

School inclusion support professionals: who are and what are these new actors in the educational scenario?

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ABSTRACT

The study is a part of the dissertation published by the author, whose general objective was to describe and analyze the profile and performance of school inclusion support professionals in different municipal contexts, involving five municipalities, three in the state of Bahia and two in the state of São Paulo. Thirty school inclusion support professionals participated in the study, through focus groups. The objective of this article was to analyze administrative aspects and functions performed by these school inclusion support professionals in the school context. Despite gaps in the literature, the theoretical framework used was sufficient to support the research. The results showed: precariousness in the profile and performance of professionals, support service adopted indiscriminately, bad working conditions, function deviation, professional without an adequate profile, precariousness, and privatization of support for school inclusion. In addition to pointing out that school inclusion support professionals are, in some situations, the only professionals, when they should be part of a support network, the importance of this professional is pointed out for a portion of students from the special education target audience. However, there is a need for: definition of guidelines, improvement of working conditions, definition of job attributions, continuing education, and supervision.

KEYWORD

school inclusion; support professional; support network.

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PROFISSIONAIS DE APOIO À INCLUSÃO ESCOLAR: QUEM SÃO E O QUE FAZEM ESSES NOVOS ATORES NO CENÁRIO EDUCACIONAL?

RESUMO

O estudo é um recorte da dissertação publicada pela autora, que teve como objetivo geral descrever e analisar o perfil e a atuação dos profissionais de apoio à inclusão escolar em diferentes contextos municipais, envolvendo cinco municípios, três do estado da Bahia e dois do estado de São Paulo. Participaram do estudo 30 profissionais de apoio à inclusão escolar, por meio de grupos focais. O objetivo deste artigo foi analisar duas categorias: aspectos administrativos e funções exercidas por esses profissionais de apoio à inclusão escolar no contexto escolar. Apesar das lacunas na literatura, o referencial teórico utilizado foi suficiente para o embasamento da pesquisa. Os resultados evidenciaram: precariedade no perfil e na atuação dos profissionais, serviço de apoio adotado indiscriminadamente, péssimas condições de trabalho, desvio de função, profissional sem perfil adequado, precarização e privatização dos suportes de inclusão escolar. Além de apontar que os profissionais de apoio à inclusão escolar são, em algumas situações, os únicos profissionais, quando deveriam ser parte de uma rede de apoio, aponta-se a importância desse profissional para uma parcela de alunos do público-alvo da educação especial. Porém, há a necessidade de: definição de diretrizes, melhora das condições de trabalho, definição das atribuições do cargo formação continuada e supervisão.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

inclusão escolar; profissional de apoio; rede de apoio.

PROFESIONALES DE APOYO A LA INCLUSIÓN ESCOLAR: ¿QUIÉNES SON Y CUÁLES SON ESTOS NUEVOS ACTORES EN EL ESCENARIO EDUCATIVO?

RESUMEN

El estudio es parte de la disertación publicada por el autor, cuyo objetivo general fue describir y analizar el perfil y el desempeño de los profesionales de apoyo a la inclusión escolar en diferentes contextos municipales, involucrando cinco municipios, tres en el estado de Bahía y dos en el estado de Sao Paulo. Treinta profesionales de apoyo a la inclusión escolar participaron del estudio, a través de grupos focales. El objetivo de este artículo fue analizar los aspectos administrativos y las funciones que desempeñan estos profesionales de apoyo a la inclusión escolar en el contexto escolar. A pesar de las lagunas en la literatura, el marco teórico utilizado fue suficiente para apoyar la investigación. Los resultados mostraron: precariedad en el perfil y

desempeño de los profesionales; servicio de apoyo adoptado indiscriminadamente, malas condiciones de trabajo; desviación de función; profesional sin perfil adecuado, precariedad y privatización de los apoyos a la inclusión escolar. Además de señalar que los profesionales de apoyo a la inclusión escolar son, en algunas situaciones, los únicos profesionales, cuando deberían formar parte de una red de apoyo, se señala la importancia de este profesional para una parte de los estudiantes del público objetivo de educación especial. Sin embargo, se necesita: definición de lineamientos, mejora de las condiciones de trabajo, definición de atribuciones laborales, educación continua y supervisión.

PALABRAS-CLAVE

inclusión escolar; profesional de apoyo; red de apoyo.

INTRODUCTION

As a result of the school inclusion policy adopted with more emphasis in the country from 2008 onwards, the number of enrollments of special education target audience (SETA) students educated in common classroom contexts of regular schools increased tenfold from 110,536, in 2002, to 1,090,805, in 2019 (Brasil, 2019). Consequently, the expansion of these students' access to schools boosted the demand for support that would better accommodate and deal with the diversity of this student body. The focus of the present study is a new character that emerged in this scenario, these are the professionals who, not being teachers, have been hired to provide support to SETA students in common schools.

