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On the way to good

Activities to awaken the citizenship, culture and integration of new students when entering college transform university pranks and begin to count positively in the evaluation by *Márcia Soligo* The prank is a tradition that is part of the reception of the freshmen of a college, applied [...]

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Activities to awaken the citizenship, culture and integration of new students when entering college transform university hoots and start to count positively in the evaluation

by **Márcia Soligo**



Pranking is a tradition that is part of the reception of a college's freshmen, often applied by fellow veterans or even promoted by the institution itself. The moment that marks the student's entry into the academic world, however, despite the fame achieved by the practice of vexatious pranks, which include the haircut, the painting of the body and face of the students, among other more or less embarrassing actions, for some time has been transformed into an action of social responsibility and integration and gains reinforcement in the MEC evaluation system.

In Brazil, the number of institutions that practice solidarity and "of good" pranks grows every year, exploring this important ritual of passage as a source of integration and foundation for the years of academic experience that will come in the student's life.

The constitution of a good social base from the student's entry into college is defended by the Academic Director of Undergraduate of the School of Advertising and Marketing (ESPM-SP), Ismael Rocha. According to him, rituals of passage exist, but can be performed involving humanitarian values. Since 2009, the ESPM of the capital of São Paulo has carried out integration activities for one week at the beginning of each semester. The goal is to definitively replace any other type of prank with actions coordinated by the institution itself and that promote a warm welcome to the entrant, adding value and culture.

According to Ismael, this moment is fundamental and indispensable for the entrant, as it stimulates the collective spirit and contributes to the learning process. For the principal, from the first contact, the student gets to know the school better and lives the institution in a way that the important professional training process is pleasantly established.

The moment of reception to students at the Metropolitan Institute of Higher Education (Univaço), located in Vale do Aço, in Minas Gerais, is also used from the beginning to involve students and awaken the spirit of social responsibility. Because it is an institution focused on the health area, Univaço promotes activities on body care and disease prevention.

For the Academic Director of Univaço, Vera Lúcia Venancio Gaspar, the initiative is a milestone in the lives of new university students and definitely contributes to the formation of responsible doctors, committed to citizenship and the community. As a reward, in addition to the social involvement of students and their commitment to the chosen course, the initiative has already been awarded by the Educar DPaschoal Foundation, which recognizes solidarity pranks throughout Brazil.

Point in the evaluation

The concern with the training of a professional and the development of an awareness of citizenship and responsibility is what leads to the realization of initiatives like these. However, the concern of the institutions must go beyond that, and ban once and for all the performance of violent and harmful pranks to the physical and mental health of students. The government itself entered this campaign and established last year that the National System of Evaluation of Higher Education (Sinaes) would consider as part of the evaluation of public and private institutions the actions promoted for the implementation of solidarity pranks.

The measure was unanimously accepted by the National Commission for the Evaluation of Higher Education (Coneas), which is responsible for the coordination and supervision of Sinaes, and shows a concern to end definitively with the occurrence of unfortunate pranks, such as that of the medical student at USP, Edison Tsung Chi Hsueh, a freshman who was found dead in the pool after the prank in 1999, and the girls who were forced to lick sausages simulating sexual acts in the trot of the Faculty of Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine of UNB, in 2011.

Some universities have completely banned the practice of pranks and others have created hotlines for reporting humiliating or violent events. Even so, the prohibition is often limited to the space of the institution, which only disapproves of the actions carried out externally and is not responsible when the incident occurs outside the school premises.

In France, pranks have come to be severely punished and have been banned by law since the death of a student in 1998. The penalty for those who practice is six months in prison or the payment of € 7,600.

The simple prohibition, however, is not enough to definitively prevent the occurrence of brutal or bad-taste actions against freshmen. For Ismael Rocha, it is not enough to ban pranks, it takes political will from the institution's senior management to create alternatives, offer space, financial help and structure. With new possibilities available, students rarely resort to other forms of hazing other than playful and social ones. According to ESPM, no disapproved activity has been recorded by the institution since the beginning of the integration activities of freshmen.

