

ACTIVE LEARNING AND INCLUSION AGENTS: A NECESSARY TRAINING

APRENDIZAGEM ATIVA E AGENTES DE INCLUSÃO: UMA FORMAÇÃO NECESSÁRIA

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Abstract

Who are the workers called “inclusion-support-agents” in Brazil? Based on a literature review we applied a questionnaire to learn about the personal and professional profiles of these workers. The questionnaire was applied to pre- and in-service school inclusion-support-agents from a state and a federal school in Rio de Janeiro. The results point to the need for investment in training, given the challenges faced by special education in the inclusive perspective, combining innovative technologies and diversity of learning. In conclusion, the adequate training in active learning methodologies of these professionals will help provide real learning and socialization scenarios of students with Special Educational Needs and allow schools and universities to fully achieve their educational objectives.

Keywords: Continuing education. Agent support for school inclusion. Active learning.

Resumo

Quem são os “agentes de apoio à inclusão” no Brasil? A partir de uma revisão da literatura, aplicamos um questionário para conhecer o perfil pessoal e profissional desses trabalhadores. O questionário foi aplicado a agentes de apoio à inclusão escolar em serviço de uma escola estadual e federal do Rio de Janeiro. Os resultados apontam

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a necessidade de investimento em capacitação, tendo em vista os desafios enfrentados pela educação especial na visão inclusiva, aliando tecnologias inovadoras e diversidade de aprendizagem. Conclusão: a formação adequada em metodologias ativas de aprendizagem destes profissionais, ajudará a gerar cenários reais de aprendizagem e socialização dos alunos com Necessidades Educacionais Especiais e permitirá às escolas e universidades atingirem plenamente os seus objetivos educacionais.

Palavras-chave: Formação continuada. Apoio à inclusão escolar. Aprendizagem ativa.

Introduction

The debates on special education in an inclusive perspective show that we need to know more about the training of those who work directly with school inclusion. Considering the myriad of students with disabilities, and other specific disorders, enrolled in regular classes it is imperative that schools have very well-trained inclusion agents. These students, more than those considered normal or without special needs, require individual interventions to assist them during their schooling, thus, to adequately comply with the current legislation on the Specialized Educational Support in school it is important to continually train these workers.

The training of the different school staff both for the inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs and the democratization of inclusion in Brazilian schools are established by public policies. The Resolution nº. 2/CNE/CEB/2001 and its direction nº. 17/CNE/CEB/2001, are crucial for the promotion of professional training, and consequent school inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs. These have been reaffirmed in 2015 by the Brazilian Inclusion Law (BRASIL, 2015).

The understanding that it is not enough for schools to be equipped with their own teaching resources for the Specialized Educational Support such as Multifunctional Resource Rooms leads to the necessity that schools, among other aspects, consider improving their staff's practice during activities that are performed directly with students who are the target audience of Specialized Educational Support. Thus, the idea of a transformative and emancipatory education within the reach of all, calls for an



important move to organize school staff. Not only teachers and inclusion agents but all of those who are in contact with the Special Educational Needs students need specific training so that they respond to the requirements of all children, considering their diversity (AINSCOW, 2002).

From the school context perspective, the possibility of a democratic and emancipatory education to combat the prejudice is particularly important in the light of the inclusive paradigm. According to Adorno (2000, p. 141) this would bring to light what society wants to hide. Promoting a true conscience and a “political demand” for inclusion is imperative. Aiming to deepen the issues concerning the learning of people with Special Educational Needs and the effectiveness of school inclusion in regular classes from Basic⁷² Through Higher Education, the work was based on two fundamental axes: 1) professional training of special-education agents that support school inclusion; 2) Specialized Educational Support with the perspective of active learning methodologies.

The school inclusion support agent is a special-education expert, a profession regulated by the Ministry of Labor in the Brazilian Classification of Occupations (BRAZIL, 2002). According to the Brazilian Inclusion Law (BRASIL, 2015) in its article 3, item XIII, the support professionals aimed for school inclusion are those who perform activities such as feeding, hygiene and transportation of students with disabilities, acting in all necessary school activities and in all levels and modes of teaching, whether in public or private institutions (BRASIL, 2001).

Based on the assumption that training education-professional to work with the inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs may not be the most appropriate, and given the need for interventions in the field of special education from an inclusive perspective, we questioned: “Who are the professional agents that support school inclusion in Brazil? “How does the professional training of these workers take place?”

⁷² Basic education also referred as k-12 - kindergarten through the 12th grade.

“How can they contribute to students' school inclusion using active learning methodologies?” The answers to these questions may lead to better planning of outreach activities, and therefore, better inclusion rates of the public with Special Educational Needs.

