





THE ROLE OF THE SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL IN THE INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH THEA: A STUDY IN A SCHOOL IN RONDÔNIA

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Abstract

This research addresses the issue of professional support for the inclusion of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The main research question is: what is the role of the professional supporting the inclusion of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in a municipal public school located in the state of Rondônia (RO)? The general objective is to analyze the role of this professional. Using survey procedures and document analysis, data was collected from the recruitment notice and the Pedagogical Project, as well as interviews with five social educators (ES), and interpreted using content analysis. The main results and discussion were: I) the legal provisions governing specialized support professionals for students with ASD, but the participating institution requires the professional to have completed elementary school as a minimum requirement to be hired; II) it was identified that each of them accompanied a student with ASD, and through continuing education they received guidance for their work; III) it was found that, even without specialized training, the SEs accompanied the pedagogical activities in the classroom, helping students with ASD to participate and carry out the tasks proposed by the teacher in charge.

Keywords: Special education; Inclusive education; Social educator; Support professional; Autism spectrum disorder.

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O PAPEL DO PROFISSIONAL DE APOIO NA INCLUSÃO DO ESTUDANTE COM TEA: UM ESTUDO EM UMA ESCOLA DE RONDÔNIA

Resumo: Esta pesquisa aborda a temática do profissional de apoio à inclusão do estudante com Transtorno do Espectro Autista (TEA). A questão principal da investigação é: qual o papel do profissional de apoio à inclusão do estudante com Transtorno do Espectro Autista (TEA) em uma escola pública municipal localizada no Estado de Rondônia (RO)? Apresenta como objetivo geral analisar o papel deste profissional. A partir dos procedimentos da pesquisa de levantamento e análise documental, os dados foram coletados no Edital de contratação e Projeto Pedagógico, além de entrevista com cinco educadores sociais (ES), e interpretados por meio da análise de conteúdo. Tem como principais resultados e discussão: I) evidenciou-se que as disposições legais que regem sobre o profissional especializado de apoio ao estudante com TEA, porém na instituição participante exige que o profissional tenha como requisito mínimo Ensino Fundamental completo para ser contratado; II) identificou-se que cada um deles acompanhava um aluno com TEA, e por meio da formação continuada recebiam orientações para seu trabalho; III) verificou-se que, mesmo sem formação especializada, os ES acompanhavam as atividades pedagógicas em sala de aula auxiliando os alunos com TEA para que eles participem e realizem as tarefas propostas pela professora regente.

Palavras-chave: Educação especial; Educação inclusiva; Educador social; Profissional de apoio; Transtorno do espectro autista.

EL PAPEL DEL PROFESIONAL DE SOPORTE EN LA INCLUSIÓN DE ALUMNOS CON TEA: UN ESTUDIO EN UNA ESCUELA DE RONDÔNIA

Resumen: Esta investigación aborda la cuestión del apoyo profesional a la inclusión de alumnos con Trastorno del Espectro Autista (TEA). La pregunta principal de la investigación es: ¿cuál es el papel del profesional de apoyo a la inclusión de alumnos con Trastorno del Espectro Autista (TEA) en una escuela pública municipal situada en el estado de Rondônia (RO)? El objetivo general es analizar el papel de este profesional. Utilizando procedimientos de encuesta y análisis documental, se recogieron datos del anuncio de contratación y del Proyecto Pedagógico, así como entrevistas con cinco educadores sociales (ES), y se interpretaron mediante análisis de contenido. Los principales resultados y discusión fueron: I) las disposiciones legales regulan el apoyo profesional especializado para alumnos con TEA, pero la institución participante exige que el profesional haya concluido la enseñanza primaria como requisito mínimo para ser contratado; II) se identificó que cada uno de ellos acompañaba a un alumno con TEA, y a través de la formación continua recibían orientación para su trabajo; III) se constató que, incluso sin formación especializada, los ES acompañaban las actividades pedagógicas en el aula, ayudando a los alumnos con TEA a participar y realizar las tareas propuestas por el profesor regular.

Palabras clave: Educación especial; Educación inclusiva; Educador social; Profesional de apoyo; Trastorno del espectro autista.