It should be noted that, until 2008, the only professional support for school inclusion provided for in official documents was that of the “specialized teacher”. The CNE/CBE Resolution No. 02/2001, “National Guidelines for Special Education in Basic Education” (Brasil, 2001), as presented in its Article 8, provided for a professional to provide a specialized pedagogical support service in common classes to exercise teaching functions requiring a degree in special education or supplementary studies or postgraduate studies in specific areas of special education (*ibidem*).

As of 2008, the official documents of the special education policy from the perspective of inclusive education began to advocate, with greater emphasis, the need to provide specialized educational assistance (SEA), through the multifunctional resource rooms (MRR), whose responsible professional would be the specialized teacher trained in special education (Martins, 2011). Therefore, specialized teachers began to be allocated in the MRR with the objective of working in a perspective of articulation with common education teachers (Matos and Mendes, 2014).

In 2008, in the document of the “Policy of Special Education in the perspective of Inclusive Education” (PSEP-IE — Brasil, 2008), the reference to a new professional, without teacher training, appeared for the first time, called “caregiver” or “monitor” and, from then on, references to this type of professional become more present in official documents.

Chart 1 describes the documents that describe some regulation regarding these support professionals from the 2008 PSEP-IE (Brasil, 2008), the nomenclature, and the year of publication.

Chart 1 – Official documents and existing nomenclatures related to the support professional in the school inclusion policy.

YEAR	Document	Nomenclature
2008	National Special Education Policy from the perspective of Inclusive Education (Brasil, 2008)	Caregiver or monitor
2009	Resolution No. 04/2009 — MEC/CNE (Brasil, 2009)	Other education professionals who act as support
2010	Technical note SEESP/GAB No. 19/2010 (Brasil, 2010)	Support professionals
2012	Law No. 12.764 — National Policy for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder (Brasil, 2012)	Specialized escort
2014	Decree No. 8.368/2014 (Brasil 2014)	Specialized escort
2015	Law No. 13.146. Brazilian Law of Inclusion (Statute of Person with Disabilities) (Brasil, 2015)	School support professionals

Source: Elaborated by the authors. MEC: Ministry of Education; CNE: Conselho Nacional de Educação; SEESP: Secretaria de Educação Especial.

The PSEP-IE of 2008 attributes to the caregiver the responsibility for supporting “[...] hygiene, food, transportation activities, among others, that require constant help in the school routine.” (Brasil, 2008, p. 17, our translation). Resolution CNE/CEB No. 4/2009, of October 2, 2009 (Brasil, 2009), in turn, maintained the profile of the political professional from 2008, contemplating it as a support service, but not naming its function.

In 2010, the extinct Special Education Secretariat (SES) of the Ministry of Education (MEC) published the Technical Note SEESP/GAB No. 19/2010 (Brasil, 2010) on the support professional for SETA students enrolled in regular schools in the public education network. The note described the role of these professionals, justified their presence, and maintained the function of supporting basic care, however, without defining their profile and who would be responsible for demanding this support and guaranteeing the administrative conditions of the professional’s work. The technical note also provided that, if necessary, support could be individualized, depending on the student’s needs.

In the case of students with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), Law No. 12,764/2012 (Brasil, 2012) provided for the support of the “specialized companion” for this public. Decree No. 8.368/2014 (Brasil, 2014), which regulated this law, reinforced the profile of basic care, adding responsibility for supporting communication and social interaction activities, when this was required due to the characteristics of the students. It is worth mentioning that, although they are similar in some func-

tions, it is believed that the “specialized companion” is not the same professional in focus (school inclusion support professionals — SISP). However, in this and in the other cited laws, the texts are vague, without description and guidelines for performance and identification of the profile, such as the term “specialized” that refers to a specific training, but it is not known which and at what level, allowing for different interpretations.

In 2015, the Brazilian Law of Inclusion (BLI — Brasil, 2015) provided for the mandatory provision of “school support professionals”, maintaining their support function in basic care activities, emphasizing that these professionals should act in all school activities that were necessary without exercising activities of legally established professionals.

Concluding the analysis of the legal panorama, the official documents indicate that there are devices that make the presence of a SISP mandatory in the school context when the characteristics of the students demand support in mobility, hygiene, food activities and, in the case of students with autism, if there is also a need for support in communication and social interaction. However, the regulation of this function is still vague in the sense of defining who this professional should be, how they will be hired, under what working conditions and performing what functions. This scenario opens the possibility for multiple interpretations, in addition to mistakes and lack of standardization of the support service (Martins, 2011; Leal, 2014; Almeida, Siems-Marcondes, and Bôer, 2014).

