality. More than 15,000 young people aged 17-24 were interviewed in nine countries, including Brazil. Of the countries interviewed, Brazil has the highest rate of young people who neither work nor study (hence the name “*nem-nem*”, neither-nor) and among these, when comparing with other countries, Brazil has the highest percentage of those who are not looking for work, are not in the care of family members, are not involved in any business nor are considered individuals with disabilities. Research shows that these young people are more exposed to violence and insecurity. In addition, the survey states that the young people interviewed had not completed ten years of study.

The survey showed that 40% of young respondents in Latin America do not know how to perform simple mathematical calculations that are useful for everyday life and that they lack the skills that the job market recognizes as essential. On the other hand, these youngsters have a familiarity with technology, and the lack of study is not a hindrance to this perception. In addition, an important fact is that 85% of respondents expressed hope that they would complete higher education and said they were optimistic about their future. This is an important fact, because despite the difficulties, these young people still have a motivation that allows them to see paths in the future.

The results reveal a challenging reality for Brazilian youth. The research concludes that it is essential that these young people are attracted to situations that develop their skills and competencies, necessary for the job market. That is, it is necessary that formal education finds a way of attraction for these young people.

There is a need to rethink high school education and focus on significant changes in teaching. According to the website of the Ministry of Education (MEC), with regard to the new high school education (provided by Law 13.415/17), some changes are significant, for example, there is emphasis on the content essential to the life of the individual, as foreseen in the National Curricular Guidelines (BNCC). In addition, there is an urgency to embrace diversity and encourage leadership in these young people. The BNCC, approved at the end of 2018, provides for learning that is essential during high school and that will be worked on through skills development.

In high school education, the focus in the area of languages and its technologies is on the expansion of autonomy, protagonism and authorship in the practice of different languages [...] In the area of mathematics and its technologies, students should consolidate the knowledge developed in previous stages and add new ones, expanding the range of resources to solve complex problems [...] In the area of Nature Sciences and its Technologies, it provides the opportunity to deepen and broaden the knowledge explored in the previous stage. It treats research as a form of student engagement [...] The area of Applied Human and Social Sciences proposes to deepen the broadening of the conceptual base and the modes of construction of argumentation and systematization of reasoning. (BNCC, 2018, p. 471-472).

Art fits into the area of Languages and its Technologies, as it is synonymous with human expression and can be manifested through dance, theater, music or the visual arts. “It is in learning, research, and artistic making that perceptions and understandings of the world broaden and interconnect in a critical, sensitive, and poetic perspective on life” (BNCC, 2018, p. 482).

Several heads of state met in September 2015 in New York at the United Nations Headquarters to set the new Sustainable Development Goals, replacing the UN Millennium Goals. This Agenda aims to balance

the three dimensions of development: economic, social and environmental, creating goals for the next 15 years.³

The focus of the 2030 Agenda is the transformation of the world through empowerment of the human being and the development of their freedoms and capacities so that they are able to use their full potential in the struggle to build a more sustainable and socially and economically balanced world. Economic progress must occur in conjunction with personal fulfillment.

It is worth mentioning that the fourth objective of the 2030 agenda is “to ensure an education that is inclusive, equitable and of quality, and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (Agenda 2030, p. 23). This includes access to quality education, the provision of equal opportunities, and a teaching proposal that specifically addresses each individual’s skills.⁴

The agenda proposal is consistent with the ideas defended by Martha Nussbaum (2013) and Amartya Sen (2010) regarding investment in human capabilities. This is because the document from beginning to end talks about creating the conditions for the development of national capacities and that the objectives are centered on the people and dignity of the human person, so that life can prosper.

The agenda emphasizes that in order to eradicate poverty, a basic standard of living must be guaranteed, which Pompeu (2017) calls the minimum civilizational threshold, as a set of unavailable basic rights that must be offered to the entire population. The minimum civilizational threshold is essential for the configuration of the democratic rule of law and is based on freedom and equality. In this sense, the 4th objective of the agenda demonstrates that to eradicate poverty and end oppression, it is necessary to follow the path of a quality education focused on the freedom of the individual.

3 Skills and competences

Teaching through competences arises from the need to invest in an education that goes beyond the transmission of knowledge, aiming at their application in practice, with actions that prepare students for life’s challenges. Thus, the student studies the content in order to see the possibilities of executing that knowledge to solve a problem. “Because the world of work has placed the notion of competence at the heart of organizational management and the school has placed it at the center of recent curriculum reforms. But the main reason is for the evolution of society” (PERRENOUD, 2013, p. 30).