Introduction

This research addresses the topic related to Special Education, with a focus on the perspective of Inclusive Education, concerning the educational aspects involved in the inclusion process of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in regular classrooms.

When contextualizing education from an inclusive perspective, the National Policy on Special Education from the Inclusive Perspective (Brazil, 2008) indicates that it is necessary to rethink certain aspects that must be considered to meet the learning needs of all students, namely: physical structure, human resources, didactic resources, pedagogical practices, among others.

Regarding the National Policy on Special Education from the Inclusive Perspective, Dupin and Silva (2020) understand that its main objective is to collaborate and ensure that everyone has access to quality education, as well as to guarantee the permanence of students who are part of the target audience of special education within an inclusive education perspective.

Inclusive Education, in turn, refers to a perspective aimed at ensuring the right to education for all (Prais, 2020). According to Vioto (2022, p. 28), it “[...] implies a change [...], in such a way as to enable all individuals to have adequate educational opportunities while respecting their individuality throughout the entire learning process, as well as the inherent limitations of each individual.” Thus, a school that reevaluates its strategies, physical structures, and available materials, as well as the inclusion practices of professionals in the classroom and specialized support staff, is on the path to becoming an inclusive school (Vioto & Vitaliano, 2019).

Taking into account the provisions of the legislation, Special Education (SE) is a modality and a right, according to the Law of Guidelines and Bases (LDB) No. 9.394/96 (Brazil, 1996), in its Article 59, item III, which states: “[...] free specialized educational services for students with disabilities, global developmental disorders, and high abilities or giftedness [...] preferably within the regular education system.” Thus, there should be no exceptions for a student with ASD.

ASD is a neurodevelopmental disorder, comprising a set of diverse characteristics, such as atypical behaviors that often impair communication, social life, and lead to restricted and repetitive behaviors (APA, 2014).

With Brazilian Law No. 12.764 of December 2012, in its Article 1, it is stated that “This Law establishes the National Policy for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder and sets guidelines for its implementation,” identifying ASD as part of the target audience of SE (Brazil, 2012).

The same law includes in its Article 2 the provision that, in cases of proven necessity, “a person with autism spectrum disorder included in regular education classrooms, under the terms of Article 2, item IV, will have the right to a specialized assistant” (Brazil, 2012).

For inclusion to be successful, it is essential that the professional is trained to meet the specific needs of students, as argued by Lima and Halick (2023). Furthermore, it is crucial that the professional has knowledge of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and its particularities (Lima & Halick, 2023).

This right is related to the process of analyzing the special educational needs (SEN) of each student, taking into account the level of support necessary for their learning. According to the DSM-V (APA, 2014, p. 52), ASD is classified into levels, with specifications for each level, which are presented in the following table.

Table 1 – Levels of Support for Assisting Individuals with ASD

Levels of Support	Social Communication	Restricted and Repetitive Behaviors
Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the absence of support, deficits in social communication cause noticeable impairments. - Difficulty initiating social interactions and clear examples of atypical or unsuccessful responses to social approaches from others. - May appear to have reduced interest in social interactions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Behavioral inflexibility significantly interferes with functioning in one or more contexts. - Difficulty switching activities. - Problems with organization and planning create obstacles to independence.
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Severe deficits in verbal and nonverbal social communication skills. - Apparent social impairments even in the presence of support. - Limited ability to initiate social interactions and reduced or abnormal responses to social approaches from others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Behavioral inflexibility, difficulty coping with change, or other restricted/repetitive behaviors occur frequently enough to be obvious to casual observers and interfere with functioning across various contexts. - Distress and/or difficulty shifting focus or actions.
Level 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Severe deficits in verbal and nonverbal social communication skills cause serious functional impairments, with great limitations in initiating social interactions and minimal response to social approaches from others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extreme behavioral inflexibility, severe difficulty coping with change, or other restricted/repetitive behaviors significantly interfere with functioning in all areas. - Severe distress/difficulty in shifting focus or actions.

Source: (APA, 2014, p. 52).