Methodology

This study is a survey characterized by the investigation, with a questionnaire, to understand the perspectives of the inclusion-professionals based on a literature review of papers published within the year of 2019 in other words very updated work prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Investigative steps

The first stage consisted of the search for papers published in the subject area within a Brazilian scientific journal database called Periodicos CAPES⁷³. The keywords that were used are: "teacher training"; "special education"; "active learning" "school inclusion". The “last twelve months” was used as a cutoff for the “publication date”. Finally, in “type of material” we selected “articles”, and, in relation to “language”, we selected “English”. The adopted inclusion and exclusion criteria were:

- Inclusion- 1. Article written in English; 2. Main theme – original or review papers; 3. Inclusive learning interventions in k-12 schools; 4. Articles that portray Brazilian reality.
- Exclusion- 1. Incomplete articles; 2. Discussion of topics other than teacher training for Special Educational Needs; 3. Traditional pedagogical approaches; 4. Duplication of roles.

⁷³ Available in: <www.periodicos.capes.gov.br>. Accessed on: July 2020.

The retrieved papers from the chosen database were analyzed by each of us authors. After analyzing the titles and abstracts only those that clearly indicated the intention to address the professional training of teachers in the different environments, conceptions, as well as the forms of learning and their pedagogical practices were included. As a consensus of the research group, articles were included or excluded due to any of the exclusion criteria. Having defined the inclusion, the articles were analyzed, to bring up-to-date information about this educational professional, as well as possible indicators of needed improvements in their education.

Based on the analysis of the texts, the authors elaborated a semi-structured online questionnaire with eight closed and one open-ended questions. The invitation to participate was sent to 200 school staff involved in inclusion. The questionnaire started with an invitation to participate in the research with the due consent of the participants, with the following clarification: “By responding the form, you authorize the disclosure of the information contained in the responses without revealing your identity, and you are aware that you are participating in a research work.” Only after the consent, did the form open to the research questions as follows:

Table 1: Questionnaire answered by invited school professionals.

Questions	Multiple choice answer options
1. How old are you?	Age ranges: 20-25; 25-30; 30-40; more than 40.
2. What is your educational background?	Complete undergraduate Teacher Training course; Incomplete undergraduate Teacher Training course; High School Teacher Training course; Technical High School in Health; High school.
3. Are you a trained school-support professional or inclusion-support agent?	Yes; No; in training
4. Do you work or have you ever worked as a school-support professional or inclusion-support agent? Options:	Yes, No.
5. Tell us about your experience:	I Work/worked in a public school; I work/worked in a private school; I work/worked in a public and private school; I have no experience yet.

6. Does the school support professional or inclusion support agent assist pedagogical activity with the teacher?	Yes, No; Perhaps
7. Does the School-Support Professional or Inclusion-Support Agent assist students in locomotion, hygiene, and food?	Yes, No.
8. Should the school-support professional or inclusion support agent be part of the plans developed for the student being served?	Yes, No
9. About professional performance: Answer how do you think your professional performance at school should be.	Open ended question

Font: the authors.

Results and discussion

1. Analysis of the literature review

As a result of the first stage twelve papers were retrieved from the chosen data base and analyzed by each author of this paper. After analyzing the titles and abstracts, as a consensus of the research group, four articles were excluded due to the 2nd exclusion criterion - Discussion of topics that differ from specialized educational assistance and eight papers were included. These clearly indicated the intention to address the professional training of educational staff in the different environments, conceptions, forms of learning and their pedagogical practices. Having defined the included articles these were analyzed, and brought up-to-date information about this educational worker, as well as possible indicators of improvement necessities in their training (Table 2).

Table 2: Articles retrieved during the search on the periodicos CAPES journal database.