Martins (2011), when carrying out a balance of national productions on this subject, pointed out that there is a lack of academic work on the performance of these subjects in school, as well as definition in policies regarding this function that has been popular in education networks and this represents a low-cost strategy in an attempt to guarantee the PSEP-IE (Brasil, 2008). Almeida, Siems-Marcondes, and Bôer (2014) describe that most of the works found on caregivers were related to health and social work and little was known about the subject in the field of education. Zerbato (2014), when analyzing the new roles of professionals that emerged as a result of school inclusion policies, highlighted the need for greater clarity in defining the role of each one in order to avoid the “pushing game” in relation to challenging responsibilities in the school context. The author also alerted to the fact that the function of the support professional should be to assist in activities of daily living, excluding the function of pedagogical support.

It should be noted that, although the presence of these professionals in schools is recent in the Brazilian context, in other countries with older experiences in school inclusion policies, the need for this type of support for students is already recognized. In France, for example, they are referred to as “school life assistants” (Gardou, 2009), and, in the United States, as “paraprofessionals” (Giangreco, 2010).

In Brazil, due to the lack of regulation, the terms adopted have been varied, such as “school caregiver,” “support professional,” “inclusion agent,” “school life assistant,” “inclusion trainee,” “professional of pedagogical support,” “teaching assistant,” “companion”, among others (Martins, 2011; Almeida, Siems-Marcondes,

and Bôer, 2014; Leal, 2014; Salheb, 2017). In the present study, in compliance with the provisions of the BLI (Brasil, 2015), the standardized use of the term “school inclusion support professional” is proposed.

Finally, considering the increasingly frequent entry of these new actors into school, often due to the legalization of parental demands, the lack of definitions of the legal provisions that govern this function and the lack of knowledge on the subject, the present study had as a general objective to describe and analyze who the SISP are and what they do.

METHOD

In order to have a broader sample of the study universe, we opted for a multihull study which, according to Triviños (1987), is a variation of the case study that can study two or more organizations or subjects without necessarily having a comparative nature. The survey involved five municipalities, three in the state of Bahia and two in the state of São Paulo, which were selected according to convenience criteria. The focus group technique was used, which, according to Gomes (2005), should be composed of a group of people formed from a criterion established by the mediator, composed of six to ten people who have experiences and knowledge in common to discuss a certain topic. In addition, the author states that it is a technique that goes beyond the limits of discussions, touches on different dimensions and views of each topic addressed, facilitating interaction between participants. Before starting the study, it was approved by the Ethics Committee (CAEE 59714016.30000.5504), and data collection was carried out at the end of 2016 and beginning of 2017.

Fictitious names were adopted for each city in order to preserve anonymity. Initially, contacts were made with the Education Departments of each municipality, and then official municipal documents that discussed the function, regulation and selection of these professionals were collected. The SISP operating in these municipalities, indicated by the departments, were contacted and those who consented to participate signed the Free and Informed Consent Term (FICT). At the end of the study, in accordance with a previously agreed commitment, feedback on the results and conclusions of the study was made to the investigated municipalities.

Chart 2 presents the municipalities and the respective reference acronyms of the participating SISP. The 30 SISP worked in preschools, elementary schools I and II, with five to seven professionals per municipality. Of the total, 27 were female and three were male, which shows that the function is predominantly assumed by women. The time working as a SISP ranged from three months to six years, showing that this function is relatively recent in schools.

The previous work experiences of the SISPs were locksmith, saleswoman, telemarketing operator, assistant in a mechanic workshop, bus driver, cashier, supermarket employee, beauty salon assistant, cleaning assistant, administrative assistant, nanny and auxiliary school. As for the level of education, there were participants with incomplete and complete high school, interns (Psychology,

Chart 2 – Investigated municipalities and characterization of school inclusion support professionals participating in the study.

MUNICIPALITIES		PARTICIPANTS
Baianos	Flores	F1; F2; F3; F4; F5; F6
	Sexto Elemento	S1; S2; S3; S4; S5; S6
	Lince	L1; L2; L3; L4; L5
Paulistas	Santa Clara	SC1; SC2; SC3; SC4; SC5; SC6; SC7
	Chico Lopes	C1; C2; C3; C4; C5; C6

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Pedagogy, Speech Therapy), graduates in Pedagogy and Psychology and post-graduates in Psychopedagogy.

The instruments used in the data collection were:

1. characterization form of the participants; and
2. script for the focus group interview, consisting of 11 guiding questions.

A focus group was held per city. It took place in municipal schools, totaling five focus groups organized by municipality. Each participant had their speaking moment, and the groups were filmed and recorded, lasting an hour and a half. For the present article, two general categories of analysis were selected that concerned administrative issues and issues related to function.

RESULTS

The results presented here were selected to describe and analyze some of the administrative and technical issues related to the role that a SISP played in schools.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES OF THE FUNCTION OF THE SCHOOL INCLUSION SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

The administrative issues analyzed concern the selection and recruitment process, hiring requirements and working conditions.

