REPORT OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE IN REMOTE EDUCATION DURING THE PANDEMIC WITH A SUBJECT WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)

RELATO DE EXPERIÊNCIA DOCENTE NA ATUAÇÃO NO ENSINO REMOTO DURANTE A PANDEMIA COM UM SUJEITO COM TRANSTORNO DO ESPECTRO AUTISTA (TEA)

INFORME DE EXPERIENCIA DOCENTE EN EDUCACIÓN REMOTA DURANTE LA PANDEMIA CON UN SUJETO CON TRASTORNO ESPECTRO AUTISTA (TEA)

Relma Urel Carbone CARNEIRO1
Carla Ramos de PAULA2

ABSTRACT: The pandemic caused by Covid-19 is leading to an international health crisis with impacts in all social spheres, and education has been drastically affected. Classes in general have been unable to take place in person, and remote teaching has emerged as a possibility in the new scenario. This article reports a teaching experience in the pandemic context; it is a qualitative study, developed from a semi-structured interview with a primary school teacher. The objective of the work is to present a report of teaching experience in dealing with a subject with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in a public school in Cascavel/PR. Throughout this study, we show how inclusion has been materialized in a positive way in educational practice. In summary, the theme of inclusion in the pandemic context needs to be discussed, in the search for the realization of possibilities that favor humanizing formative experiences to the subject with disabilities.


RESUMO: A pandemia ocasionada pelo Covid-19 está protagonizando uma crise sanitária internacional com impactos em todas as esferas sociais, e a educação tem sido afetada drasticamente. As aulas de modo geral foram impossibilitadas de acontecer presencialmente e o ensino remoto surgiu como uma possibilidade no novo cenário. Este artigo relata uma experiência docente no contexto pandêmico; trata-se de um estudo de abordagem qualitativa, desenvolvido a partir de uma entrevista semiestruturada com uma professora do Ensino Fundamental I. O objetivo do trabalho é apresentar um relato de experiência docente na atuação com um sujeito com Transtorno do Espectro Autista (TEA) em uma escola pública de Cascavel/PR.

1 São Paulo State University (UNESP), Araraquara – SP – Brazil. Professor of the Department of Educational Psychology. Doctorate in Special Education (UFSCAR). ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8961-3617. E-mail: relma.urel@unesp.br
2 São Paulo State University (UNESP), Araraquara – SP – Brazil. Doctoral student in the Postgraduate Program in School Education. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1218-4911. E-mail: carla.paula@unesp.br
Evidenciamos ao longo desse estudo como a inclusão tem sido materializada em uma práxis educativa de modo positivo. Em síntese, a temática inclusão no contexto pandêmico precisa ser discutida, na busca pela concretização de possibilidades que favoreçam experiências formativas humanizadoras ao sujeito com deficiência.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Inclusão. Transtorno do Espectro Autista. Pandemia.

**RESUMEN:** La pandemia causada por Covid-19 está provocando una crisis sanitaria internacional con repercusiones en todas las esferas sociales, y la educación se ha visto drásticamente afectada. Las clases, en general, no han podido ser presenciales y la enseñanza a distancia ha surgido como una posibilidad en el nuevo escenario. Este artículo relata una experiencia docente en el contexto de la pandemia; se trata de un estudio de enfoque cualitativo, desarrollado a partir de una entrevista semiestructurada a un profesor de Escuela Primaria. El objetivo del trabajo es presentar un informe de experiencia docente en la actuación con un sujeto con Trastorno del Espectro Autista (TEA) en una escuela pública de Cascavel/PR. A lo largo de este estudio destacamos cómo la inclusión se ha materializado en una praxis educativa de forma positiva. En resumen, el tema de la inclusión en el contexto pandémico necesita ser discutido, en la búsqueda de la realización de posibilidades que favorezcan experiencias formativas humanizantes al sujeto con discapacidad.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Inclusión. Trastorno del espectro autista. Pandemia.

**Introduction**

The present article aims to present a report of teaching experience with a subject with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)\(^3\) in a public school in Cascavel/PR, which has been happening in the context of a pandemic\(^4\) remotely.

There have been many changes in society until reaching the idea present nowadays that disability does not exclude from the subject the possibility of humanization (BARROCO, 2007).

