INTERGENERATIONAL
SOLIDARITY

ORVALLE SCHOOL

Beatriz Suárez Maté
Ana Llovet De Asís
MªCarmen Gascón MacDonald
Alejandra García Calvo
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1. Intergenerational solidarity
The ageing population is a reflection on human development; a lower mortality rate, longer life expectancy and a reduction in birth rate.

In the year 2000, for the first time in history, there were more people over the age of 60 than children under the age of 5.¹

On a global scale, life expectancy increased from 45 years (between 1950-1955) to 65 years (between the year 2000-2005). It is expected to reach age 75 between 2045-2050. The population is getting older more rapidly. In both more and less economically developed countries, the average number of children per family is only two. This is below the necessary level to sustain an optimum population long term. In 2050 one out of every four people will be 80 years or older.

2. Inverted population pyramids²

¹ unfp.org
² http://www.educaplus.org/geografia/mun_piramides.html
3. The disadvantages of excluding the elderly from society

**Family life:**
The elderly have always had an important role in the family. Many times, the older generation have insured a good relationship between parents and children helping each other in their needs. Sometimes the parents have had marital problems and the respective parents have helped them during this difficult time, because they have more experience and they know more about these kind of problems.

With regards to grandchildren, grandparents can look after them like a nanny. It is important to know that parents can save a significant amount of money in childcare. What’s more, they know that it’s someone they can trust looking after their children.

If we exclude grandparents from the family then one can no longer rely on them to help with family issues or childcare.

**Culturally:**
If we exclude elderly people, we prevent the cultural enrichment of the younger generation, because elders have more life experience and knowledge.

Furthermore, excluding the elderly deprives the youth of the opportunity to develop more enhanced moral skill set.

**Socially:**
The term “grandparent” has lost its prestige throughout the years; in some cases grandparents no longer play as large a role in family life. Nowadays, the majority of grandparents are excluded from both their families and society where they live. The consequences of this are: Grandparents have always had great support from their children, taking care of their grandchildren, looking after them when their parents aren’t able to and giving them a lot of affection. The marginalization of older people and the loss of their importance within the family damages the relationship between parent and child for generations to come

**Economically:**
As previously stated, nowadays most of the families tend to take their elders to old people’s homes when they are unable to live
independently. They do not realize that aside from making the elderly feel lonely and excluded, they come off worse economically themselves because they have to pay for a service that they could do. The residences are expensive and should be only invested in if necessary. In general, at least in developed countries, the number of young people has decreased a lot compared to other time periods. Nevertheless this issue constitutes a risky problem that needs to be solved.

One of the consequences of the ageing population is the reduction of the amount of people that work. The majority of the current population is aged between 30 and 40 years old. Those that work generate income to provide care. The working population takes care of the elderly. When the working population reach the age of 75 the amount of elderly people will be larger, which will create a strain on resources relating to the care of elderly people in the future

4. Measures other countries have taken to integrate the elderly into society

a) The Chinese Government in Beijing have created a new law requiring children to visit their elderly parents.

This new law is called the "Law of Protection of the Chinese Elderly" and stipulates that children should visit their parents more frequently, but does not specify the frequency of visits in any of its 86 articles, nor the penalty if the law is breached.

This regulation states that companies must give workers holiday to enable people to visit their parents.

This measure aims to teach the Chinese population that they have to give the necessary attention to their elders, the same as they wish to receive when they reach old age.

b) Sweden is recognised for their good treatment of the elderly. A report that categorizes countries around the world and how they treat their elders placed Sweden at the top of the list. According to the study of Global Index Ageing, United Nations Organization (UN), elderly people in Sweden receive the best treatment in the world.
The study is the first ever global index that measures the quality of life of older citizens. The Swedish elderly receive the best treatment in the world thanks to the measures taken to achieve this: the majority of older people in this country live in their own home, by free choice, and can do so due to the public support they receive. The help extends to catering, cleaning, shopping, transportation and health care when they need it. If one's health deteriorates with age, there are special homes for them where there is assistance 24 hours a day.