School inclusion support professionals selection and recruitment process

Of the municipalities surveyed, in only one of them (Lince), did the professionals go through the special education sector before starting the service. In the others, selection and hiring were managed by outsourced companies responsible for assigning functions to professionals and none of them carried out tenders or notices for recruitment and selection. The absence of a responsible and careful selection process, with public notice and normative instructions to be followed, contributes to the devaluation of the function, in addition to the possibility of hiring people with an inadequate profile because there is no selection that requires minimal skills and characteristics for the vacancy. Martins (2011) points out, in

his research, problems of this nature, in addition to the turnover generated by these weaknesses in hiring.

In Lince, the SISP visited the special education sector in the municipality, had individual conversations with team members and received a referral form that contained general performance data, such as the school, the class, and the students they would accompany. In this case, there was brief guidance on the service, despite being generic and minimal. However, from the analyzed data, it was possible to identify that only information in the act of hiring is not enough. That is why there is a need for an official municipal document with a description and guidelines for the performance of these professionals.

In two municipalities (Sexto Elemento and Flores), the SISP reported having only received information about the position and function when starting the service at the school. They reported not having initial contact with the sector responsible for special education in the municipality, therefore, they did not receive guidance from the service and assumed the role without knowing the activities they would perform at school. It is a concern pointed out by authors in the area the absence of a selection and of the initial contact of the managers with the professionals, besides the lack of dialogue and orientation of the function in the hiring since they generate different problems in the course of the performance, such as deviation of function, inadequate profile for work, lack of interest and affinity for the activities, outsourcing of the service by the regent teacher, among other issues resulting from the lack of guidance and normative instruction of the municipality (Martins, 2011; Lopes, 2018).

In the other two municipalities (Santa Clara and Chico Lopes), the functions were assigned by the company at the time of selection so that the SISP already took over the vacancy with an idea of the activities they would perform. In Santa Clara, after hiring school life companions (SLC), the company's professionals held a 15-day training course before starting the service with guidance and information related to the role they should perform. In the case of interns, the internship company provided information regarding their vacancy and role, however, more detailed guidance was given at the municipality's inclusion follow-up center with the service already in progress. In the case of Chico Lopes, there was a person from the company at the Department of Education designated to select and monitor the work of these professionals who informed the functions at the time of selection.

In the set of results on the selection and hiring of SISP in the five municipalities, it was possible to perceive the dissatisfaction and the challenge faced by those who did not receive initial guidance and who did not know what function they would perform. According to them, the lack of information and guidance make it possible to hire people whose qualifications and expectations are not consistent with the function, and this can affect the quality of work and generate dissatisfaction, which often culminates in the resignation of the position, increased turnover, difficulty in providing training for these personnel and in keeping qualified professionals for this function in schools.

It is worth noting that the existence of a company responsible for the hiring process does not seem to be enough to welcome and guide the SISP. It is necessary

that the team responsible for special education is also responsible for welcoming, monitoring, and supervising professionals. These are the most important phases to ensure quality work: initial guidance, follow-up, and supervision. Giangrecco (2010), in his studies carried out in the United States, points out the importance and need for initial guidance, as well as the supervision and follow-up of these professionals since it directly interferes with the quality of the service. What pointed out the data of the present study was the precariousness in hiring, reflecting on the poor performance of the function.

Hiring requirements

Differences were also found in the hiring of SISP between the municipalities, as can be seen in Chart 3. It was found that the municipalities named the positions of their support professionals differently, although none adopted the term provided in the current legislation of the BLI of “school support professional” (Brasil, 2015). The position of “assistant” was the most recurrent, followed by “caregiver”. In Flores, Sexto Elemento, and Santa Clara, there was a reuse of function and the previously existing assistants in the kindergarten classrooms became specific for SISP students, even maintaining the old nomenclature. In Lince and Chico Lopes, the position called “caregiver” had been created.

**Chart 3 – Title of positions and educational requirements
for the school inclusion support professionals.**

BAIANA CITIES		
Municipalities	Title of positions	Educational requirements
Flores	Assistants/interns	Pedagogy students
Sexto Elemento	CDA	High school completed
Lince	Caregiver	No training required
PAULISTA CITIES		
Municipalities	Title of positions	Educational requirements
Santa Clara	- SLC - Inclusion interns	- SLC: have completed high school and be at least 21 years old. - Pedagogy interns
Chico Lopes	Caregiver	Complete high school, Caregiver course

Source: Elaborated by the authors. CDA: child development assistant; SLC: school life companion.

In each city and each region, a name is assigned to this professional. As the authors’ studies point out: Martins (2011) opted for the term “support professional”; Almeida, Siems-Marcondes and Bôer (2014), preferred to adopt the term “caregivers”; Duque (2008) and Leal (2014) used the term “inclusion agent”. Other names were identified in the practice of schools, such as: “pedagogical support

professional”, “teaching assistant”, “inclusion intern”, “mediator”, among others. In the foreign literature, Gardou (2009) presents the denomination used in France as “school life aids” and, in the United States, Giangreco (2010) refers to the term “paraprofessional”.