The Federal Constitution of 1988, in Art. 205, highlights education as a **right of all** and a duty of the State and the family. Further, in Art. 208, §§ 1 and 2, we can see that the law asserts the access to compulsory and free education as a subjective public right, and the failure to offer compulsory education by the public sphere, or offering it

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\(^3\) Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a complex developmental condition involving persistent challenges with social communication, restricted interests, and repetitive behavior (AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION, 2018).

\(^4\) Due to Covid-19, an acute respiratory infection caused by the SARS-COV-2 coronavirus (BRASIL, 2021), classes in different stages of Brazilian education are predominantly being held outside of class.
irregularly, implies responsibility on the part of the competent authority (BRASIL, 1988).

According to the law, education is an inalienable right for all subjects without distinction. According to Cury (2002), this right is a prerogative of the individual, indispensable for the constitution of his or her personality and citizenship.

The Law of Directives and Bases of National Education (LDB), in Article 58 of Chapter V, points to Special Education as the type of schooling offered preferably in the regular education system, for students with disabilities, global developmental disorders and high abilities or giftedness (BRASIL, 1996). It is known that the LDB is a milestone in Brazilian education and that the document brought many advances regarding Special Education by delimiting a chapter of the law to discuss the issue.

Moreover, there is the 2008 National Policy for Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education, a document that aims to ensure the school inclusion of Special Education Target Students (PAEE) through guidance to education systems, seeking policies that promote quality education for all subjects (BRASIL, 2008).

In this scenario, another important document is the Brazilian Law of Inclusion of the Person with Disability (Statute for Persons with Disabilities), Law No. 13.146/2015. It is a law that aims to ensure and promote the exercise of rights and freedoms of the person with disabilities. The law contemplates a chapter entitled "Of the right to Education". In article 27, we visualize:

> Education is the right of the person with disabilities, ensured by an inclusive educational system at all levels and learning throughout life, to achieve the maximum possible development of their talents and physical, sensory, intellectual, and social abilities, according to their characteristics, interests and learning needs (BRASIL, 2015, Art. 27, our translation).

In our brief look at some official documents, we have shown how Special Education has been addressed by law. We know that there is a distance between a discourse manifested in the law and the reality materialized in the educational praxis. However, we agree with Carneiro (2016) when he points out that although practices are not changed by decrees, legal documents are important elements, because they are

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5 The subjective public right clearly explains the substantive and legal link between the objective (duty of the State) and the subjective (right of the person). In practice, this means that the holder of a subjective public right is assured the defense, protection, and immediate enforcement of a right, even when denied (CURY, 2002, p. 21, our translation).
collection mechanisms and through them, we can claim compliance with the legal provisions.

In this sense, we intend, throughout this article, to report a teaching experience in acting with a subject with ASD in the pandemic context.

**Material and method**

This work used a qualitative approach: it is an experience report, in which data collection occurred through a semi-structured interview and the instrument used was a script with twelve questions. The interviewee was a teacher who works in the early years of elementary school with a student with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

We emphasize that the interview took place virtually via audio recording synchronously through the WhatsApp application, and the analysis of the data collected was based on Bardin's Content Analysis (2016).

After transcribing the data collected, we organized the interviews based on a few categories to proceed with the analyses, which were: student interaction, teaching and learning process, family-school relationship, and conception of inclusion.

The interview in question was conducted with a teacher who teaches the early years of elementary school. The participant has nine years of experience in Elementary Education and currently teaches a second-grade class. However, this is the first time she is working with a special education student in her classroom.

**Autistic Spectrum Disorder in the curriculum of the Cascavel public municipal network**

The municipal school system of Cascavel-PR has its own curriculum, entitled "Curriculum for the Municipal Public Network of Cascavel". In this document, we find the theoretical foundations and philosophical assumptions of education; historical and legal aspects of elementary education; conception of evaluation; theoretical assumptions for the education of people with disabilities and the curricular organization of the subjects.

Regarding the item theoretical assumptions for the education of people with disabilities, we see listed the sub-items: intellectual disability, visual impairment,
hearing impairment, physical disability, multiple disabilities, global developmental disorders and high abilities or giftedness. In each section of the sub-items, there is a presentation on the educational services provided in Cascavel and the schooling and development of PAEE students in that context.