If the objective of education through competency is to educate for life, what students experience in school needs to resemble that same objective. However, there is a discrepancy between real life and traditional teaching, which emphasizes curriculum content but does not help the student to understand in which situations in life he or she can use that learning when faced by complex situations. “It is important to know how to read, count, measure, classify, research, compare, etc., but none of these skills alone would allow for the totality of a complex situation to be faced” (PERRENOUD, 2013, p. 68).

Howard Gardner, in researching human potential, identified that the individual is endowed with diverse talents, which present themselves differently in each person. From this finding, he sought to study the ability of human beings to expand their intelligences, based on a pluralistic view of education, which has the individual as the center of the learning process (school based on the individual), and where they are seen as a being endowed with different styles. This idea resulted in the theory of multiple intelligences (GARDNER, 1993).

According to Gardner (1993), intelligence can be defined as the ability to solve problems or create innovative products that impact society. In this sense, he asks the following question: “When you train a person

³ Available at: <https://nacoesunidas.org/pos2015/agenda2030/>. Accessed on May 25th 2019.

⁴ "Within Objective 4 there are several developments: 4.1) By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education, leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes; ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality development in early childhood, as well as pre-school care and education so that they are ready for primary education; ensure equal access for all men and women to affordable quality technical, vocational and higher education, including university; substantially increase the number of young people and adults who have relevant skills [...]; eliminate gender disparities; ensure that all young people are literate and have acquired basic knowledge in mathematics; ensure that all students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development [...]"

in skill A, for example, does that training transfer to skill B? In this case, for example, does mathematical training increase musical capacities?" (GARDNER, 1993, p. 14). This question is pertinent when talking about education through skills or competences, because it enables reflection on the multiplication of knowledge and on cross-sectional education. Seeking answers to this question, Gardner identified seven intelligences: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, corporal-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal (GARDNER, 1993).

A plurality of intelligences requires a plurality of assessment methodologies and tools that increase the possibilities for understanding content, and detecting strengths and weaknesses. "Intelligence, from this point of view, is a general ability, found to varying degrees in all individuals. It is the key to successful problem solving" (GARDNER, 1993, p. 19). Thus, Sales and Araújo⁵ (2018, p. 689) understand that "the elaboration of teaching methods and techniques is always directed to the act of teaching, little or almost no importance is given to the act of learning, in this sense, it is taught that it is necessary to transfer in a progressive manner to the students the control of their learning [...]".

In developing the theory of multiple intelligences, Gardner emphasized artistic education, believing that it was possible to broaden the intelligences through informal teaching. He argues that students need to have contact with the way of thinking brought on by developed art, from artists who experience it daily. The author justifies this logic by understanding that children need motivation to learn, since learning is the result of their productions and reflections. It is not just about learning an instrument or learning to dance, but about learning to look at life through the sensitive eye that art awakens. "Art education needs to be a cooperative enterprise involving artists, teachers, administrators, researchers and the students themselves" (GARDNER, 1993, p. 125).

3.1 21st Century Skills and Conflict Management Skills

Consensual conflict management can be achieved through different procedures in the Brazilian context, namely negotiation, mediation and conciliation. As a rule, regardless of the procedure, good conflict managers act to facilitate dialogue and find connecting points in the midst of disagreements. Thus, a new way to look at the problems is sought, in order to promote a transition from competition to collaboration. Those involved cooperatively seek a viable and adequate solution to the problem without having to follow a set procedure. This freedom allows for the development of more creative solutions, which can sometimes be restricted in more standardized procedures (SALES, 2009).

Understanding that the skills of the conflict manager coincide with the skills most needed by the labor market in the 21st century, and that art can act as a methodological vector for their development, it is essential to present and analyze these skills in order to demonstrate their development throughout the experience to be narrated in the present work.

To enable the comparison between the skills most needed in the 21st century labor market and the skills of the conflict manager, we start by presenting the first, which come from the profound social transformation resulting from technological advances and which change the way human beings interact with each other and build their existence. This transformation directly affects the labor market, as many jobs, with a primarily technical and repetitive nature, are gradually automated. Therefore, the professional in this new age is expected to develop skills that respond to current demands.

The World Economic Forum (WEF, 2018) conducted research that measured rising and declining skills in the labor market for the year 2022, as presented in the table below. For the present study, it was decided to focus on the rising skills. Among the ten skills listed by the WEF, seven correlate with the skills of conflict management, as listed below.

⁵ For more information on guidelines for the transformation of teaching, more specifically the legal, according to Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory, see: SALES; ARAÚJO, 2018. Available at: <https://siaiap32.univali.br/seer/index.php/nej/article/view/13414>.