	Articles found	Analysis
1	FERREIRA, J. A. O.; CARNEIRO, R. U. C. The student with high skills/giftedness in a riverside school in the Amazon. Online Journal of Educational Policy and Management , [S.l.], p. 247-269, Jan. 2020.	Yes
2	SILVA, R. S. DA; MARZARI, M. INDIGENOUS EDUCATION: Challenges for non-indigenous schools in Barra do Garças-MT. Revista Prática Teaching , v. 4, n. 1, p. 317-333, July 15. 2019.	Exclusion criteria 2
3	MONTE, P. M. do; LUSTOSA, A. V. M. F. The subjective processes of teachers in pedagogical work with students with high skills / giftedness. Obutchénie: Journal of Didactics and Pedagogical Psychology , 3 (1), 205-237, 2019.	Yes
4	ESCOBAR, N. T. C.; CARLESSO, J. P. P. The importance of continuing education for teachers who accompany students with disabilities in regular schools. Research, Society and Development , 8 (3), e3983801, 2019.	Yes
5	PAULA, O. L. B. de; CARVALHO, E. T. de. School integration and inclusion in the historical panorama of the Brazilian bureaucratic heritage. Research, Society and Development , 8 (6), e39861069, 2020.	Exclusion criteria 2
6	ARAÚJO, J. D. de A.; MATIAS, J. L. P.; OLIVEIRA, R. V. de; SILVA, W. D. A. da. "Nothing about us without us": the Specialized Educational Care in the high school based on the perception of students of Special Education. Research, Society and Development , 9 (3), e87932476, 2020.	Yes
7	MURA, A. School, and social inclusion in Italy: the contribution of associations of people with disabilities. Educational Policy Analysis files , [SI], v. 27, p. 65, June 2019.	Exclusion criteria 2
8	DULTRA, A. A. Hybrid education: an alternative for the inclusive education of the deaf. Research, Society and Development , 8 (6), e47861078, 2019.	Yes
9	TORRES, J. P.; MENDES, E. G. Evaluation of a didactic kit that tactfully reproduces illustrations in Physics Education. Special Education Magazine , v. 32, p. 35-1-14, 2019.	Yes
10	CARIDADE, N. V. D. School process in the elementary school of a deaf student at a school in Macapá, Amapá. Research, Society and Development , 9 (3), e185932722, 2020.	Yes
11	SILVA, <i>et al.</i> The paths to inclusive education: the relationship between guiding documents and the inclusion process. Research, Society and Development , 9 (3), e107932490, 2020.	Exclusion criteria 2
12	SANTOS, L. C. dos; AMORIM, C. M. F. G.; PAULA, N. L. M. de. Teacher's conceptions about including education for people with disabilities at EEMTI Dr. José Gondim - Liceu de Iguatu / CE. Research, Society and Development , 9 (4), e137942981, 2020.	Yes

Source: Authors selection in periodicos.capes.gov.br using.

Of the included articles, five are related to the importance of inclusive teacher training associated with active learning in Brazilian schools. The analysis of the papers published in 2019 allowed to identify the concern about the use of digital technologies in the care of people with Special Educational Needs (DULTRA, 2019). In addition, it demonstrated differentiated practices in the care of students with Special Educational Needs, such as hearing impairment and other disabilities (MONTE; LUSTOSA, 2019). The hybrid education (DULTRA, 2019), the expansion in the understanding of inherent practices of the support agents for students with high skills/giftedness were presented (HS/G) (FERREIRA, 2019; MONTE, 2019). These papers presented discussions and practical examples of how to favor learning through concrete models and active learning.

Based on the papers of this review, teachers should seek teaching methodologies that enhance pedagogical practices and favor students' learning, by motivating them and promoting their autonomy. With this study, we do not propose the reinvention of pedagogical practices, but rather a renewed awareness of the actions that can truly favor learning in an active way. In this perspective, support agents/teachers have a fundamental role in enabling meaningful learning for their students. They should allow all students to be heard and have their opinions and questions respected, interacting with their peers, even those with special needs (FREIRE, 2015).

According to active learning theorists, these actions are necessary to mitigate the difficulties that students and teachers experience in the traditional educational environment. In most cases, the traditional didactics does not include the Special Educational Needs Students. History has shown that children benefit from active learning, even those with special needs. One of these authors is Maria Montessori and her experience with the "Casa de Bambini" created in 1907 (KRAMER, 2017). Montessori's experience showed that children with Special Educational Needs benefit from hands-on learning with concrete material and with clear limits without severe

impositions (KRAMER, 2017). Considering that most Brazilian schools still use traditional teaching methods, teachers have little or no specific training in active methodologies, setting enormous challenges that teachers have to face to include all students (SANTOS; CARVALHO, 2017).

Brazilian school inclusion is based on a broad array of human rights legislation, including decrees and laws that promote the inclusion of people with special needs. The Federal Constitution (BRASIL, 1988); the National Law of Education Guidelines and Bases (BRASIL, 1996); the Brazilian Law for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities (BRASIL, 2015) and other international standards that were signed in Brazil indicate that students with Special Educational Needs should be included, preferably in regular classes in schools, at any stage or type of education. These institutions must also provide specialized educational assistance and have Multifunctional Resource Rooms.

However, schools that lack adequate materials that have inefficient technologies and, most importantly, lack adequate professional training for their staff are not allowing adequate progress for students with Special Educational Needs. Thus, it is necessary to promote more in-service training, both for specialized teachers and for teachers of regular classes, to encourage the use of existing materials, or to produce specific materials, to constitute individualized practices. As Nóvoa (1992) says, the training of these educational agents is not based on the accumulation of courses, knowledge, or techniques, but through training and experience with the permanent (re)construction of a personal and professional identity.