The curriculum asserts that human development happens through social relationships, and that the educational task "should be based on the possibility of schooling of these subjects" (CASCAVEL, 2008, p. 110, our translation). As exposed in the curriculum, the student with ASD is understood from its totality and not focusing on its disability, therefore the quality schooling of this subject is defended.

Regarding the teacher's sphere, the curriculum emphasizes the importance of continuous teacher training, and stresses that to teach an individual with ASD "it is necessary that the teacher be a specialized person, well prepared, technically and emotionally, instrumentalized to permanently enable the development of appropriate actions" (CASCAVEL, 2008, p. 111, our translation).

In this way, according to the document, the emphasis placed on the profile of the teacher expected to work with this student reveals a teacher who has theoretical and practical knowledge, enabling the implementation of actions that promote the interaction of the subject and meaningful learning.

The curriculum also emphasizes that the social function of the school is the socialization of historically accumulated knowledge, and that education can become a tool that enables the global development of this subject (CASCAVEL, 2008).

We notice that the curriculum explicitly defends the importance of the teacher's action and the school's performance in the development of the student with ASD, as well as the defense of an education from the perspective of a humanizing process of the student subject.

**Inclusion in the context of remote education**

We point out that the municipality where the teacher works chose to offer teaching through remote and printed activities during the pandemic period, as reported in the Secretariat of Education's channel. The participant interviewed holds weekly meetings via the *Google Meet* platform with the second-grade class in which she teaches.
It is known that discussing education in this specific moment of pandemic requires us to consider the implications that this crisis caused by the virus has brought to the educational sphere. Since our experience report is immersed in this context, it is essential to understand the background in question.

In-person classes in most institutions around the country and the world have been suspended, the hybrid model has been implemented in some situations, and remote classes have emerged as an alternative.

Moreira and Schlemmer (2020) define remote teaching as a teaching modality that presupposes the geographic distancing of teachers and students, in view of the restrictions imposed by the Coronavirus, and this has the character of exceptionality, that is, employed in an emergency manner.

We cannot romanticize remote learning, as we know the many inequalities present in our country, where many students do not have the minimum conditions and equipment to participate in a class in the remote model. Thus, a very careful reading of the interests surrounding remote teaching is necessary, as well as the type of education that has been offered in this controversial scenario. In other words:

In remote 'teaching' we are left with little teaching, little learning, little content, little time, little dialog. On the other hand, we have many tasks. On the students' side, they supposedly become 'autonomous' and go in search of their own knowledge, overwhelmed with the multiplication of readings, videos, podcasts, webinars, etc. (SAVIANI; GALVÃO, 2021, p. 42, our translation).

Saviani and Galvão's (2021) position is extremely important, as it helps us reflect on remote education from a critical perspective of society. We agree with the aforementioned authors and believe that the quality of teaching and the way education is being offered need to be the central issues when initiatives with emphasis on the remote model are materialized.

We point out that remote teaching is not the most appropriate model to think and discuss the process of inclusion of a student. However, reflecting on how a pedagogical praxis has been carried out becomes an interesting movement to (re)think about possibilities and, perhaps, discuss other alternatives that can materialize a quality educational process to the student with special needs.
Student interaction in the teacher's view

Because face-to-face classes could not be continued, the classes in the city of Cascavel-PR during the period in which this study7 took place were held remotely via Google Meet, a tool that allows online synchronous meetings by sharing audio and video.

One of the questions included in the semi-structured questionnaire asked if the teacher considered the regular classroom the ideal place to attend the student. The teacher, when answering affirmatively, brought up some relevant issues to (re)think the remote teaching, as we can see in the excerpt below:

_I think so, because that is the place where he will be interacting more with the other classmates. Even talking to the mother she said that it was better when the classes were in person, because at home he is the younger one, his brothers are all grown up, all adults, so he has no contact with other children, in his case I also think it would be better for his interaction._

From the teacher's speech, the Google Meet classes have proven to be a tool that has enabled the implementation of the teaching and learning process in this chaotic scenario. When we discuss and get into a specific case like the one in question, we see the importance of the classes during the pandemic period in the student's academic life, since the school environment is one of the only possible places for him to interact with other children.