According to the DSM-V (APA, 2014), level 1, considered mild, only requires support if there is a need for assistance to adapt to the new more easily. Ferreira Filho (2023, p. 7) describes "with support level 1, the level of dependence on another adult for most tasks is low". The greatest deficits are, therefore, in communication difficulties.

At level 2, it is understood as moderate, Ferreira Filho (2023, p. 8) contemplates in his writing "[...] communication difficulties can gain more accentuated contours... Such as, for example, the lack of verbalization [...]. In some issues, the autistic person with support 2 can achieve progress and even independence".

At level 3, which is classified as severe or profound, due to its characteristics presenting a set of somewhat higher difficulties and undoubtedly requiring support, Ferreira Filho (2023, p. 8) completes "[...] support 3 is the one that will hardly gain any independence, as they need help even in basic daily tasks".

We understand that it is through evaluation that it is proven that there is a need for a support professional to accompany the student with ASD in the school environment so that through this collaboration their peculiarities can be met, providing good school development (Bezerra, 2021; Brites; Brites, 2019; Cunha, 2017).

When referring to ASD, there is much talk about its peculiarities and, therefore, it is questioned whether there is really a preparation of the school environment, of the professionals involved so that students with ASD can have their learning needs met, as advocated by the perspective of inclusive education (Angelo, 2021; Barberini, 2016; Dias, 2019).

In this sense, Barbosa et al. (2020, p. 143) understand "[...] that the pedagogical work of the support teachers with the other students in the class should not occur only in specialized care, but also in the regular classroom". To have unity between the work developed to support the learning process of students with ASD. Based on this context, this investigation starts from the problematization: What is the role of the support professional for the inclusion of the student with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in a municipal public school located in the State of Rondônia? From this, the central objective is to analyze the role of the support professional in the inclusion of the student with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Method

For the development of this study, survey research and document analysis procedures were adopted.

The survey research sought to understand the perceptions of a specific group about the investigated phenomenon, considering their experiences and understandings (Marconi; Lakatos, 1990). The document analysis, according to Marconi and Lakatos (1990), involved the exploration of documentary sources to highlight relationships between the phenomenon and other factors.

This study is part of the project "Formative Dialogues between the University, Basic Education and Special Education for the Inclusion of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)", linked to the Research Group on Public Policies, Inclusive Education and Pedagogical Accessibility of the Amazon (GPAM), with approval from the Research Ethics Committee (CEP), opinion nº 5.706.978.

The research was conducted in a Municipal School of Early Childhood Education and Elementary School in Rondônia, chosen for having the largest number of students with ASD in 2023. The objective was to gather perceptions of social educators about their work with students with ASD. In total, seven social educators were at the school in the year of the research, five participated voluntarily after authorization from the management team. To ensure confidentiality, the participants were identified with the acronyms SE and numbering (SE-1, SE-2, ... SE-5). For the realization of the document analysis, two documents were selected, described in Table 2.

Quadro 2 – Fontes documentais

Federation Unit	Document	Year of publication
RONDÔNIA	Projeto Pedagógico (PP) da escola participante	2021
RONDÔNIA	Edital N° 002/2023 - processo de seleção - educador social	2023

Source: Prepared by the authors (2024).

In addition to the documents, an individual interview was conducted, using a script composed of 20 questions that covered: identification data, education and work, student with ASD, care planning, and educational inclusion and professional practice. The interpretation of the data from the documentary sources and transcriptions of the participants' speeches was carried out through the Content Analysis of Bardin (2011, p. 45) which refers to “[...] a set of methodological instruments in constant improvement, which apply to extremely diverse discourses (contents and continents)”.

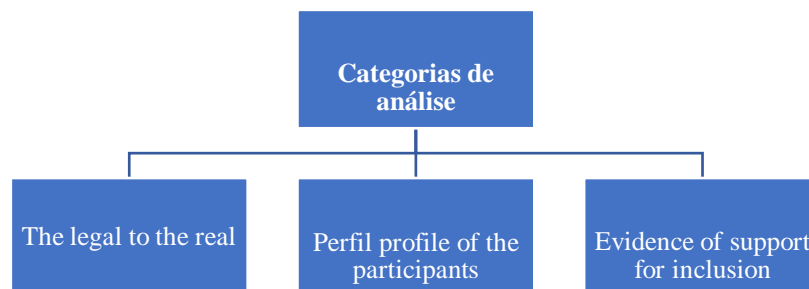
Bardin (2011) classifies content analysis into three phases: I) pre-analysis, II) exploration of the material, and III) the treatment of results. Evidently, content analysis allows

us to organize the collected data into categories, simplifying what is necessary from the objective that was defined in the research."