Monte and Lustosa (2019) report the need for specific training to work with HS/G people. These authors demonstrate that there is a high proportion of teachers that are "under prepared", to use the school's multifunctional resource rooms. Thus, even though there are specialized educational assistance teachers in the school this does not guarantee the effectiveness. Considering the array of all possible variations of special needs, according to the degree of impairment, the distinct types of stimulation needs, care, and social economic contexts the special education teacher's profile would have

to be very wide, or schools would have to have more of these specialized workers. In agreement, to better cope with the necessary changes, Escobar and Carlesso (2019) discuss the importance of in-service continued education for teachers to deal with school inclusion as well as the need for adjustments in the undergraduate curricula to make training more solid.

Being teachers involved with special education in the public educational system of Rio de Janeiro we were interested in knowing what the local scenario of special education is. Of the 200 invitations sent we obtained the feedback of 44 participants, who effectively answered the questionnaire. Concerning the age of the respondents, the majority, 61.36%, (27/44) was over 40 years old; 29.55% (13/44) were between 25 and 39 and a 9.01% (4/44) under 25. Most (75.0%) of the participants (33/44) informed they had some type of training in Special Educational Needs and 13.6% informed they are still in pre-service training. Only 11.4% informed they had no Special Educational Needs training although they are within the school workforce. The academic background of the participants varies as can be seen in table 3.

Table 3: Age, academic background of the participants

Training in SEN*	Age (years)	Academic background	Participants	
			Number	%
Yes (75.0%)	20-25	High school Teacher Training Course	4	9,1
	25-30	Education or teaching college degree	2	4,5
	30-40	High school Teacher Training Course	2	4,5
		Education or teaching college degree	4	9,1
	> 40	High School	3	6,8
		Incomplete Education and teaching college degree	4	9,1
		Health workers	2	4,5
		Education or teaching college degree	9	20,5
Specialist course		3	6,8	
In training (13.6%)	< 25	Incomplete Education and teaching college degree	2	4,5
	30-40	Incomplete Education and teaching college degree	1	2,3
		Education and teaching college degree	2	4,5

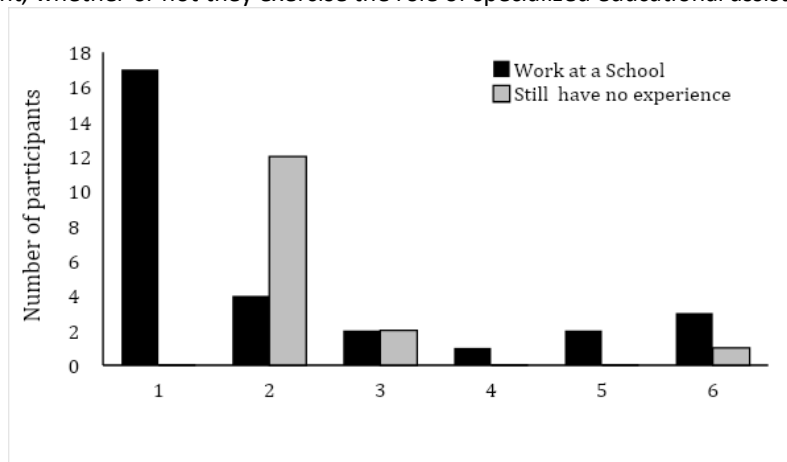
	> 40	Incomplete Education and teaching college degree	1	2,3
No (11.4%)	20-25	Incomplete Education and teaching college degree	2	4,5
	> 40	Technical High School in Health	2	4,5
		Nurse	1	2,3
Totals			44	99,8

* SEN – Special Educational Needs

Source: Research data from the online questionnaire.

When asked about their professional experience associated with Special Educational Needs, whether they have worked or were working in the area, 54.55% answered no (24/44) independent of prior training. Dividing the groups with or without training for special educational needs. We see that 51.5% of the participants (17/33) who have training as school inclusion support agents work with special education in schools while 48,5% who are trained (16/33) do not, 4 work in schools, and 12 say they still have no experience as school inclusion support agents. Of the 6 participants who responded that they are in training, two responded that they already have experience and work in schools. Of the other 4, 3 work in schools. The last category, those who are not trained in specialized educational assistance, two work as specialized educational assistance at school and two do not (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Distribution of participants with or without specific training in school inclusion support agent, whether or not they exercise the role of specialized educational assistance. (n = 44)



Source: research data

These results may reflect the alumni who attended the AAIE-FAETEC⁷⁴ course in the past two years. Some are already inserted in other working positions, such as class teachers (for example, the group that claims to be formed, works in schools, although not as a support agent), pointing to the perception or interest in working in inclusive settings. Some participants associated their training in inclusion while still graduating from teacher training courses, preparing them to serve this specific group of students.