Rising Skills	Declining Skills
Analytical thinking and innovation⁶	Manual dexterity, strength and accuracy
Active learning and learning strategies	Memory and verbal and spatial skills
Creativity, originality and proactivity	Financial and material resource management
Technology Design and Programming	Installation and maintenance of technology
Critical thinking and analysis	Reading, writing, math and active listening
Complex problem solving	People management
Leadership and social influence	Quality and safety control
Emotional intelligence	Coordination and time management
Logical reasoning, problem solving and ideation	Visual and verbal skills
Systems Analysis and Evaluation	Use, monitoring and control of technology

Research demonstrates the need to strengthen what is most subjective in individuals by suggesting that repetitive technical functions that require manual dexterity will be automated, without acting against evolution. However, it is clear from empirical observation, that formal education does not favor the development of skills which are considered *soft*, and it can be understood from observation that these skills develop throughout life, through experiences, and will not develop from lectures on the subject (WEF, 2018).

All the steps of conflict management should consider the subjects involved in the conflict, invested with emotions and particular issues. These steps already correspond to the ability to solve complex problems,⁷ identified as the most necessary skill in the job market. Building on this understanding, Fisher, Patton, and Ury (2018) state that in order to conduct a negotiation based on interests, it is important to separate people from problems, focus on interests rather than positions, create options for mutual gain and based on objective criteria.

Separating people from problems (**critical thinking and analysis; emotional intelligence**) means seeing that behind the problem there is a person, and this human connotation will enable those involved to develop the ability to put themselves in the other's place to empathically feel their emotions. Focusing on interests rather than positions (**critical thinking and analysis; emotional intelligence**) encourages one to reflect on one's purpose and what is really valuable, unlike positions, which hide one's interests. Through this reflection, one can help find common interests and then create options. Creating options for mutual gain (**logical reasoning, problem solving and ideation; creativity, originality and proactivity**) requires creativity, to generate diverse ideas from which to extract the best option (FISHER; PATTON; URY, 2018).

In addition to Fisher, Patton and Ury (2018), Fisher and Shapiro (2009) stress the importance of communication and positive emotion management. In order to awaken positive emotions, the authors propose five steps: express appreciation (**emotional intelligence**) for the feelings of others, which requires active listening and genuine empathy; build affiliation (**analytical thinking and innovation**), which consists of identifying points of connection between those involved in the conflict, in order to establish real collaboration; respect the autonomy of the other (**leadership and social influence**), which demands effective communication in the conduct of dialogue when deciding jointly; recognize the status of the other involved (**leadership and social influence**) in order to harness each other's strengths in finding a suitable solution to the conflict; and, finally, to play a rewarding role (**leadership and social influence**), guided by a clear and personally relevant purpose.

Given the above, it is clear that multiple behaviors characterize conflict management and they are configured as a set of skills that need to be developed by the human being so that s/he can relate in a healthy way with her/himself and the people around her/him, this being essential for decision-making and living in an

⁶ The skills that match the skills of conflict management are highlighted in bold and presented below.

⁷ To present the correlation explicitly, we chose to present in brackets and in bold the 21st century skill to which the conflict management skill corresponds.

active and meaningful democratic society. Conflict management can be correlated with the ability to solve problems creatively, which includes managing people and emotions. Between goals and techniques there is a way to build conflict management skills and it encompasses a different way of perceiving situations around you (perception), connecting with people (communication) and feeling (emotion) (URY; PATTON; FISHER, 2018).

For the conflict management process, it is essential to stimulate creativity in order to ensure a lighter and more positive communication, to reformulate situations so as to identify opportunities in times of crisis, and to create a wide range of options to reach a solution that generates mutual gains for those involved. Establishing this link between conflict management and creativity, Warat (2004, p. 43) states that “everything is being created at every moment, life is a continuous flow of creativity”.

Regarding creativity, authors point to the importance of diversity of experiences and individual baggage; flexibility and freedom of thought; as well as curiosity and concern in the face of the situation (GRANT, 2017; MLODINOW, 2018; SINEK, 2018; ZUGMAN, 2018). Sinek (2018) identifies that, allied with the above aspects, innovation, as a consequence of creativity, is an emotional activity, which is most successful when guided by the purpose of the creative agent.

The creative process comes, with other aspects, from the particular experiences of each individual, responsible for the accumulation of “raw materials” that will be used at the moment of creation (ZUGMAN, 2018; GRANT, 2017). There is something very personal (and immaterial) in how the curiosity to seek new ways is awakened in each subject. This is understood by Zugman (2018, p. 83), who states that “creative people also get more raw materials by diversifying their interests and skills”. In the same vein, Grant (2017, p. 53) understands that “this unique combination of broad and deep experience is fundamental to creativity”.