Results and Discussion

In this section, we present the results and discussion, with the data organized into three categories defined a posteriori based on the content analysis technique.

Figure 1 - Categorization of the research data



Source: Prepared by the authors (2024).

a) From the Legal to the Real

In the Pedagogical Project (Ariquemes, 2021) of the participating school, we identified that the institution has a Multifunctional Resource Room (SRM) intended to serve target students of Special Education through weekly sessions held opposite to the common class enrollment schedule. According to the school's Pedagogical Project, this specialized service is planned; however, it is noteworthy that, in total, the institution had 45 students enrolled in the year the research was conducted, distributed across morning and afternoon classes, and the teacher contracted for the SRM had a 20-hour weekly workload of effective work.

Thus, we highlight that the relationship between these data suggests a perception of inadequacy in quantity/quality for the specialized educational services offered in the SRM. Additionally, this relationship directly affects the (im)possibility of collaborative work between the SRM and common classes among professionals involved in the inclusion process of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Barbosa et al. (2020) argue that support for students with ASD should not be limited to the Specialized Educational Service (AEE) room. Support professionals must be prepared to

collaborate with the lead teacher, intervening in diverse situations, ensuring continuous support, integrating with the class, and employing adequate pedagogical strategies and practices.

Dias (2019) states that the permanence and development of students with ASD depend on the accompaniment of a professional designated by the school. Barberini (2016) argues that, although regular classroom teachers attempt to include specialized support for students with ASD, adapted teaching techniques and planning often exceed their capacities. Barberini (2016) advocates that it is essential for educational systems and institutions to ensure the presence of a specialized companion to guarantee this right.

We identified that, in the participating school, students with ASD have a professional accompanying them in the common class, termed a Social Educator (SE). Analyzing Notice No. 002/2023 (Ariquemes, 2023), which addresses the selection process for SEs, the minimum requirement for hiring is a complete high school education. Regarding this professional's workload, Notice No. 002/2023 specifies a ten-month contract, extendable, with a 22-hour weekly workload. Additionally, Notice No. 002/2023 (Ariquemes, 2023, pp. 1-2) in the hiring section describes the following responsibilities for this professional.

Chart 3 – Responsibilities of the Social Educator as outlined in Notice No. 002/2023

Assist and accompany students with disabilities in school routines; encourage children or adolescents to adopt hygiene habits, good manners, informal education, and health practices;
Awaken a sense of responsibility in students, guiding them in fulfilling their duties;
Assist children or adolescents in extracurricular activities and during recreation periods;
Observe students' behavior during meal times; ensure discipline within educational institutions and surrounding areas;
Assist in the entry and exit of students; be responsible for receiving, distributing, and collecting daily attendance books and other documents related to school activities in each class;
Provide classrooms with essential school supplies; collect and deliver to the school office books, notebooks, and other items forgotten by students;
Collaborate in assisting students in emergency situations, such as accidents or sudden illnesses;
Report to the competent authority any acts related to breaches of discipline or any irregularities observed;
Receive and relay messages;
Perform other similar or related tasks that contribute to the development of education;
Carry out additional tasks when necessary and in accordance with the instructions and assignments from the immediate superior."

Source: Prepared by the authors based on Notice No. 002/2023 (Ariquemes, 2023).

The Notice No. 002/2023 mentions that the professional designated to accompany students with ASD will have broad assignments, but does not specify their role in the teaching and learning process. Coelho (2021) argues that this professional must have pedagogical training to carry out appropriate interventions and meet the specific educational needs of students with ASD in the regular classroom. Barbosa et al. (2020) highlight that, although there are educational policies to expand inclusion, it is necessary to rethink the support for students with ASD, with the lead teacher collaborating more effectively with the support professional. And we understand that, as long as educational policies are not fully implemented, specialization in Specialized Educational Assistance (AEE) will remain limited, and the support professionals will continue to have difficulty understanding their role and limits in their professional practice.