In view of the number of assignments given to the Special Educational Needs staff, we asked the participants to answer three questions based on how they think their professional performance at school should be. The data showed that 88.63% (39/44) acknowledge that assisting in pedagogical activities is a task for the school inclusion support agent while 9.01% (4/44) say that this could be their task and 2.27% (1/44) say this is not their task. Looking more closely at the data, 4.54% (2/44) of those with specific training state that this “it could be” be a support agent task. The remaining negative responses are among those who have no specific training in Special Educational Needs or are still in training. When asked whether assisting students in locomotion, hygiene and feeding is a support agent task; 97.63% of participants stated yes. All respondents (44/44) stated that they should participate in the plans developed for each specific student. The last question of our questionnaire was to understand the motivations that lead to an interest in inclusion, why they chose the profession. Most participants, 81.8% (36/44) took the course to become a school inclusion support agent, to expand the possibilities of professional performance. The other reasons of interest are linked to the search for qualification, the improvement of professional practice, and the search for new job opportunities (Table 4).

⁷⁴ AAIE-FAETEC Course – Support Agent for School Inclusion - Foundation for the Support of Technical Education of the State of Rio de Janeiro a translation for Curso de Agente de Apoio à Inclusão Escolar - Fundação de Apoio a Educação Técnica do Estado do Rio de Janeiro.

Table 4: Why did you choose this profession school inclusion support agent?

		WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS PROFESSION?	%	No.
Interest in inclusion		I am a class teach and wanted to expand my performance	56.81%	25
		I am a class teacher and believe in the work of school inclusion support agent favoring inclusive education.	2.27%	1
		I want to be a teacher and work with inclusion	11.37%	5
		I am a health professional, and I am interested in working with inclusion.	4.54%	2
		I needed to work, and this opportunity appeared. And I was always interested in working with inclusion.	2.27%	1
		I am a psychoanalyst, and I am interested in inclusion.	2.27%	1
		I have a passion for inclusion, and I understand that inclusion needs a lot of qualified professionals who have a love for inclusion.	2.27%	1
Work opportunity		The job market for inclusion professionals is growing.	4.54%	2
		I needed work and this opportunity appeared. But I had never thought of working with inclusion before.	9.01%	4
		I want an opportunity in that area.	2.27%	1
		It was for a period for a DIVIN survey.	2.27%	1

Source: Data from the online questionnaire.

The comprehension that it is necessary to invest in the professional training of people who support students with Special Educational Needs was only more exposed, with the data recorded in this survey and literature review. It is necessary to guarantee the quality of this staff. Special Educational Needs students need an individualized education with several alternatives to adequately provide a suitable education. The aim is to have educational staff able to work with the diversity of students, with a diversity of strategies, seeking to anticipate their students' Special Educational Needs. One possibility is the use, with knowledge and creativity, of Individualized Education Plans (IEP).

The professional profile in this survey agrees with the work of Escobar and Carlesso (2019) who show that there are still no clear definitions of training, function and even nomenclature to be used in educational and training environments. The analysis of data referring to the initial training of professionals indicates the need to include eight categories. In particular, the category of health professionals which represent a variation of the initial training for they are not clearly related to teaching,

or learning, among these are nurse technician, social assistants, and psychoanalyst. The variability of the initial training of the school inclusion support agent can be considered a facilitating factor for an active interdisciplinary proposal in the construction of the identity of multiprofessional teams.

Although the responses to the questionnaire showed different profiles and backgrounds among professionals, it is important to note that in the question "Should the support professional be part of the plans developed for students in need? All participants in the questionnaire answered "yes". This is an interesting information, it points to the understanding that the inclusion process is not just the responsibility of the professional who accompanies the student. The recognition of the need for collective planning for inclusion was present, both in the responses of professionals with and without experience of those who have already experienced inclusive practice at school, as well as those who only have training, and who do not effectively work at school. Thus, the profile of the participants in the sample of the present study is composed of people with a collaborative, interdisciplinary, active, and procedural characteristic.

During the elaboration of the questionnaire, we considered the possibility that perhaps some in service professionals, in fact, do not participate in the planning of the activities of the students they attend. Therefore, the questions were elaborated to determine their opinions not their experience. Participation in the planning process, implies in action, collaboration and presupposes the recognition of the student's potential and needs. The concept of learning and development implies in a process that requires actions and interventions of the learner under constant evaluation to redirect the process to better the outcomes (VYGOTSKY, 2003).