Creativity is developed by using the part of the brain responsible for flexible or elastic thinking. This elasticity stems from the amount of thoughts that arise when the brain is free to think. This mental model brings out the experiences, concepts and values, and opens, from these links, new possibilities. Human genetics proves that although there is a tendency to prefer comfortable situations, external circumstances directly influence the modification of cells that affect actions. Thus, Mlodinow (2018) understands that a relaxed and happy mind is more likely to be more flexible, as these feelings are able to activate the unconscious, spontaneously enabling imagination and creating new paths.

It is in this context that artistic experiences are inserted as a way to enhance the development of conflict management skills, including: complex problem solving, creativity, teamwork and communication. Thus, the following section will present the role of art in this experience, and subsequently the research results are presented.

4 Art as a methodology for developing conflict management skills

A survey from the University of Michigan published in 2008 looked at Nobel Prize winners from 1901 to 2005 to find out how likely these scientists were to have had any experience with the arts. The idea arose from the desire to gauge what may spark the innovative spirit in some people. The research found that the odds of a scientist winning a Nobel Prize increase by 2% if they are involved with music, 7% with visual arts, 8% with photography, 7.5% with handicrafts, 12% with writing and 22% if they have had experiences with performing arts (ROOT-BERNSTEIN *et al.*, 2008).

The research also points to art as a way to accumulate skills such as communication, creativity, and problem solving and, moreover, it is an effective way to transmit values that impact on a person’s personal and social life, such as, for example, self-knowledge and empathy. According to the research, the benefits of a scientist-artist are in the sharing of common ways of solving problems based on sensitivity and creativity.

Due to the sensations it arouses and for working on flexibility and adaptability, art proves to be an instrument for stimulating original thinking. In addition, there is a mental similarity between the artistic process present in musical or theatrical constructions and with the mentality that solves problems in daily life, be

they related to professional, personal or social issues. The brain trained to solve problems is the same as the one that thinks and creates art. Mlodinow (2018, p. 81) states “the mental equipment we use to solve business problems - or to adjust to the conditions of our personal lives - is the same that we use to explore or create new art forms”.

Therefore, if the human being has a mental apparatus that can be enhanced to develop the ability to solve problems creatively, and if this apparatus is the same as that used for artistic creations, the union of the two can bring positive results. This information also breaks the paradigm that thinking and making art is only for people with a specific gift.

Artistic creations (theater, dance, music, amongst others) are born of problems that become inspirations for scripts. The artist starts from something that aroused their interest. Behind this interest is a problem-question from which they develop a narrative that proposes a solution. “Problems have become allies” (BOGART, 2011, p. 12).

In addition, artists are trained to think quickly and creatively in the face of unforeseen situations, so that the viewer does not notice the improvisation. If a scene is made up of a lot of actors, the looks, the connections, the sense of the team all contribute to the improvisation. Thinking like an artist is not the only option for developing creativity, but it can prove to be an effective option that can be used as a tool to empower spaces that are worked on by creative people.

Musical theater consists of an artistic modality that has three expressions: music, dance and theater. In this genre, the story is built and told through songs, sung by the characters, and choreographies are performed between one scene and another. Musical theater has the ability to connect both its cast and the audience through the sensations it arouses during the process. “Any great musical must have: brain - intelligence, heart - emotional content, and courage - to do something fresh in a new way” (OGANDO, 2016, p. 16). Thus, musical theater can be used as an instrument to make people think differently by including emotions in the process of creation.

Art transcends fun, entertainment, physical activity or the discovery of talent. In fact, science has shown that it is a path for professional and human development for those people who have the opportunity to participate in artistic experiences. Professional development, because art experiences are capable of developing skills that match the demands of the 21st century labor market, as described previously. Personal development, because it has the potential to develop individual autonomy as well as self-esteem. Art connects people through a purpose, is able to change the view of differences between individuals and develop empathy.⁸

In the same vein, the University of Missouri Science and Technology has developed research on education and art aimed at developing *soft* skills in students of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, with the objective of increasing motivation and thereby broadening prospective professionals in these areas. The importance of arousing curiosity and self-motivation in their students was detected through the fusion of technology, creative thinking, art and design. Thus, the University decided to provide experiences that emphasized impulses, visions, sounds, emotions, and stimuli, to connect with the information that exists in the brain and then to create concepts or to transform what exists.

When an individual is taught a single concept, the brain creates neural pathways that connect that concept to their experience. The more established access points or neural pathways are, the greater the chance of retention and recall. The integration of the arts into core content areas not only allows students to explore a unique concept from different points of view, but also utilizes the different learning modalities mentioned above, both leading to the formation of more neural pathways. (LAND, 2013, p. 549).