We note from the excerpt that the student's family and the teacher consider face-to-face teaching as the most appropriate way to conduct classes. It is a consensus that remote teaching reduces some distances, that is, it allows some educational experiences to be carried out. However, at the same time, it imposes other limits, for example, the democratization of access to classes. According to the teacher, remote teaching cannot satisfactorily meet all the demands of the teaching and learning process.

When asked about the student's interaction with other colleagues, the teacher points out:

_So. Now, remotely, it's very complicated. But I see that, as his mother said, he likes to enter the Google Meet classes to see his classmates, but there is one classmate that he likes the most, you know. So, the_
interaction is only on Google Meet. Then, as he speaks very little, he speaks only the essentials. But being in the present class, he is interacting.

This excerpt from the interview shows that in the teacher's perception the student with ASD is interacting in some way through the online tool. It is impossible to measure the quality of the content of this interaction via Google Meet. The teacher's speech, and the analysis of the answers in general, shows an understanding of the student emphasizing his potentials and not his difficulties. Therefore, the line "he is interacting" reveals the work that the teacher has done with this student, as well as the theoretical framework adopted by the Cascavel curriculum, a teaching and learning process guided by the search for possibilities.

Teaching and learning process

When asked about finding the learning of the SEN student satisfactory, the teacher pointed out:

Yes, I consider it satisfactory. Until the present moment, it was very light, you know, the mother collaborates a lot, you know, what we talk to her, she is a very receptive person, you know. I had been worried, but then I saw that in his case, because each student is specific, it is in a different way, but I found it very easy.

It is clear that the student, according to the teacher's answer, has had a good academic performance, that is, he has appropriated the proposed contents, which we consider as something positive in this new scenario.

Education as a right of all students imposes the requirement not only of more places, schools, teachers, but also a pedagogical practice that is challenged by the difference, because the ideal of equality goes through the recognition of difference (CARNEIRO; DALL'ACQUA; CARAMORI2018, p. 200, our translation).

In this way, the pedagogical work revealed by the teacher interviewed when she said that the learning has been satisfactory expresses a work guided by the recognition of differences in the teaching and learning process.

According to the city's curriculum: "[...] the schooling process allows them to progress in their learning, and some even manage to overcome their own difficulties in the sphere of socialization" (CASCAVEL, 2008, p. 108, our translation). We infer that
the teacher's speech is in accordance with the curriculum, since, from the teacher's perspective, her student is interacting with other classmates and her learning was considered satisfactory, i.e., the student is appropriating the contents that were worked on.

We highlight in the teacher's speech the importance of remote classes, because considering learning as a process implies in discussing the way education for the subject has been offered during the pandemic period. Thus, the case analyzed reflects a specific reality that, in turn, reveals a pedagogical work committed to the appropriation of school contents by the student, and, therefore, is in line with the discourse present in the curriculum proposal of the municipality.

The family-school relationship

One of the interview questions was about the teacher's contact with the student's family. Throughout the answers it was explicit, as in the question discussed above, that the family and the teacher have a close relationship, as we can see in the excerpt below:

So the contact is more by video call and when the mother goes to pick up the activities, but usually only the mother goes. So besides Google meet with colleagues, once a week I and the pedagogical support teacher (PAP) talk to him individually to help him [...] But it is a very good contact and the family is very participatory, you know, the mother in the beginning we talked to her about what he liked most and she said he liked that character Sonic, but then we were researching and in activities we always put a sticker, we made a Sonic notebook for him so he was loosening up more.

According to the report, the teacher has sought to develop a partnership with the student's family, and this attitude reflects positively on the development of the teaching and learning process of the student.

It is known that the family participation in the student's academic life is essential for a good school performance. Thus, we list the relationship between family and school in this study as a positive aspect to be highlighted.

In Cascavel's curriculum, it is highlighted that teachers, family and other students need to assimilate that the school needs to work with an emphasis on the possibility of schooling for the individual with disabilities (CASCHEVEL, 2008). Therefore, we see that the family is understood as an important element in the student's schooling process. In this direction, we observe the approximation between the
discourse set in the curriculum and the teaching practice, which materializes as a unique experience.