Comparing the opinion of the participants on the pedagogical planning and the attendance to the students in the locomotion, food, and hygiene, it was possible to identify that the school inclusion support agent understand that the pedagogical planning does not only include formal subject-matter planning. In an inclusive

perspective, giving access and allowing permanence and participation of the student in the school environments, is as important and meets the special education legislation. Thus, pedagogical planning which includes all staff directly involved with the specific student tends to construct learning plans that may truly meet their specific needs and potentials.

2. Experience in forming the school inclusion support agent

An increasing number of students with disabilities, global developmental disorder and HS/G have exposed a weakness in the Brazilian educational system. Schools are faced with the lack of qualified staff able to fully assist people with Special Educational Needs and not only push a wheelchair or help access the bathroom. The lack of an education professional capable of intervening in the learning of students in partnership with the class teacher, whether in basic or higher education is considered serious, in the face of an inclusive paradigm (SETUBAL; FAYAN, 2016).

Specific data regarding the enrollment of students by age group began to be recorded in 2007 by the Ministry of Education (MEC/INEP), with only an estimative of the need for special education before 2007. Examining, the data during the last decade of the School Census it is possible to observe a relevant increase (61,00%) in the enrollment of students with disabilities belonging to the basic school age group (4 to 17 years old) (455,099 in 2007 to 732,164 in 2015). However, the increase is even more impressive in regular classes of basic education, with an increase of 153%, (254,955 students in 2007 to 646,212 in 2015). Analyzing further this data, in 2007, 56.02% of Special Educational Needs students were in regular classes compared to 88.26% in 2015 demonstrating a clear need for school inclusion support agent (SETUBAL; FAYAN, 2016, p. 71).

In accordance with these requirements, the current legislation in defense of people with disabilities (BRASIL, 2015) reinforced their right to formal education. In this

sense, the following points regarding support measures for people with Special Educational Needs in schools can be cited in Chapter IV, Article 28:

IX - adoption of support measures that favor the development of linguistic, cultural, professional and professional aspects, taking into account the talent, creativity, skills and interests of students with disabilities; X - adoption of inclusive pedagogical practices by specialized educational assistance programs; XI - training and providing teachers for specialized educational assistance, Libras translators and interpreters, interpreter guides and support professionals; XII - Libras teaching offer, the Braille System and the use of technological assistance resources, in order to expand the students' functional skills, promoting their autonomy and participation; XIII - access to higher education and professional and technological education in equal opportunities and conditions with other people (BRAZIL, 2015).

Although the specific term for school inclusion support agent varies between municipalities, institutions and even the required level of education, in accordance to Brazilian law, there must be an offer of continuing education for these professionals. Thus, it is a prerequisite, during the selective processes, that the candidate presents certification of specific training of at least 120 hours. As a result of this training the professional should be competent to assist the teacher in planning, carrying out the school activities of students with Special Educational Needs, contributing to the social coexistence, development, physical and emotional well-being of the Special Educational Needs student enrolled in regular and/or specialized schools (BRAZIL, 2009). Due to the legislation, many courses have appeared across the country, however most are expensive thus, making it difficult for teachers to attend. We shall show the experience of a training course for school inclusion support agent in a public institution in the State of Rio de Janeiro that brought the possibility of free training for teachers.

The Foundation for the Support of State Technical Schools (FAETEC) in the city of Rio de Janeiro and two adjacent municipalities offer an outreach course relevant to an inclusive educational context. The prerequisites are a minimum age of 18 years and at least the high school teacher training course certificate. Educational professionals

(teachers, instructors, educational advisors, and pedagogues) with incomplete training or study were also accepted in the course. Part of the 180-hour workload is performed in face-to-face classes and part as distance activities all demonstrating practices within the scope of the Special Educational Needs area. Its syllabus reflects how much knowledge is needed to satisfy the diversity in inclusive education (Chart 3).

Chart 3: Syllabus of the school inclusion support agent course (FAETEC-RJ)

Contents	Teaching Topics	Program content
Specific	Fundamentals of special education from the perspective of inclusive education	Historical and legal frameworks for Inclusive Education Learning and human development.
	Target audience of Special Education	Physical Disability; Visual impairment; Deafness; Intellectual Disability; Multiple Disability; Autism; High Skills Learning Disorders
	Inclusive conceptions and practices	Support agent relationship to school inclusion: Family Student School community. Dealing with diversity in the school context
	Methods, techniques, and accessibility to the curriculum	Accessibility Individualized teaching plan - PEI Curricular adaptation and flexibility Assistive Technology Transition to adulthood Labor customization Evaluation.
	Laboratory Practice	Learning Resource Lab <i>Workshop</i>
General	Cross-cutting Themes	Entrepreneurship concepts Professional ethics Citizenship concepts: Rights and Duties of the citizen Social responsibility Personal <i>marketing</i> .