⁸ These findings motivated recent changes in the Post-Graduate Program of the University of Fortaleza (Post-Unifor). In partnership with The Biz School of Musical Theater. Post-Unifor performed the Broadway musical “Godspell” in August 2018 as part of the completion of certain courses, including architecture, physiotherapy and fashion. In addition, Post-Unifor is developing an interdisciplinary program where the staff is composed of artists and scientists who will be in the classroom working with the creative process, script writing, project development, using the various forms of artistic expression to awaken skills, from abstraction to result. Following up on the “Science and Art XXI” project, Post-Unifor in partnership with The Biz school performed the Broadway musical “Rent” in August 2019..

Realizing that several studies point in the same direction, namely, the potential of art as a methodological instrument for the development of both 21st century skills and conflict management skills, it was decided to test this instrument on high school students in the city of Fortaleza, Ceará. The next section will go deeper into presenting the results achieved.

5 Peace on the stage project

To gauge whether experience with art contributes to the development of conflict management skills and 21st century skills, an experiment entitled “Peace on Stage” was conducted, culminating in a musical drama show “Dreams That We Can Be”. The show was developed by 35 (thirty five) high school students from the State Education Network, in Fortaleza, Ceará, under the coordination of the present researchers, with the collaboration of volunteer teachers of singing, dance and acting. The project was planned in April 2018 and executed from May to July 2018, ending with the performance of the show. To measure the results, the students answered a questionnaire and an interview.⁹

The first challenge faced was the issue of time. In eleven weeks, the youths would perform as protagonists of a musical performance, performing, singing and dancing, without any prior artistic experience.

The schedule of activities during the preparation period was divided as follows: I) Creation of situations that instigated the following competences: social interaction, problem solving, respect for differences, inclusion, leadership, communication, teamwork and creativity, all of which were observed in the daily activities and the creation process; II) Offering spaces that were different from conventional ones: the infrastructure of the theater, rooms with round tables, multifunctional spaces, recording studios and open were used ; III) Promotion of collective musical theater classes, which include singing, dance and theater classes.

The format of the meetings occurred as follows: in the first 7 (seven) weeks, the young people had musical theater classes, two days a week, totaling 4 (four) weekly hours of class. In the last 4 (four) weeks (coinciding with the school holidays), the students had classes from Monday to Friday from 8h to 11h, totaling 15 (fifteen) weekly hours. The goal was for the young people to practice all the artistic modalities (dance, singing and theater) in groups, even if there was a greater affiliation with one of the modalities.

Bringing together people with different characteristics and skills to build a musical show together is an opportunity to teach them about humanity and the ability to solve real problems. Everyday situations impact on one’s emotions and need to be resolved or “improvised.” There is a relationship between conflict management and this particularity.

Performing on stage means going through challenging situations. These situations involve both the individual and the group. Concocting a performance, in front of an audience with lighting that sometimes makes it difficult to see, changing costumes in seconds (and sometimes in the dark), changing scenery, helping other people in situations that are more challenging than yours, dealing with the unpredictable, and dealing with mistakes and fear are examples of situations that are experienced during a show. It necessitates quick decision making, thinking about yourself, the other, and the show.

It was realized that the project, in addition to enabling the development of various skills by engaging participants for a significant and continuous period, motivated the students to make an essential, daily effort to achieve the project’s purpose and placed them side by side with the same interests, each contributing in their own way, which generated cooperation. Art creates a sense of belonging, meaning that what they accomplished during the project can extend to something unexpected and unplanned, such as the discovery of a purpose in life, a vocation and dreams.

In addition to these observations, made by the researchers, 16 (sixteen) young people who participated in the Peace on Stage project were interviewed. The questionnaire consisted of three questions and the

⁹ This research was submitted for ethical evaluation, by the Ethics Committee of the University of Fortaleza, since it is a research with human beings, conducted within the University of Fortaleza. After the procedure and approval by the Committee (see the attached document), a meeting was arranged separately with each student, at which time the questionnaire and the interview were answered on the same day.

interview had ten questions, with result that the two resources complemented each other. The questionnaire consisted of the following questions: a) have you had any prior experience of art before the Peace on Stage project? b) Do you believe that this experience with art was important for your personal and/or professional development? c) Among the skills below which one do you believe has been awakened after your involvement with the art experienced in the Peace on Stage project? Mark the two that stood out most: Leadership, self-confidence, communication, overcoming challenges, problem solving, teamwork, creativity, empathy, and critical thinking.