The training required ranged from no schooling requirement (Lince), passing through the requirement of secondary education, the most frequent, to being an intern/student of pedagogy. In Santa Clara, there were two types of support professionals with the positions of “inclusion trainee” and “school life companion” (SLC), the latter requiring that the professional had a high school education, was over 21 years old and had a formal education provided by a private company.

It is worth noting that, in the context of hiring, a growing number of these professionals have been hired through the courts, which, according to Serra (2017), in addition to not representing the best way, has caused tensions between schools, families, and the judiciary, considered by the author as a consequence of the lack of definition in training, function, salary floor, forms of hiring, as well as the “pushing game” of financial responsibility. The data from the present study corroborate what the author points out: the absence of minimum criteria in hiring and the disorganization and official lack of definition of who these professionals are and what they should do are more and more harming for the identity and possible regulation of these new actors in the school context.

In this context of judicialization, schools have conditioned the enrollment of SETA students to the presence of these professionals at the family expense, although the BLI (Brasil, 2015) treats it as the responsibility of educational institutions (Serra, 2017). In cases of judicial guarantee, consequently, a practice called by Giangreco (2010) “*one to one*” has been installed. A growing reality of families seeking justice to guarantee this service, most of which are successful, leads to this “*one-on-one*” service, a professional for a student. This situation indicates the need for a careful evaluation for this referral. Individualized care becomes necessary in cases of students who are dependent on carrying out basic activities under the assessment of education professionals. This practice is criticized by national and international authors and can cause harm to students and be considered as discrimination, overprotection, and dependence, undermining autonomy, participation, and interaction with others (Gardou, 2009; Giangreco, 2010).

Work conditions

Hirings by outsourced companies (four cities) were identified, all of which were temporary (five cities), high professional turnover, low wages, and work overload. The SISP reported being dissatisfied with the excess of functions assigned to them, as well as the lack of knowledge of their function, in addition to the difficulties encountered in the context of the school of devaluation by other professionals and, in addition, they pointed out the need for and importance of ongoing training for their performance. Xavier (2019) highlights, in his research carried out with the SISP in the city of Recife, an important aspect to be considered when talking about working conditions and which was reported in the speeches of the participating professionals: “Existence of a professional devaluation of the

educational area, revealing the way in which education systems understand the importance of each function in the school context, creating hierarchies between functions, generating feelings of indignation and demotivation.” (Xavier, 2019, p. 127, our translation).

The same author justifies as one of the contributing factors of these terrible working conditions the possible multiple interpretations of current policies with setbacks and lack of definitions, as well as the little importance given to education and, consequently, to the role of the SISP (*ibidem*).

Finally, in relation to working conditions, a critical scenario is perceived that presents weaknesses, triggering negative impacts on the performance and identity of the SISP in the school context, which are, in part, influenced by the lack of regulation of the practice of this professional at school. Obviously, the lack of definition of a profile for the function, the incipient criteria in the selection process, the lack of training and the outsourcing of this service configure a situation of precariousness in this type of employment, of devaluation of the professional, and it is a strategy that, apparently, has been adopted to privatize support services for school inclusion.

FUNCTIONS PERFORMED BY THE SCHOOL INCLUSION SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

Chart 4 presents the functions carried out in practice by the SISP in the municipalities of Bahia and São Paulo.

Chart 4 – Functions performed by the school inclusion support professionals in the municipalities investigated.

FUNCTIONS PERFORMED	BAIANO MUNICIPALITIES	PAULISTA MUNICIPALITIES
Provide basic hygiene, food, and mobility care	All	
Assistant in pedagogical activity	Flores, Sexto Elemento, and Lince	Santa Clara (interns)
Assist with challenging behaviors	Sexto Elemento and Lince	Santa Clara (SLC)
Assist the student with activities outside the classroom	-	Santa Clara, Chico Lopes
Plan and teach	Flores, Sexto Elemento e Lince	-
Provide basic health care	-	Santa Clara

Source: Elaborated by the authors. SLC: school life companion.

Provide basic hygiene, food, and mobility care

According to the SISP, activities related to hygiene were to provide support in the use of the bathroom and help in changing diapers for SETA students without autonomy in the performance of these activities. In some cases, the SISP

only accompanied the student from the classroom to the bathroom door. In these cases, it would be important to review the need for this professional since the students had autonomy in using the bathroom, and this monitoring hindered the student's independence and increased the stigma of difference. This discussion leads to the thought that having a disability necessarily demands support from the SISP. It can be considered that this view is based on the conception of the medical model that insists on welfare, deficit, and disability as a personal tragedy (Piccolo and Mendes, 2012).

The mobility support was exemplified with activities such as taking the student from one place to another safely and comfortably and was more directed towards students with reduced mobility due to physical disability. Assistance in the feeding activity was provided both at snack time and at lunch, to provide a bottle or food, depending on the level and type of impairment of the student.