Source: Technical School Support Foundation (RJ) - Inclusion Division (FAETEC- DIVIN)

A requisite of the course offered by FAETEC, is that participants develop an educational material for students with Special Educational Needs. In figure 2 are some of the materials prepared by the participants of the course during one of the editions of

the course. Figure 2A. shows materials to develop mathematical skills; Figure 2B. material to develop reading skills; Figure 2C. Sign language material, and Figure 2D. Motor skills material. The diversity of materials demonstrates the creative capacity of the professionals to adapt and/or create new materials or technologies to meet with the needs of their target audience.

Figure 2: Photos of activities presented as a final project in the extension course for the special education of Support Agents for School Inclusion.



Source: Collection of material from the authors donated to the disabled person. A. Material to develop mathematical skills; B. Material to develop reading skills; C. Sign language material, D. Motor skills material Source: Collection of authors' materials donated to people with disabilities.

To guarantee equity and quality in the learning process of all students there is a great need to learn how to deal with students with Special Educational Needs. Although, it is fundamental that all staff contribute for each student to learn as much as their potential allows, initial teacher training courses of all subject matters, and not only pedagogy, should include this type of specific knowledge. Consequently, it is essential that teacher training courses offer in their curricula disciplines that involve inclusion in a comprehensive and specific way. This leads to, at least, two needs, the first to institutionalize inclusive didactics, and the second to have training courses that use active learning pedagogy as a methodological perspective in teacher training courses. Active learning resources help students to build mental models as of hands-on/minds-on activities thus permitting critical and reflective thinking (MOREIRA; RIBEIRO, 2016).

Courses based on the theoretical and practical training of teachers in active learning pedagogy and applying this pedagogy in an inclusive way make it possible to transform the school context. (MASCARO, 2016). In-service training (when teachers learn by doing while at work) using active methodologies is a strategy for this transformation. Mediating their students' learning process, includes identifying the difficulties in successful learning, which in turn makes it possible to improve their practices and contributes to the development of a truly inclusive education (ESCOBAR; CARLESSO, 2019). An example of active methodology is the presentation of case studies of Special Educational Needs students. The discussion of the practical issues of the inclusive work stimulates reflections on the knowledge acquired through the workshops. On the other hand, one can also verify through this strategy aspects that have not been fully understood. Consequently, these topics can be included in following classes, where qualified teachers can give appropriate feedback.

3. Higher education and inclusion

Another important discussion refers to Higher Education, where inclusive intervention practices are poorly implemented, despite having a legislation to be followed for more than a decade. At the college/university level regular assessment, by the Ministry of Education, has mitigated some of the accessibility flaws such as mobility with the installation of ramps and elevators, accessible bathrooms, indications with Braille and tactile flooring for the blind however, many aspects are still in need of implementation and or expansion. Access to places with tactile floor indicators for the visually impaired, or even signs of direction, do not exist or are insufficiently installed in most Universities in Rio de Janeiro, although by law all buildings must have them installed (TORRES; MENDES, 2019). Another critical point is the absence or insufficiency of sign language translators for undergraduate and graduate students at universities, who often depend on people without adequate training, to act as mediators in the

inclusion of deaf people (CARIDADE, 2020). Of all inclusion strategies, professional support for people with Special Educational Needs is the greatest. The cases in which there are readers for those with low vision, or a professional who helps them with their learning process are rare due to few public entrance exams for these professionals at universities (BRAZIL, 2015).

Although colleges/universities offer places for people with disabilities to study their undergraduate courses, these institutions still need to develop and implement better policies to support these students. To comply with the legal requirements and the guidelines and of the Ministry of Education, all course plans should include theoretical reflections on the topic of inclusion of people with disabilities. Although many barriers have been overcome in basic education, the university level still has a long way to go. Real inclusion still needs to be implemented in the higher education context (BRAZIL, 2015).

In Brazil, all undergraduate courses have their own National Curriculum Guideline with specificities needed for their alumni. The guidelines for the specific teacher training courses (including pedagogy) indicate the need for the adoption of active learning methodologies, and the assessment of skills and competencies. The justification is that applying these strategies which tend to improve the students learning ability will familiarizes the future teacher, and consequently will have a better chance to apply in basic schools as well. Although, the focus during college may not necessarily be the inclusion of people with Special Educational Needs, training pre-service teachers with methodologies, such as flipped classrooms, case studies, problem-based learning, project-based learning, storytelling, and other active learning methodologies may alert them to the variety of possible strategies that can be adapted to the special need of certain students. Thus, more professional development for teachers and professors working at the university level is still needed (DULTRA, 2019). The next question that rises is who is prepared to help their peers, and how are we going

to have so many teachers trained for the growing demand that secondary schools are offering to students with Special Educational Needs.