Most respondents had not experienced art before and 100% of respondents believe that this experience with art was important to their personal and/or professional development in general. Following the questionnaire, students indicated two skills that they believe they had developed through their experience in the Peace on Stage project, and the answers primarily point to the awakening of self-confidence. This was followed by overcoming challenges, teamwork and empathy. What they reported about the skills was confirmed during the interview from the testimonials.

Young people were asked what made them accept the invitation to participate in the artistic experience and most of the answers related to art. It was hoped that this could be an experience that would provide something new and some useful learning for their growth as a human being. They claimed to appreciate art, but many had not had the opportunity to be involved with a complete artistic experience. Many affirmed the desire to attend music, dance, and theater classes and outlined the desire to participate in a stage experience. Gardner (1993) when developing the theory of multiple intelligences, stressed the importance of artistic experiences, with their ability to keep those involved motivated.

In addition, the project methodology referred to childhood, dreams, the future, hopes and changes. "It was like an opportunity for me to achieve something for my future, for me to grow" (Student 1); "The biggest reason was the fact that I love to sing, I like to dance and I had to go through new experiences" (Student 2); and "Art is what made me participate" (Student 3). They were motivated and eager to increase their repertoire of experiences and individual baggage, it was indispensable for them to experience creative processes (GRANT, 2017; MLODINOW, 2018; SINEK, 2018; ZUGMAN, 2018).

When asked how they would define this experience and which of the moments in which the show was prepared (classes of integration, singing, dance, drama, studio recording) was most important to them, the answers varied. In the first aspect, we highlight self-knowledge during the classes, an opportunity in which they could "know and discover each other" and also discover what they are capable of doing, all being relevant experiences for the development of the ability to manage conflicts (FISHER; SHAPIRO, 2009). Some expressed that that experience made them better people, and was responsible for internal and external development, to the point of feeling free and having fun in the process. The feelings of freedom and fun are important for activating flexible thinking and for experiencing a creative process, justifying what some have said about the project having awakened "new ideas" (MLODINOW, 2018).

In dance classes, for example, they "felt the movements", "flew", expressions that refer to education focused on the senses, a proposal that goes beyond the limits of traditional teaching. "I think it was the moments in class, because that's where we got to know each other, discover each other, discover our limits and discover our skills that we didn't know we had" (Student 4); "It was important because we have to have new ideas and new experiences and we have to know how to deal with people different from us" (Student 5); "The feeling of dancing is of flying, it is as if I have been flying and learning many new things, either by feeling the movements, or by feeling the air moving through my arms" (Student 6). Again the students' statements refer to the importance of stimulating the freedom of thoughts to activate flexible thinking to develop creativity (MLODINOW, 2018).

In drama, dance and singing classes, students discovered skills they did not know they had, and from this point they began to overcome insecurity, create autonomy and empower themselves. They experienced the theory of multiple intelligences (GARDNER, 1993) in practice when realizing their own talents. The youths also reported the importance of preparation time to learn how to deal with different people and to overcome difficulties together. These are statements that show a way of building interpersonal intelligence,

the ability to cooperate and work in teams, not to mention the benefits of building affective bonds that will remain beyond the school period.

The goal of education with competencies is to prepare students for life, to instruct them in values that have a practical application that transcends the school environment. “It was the rehearsals, because there I overcame my insecurity” (Student 7); “The most important moment was being able to put it all into practice, everything we were learning and presenting” (Student 1); “The period of the recordings was the most important because I didn’t know I was able to do this with my voice” (Student 2); “There wasn’t anyone telling you that you had done it wrong, when the person wasn’t doing it right, someone would go there and help” (Student 9). These statements show that there was no competition among students, but collaboration, fundamental behavior for the construction of creative solutions (SALES, 2009).

It is important to note that during the preparation some students picked up on the connection with purpose, this was expressed by the statements: “something from within” and “feeling with the heart”. These expressions denote the awakening of something dormant that could not be conceptualized. For an experience to cause transformation, beyond motivation, it must be connected with “something bigger” that makes sense, from what the individual believes, this is the purpose to which Sinek (2018) refers, referenced in the first section of this article.

The role of education, therefore, is to assist students in the pursuit of their purpose, because only from this can they build their own history with autonomy, determination and confidence. Education offers this possibility through competency teaching, as it is a path based on numerous options presented to students. Art helps in this awakening from the reflections it brings. “It was a way of waking up to life” (Student 10); “Something that came from within was something that you really felt like doing from your heart” (Student 9).