Ferreira Filho (2023) argues that developing teaching strategies for students with ASD is challenging and goes beyond material and curricular adaptations, also requiring attention to the support professional who accompanies the student. Given the importance of this professional for the student with ASD in the regular school environment, it is crucial that schools adopt the best teaching strategies and provide adequate training for the professionals to prepare them for the challenges related to the teaching and learning of these students.

b) Profile and perceptions of the participants

In this category, we present the identification of the research participants. In Table 4, we visualize some information about the ES.

Table 4 – Profile of the research participants

Identification	Age	Gender	How many and which students with ASD do you support at this institution?	Class the student is enrolled in
ES1	23	female	2 Students	2nd grade of elementary school
ES2	21	female	1 Student	Pre-kindergarten I
ES3	26	female	2 Students	2nd grade of elementary school
ES4	50	female	1 Student	1st grade of elementary school
ES4	53	female	2 Students	Pre-kindergarten II

Fonte: Elaborada pelas autoras (2024).

According to the table above, we observe that the average age of the interviewed professionals is thirty-four years and six months, with a variation from twenty-one to fifty-three years. Regarding the professionals' work, it ranges from early childhood education to the 2nd year of elementary school.

Regarding education, we observe that, of the five professionals interviewed, only one has a complete higher education degree and completed a specialization, but without connection to the area in which they are working and/or related to special education.

Dias (2019) emphasizes that support professionals must be qualified and trained to meet the specific educational needs of students with ASD. They must be prepared to provide the necessary support during the learning process, with interventions that help develop the learning abilities of the students.

The ES had an average of nine months and seven days, varying from thirty days to three years, according to the ten-month contract stipulated by the public notice regarding the time of service at the institution. We detected that there is high turnover, and this represents a challenging aspect, given the adaptation process of the student with ASD and the professional training of the ES.

According to Barbosa et al. (2020), for quality specialized support by the support professionals, it is believed that it is not entirely related to how long each one has been working, but rather the path they take to seek and improve teaching strategies to meet the student with ASD.

In the issue referring to the time they have been working at the institution, it does not indicate the quality of these services with students with ASD, it is evident that over time, with the interaction, these professionals can identify the singularities of each of their students with ASD and start to develop better support.

According to the segment of the National Special Education Plan in the inclusive perspective (Brazil, 2008), when proven the need for specialized support, it should be carried out by a specialized professional. Therefore, when analyzing the ES responses, the gap in the issue of training is evident, for such prescribed support in the legislation.

Regarding the essential point we highlighted, in thinking about how the training of these professionals should be, we do not contemplate this right to the student with ASD, the institution, by establishing a support companion without professional preparation, this means that the student with ASD is enrolled, but their educational process in the educational institution is underdeveloped.

When questioning the ES about the offer of courses or training to improve the support for students with ASD, the responses were unanimous in indicating the holding of lectures and the transfer of information. However, ES-2 observed that, although some training is available, its frequency and content depend on the institution's programming and planning. ES-3 reported that, throughout the year, training on special education and inclusion was offered, with plans to offer more courses on topics such as ASD in the future. In summary, the responses suggest that, although there is some educational support, the regularity and depth of training vary according to institutional planning.

We found that, although there is concern from educational institutions, there is a gap between the rights of students with ASD and the reality in schools, where the support from professionals is limited to the SRM and is not present in the regular classroom. Dias (2019) highlights that the lack of specialization of support professionals is concerning because their inadequate pedagogical preparation compromises the ability to meet the specific educational needs of students with ASD.

Evidently, the training brings learning to the ES, in the sense of establishing a connection between the practice of the ES and the theory found to solve possible situations involving the student with ASD in the school context. Therefore, we emphasize that, based on their statements, the ES are having opportunities to train within the educational institutions.

The ES unanimously declared that there is an exchange of information between teachers and ES, as stated by them, whenever there is an opportunity, they converse, exchange information, and discuss the development of the student. In general, the exchange between teachers and ES always happens.

