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RESEARCH

A voz do professor: um instrumento que precisa de cuidado

The voice of the teacher: a tool that needs care

La voz del profesor: un instrumento que necesita cuidado

Janaína von Söhsten Trigueiro¹, Mariane Lorena Souza Silva², Rebeca Silva Brandão³, Isolda Maria Barros Torquato⁴, Matheus Figueiredo Nogueira⁵, Giorvan Anderson dos Santos Alves⁶

ABSTRACT

Objective: To describe the experiences of the participants of the extension project “Educating the educator: Promoting the occupational health of the teacher” during educative initiatives directed towards the teachers’ preservation of the voice awareness. **Method:** Case of study, descriptive nature that covered teachers of the urban zone of the municipal network of Cuité-PB, performed in the academic semesters of 2012, with weekly workshops that adopted the following steps: Reception dynamic, previous knowledge rescue, explanation about a theme, doubt clarifications and vocal exercises. **Results:** There was awareness by the teachers regarding the prevention of vocal health, inducing them to reflect about their own habits, above all the unhealthy ones, as well as to correct them. **Conclusion:** Due to the lack of care with the health of teachers and the importance of life quality changes, the positive response to the project is a feedback of the necessity of the attention to the instructor’s health especially vocal health. **Descriptors:** Worker’s health, Instructors, Voice, Health promotion.

RESUMO

Objetivo: Descrever a vivência de participantes do projeto de extensão “Educando o educador: promovendo a saúde ocupacional do professor” durante ações educativas direcionadas à conscientização da preservação da voz do professor. **Método:** Relato de experiência de natureza descritiva que abrangeu professores da zona urbana da rede municipal de ensino de Cuité-PB, realizado nos semestres acadêmicos de 2012, com oficinas semanais que adotaram as seguintes etapas: dinâmica de acolhimento, resgate do conhecimento prévio, explanação acerca do tema, esclarecimento de dúvidas e exercício vocal. **Resultados:** Houve a sensibilização dos professores quanto à prevenção da saúde vocal, levando-os a refletir sobre seus hábitos, sobretudo, os prejudiciais, para assim corrigi-los. **Conclusão:** Diante da falta de cuidados com a saúde do professor e da importância de transformação na sua qualidade de vida, a resposta positiva ao projeto é um *feedback* da necessidade de atenção à saúde docente, principalmente a vocal. **Descritores:** Saúde do trabalhador, Docentes, Voz, Promoção da Saúde.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Describir la vivencia de participantes del proyecto de extensión “Educando el educador: promoviendo la salud ocupacional del profesor” durante acciones educativas direccionadas a la concienciación de la preservación de la voz del profesor. **Método:** Relato de experiencia de naturaleza descriptiva que alcanzó profesores de la zona urbana de la red municipal de enseñanza de Cuité-PB, realizado en los semestres académicos de 2012, con oficinas semanales que adoptaron las etapas a continuación: dinámica de acogimiento, rescate del conocimiento previo, explicación acerca del tema, aclaración de dudas y ejercicio vocal. **Resultados:** Hubo la sensibilización de los profesores en cuanto a la prevención de la salud vocal, llevándolos a reflejar sobre sus hábitos, sobre todo los perjudiciales, con vistas a corregirlos. **Conclusión:** Delante de la falta de cuidados con la salud del profesor y la importancia de transformación en su calidad de vida, la respuesta positiva al proyecto es un *feedback* de la necesidad de atención a la salud docente, principalmente la vocal. **Descritores:** Salud laboral, Docentes, Voz, Promoción de la salud.