Regarding questions two and three, one of the students answered that the moments lived in the project were important because she was able, in those moments, to escape her problems and develop a new look at life. This quote addresses several questions: first, the creative process, which is responsible for creating options in the face of problems, making the person see beyond them (what is referred to, in negotiation, as how to separate people from problems and to create options for mutual gain). The second issue relates to the resignification of problems from a positive perspective. When the student claims to have managed to escape problems and develop a new look at life, s/he has given new meaning to these situations, looked on the positive side and learned something (FISHER; SHAPIRO, 2009).

That is, as art encompasses countless experiences, it brings new meanings, new options, new paths for those who are involved with a complete artistic experience. “It was a unique moment for me because I always wanted to develop myself in art” - “I always found art to be an escape from problems” - “I see life in a new way” (Student 11).

Following this, the theme was the day of the show, the expectations and sensations from the time they arrived in the dressing room to the moment of the presentation, the moment when they saw the stage set, the costumes, the wait for the curtains to open, and the responsibility of performing in front of an audience. In question six, they had to report their sensations during the show. Most respondents reported that during the day of the show, what they felt most was anxiety, fear, panic, nervousness, trembling, some felt sick, others did not know what to answer because they felt “thousands of feelings”.

At that moment they needed to control their emotions and concentrate on performing what they had rehearsed. Reports on how they felt during the show ranged from joy, euphoria, comfort, optimism, love, fulfillment, freedom, that is, those emotions that could have been negative before the show turned to positive emotions at that moment and in their lives. This situation demonstrated their ability to manage their emotions. Emotional intelligence is one of the skills that is increasingly necessary and was not on the skill list until 2015 and today is ranked in sixth place (WEF, 2016; ACCENTURE, 2013).

“During the show I thought: it is now that I am going to put my feelings out there” (Student 7), in other words, art as a way of expressing feelings, an alternative to the exercise of communication through dance, acting, and songs. “I felt love for those people, they believed in me” (Student 11), “I felt able to introduce

myself to the crowd” (Student 12), demonstrating that at that time they felt supported, strengthened, ready to live that experience through the trust that had been placed in them. Young people need support and encouragement to play their part and develop their autonomy. “I wasn’t so nervous because I had everyone’s help” (Student 12), emphasizes the spirit of cooperation and unity that was provided in the environment during the show. That period of preparation connected them in such a way that they felt responsible for each other, helped each other on the day of the presentation.

The youths were asked about the possible problems they faced on the day of the show and their reactions. Of those interviewed, most faced problems at the time of the show, whether it was technical problems, wrong choreography or having been hurt. In addition to having to deal with the atmosphere of an artistic performance and the idea of doing something new, they had to deal with the problems that arose during the show, otherwise they could compromise the work they had done so far. The words that draw attention in the statements are: mediate, improvise, and continue. In addition to these, the terms “everybody”, “we continued”, “together” also stand out.

This question is one of the most important of the interview, as it represents the ability to manage conflicts. The fact that they had been able to mediate, continue and improvise are positive indications regarding the development of this ability. However, they are not isolated facts, they are a set of situations that point the way and prepare the brain to think differently. In addition to working on emotions, students performed what they had learned during the project in solving the problems that arose, increasing the possibilities of applying this knowledge in their lives (PERRENOUD, 2013).

As for the end of the presentation, they said that they felt good, fulfilled, grateful, happy and loved. “Even with all the difficulties, we managed to put on the show” (Student 14); “I got on stage” (Student 7). At that moment, they felt that they had overcome barriers and overcome challenges. “I wanted to do it and I did it the best that I could” (Student 6); “It was a worthwhile job, I was focused, I felt wanted and I achieved something” (Student 10). The importance given to that moment for their lives and what they would live from hereon is highlighted. “After the show, several doors opened. I was able to enter the church choir with more confidence. After the Peace on Stage project I put myself into everything” (Student 7); “I added it to my personal, lifelong curriculum” (Student 10).

To confirm the transformations that occurred after this experience, the last two questions of the interview were directed at the awareness of values and what effect the experience had on their lives. The values most expressed were empathy, self-confidence, freedom, respect, teamwork, affection, unity and communication, values that coincide with rising skills (WEF, 2016; ACCENTURE, 2013). The most emphasized word was empathy, one of the most effective practices in conflict management (FISHER; SHAPIRO, 2009).

“In school there is not much of that. In the project, I met people who trusted me and listened to me” (Student 11); “I became a person who cares more about others” (Student 3); “It was not so much concern about the show, but about the other person” (Student 4); “When they weren’t doing well, we would go there and help. Get up and we’ll get up together” (Student 15). What they report goes back to what Gardner (1993) stressed about artistic experiences and the importance of informal teaching to develop a typical artistic sensitivity.