Barberini (2016) in his speech about the regular classroom teacher, as to their main objective, which is to teach their students, and due to concerns about attending to students with ASD, they often feel unprepared. Therefore, these dialogues are very relevant for the exchange of information and advancements in supporting students with ASD.

Evaluating the academic progress of students with ASD requires pedagogical practices adapted to their specific needs. In the ES responses, they indicated that the activities are organized according to these needs. ES-1 and ES-5 reported that they adjust the activities according to the individual needs of the students. ES-2 and ES-3 said they use guidance from the resource room and consider the students' feelings in planning. ES-4 adapts the activities to the time and needs of the student. In summary, the social educators demonstrate an effort to personalize their practices and adequately meet the needs of students with ASD.

Based on the responses obtained, we identified that, although the ES communicate and have dialogue with the lead teacher and the resource room teacher, the policies indicate that it is not just about observing, but recognizing the needs, organizing the pedagogical work with strategies and resources that favor the learning of students with ASD, and this can be achieved with specific training to assist these arrangements in the role they perform.

Vioto (2022) argues that teachers should adopt teaching practices that adequately meet the students in special education and prepare inclusive pedagogical strategies. Additionally, the same author emphasizes the importance of rethinking and adapting methods and activities to ensure they suit the individual needs of the students.

Justifying, Ferreira (2023) believes that the joint work between the teacher, the student with ASD, and the other students in the class is important. He adds that when doing the same activity, inclusion is happening, and through this, the interaction of the student with ASD and the other children can lead to the development of communication in ASD.

In the conception of the proposal that it is the resource room teacher who provides ready-made activities to be carried out with students with ASD, we need to analyze the following point: if the support professional's accompaniment is only focused on assisting the student with ASD in the application of the activities provided by the resource room teacher, regarding planning the activities based on the specific needs of each student with ASD, the ES make it clear that they are not the ones who plan. The planning of the ES is only based on how they will assist in accompanying the students in carrying out the activities.

We analyzed Public Notice No. 002/2023, in which, when describing the duties of the ES, we did not find in their responsibilities that one of them would be planning activities for the student with ASD, contrasting with the role of a specialized professional described in the Brazilian Law No. 12.764 (Brazil, 2012), as the support professional, when properly trained, will make interventions and plan according to the specific needs of their student.

Coelho (2021) in his view believes that the unpreparedness of professionals to serve a student with ASD is visible, and he argues that specialized training becomes indispensable to promote the teaching process. We emphasize how challenging it is for the ES to carry out their roles with students with ASD, due to their unpreparedness in training and the challenges that ASD presents.

Regarding the guidance received to perform their role, the ES inform that they have support from school management, from the municipal administration (municipal education

department), however, they were unanimous in saying that the main guide of their work is the resource room teacher and the exchange of information with the regular classroom teacher.

Cunha (2017) states that it is the role of all professionals in educational institutions to provide guidance regarding the specific educational needs in the school environment. Thus, we believe that for a school to promote education from an inclusive perspective, everyone must be part of it, by guiding, informing, and promoting mediations to provide better learning conditions for students with ASD.

The challenges of providing support and educational services to students with ASD are daily and involve doubts regarding the best teaching strategy, and we do not even need to mention the unpreparedness of support professionals, which is evident in the school observed by the ES. In the following category, we will present evidence of support for inclusion and highlight how strategies are developed to include students with ASD.

c) Evidence of Support for Inclusion

When questioned about the activities developed, whether they have a specific room, and the resources available to support students with ASD, the responses indicated that the support is provided in the classroom, and that resources from the resource room are used when necessary, but they did not mention the use of these resources for task development with the students.

Notably, ES-2 stated that she helps the child in the classroom to improve their quality of life and promote their development and autonomy. She mentioned collaborating with the family and using resources, both provided by the resource room and her own, to support the child's functional learning. On the other hand, ES-3 explained that students with ASD study alongside other students, performing activities similar to those of others or, in some cases, adapted by the resource room. When they face difficulties, the activities are adjusted by the resource room, although many students are able to keep up with the activities alongside their peers.