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INTRODUCTION

The quality of life at work has been widely discussed, highlighting that the health care of workers is considered essential. Each profession has peculiarities that provide certain risks, which can be prevented. In this perspective, an employer must offer conditions for the work environment does not become a place of illnesses, but a place to ensure recovery and professional satisfaction.¹

Among the professionals with significant risks, there is the teacher. The teacher has been the subject of research in Brazil by submitting higher chances of being attacked by some kind of vocal disorder caused by misuse of the voice, when compared to other professionals who also use it in their everyday work.²⁻³⁻⁴

Hereditary, behavioral factors, improper lifestyle and, above all, the absence of vocal training and appropriate physical education resources are undermining the teacher, making it susceptible to the development of disturbances in the voice, as dysphonia.^{3.5-6-7} In this case, the voice, his main tool of work, shall be a concern.¹⁰⁻⁹⁻¹¹

It is necessary to highlight the vocal changes with the time, of an insidious way⁹, causing failures and loss of voice, vocal fatigue, feelings of pain and hoarseness, which commonly leads to absenteeism and even the final clearance work.^{7.12}

This is due to the numerous responsibilities assumed by teachers, associated, mostly due to the fact that relegate the vocal health, looking for help only when the problem has already been installed.^{5.7} Scholars claim that few programs describe, for the teachers, the real importance of his greatest means of communication and the measures they can take to prevent the emergence of vocal disorders.^{8.13}

A clean voice, audible and no changes is synonymous with health, especially to the teachers, since it is a mandatory component for the reach of pedagogical purposes and the domain in the classroom. Thus, it is obvious that vocal health promotion actions generate positive results, because it points alternatives that consider the needs of educational technique based on interaction, in demonstration of their weaknesses and in awareness of the teacher as the main responsible for his voice, being aware about his self-care. 4

Currently, there are few laws and proposals in Brazil covering the vocal health of the teacher. However, with the increase of cases of vocal disorders frequent in these professionals and the increased emphasis on worker's health, it is hoped that a differentiated point of view raises ways to minimize them, redirecting the focus of actions for prevention.^{2.12}

To reflect about the fragility still present with the teachers' health care and to perceive him as an everyday practice immersion worker that generates various types of illnesses, the intention to create means that enable these general changes in life habits emerged.

With all this, the present study aims to describe the experience of participants of an extension project for the educational activities directed at understanding of the preservation of the voice, fundamental aspect to the teacher's job.

METHOD

This is a case study, descriptive in nature, about living in the extension project "Educating the educator: promoting occupational health of the teacher", developed by Universidade Federal de Campina Grande - UFCG, campus Cuité, city located in the Northeast region of Brazil, having as target group teachers of urban area of municipal education.

The case study is a descriptive tool that generates reflection about actions experienced in professional field of scientific academic interest.¹⁴

The project was conceived by a lecturer of the course of Bachelor of Nursing from the aforementioned institution, graduation degree in Speech Therapy and Nursing, with the collaboration of other three teachers and 11 students of this course. The experience lasted two academic semesters of 2012.

In order to raise awareness among teachers about the importance of participation in the project, there was an explanation about its objectives in the theater of the city, when the themes of greatest interest were randomly rescued. From them, three different main themes were elected: problems with the voice, with the posture and with interpersonal relationships, however, in this study only the activities directed to the vocal care were addressed.

At first, the weekly meetings of the extension group had a formative character, that is, creating a kind of "hug to knowledge", when they discussed issues concerning the voice of the teacher and the reality of teaching work, especially about the singularities in the town of Cuité. It was possible to build the core of the educational activities of a critical-reflexive way, based on collective thinking, opting for the workshop as a means of awareness and learning.

The operationalization of the workshops occurred at Escola Municipal Julieta de Lima e Costa. Due to the high number of teachers, an average of 90, the group was divided into three subgroups in order to facilitate the implementation of the educational proposal, the workshops had duration of 2 hours each one and followed the following steps: host dynamics, rescue of prior knowledge, explanation about the theme, clarifying doubts and vocal exercise. Furthermore, one of the extension workers had function to observe and record the feedback of those involved in the field notebook.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Highlighting the heart in theory

Identifying the occupational hazards in the working environment and their interference on health and voice of teachers is essential because it enables planning and developing actions that promote the improvement of the quality of life.¹⁶

In fact, it is imperative that the teacher knows his voice so that he can see any change, because often may be associated with overuse, which is used throughout the working hours, often coming up to 60 hours a week, which is irreconcilable with the vocal health. In addition, the majority of these professionals do not prepare before using the voice and essential care are forgotten.^{15,17}