Finally, the function of "basic care" is the most clearly defined in the BLI for the SISP. However, Flores participants considered this performance as a role deviation and questioned the special education manager about supporting these activities. Thus, it is worth remembering that, although the legislation provides that this is the function of the SISP, it does not define who should assume this position and this leaves room for different interpretations.

In the municipality of Sexto Elemento, there was also this situation since the SISP questioned whether it would be their obligation to support the basic care of students. However, the difference between the two municipalities was the training required, and, in Sexto Elemento, there was no training requirement, and it was described in the documents that this was an attribution of the SISP, but even so, there was resistance on the part of professionals in relation to this function and, in Flores, they were interns.

It was also identified that, when the function of providing basic care was attributed to the interns who assumed the role of SISP, this was a reason for dissatisfaction and a desire to give up the internship and the course since they should take the place of apprentices of the teacher's tasks. If this happened sporadically, there would be no problem, but transforming it into the intern's function caused the impression that this activity could become a routine in their profession.

In both municipalities, the participants demonstrated dissatisfaction with this activity, and they identified themselves more with teaching assignments, even without being trained for this, which demonstrated a lack of clarity on the part of professionals regarding the role they should play in the school.

The Sixth Element SISP, in the case of women, also pointed out difficulties in providing hygiene care to male adolescents, as reported: "*I have a wheelchair user who is 16 years old, I take him to the bathroom, I assist him with urinating, he already has hair, he is already a man.*" (S2). This situation caused embarrassment both for the student and for the SISP. In some cases, professionals reported that students stopped going to the bathroom to avoid experiencing this type of embarrassment. Finally, in these cases, it would be necessary to be careful when recommending the SISP, respecting the needs and context of the students, assigning professionals with

an appropriate profile for each student in order to avoid creating more barriers for the participation of these students, in addition to embarrassment.

With regard to the importance of establishing the practice of the SISP with a focus on each student, Oliveira and Gomes (2020, p. 417, our translation) point to this attribution “[...] ensuring participation in all school activities, meeting their basic and functional needs, without prejudice, constraints or exposures.” They also reinforce the importance of the professional support-student relationship being based on respect for human beings, considering their knowledge, rhythms, desires, and interests (Oliveira and Gomes, 2020).

In the municipality of Santa Clara, one of the SISP criticized the fact that only he could take on this role of basic care for the students for which he was responsible and stated that, if he had to miss work, the student would go without food since everyone was afraid to do something wrong and no one had the initiative to want to learn how to provide this help. There were also reports that, sometimes, when the SISP advised that he would not be able to attend work, the family was informed so that the student did not go to school.

Finally, at the same time that the presence of a professional specially hired to provide basic care to the SETA student can be an important support, it can end up taking the responsibility away from the school for providing the assistance that the student needs. Thus, it is necessary to invest in collaborative and articulated work among professionals to share the philosophy of school inclusion, which assumes that it is everyone’s responsibility to respond to the needs of SETA students (Matos and Mendes, 2014).

Assisting in pedagogical activity

The role of “assisting in pedagogical activity” was mentioned in the municipalities of Flores, Sexto Elemento, Lince, and for the interns in Santa Clara, which they described as “*any intervention in pedagogical activities with the student*”, but they differentiated their role as auxiliary in activities from the “*plan and teach*” activity. According to the speeches of the SISP, the teacher passed the activity on to the students, and they helped in the execution, facilitating their access and participation. The SISP highlighted the importance of this support since the teachers were unable to provide the more individualized support necessary for the student to carry out the proposed activities, in which they were dependent.

In Flores, all participants reported performing the function of “*assisting in the pedagogical activity*”. One of them reported doing the work of a scribe in cases where students had motor impairment in the upper limbs and/or difficulties in writing. This function consisted of copying and transcribing the students’ responses, which facilitated their participation in the learning process and monitoring the class. As a SISP from Flores reported: “*I sit down and just write for one student, in my case, she has to give me the answers and I have to copy. I copy the things on the board, and she answers because she can’t.*” (F4).

In this situation, it is possible to assess the student’s real demand since there are other support possibilities that may be more appropriate and generate more benefits, such as, for example, the use of assistive technology (AT), re-

sources that favor the student's autonomy and, at the same time, it guarantees participation in activities (Bersch, 2008), however, it is necessary to evaluate and build the resource.

In Flores, other activities were exemplified as “*assist in pedagogical activities*”, such as: helping with painting activities, calligraphy, and making the notebook and diary. In Sexto Elemento and Lince, the SISP had a function similar to that described in the municipality of Flores, in addition to providing motivational incentives and supervising the completion of tasks, accompanying the students and sitting side by side, otherwise, the participants stated that the students would not carry out the tasks, as reported by S3:

If I don't stay close to him, he can't do activities. I think being there close to him is very important. The teacher is putting something on the board, and I say, "Now it's your turn to do it." If you don't play hard with him, he won't, he just wants to play and disperse the whole class. If one is not close to give a limit, it won't happen. The teacher can't handle him and the others.