We highlight in the statements of ES-2 and ES-3, regarding the support they provide to students with ASD, that working in the regular classroom with other students is part of the teaching-learning process in which the student with ASD tends to participate. Regarding the

activities developed by students with ASD, we argue that while the support professional is not prepared in terms of their training, the doubts about the support provided will remain secondary.

However, Dias et al. (2021) argue that, to establish specialized educational support (AE), it is necessary for both the lead teacher and the support professional to exchange ideas and work together in the inclusion process of the student with ASD. Therefore, we acknowledge that the participating institution does provide pedagogical resources, and as stated by ES-2, she also has her own resources, but this does not remove the responsibility that when support is provided to a student with ASD by a companion who knows and masters teaching techniques, it promotes progress in their educational process.

Law No. 12.764 (Brazil, 2012) establishes the role of the specialized professional, who will accompany the lead teacher in the classroom, contributing to prevent what was reported by the ES of the participating school.

When asked about the performance of their students with ASD, the ES presented different perspectives. ES-1, ES-4, and ES-5 highlighted that their students perform well and often surprise them positively. However, ES-2 reported that, although her student has many difficulties, they are making progress, such as improving the ability to hold a pencil and carry out activities with assistance and positive reinforcement. ES-3 observed that her students have shown significant evolution, integrating well with their peers and showing positive and inclusive development, characterizing the progress as “supernormal” and “super inclusive.”

From the ES statements, we observe that they demonstrate commitment in monitoring the AEE of students with ASD, evidenced by the positive report about the educational progress of the students. Angelo (2021) mentions that, although the learning of some students with ASD may be slower, the ES believe that the learning process is going well, with each student developing at their own pace.

In light of this, Dias (2019) defends the statements of the ES that highlight the good performance of their students with ASD, doing their activities in the regular classroom is progress, if we promote the idea that the fact that they carry out an activity in the classroom shows that it is not impossible to include the student with ASD in the regular class.

Regarding the identification of the learning potential of students with ASD and how they seek to know it, ES-1 mentioned that one student faces many difficulties, while the other is quite independent. ES-2 explained that she evaluates the student’s development daily in collaboration with the parents, maintaining good communication to identify areas for improvement. ES-3 stated that she can identify the students' needs and potentialities through

evaluations, studies, and observations from the beginning. ES-4 highlighted that she observes the student's behavior and needs, tries to encourage them, and constantly learns from them. ES-5 observed that one student needs stimulation, while the other is quite dependent on her.

Among the five responses from the ES, we identified that all responses were positive in terms of their ability to identify their students' potentialities. Cunha (2017) emphasizes that it is extremely relevant for the professional to understand the potential of their student. In their descriptions, ES-3 and ES-4 believe that the best way to know their student is to observe them. In a broader way, they believe that if they understand what the students need, they will be able to meet their specific educational needs (NEE) more precisely.

One of the fundamental aspects of the professional's work in education is the practice acquired over experience, which is crucial for the students' development. In the context of students with ASD, the lack of practice in pedagogical intervention, along with the absence of adequate teaching materials, human resources, and appropriate physical structure, can significantly compromise the contribution to the development of these students.

When we questioned the ES about adapted materials, what they would be, and who creates these materials, the responses indicated that there are materials available, provided by the educational institution for students with NEE, but regarding the creation of these materials, they always develop new materials based on the needs or content being worked on by the classroom teacher.

In continuation, regarding the materials mentioned in the previous question, only ES-1 and ES-5 believe that more materials would be necessary. We found that the school provides various teaching materials for each type of support, and these materials are kept in the resource room and are available for the ES to use with students with ASD during their support sessions.

In this sense, Ferreira (2023) argues that, for the inclusion of students with ASD, it is necessary for the professional to be well-guided in their work, with the offer of suitable teaching resources to help in the development of activities.

Regarding the difficulties in developing activities with students with ASD, the ES stated that the main difficulties are the lack of materials and the absence of adequate space (ES-1, ES-5), difficulty in researching and organizing pedagogical activities (ES-2), and the other two responses simply said no.