Sweden invests more of its GDP than any other country in the world to care for the elderly. Therefore, if you are elderly and live in Sweden you are likely to receive exceptional treatment.

c) The commitment that Japan has made to ensure the elderly sufficiently respected is recognized in society. To achieve this they created a holiday called Respect Seniors Day (敬老の日, Keiro no hi). It is an annual celebration and aims to honor the elderly Japanese people as well as raising awareness about the importance of experience of these people.

Since 1966, this festival had been held on 15 September but, starting in 2003, is held the third Monday in September. So, in Japan it is officially considered a long weekend. The Respect Day for the elderly is one of two national holidays in September.

Traditionally in Japan one respects their elders, who have more experience and have contributed more than anyone to the building society, especially after the second World War. This feature is perhaps one of the most distinguished in Japan for most Western countries. It seems that this secular respect for elders comes from the Confucian tradition. Many communities celebrate this day for the elderly, who are older than 70. Generally, the celebrations include the younger people cooking for their elders. However, the smaller villages still maintain the tradition of "keirokai", a ceremony in which schoolchildren and young people sing and dance, as part of a celebration that includes food, tea, and free sweets for seniors.

On this day, there is huge media coverage, the value of experience and respect, for the elderly. It is a day full of meaning and sends out a message to the younger generation, which transmits to them the
importance of respect for the elderly, instead of the typical rejection of the elderly in Western societies.

d) Finally, in South America, steps have been taken to improve the lives of the elderly. Countries like Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Panama have made significant progress in improving the welfare of the elderly population by guaranteeing income security and access to health services.

5. Statistics from Colegio Orvalle
We decided to carry out a poll in our school to find out the frequency with which Orvalle students visit their grandparents. We asked students from 4th grade primary to 2º Bachillerato when they last spent time with their grandparents:

The results we obtained were these:

6. Ways in which we have tried to integrate the elderly in our school
To demonstrate the proposed solutions we decided to do a survey of all the students in the school. Thus we have concluded that these ideas work, and think they should be implemented in all schools as a mandatory activity to promote intergenerational solidarity.
In Orvalle, on the last day of school, students visit old people in their residences.

Every year the school celebrates "Grandparents Day", in which all grandparents of the students go to school and they spend the day with their grandchildren.

The school offers extracurricular activities to do with grandparents. Every year the school holds a relay race. This race is intended to merge the two generations, have a fun time and to show the elderly that they are useful and perfectly capable of doing the same things that the young can do.

7. Ways of integrating the elderly into society

In a general way we would like to put ourselves in the shoes of our seniors and give them the attention that we would like to receive when we are in the same circumstances. Since we are all going to age, it would be wise to promote the care of the elderly amongst the younger generations. Our care for the elderly should be based on three basic principles: respect, attention and affection.

Some proposed solutions to make intergenerational solidarity a reality:

- The intervention of the state, providing subsidies for retirees and the elderly, consisting of discounts so they can take part in any kind of activity they wish, courses to improve their ability in the use of modern social skills, and making all hobbies and leisure events accessible to them.

- The creation of workshops for the elderly and communities where they are able to take part in any activity they wish.

- Another way to integrate the elderly into society is to allow them to be involved in helping train young people and enlighten them with their vast life experience. For example by giving talks or lectures. This would be a perfect activity for the newly retired. Elderly can even contribute to improving society and they could do a great job. Pope Francis speaks of this in the following way: "We can not have a real human growth and
education without fruitful contact with the elderly because their very existence is like an open book in which young generations can find precious indications for the way of life”.

-In the event that elderly people have no family support a solution would be to offer host families, and integrate these elderly people into these families and society. These host families would be committed to perform this important task.

-Encourage families to insist on the care of their elderly and choosing nursing homes or taking them as a last resort only if home care is not sufficient and need urgent care in these centers. This would improve family relationships since elder care sometimes requires many hands to assist, which creates a more united family to work together.

-Finally, another possible solution would be to build social support networks for the elderly, where they feature the different, previously proposed activities, workshops, or tips to lead a healthy life to age - they should be simple social networks, so that seniors can use them with ease.

-The world has already started to solve the exclusion of the elderly: Many universities have begun to offer a service of university programs for seniors. This has been a great solution.
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