In their routine work, the teachers use the voice of intense way in usually noisy environments for long periods and without time to rest or recover the voice. This fact can be the cause of a vocal problem.¹⁸⁻¹⁹

Clinical manifestations such as hoarseness, vocal fatigue, burning in the throat, effort to speak, difficulty maintaining the intensity and project the voice are frequent among teachers and they interfere negatively in their quality of life and, especially, in the teaching-learning process.¹⁶ It is emphasized that the complaints referred are similar with the cited by teachers of the municipality of Cuité and vocal changes represent one of the occupational diagnoses contributing to the removal of the educators of their activities.

Language group activities, through vocal hygiene, training and prevention programs to dysphonia, employ techniques to optimize the expression of the subjects and their needs, characterized as a therapeutic approach able to collaborate for the emergence of a process to develop the language, bringing new chances of closer relations, providing opportunities for the exchange of information and knowledge.²¹

The treatment and prevention of vocal changes avoid vicious cycles in the emergence of vocal disorders, which social, emotional and professional factors change and increase the vocal disorder and the psychological framework, thus diminishing the quality of life. Educational activities include the identification, awareness and modification of vocals bad habits.²⁴

Thereby, the vocal health is unquestionably essential to a long professional career. Proper use of voice with heating and slowdown of the muscles involved in the process of phonation are basic conditions for good teaching job performance.¹⁵

Experiencing the practice in practice

Based on common complaints by the literature, the project created the workshop entitled "The voice of the teacher: an instrument that need care." This was held at Escola

Municipal Julieta de Lima e Costa with interactive character, allowing the participation and involvement of teachers with the theme, and divided into five stages: dynamic host, rescue of prior knowledge, explanation about the theme, clarifying doubts and vocal exercise.

For the operationalization of the workshop, it was tried to adopt an accessible and appropriate didactic to the reality experienced by the teachers. For this, the concept of health education as social practice that must have focused on the problems of everyday life was remembered, enhancing the experiments experienced by people or social groups, and the interpretation of the different realities in which they are.²⁰⁻²¹ Workshops had as purpose to be understandable and have positive results to improve the quality of life of the teacher's vocal health. It was noted that, in addition to build educational actions of the teacher's vocal health prevention, it is essential that they are sensitizers transforming teachers and causing them to have a reflective thinking about their living habits.

The first step was to approach members of the project with teachers, seeking to meet each participant individually, constructing a positive interpersonal link, in order to establish the mutual exchange of information, and stimulating their participation. On this occasion, there were several behaviors among teachers, that is, some were more participatory and others were looking forward to the next step.

The second moment had the purpose of rescuing the notion that teachers held about the vocal disorders, since everyone already mentioned have been affected or submit hoarseness during the lessons. It was observed that few had knowledge of the topic and many of them never sought a doctor and most of them believed to misuse the voice.

The hoarseness cited by teachers is known scientifically as dysphonia and is characterized by difficulty in using the voice that interfere with the natural vocal production. For the teacher, a dysphonia can mean the impossibility to perform the profession, to be synonymous with the absenteeism and even generating the need for the occupation changes.⁸

Thus, knowing in advance the understanding of teachers on the subject, the explanation on vocal changes and some care pertaining to the voice project extension were started. It was started on vocal changes, observing how these problems were got, what were the causes, signs and symptoms, the harmful factors and, finally, some guidelines were pointed out, such as controlling the volume of the voice, decreasing environmental noise to avoid talking screaming, use microphone in large locations, ingesting water during class, avoiding smoking and using the interval between classes as vocal rest.

One interesting aspect was that while some teachers revealed that already adopted some preventive measures as ingesting water during class, eating an apple, doing vocal exercises, do not performing the call aloud and avoiding shouting, most of them did not have the awareness that with time the erroneous practices could affect their quality of life.