The coordinator of FAAP Social, belonging to the Armando Álvares Penteado Foundation (FAAP), Andrea Sendulsky, says that solidarity pranking is important because it takes the freshman off the streets in the first days of school, avoiding unpleasant pranks, and is a way to show the values of the institution with a reception based on respect and spirit of citizenship.

The activities for freshmen at FAAP mix culture and solidarity, with stand up comedy shows, music, art and food collection for donations. The directories and academic centers are also involved in the programming, which includes the dissemination of the initiative and a campaign to warn about the prohibition and penalties in cases of violent pranks or that may hurt the values recommended by the institution.

According to the FAAP, also since the second semester of 2009, when the campaign began, no student has been subjected to any form of vexatious prank. Andrea explains that the consolidation of the differentiated hazing project has contributed to the change of the internal culture about the prank, because freshmen who are not subject to situations of exposure to ridicule or aggressive stimuli, consequently, do not feel the need to act in the same way with the new "bixos".

Positive construction

When entering higher education, the young person expects a new universe. So many news and the unknown bring insecurity, the need to assert yourself and choose people to be inspired by. For such reasons, the reception can mark the entire academic life of the student. It can bring a positive experience of social integration and discoveries, with acceptance by veterans and inclusion in academic reality, or bring humiliation and fear of the reality that awaits you. Regardless of experience, both last for all the student's years in the academic environment and can cause irreparable traumas and even the abandonment of college.

The ongoing movement is not to erase the culture of pranks, but to modify the focus, transferring the motto of the action to a more harmonious reception, coordinated and closely followed by the managers of the institutions. In this sense, the path chosen for the pranks is towards the construction of activities that add social and cultural value, making new students welcomed in a healthy way and that such an experience strengthens their relationships with colleagues, with college and with lifelong training.

Warm initiative

From show and cultural presentations to social mobilization, different activities are carried out to welcome new university students. In the ESPM-SP Integration Week, in addition to gymkhanas, there is an inaugural class aimed at students and parents with the participation of important personalities. Social initiatives and the involvement of freshmen in the institution's academic activities, as well as in internal companies, are also part of the programming. The Univaço Citizen Trot is developed by the coordination of the medical course, involving freshmen in health-related topics. In the second semester of 2012, students carried out a campaign against smoking, with visits to schools in the region, distributing educational material and giving guidance lectures on the harms of cigarettes. At FAAP, since 2009 the reception activities for newbies involve culture and solidarity, such as stand up comedy and improvisation shows with great names in Brazilian humor, music, art and food collection for donations. There are also visits to NGOs to develop playful activities with children and adults, such as storytelling and art workshops.

Incentive for solidarity prank

In order to contribute to the end of the culture of pranks that do not promote gain for society, the Educar DPaschoal Foundation has been holding the Citizenship Trot since 1999, an initiative that recognizes the best practices in solidarity pranks in Brazil. The foundation also assists in the development of projects and has an online platform that works as a bank of ideas for projects carried out in previous years for consultation and consequent inspiration of institutions that do not yet practice social pranks or that want to improve their practices. Registration can be made at the website rotedacidadania.org.br.

In the compass of the class

The prank is an old practice, applied by veteran students to new students who enter a college. The first recorded in history dates from the year 1342, at the University of Paris. The designation of this moment of transition originates from the action of jogging horses, a style of step taught to animals by their trainers, not naturally practiced by the animal. That is, the name trot already suggested that freshmen should be taught how to behave at the university by veterans, even at the cost of heavy and shameful games.

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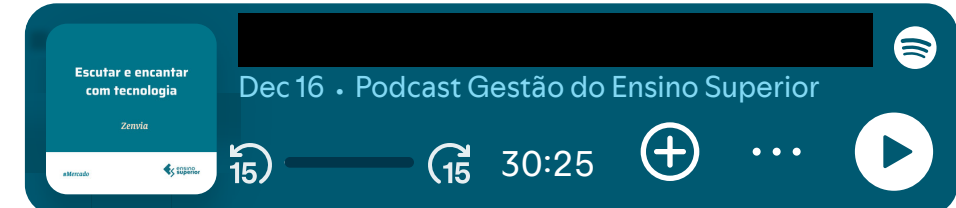


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