Young people also indicated the changes in the way they relate to themselves, showing signs of empowerment. The word “self confidence” was expressed ever since the first question of the interview and is related to how much they believe they can achieve their goals. Lack of self-confidence is a cause for many internal conflicts and can be an obstacle to overcoming challenges and fulfilling dreams. Question ten asked what had changed in the lives of young people and the answers ranged from motivation, balance, creativity, evolution, overcoming shyness, overcoming insecurities and especially the change in perception about life and about art, as they began to perceive more about art, which came from their “new way of looking” at the situations around them.

There was a more sensitive, more optimistic look, being more aware of the positives than the negatives. “It changed the way we look differently at the world” (Student 4); “I felt motivated, art is in everything” (Student

15); “I looked at things without creativity. After everything I began to see everything with new eyes, to see the good side, the bad side and what we can do to make them equal” (Student 5); “In my personal life, it taught me to be a better person. In my professional life, it taught me self-esteem. I did some interviews recently and everything that I experienced in the Peace on Stage project was used”. (Student 9); “My professional life has changed because I was very indecisive and after art everything changed, art can be present in a small or big profession” (Student 7); “I planned to do law, but when I was dancing I thought: how will this contribute to my college? (...) you can bring the two together and make something very beautiful” (Student 8); “I became a more optimistic person, at home I started solving problems, talking, not fighting. It has improved the relationship with my mother” (Student 3).

Testimonials confirm a paradigm shift and show that the experience has transcended the project, affecting the school, clarified the choice of career paths and transformed the way the students relate to other people. The experience has allowed them to realize that in traditional professions there is room for innovation. The experience also helped in the selective process of an internship in a specific case, and allowed for greater space for dialogue in family relationships.

The broadening of the view and the perception of new possibilities stand out in the responses, because it is understood that art hones sensitivity and allows for a more creative look at situations. In addition, improved communication has proven to be an important factor in conflict management, as many conflicts stem from failure or lack of communication.

Using art for skill development aims to stimulate people to think and create as artists, as this view can present previously unimagined possibilities. Artists “need” problems so as to create from them, to reinvent themselves, experiencing a process of creation. Creativity leads to originality, demonstrating that it is the result of something that came from within, that was “felt from the heart” (excerpt from one of the students’ responses).

6 Conclusion

The results showed that the experiences lived by the youths in the Peace on Stage project contributed to the development of skills such as complex problem solving, communication, emotional intelligence, teamwork and collaboration. These results confirmed the potential of art as a methodological instrument for the development of conflict management skills and, consequently, the skills needed for the 21st century labor market.

In addition to the results that were already expected to be achieved, some unexpected results could be seen, these included the awakening of self-confidence, overcoming challenges and empathy. This data is relevant because it points to empowerment through the development of conflict management skills, indispensable in the stimulation of creative thinking. This result also demonstrates a new perception about the other and their well-being, through the reports about respect for differences and collaboration. It was also noticed that the transformations surpassed the project’s limits and affected the school and the family environment.

Project participants reported various sensations during the preparation and execution of the presentation. The feeling of freedom was crucial for them to experience those moments with liveliness, enabling the activation of flexible thinking and creativity, directly related to the way they see problems. In addition, the collaboration took precedence over nervousness and anxiety on the day of the presentation and helped them to experience the show in a comfortable way.

In regard to conflict management, working on communication and emotions is critical. It is important to highlight that there are no signs of competitiveness in the interviewees’ statements. In addition, if affiliation is what connects people, what they experienced in the Peace on Stage project were experiences of affiliation, noticeable in their testimonials. When problems arose during the presentation, what made them overcome them, and improvise and mediate was, above all, the feeling that they were connected for the same purpose. This moment was essential for them to be able to work on improvisation, which requires creativity, teamwork

and control of emotions. The fact that they overcame the situation with a sense of accomplishment rather than frustration demonstrates that they acted in a professional, mature manner and that the experience was a learning experience in and for their lives.

It can be emphasized that the word empathy, which is repeated several times during the testimonies, is something they developed during the experience. Students who did not expressly mention the word empathy reported that the artistic experience changed the way they relate to people in school or the family cycle. This piece of data is one of the most important in terms of proving that their artistic experience in the Peace on Stage project awakened the development of conflict management. In addition, the entire journey from the class of integration to presentation day was important for them to expand their repertoire of experiences and grow as people, being aware of what they are capable of and the relevance of the other person in their process of learning.

From the above, it can be concluded that art is a path for the development of conflict management, a skill considered highly significant for the labor market in the 21st century, contributing to education to achieve its primary goals: personal development, citizenship and the development of professional competences that insert students in the labor market. Thus, the full realization of the right to education is achieved.

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Recebido em: 31/07/2019

Aprovado em: 30/08/2019