Conception of inclusion

Regarding the concept of inclusion, one of the questions asked how the teacher sees the inclusion of PAEE students, in general, in regular education. The teacher's answer allowed us to make some inferences about the issue, and showed how peers in the school understand inclusion:

So, in general, we see a lot of concern... when there is going to be a student it is quite concerning, at our school we have a lot of Haitian students, so it's more like a language issue and special education students, it's been a while since we had any, you know. So, in general, I saw a lot of comments from teachers saying that it was difficult and so on. That's why, when a student comes, we get so worried. But, I think it's more about our lack of knowledge.

From what the teacher said, we note how the school culture is still stuck in a very limited discourse about the education of students targeted for Special Education. We have been discussing and problematizing Inclusive Education for years, however, it is clear that there is still a lack of knowledge about the inclusion process, seen as a "difficult and worrisome" task.

The excerpt above reveals how challenging the debate around Inclusive Education is in society. In our experience report, we see a teacher who is working for the first time with a student targeted for Special Education, listening to her professional colleagues talking about empowerment and exclusion.

In this sense, the speech "I do not feel prepared to work with a PAEE student" is common in the speech of many teachers of Basic Education (FERREIRA, CARNEIRO, 2016; SILVA, CARNEIRO, 2016), which reveals a school culture in transformation and at the same time static.

It is important to highlight in the teacher's speech the presence of a different attitude, as she signals her concern with knowledge. That is, we can see a different conception from the one expressed in the colleagues' speech and that circulates in the school where she works, which, in turn, reveals that it is in line with the way the curriculum guides the work with the student, as a subject with potential.
In this sense, it is pointed out in the municipality's curriculum that it is necessary "to identify and lead to the appropriation of human wealth, objectified in different ways and in different elaborations, constitutes a guideline for the education of people with disabilities" (CASCAVEL, 2008, p. 57, our translation).

Thus, access to quality education is a fundamental condition for the subject and, therefore, the discussion of the conception of inclusion is an interesting aspect, since it guides a certain pedagogical praxis, while a certain pedagogical praxis reveals an underlying theoretical conception.

Although the teacher did not explicitly mark her conception of inclusion in this question, throughout the analysis of the answers we could see the ethical, political, and pedagogical commitment of the teacher in the search for a meaningful work with the student with ASD.

We agree with Barroco (2007) when discussing Vygotsky's famous phrase that good teaching is what advances development: "Good schooling and good teaching should be for everyone, for people with and without disabilities, since through them they can advance in their humanization processes" (BARROCO, 2007, p. 388, our translation).

In this sense, a good teaching must be thought in any context, including the pandemic context. Therefore, the discussion proposed in this paper allowed an approach to a given reality and provided reflections on an educational practice that has been carried out in a productive and positive way.

**Final considerations**

In this article we present a report of teaching experience in working with a subject with ASD, enrolled in the Early Years of Elementary School, based on an interview conducted with a teacher. To do so, we highlight some legal landmarks of Brazilian Special Education to draw a brief overview of the discourses echoed by the laws.

We glimpse how education has been woven into the pandemic scenario when dialoguing with the theme of remote education, as well as how the education of students with ASD is presented in the curriculum of the city of Cascavel.

Finally, we discuss some categories of analysis from the interview with the teacher, which are: student interaction, teaching and learning process, family and school
relationship, and conception of inclusion, relating it to the discourse present in the curriculum.

In summary, during the course of this work, we verified an essentially positive experience with inclusion in the remote learning model. However, we emphasize that this is a singular experience, which does not serve as a parameter for other places and teaching formats, and thus should not be generalized.

We emphasize that the way the inclusion of the student with ASD has been materialized reveals the dialogue with the theoretical assumptions of the Cascavel curriculum, therefore illustrating the quality with which it has been carried out, as evidenced by the analysis of the interview with the teacher.

The present study pointed out the relevance of the problematization about inclusion in this new scenario, once we could approach a model of educational reality and, based on it, reflect on the positive and negative aspects, as well as the limits and possibilities that involve remote teaching nowadays.

We see that (re)thinking about inclusion in the pandemic is a challenge, just as it is evident in the face-to-face teaching model. Therefore, alternatives and possibilities should be discussed and problematized in educational institutions and macro spheres of society, seeking to offer and implement a quality education to the target student of Special Education during the pandemic period.

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Responsible for the translation: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.
English version by: Alexander Vinicius Leite da Silva - ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4672-8799.