

Education and Intercultural development

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Citizenship, participation and empowerment of institutionalized youth

Carlota Teixeira, Cidália Queiroz; Isabel Menezes (FPCEUP; FEUP)

Contemporary societies face particular challenges in the way individuals interact and pursue the common good, as research reveals signs of growing disengagement and distrust towards conventional politics (Fieldhouse, 2007; Magalhães e Moral, 2008; Magalhães, 2009). The situation of specific groups that are traditionally on the margin of the dominant culture, such as migrants and minorities, is even more demanding (Day e Shaw, 2002; Heelson, 2005; Vianna, 2007; Munro, 2008), since participation and empowerment are privileged forms of socialization (Dudley e Gitelson, 2002).

In this paper we will present the results of a series of interviews and focus groups with professionals and young people in foster care institutions, to analyze what kind of opportunities, policies and practices they experience to foster the empowerment and participation that are basic for the development of citizenship.

A first step it's analyzing protection policies and interviewing policy-makers, judges with high responsibility and recognized as reference in this area, to understand how they analyze the law for the promotion and protection, what they think about dimensions of participation, empowerment and citizenship are sufficiently guaranteed by the law itself, and what changes or reorganizations they understand as necessary; The second phase will be a case study in an institution. Through focus interviews, all stakeholders will provide input on their perception about the way how institution is organized according the promotion of autonomy, participation and citizenship and they will identify constraints and possibilities; It could be defined as a discursive dimensions:

The recognition of the importance of participation by young people in shaping

their own life project The adequacy of legislation The conditions of applicability of legal principles and rights enshrined The recognition of the difficulty that institutions have to be as real environments (re) primary socialization The need to give centrality to the issues of participations