Other SISP also reported that the teacher gave the command to the class and they repeated and helped the student to do the task. Some Lince SISP commented that they considered this support as an incentive for the student, because when they were not present, the students did not do the activity. However, this practice may be unnecessary if there is a plan to favor greater engagement, such as: meeting students' interests and styles and using cooperative learning strategies with students supporting students, especially through peer tutoring. Within this perspective, individualized educational planning is indicated as a way of identifying peculiarities and investing in individualized goals (Tannus-Valadão, 2010), just as universal learning design (ULD) can be used as a potential strategy for the class, diversifying the ways of working to reach a greater number of students without the need for differentiation or individualized monitoring at all times (Zerbato and Mendes, 2016).

It is also noteworthy that one of the interns from Santa Clara mentioned with dissatisfaction the fact that the SETA student's activities were totally different from the rest of the class and cited an example in which the teacher was explaining the solar system to the class and asked the student with a disability to draw a house. And the intern, although he questioned it, had to help the student to do this activity out of context so as not to contradict the teacher. Finally, this situation often occurs due to the absence of prior and more adequate planning, and, at the same time, it shows that even the presence of an intern in training does not necessarily change the quality of teaching that SETA students are receiving at school.

Thus, it is necessary to rethink the practice, seek other more inclusive and universal alternatives, such as planning based on the principles of ULD, which values different ways of presenting instruction, favoring engagement, as well as diversifying the student ways of demonstrating what has been learned (Zerbato and Mendes, 2016) . Another promising possibility is co-teaching or collaborative teaching, which involves a partnership between a specialized teacher and

a regular classroom one, in addition to collaborative consulting, a partnership between specialized professionals and regular education teachers (Mendes and Malheiro, 2012).

Assisting with challenging behaviors

In the cities of Sexto Elemento, Lince, and Santa Clara, the function of “*assisting with behavioral issues*” was identified, mainly in cases of students who showed aggression and agitation. The SISP reported that, in these cases, they should “*calm down*,” “*remove the student from the room*,” “*run after the student*”, among other measures, according to the speech of S5:

My job is to run up and down behind the student. I spend most of the morning exercising, going up and down stairs. He just wants to walk and what's more, sometimes he sits down to draw and stays calm and is passionate about numbers, but when he wants to walk, I follow behind him.

In addition to this report, another professional mentioned that his mission is to make the SETA student remain seated and that he spent more time trying to seat the student than helping with other issues. It is worth thinking that there are other initial strategies for carrying out the activities other than sitting at the table, which may be a secondary goal. For this, individualized educational planning is important, built with all the professionals involved with the student to define the parallel and curricular goals of each student (Tannus-Valadão, 2010).

In Lince, this attribution was more frequent when compared to other municipalities and the situations presented were similar to those of Sexto Elemento: taking the student out of the classroom and wandering around the school so as not to disturb colleagues at times of inappropriate behavior in the classroom, which appears in the speech of L2: “*What they told me was to take the child out of the room all the time.*”

In Santa Clara, a situation similar to that of Lince occurred. A SISP (SLC) stated that the school director told him to walk around the courtyard with the student since no one knew how to deal with her. The intern also reported difficulties with the student, entered the room and accommodated her since she considered it inhumane that she needed help and no one cared. The SISP also stated that, when entering the room, the student was agitated because she had no occupation, no activity and, while everyone else was busy, she was excluded.

Removing the student from the room, in some situations, may be necessary due to the student's need and sensory or behavioral issues; in the case of those with autism, a space is needed with less stimuli and movement outside the room. However, leaving the room cannot be random, appropriate times, frequency and the well-being of the student must be considered. Leaving the room without any kind of direction after the action, without a targeted work to increase task engagement behaviors and minimize challenging behaviors may not be effective. On the contrary, it can intensify the avoidance behavior of the student in the classroom and this, instead of facilitating, can serve more to exclude and make

the situation comfortable for the school. Finally, the SISP acted by intuition or based on what the teacher instructed, but, in general, they did not have systematic supervision of their activities. It is worth noting that the student has the right to access, permanence, participating and learning at school, therefore, the right to the time experienced in learning situations cannot be taken away. Due to this, the removal from the room must be exclusively for the benefit of the student and their needs (Brasil, 2015).

It should be noted that these practices, invariably, aimed to momentarily reduce the challenging behavior and were palliative. Therefore, they did not produce long-term results, being only actions to solve immediate problems. This result is justified by the profile of professionals who did not have sufficient training but were responsible for mediating complex situations without any specialized guidance, which could aggravate the problem.