For the ES of this institution, of the five, one does not feel the need to receive information or guidance for their support. However, two of them would like to have access to the report that presents their student's diagnosis. The other two think it is important to receive

information from their students' parents and guidance from the school. One of the responses analyzed acknowledges the importance of other professionals in assisting the inclusion process for students with ASD, namely ES-2, when mentioning the importance of an occupational therapist to help with some doubts.

Among the five responses from the ES, all agreed that more information about their students is necessary, regarding the report, family information, and individual details, as a way to improve the inclusion process of their student with ASD in the institution. Regarding suggestions, only ES-3 suggested working with patience and care, having a psychologist to provide support, and not concentrating too many students with ASD in the same school.

The suggestions made by them indicate that they would improve the support provided by them to students with ASD. In this segment, we believe that professionals are always open to receiving something that could contribute to their performance as professionals. We noticed that the ES showed interest in learning more about their students with ASD, a fact that is argued by Barbosa and Bezerra (2021), who state that we need to know who our student is to include them.

However, we evaluate the following aspect: the student with ASD in the family context is a matter that could help detect sensory and auditory sensitivities such as clapping, music, balloon popping, and this is something the teacher and caregiver can gather information on and avoid in the classroom when possible. Additionally, it could help identify areas of interest such as music, cars, clay, jelly, dinosaurs, among others, in which the teacher and caregiver could incorporate these preferences into class activities.

As for the report, we observe that it is pertinent for the support professional to know and have access to the student's diagnosis information. Additionally, Vioto (2022) highlights the evidence of collaborative work in the inclusion process of students with ASD in a multidisciplinary network, involving professionals such as pediatricians, neurologists, psychologists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, among others.

Final considerations

Returning to the research problem that delimits this work, namely: what is the role of the support professional in the inclusion of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in a public municipal school located in the State of Rondônia?

We identified that the professional who accompanies the student with ASD in the classroom, known as the Social Educator, does not have specific training to assist and develop activities alongside the students. In parallel, when we delimit the role of the support professional as described in Brazilian legislation, we find that there is, indeed, a specialized support professional in the participating school who works in the resource room, but their support in the regular class is not specialized for performing the role with the student with ASD.

Recognizing that the support provided by a professional is an essential right for students in Special Education, and reflecting on Inclusive Education, we found that in the participating school, the specialized professional works only in the resource room. Ideally, this support should occur daily in the regular classroom.

Our objective was to identify this professional according to the specific learning needs of students with ASD, ensuring their inclusion in the daily activities of the regular classroom. Although the institution offers training, our research focuses on the need for appropriate support to ensure the effective inclusion of these students. The lack of an adequate set of methodologies and teaching techniques compromises the effective inclusion of students with ASD in school practice.

We analyzed the role of the support professional in the inclusion of students with ASD in a municipal school, highlighting its relevance for the inclusion process within the school setting for students with ASD. The support professional provides interventions and practices to meet the individual educational needs (NEEs) of the student with ASD, favoring their teaching, learning, and inclusion.

In the development of the research, one of the difficulties encountered was the concern regarding the support professional, as we found in educational policies the specifications that govern this professional, including their training.

One of the relationships that should be considered in the support provided to students with ASD in the regular classroom is whether the educational institution offers a support professional, and what teaching practices are developed between the lead teachers and the support professionals. We believe that this work for inclusion is collaborative and should not be inclusion by exclusion. To achieve effective inclusion, the collaborative effort between the school, the family, and the state is necessary for the inclusion of students with ASD.

Therefore, given the relevance of collaborative work, we must understand that situations in the classroom arise and that mediation will only be well-assisted if the professional is truly trained to intervene. We leave the following question for future research, which was not

addressed but shows relevance: the issue of the training of these support professionals. If the law establishes the specialized professional and mentions their training, what can we do to act in this scenario full of controversies?

When considering inclusive education, it is essential to analyze the particularities of each student. For students with ASD, it is crucial to improve knowledge and understand that inclusion goes beyond school enrollment, actually happening with the student's effective learning, which depends significantly on the presence of a specialized support professional. It is hoped that this research contributes to the reflection of educators on how to implement inclusive practices, encouraging planning and organization with a special focus on the role of the support professional in the school context.

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