As expected, there were questions that were clarified and, to enrich this time, some of the teachers mentioned the identification with the theme above, who presented the problems mentioned, that the misuse of the voice was justified, primarily, not to recognizing the importance of self-care vocals, because usually the own work required an abusive effort.

The literature reinforces what was found in this project, stating that most teachers do not know the importance of care with the voice, not recognizing the signs and symptoms as a problem of vocal disorders. Many of them believe that the changes are natural results of their profession, by accepting them, in the same way as others for failing to perform the treatment due to time and financial burden, they quit of a suitable service.²³

The experience with the teachers also made them realize that knowledge is constructed with new experiences and are subjected to changes through communication and clarification of issues that hinder learning, justifying that it is essential to work in group, allowing the construction of a range of adequate knowledge to reality, sharing thoughts and experiences. This type of joint construction of knowledge and exchange of experiences is capable of meeting the need for awareness and prevention of some diseases and illnesses in general.²¹⁻²²

There was an interactive dynamic, presenting the proposal for teachers to learn to take care of the voice. At this point, the coordinator of the project demonstrated vocal calisthenics, aiming at the prevention of problems, when all were asked to practice them and enthusiasm was noticed. The guidelines are simple to follow, but require the commitment and engagement of the teacher.

When choosing the exercises that are taught, practicality was considered, in order to promote their achievement at any time and place. In this way, they were developed with relaxation/breathing exercises (breathing standing; breathing with movement of shoulders; and breathing with movement of the neck); articulation exercises (cheeks; lips; tongue and jaw) and warm-up exercises and vocal slowdown (before class and after class).

In addition, there was the realization of drawings for kits that contained mineral water, apples and thermoses, whose benefits of these were explained during the action and the bottle was a way that the group found to encourage them to bring water to the classroom, promoting hydration of the vocal cords.

The workshop favored significant learning of the audience, featuring a moment of search for improving the quality of life of teachers from Cuité, in addition to opportunities of knowledge, reflection and discussion of the reality experienced by them. The workshop also encouraged teachers who had changes in voice to seek appropriate treatment and those who did not, at that time, have learned that prevention is the best medicine.

It was pointed out that the care of the voice needs to be solid and the exercises and guidelines to be held daily for teachers to have a healthy voice, which is socially accepted for their quality, not to modify the speech feature, allowing the individual to use it professionally, have frequency, intensity, and modulation projection suitable for gender and age, being able to convey a message with clarity and not disturb during production.¹⁵ It was noticed that teachers were willing to “hug” all the mentioned care in their daily lives.

CONCLUSION

The voice and its changes are a global problem that affects mainly the teachers, who are frequently sick in their work environment and failing to have a satisfactory quality of life. In Brazil, despite the large number of cases, there are still few proposals on legislation aimed at improving health of the teacher.

In this perspective, the project “Educating the educator: promoting occupational health of the teacher”, through the University extension program, inferred that many teachers from the municipality of Cuité have or have had vocal disorder. It was found that most of them only get help when the situation becomes untenable. It is believed that the actions planned and implemented effectively to stimulate them, in the course of daily life, change their life habits and to rethink about using the voice properly.

To this end, the action of the extension workers of the project provided an assimilation, through educational practices with reflection and awareness of the human being, of information necessary to the promotion of health of teachers, increasing transformations in their behavior through explanation of how to care their voice can avoid future problems and minimize existing ones. It was noticed that the audience was touched in meaningful ways and showed interest to change their everyday use of voice, obtaining thus a better quality of life.

It was found that this experience must be reproduced on the lack of teacher’s health care and the importance of transformation in the quality of life, as the positive response to the project is a feedback of the need that the Brazilian teacher has health care, especially to vocals.

In short, initiatives such as these ones, should be expanded and introduced continuously into the routine work of the teachers. The present study was an opportunity to the municipality of Cuité to make possible and implement teaching in measures offering the teaching opportunity to adopt changes in their lifestyle, having more satisfaction and well-being in exercising their profession. It worth noting that the implementation of the project or permanent program related to this issue can be an effective means to intervene constantly in vocal health of the teacher.

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