4. Support agent for school inclusion

From the perspective of inclusive education (BRAZIL, 2008) special education is still very recent in Brazil and has brought important values and actions to guarantee schooling and specific attention to students with Special Educational Needs. As soon as the legislation was established, students began to reach public k-12 schools, even before these institutions had time to organize themselves and adapt to the new requirements. The arrival of students with Special Educational Needs and the difficulty of teachers in assisting them revealed a significant gap in the pre-service pedagogical training. Thus, the request through the legislation for continuous in-service training came to mitigate the fact that teachers did not have contact with teaching methodologies for Special Educational Needs in their initial training.

Furthermore, the legislation introduced a new category of school professionals, the Special Educational Agent or School Support Professional, with specific assignments that differ from the teachers both from the regular class and from the Multifunctional Resource Room. These professionals are the ones who accompany students in all areas of the school, responsible for eliminating barriers to learning, social participation, and permanence of the student in school (BRAZIL, 2015). Their professional identity is still being built and doubts in educational environments are frequent. In some cases, these professionals act only as support in daily living activities, such as: hygiene and eating, mediation in communication and social relationships, and support in circulation within the school spaces. However, there are those who work directly with students in their pedagogical activities, mediating tests, classes, helping other teachers in specific strategies for these students. In this way, there are different attributes or categories being established for school inclusion support agent.

However, for many municipal governments such as the Municipal Secretariat of Education of the city of Rio de Janeiro the public entrance exam to work as a school inclusion support agent only requires complete high school education, without prior training to work in special education (RIO DE JANEIRO, 2014). Our data confirm this, since we have 3 participants who said they had worked with Special Educational Needs without specific training.

As for the differences in nomenclatures to name the people who specifically work with inclusion: inclusion support agent, school support professional, special education support agent, educational inclusion agent and many others, can cause confusion in the tasks of these workers, as well as in the appropriate professional training. The analysis of the nomenclature choices used for the support staff can also point out the different conceptions and paradigms of special education and inclusion.

First, inclusion is a term that refers to a broader scope than special education. To think about inclusion is to think the opposite of exclusion, in any context. For example, in the case of the school support professional, the concept is that support is for the whole school, understanding that everyone needs support, be it teachers, staff or students. In this case, the role of the professional is to facilitate everyone in the school. Some will receive support to teach, others to learn. Another example seems more distant from the inclusive precepts than the previous ones. Apparently, special education is not understood as school education. "Support for special education" may suggest that special education is an appendix to the school. Many questions can be raised if we assign wrong values to the specialists who are responsible, at each moment, for intervening in the learning of countless students with Special Educational Needs, who require a political and pedagogical position in the inclusive conception, collaborating for the execution of methodologically active practices (SANTOS; CARVALHO, 2017).

Conclusion

As important as knowing the profile of the staff that works with inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs it is important to know how specialized educational assistance is conducted. As discussed during this document, from K-12 to higher education, it is the responsibility of the school inclusion support agent to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities, mitigating learning barriers and stimulating participation at all levels of education.

We identified that it is still necessary to distinguish the qualified performance between school caregivers and professionals educational support for inclusion. Although there is no occupancy code for the function of school caregivers, in terms of inclusive actions, this professional is the one who takes care of the safety, mobility, hygiene, feeding and socialization of students with specific needs. Whereas the staff that supports school inclusion are the ones who carry out the pedagogical monitoring of the students in all spaces of the school, which due to their specific educational background for inclusion, has the task of guaranteeing accessibility to school contents, in dialogue between students. regular and individualized curricula.

Considering, in a transdisciplinary approach, that the inclusion support agent is aligned with active learning practices, the use of technological resources can be viewed as assistive possibilities that respond to the Special Educational Needs of students. Active learning theorists argue that active learning methods present higher learning potentials in comparison with traditional teaching methods for most students and are particularly important in the elimination of learning barriers for people with Special Educational Needs.

As presented in this study, the training and professional assignment of the inclusion support agent is still fragile in the Brazilian school. We identified a shortage in studies depicting the training of school inclusion support agent, discrepancies of in-service professional training, lack of clear delimitation of actions and skill gaps for each

staff member. The presentation of these vulnerabilities aims show the realm of the available perspectives as research and fields of action to improve inclusion in schools. Therefore, the criticisms presented here reflect that the beginning of an inclusive process has been established however, a lot has still to be done and reflect the possibilities for professional improvement. Finally, the adequate preparation in active learning methodologies, in addition to the training of these professionals, will help provide real learning and socialization scenarios of students with Special Educational Needs and allow schools and universities to fully achieve their educational objectives.

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