In these cases, it would be necessary to analyze the challenging behavior and then try to apply preventive practices and interventions with the aim of reducing and avoiding the recurrence of events and not just “softening” situations that occurred. It is also worth noting that, often, inappropriate behaviors could be related to the absence of an adequate curriculum, which made everyday life uninteresting and caused agitation and difficulty in dealing with some situations in the classroom, as well as issues related to education, housework, limits, among other issues not considered as a result of disorders and disabilities. Therefore, if there is another type of measure to be taken, the monitoring of the SISP is often unnecessary, as some reported in the focus group.

Finally, although not all SETA students manifest challenging behaviors, some will present complex needs in this regard and intervening in these problems cannot be an attribution of these assistants, as seems to be the case for the majority, even more so without the minimum, that is, with some supervision and follow-up.

Assist the student with activities outside the classroom

In the municipalities of São Paulo, the SISP exercised their function exclusively outside the classroom and only exceptionally could they enter the classroom. As a result, they planned for students to leave the room less often, for example, filling water bottles and accompanying students to the bathroom before classes. And when they needed to come in, even in rare cases, the teachers didn't like it since they argued that the presence of this professional in the room could disrupt the student's learning. This situation was contrary to what happened in the municipalities investigated in Bahia, in which the SISP accompanied the student during the entire time they remained at school and in all environments.

In this regard, it should be noted that, depending on the student's profile, monitoring within the classroom is also necessary, which is why it is important to carry out an individual assessment to identify the student's need for support. Thus, it is unreasonable to determine that all SISP must necessarily work outside or inside the classroom since support has to be where the student needs it, and it is important to think about the individual needs of each one of them.

Plan and teach

In the municipalities of Flores, Sexto Elemento, and Lince, “*planning and teaching*” was identified as a role for the SETA student, a worrying fact, since, in the three municipalities, the SISP did not have the minimum academic training for teaching.

In Flores, because they were Pedagogy students, the SISP assumed the role of planning activities and teaching these students, reporting that they had to research activities to present to the students and that the teacher would check later. Participant F6 reported that she planned other types of activities since the student did not follow the content given to the class: “*Since she doesn’t speak, she doesn’t fully understand the class, and I’m always working to develop her motor coordination.*”.

Thus, on her own initiative, she decided to take out of context activities from the class since she understood that she needed to develop fine motor coordination. Thus, due to the teachers’ lack of planning, they ended up planning activities to occupy the student, without necessarily being related to the curriculum or the educational needs of the students.

In this context, a report by a participant from Lince who worked in a class in which the teacher gave him responsibility for teaching the SETA student stands out, and he considered this positive:

The teacher gave me total autonomy so that I could come up with tasks to do with him... Normal class for the other children, but he was not inserted and I was worried that he is not learning anything, so she gave me autonomy so that I would play this role, then I would do several tasks to work with him. (L4)

This practice was justified by the absence of the work of the regent teacher and the specialized teacher and the participants, in general, reported feeling distressed and worried about the abandonment of SETA students by the teachers, therefore, they planned and took activities for them to carry out in the classroom. Again, interns or assistants are evident, with a level of schooling equivalent to high school, assuming a role that would be that of the specialized teacher and the regent one. This characterizes an outsourcing of the service within the classroom, since Xavier (2019) points out as a transfer of responsibility from the teacher to the SISP.

Carvalho (2018) states that the SISP end up feeling responsible for pedagogical activities in this context of planning and teaching, and also blame themselves for not knowing what to teach and how to keep students in the classroom, aspects that draw attention in the attitude of the SISP in relation to this action, since they valued and demonstrated satisfaction in promoting pedagogical moments for the students. They themselves believe that these are moments of confidence and autonomy and report noticing the evolution of students. It is worth mentioning that anyone who has someone by their side helping can evolve into something, however, improvised actions, activities out of context and isolated from the class and the curriculum do not match the perspective of school inclusion.

Some SISP questioned the absence of teacher involvement, characterizing it as a lack of interest. In fact, there may be cases in which the teacher shows dis-

interest and does not want to work. However, most of the time, the problem lies in the set of absences in the system that do not offer decent working conditions for the teacher, a reasonable number of students in the classroom, continued and in-service training, required support services, among others.

Thus, it is necessary to broaden the look in order to avoid the sole responsibility of the teacher in the common room because the teacher alone is not capable of promoting the expected school inclusion, therefore, involved management, services, resources, supervision, and training is necessary. Serra (2017) considers that, in addition to daily difficulties, teachers complain about the number of students in the classroom and the insufficient training to prepare and adapt educational plans, claim that they do not feel secure in what they are doing and that, often, the received support appears in an improvised way, creating discomfort in schools. Corroborating this statement, Carvalho (2018) points out that the reversal of roles between the SISP and the teacher is also recognized by the teachers themselves who declare that they need training, but who end up directing the work and responsibility for the SETA student to the SISP.

Another preoccupying situation reported by the SISP is related to the role of “covering the hole” of teachers, that is, in the absence of teachers, they are obliged to take over the classroom. Again, it is clear that, because they are at school, it is assumed that they can assume functions that are not within their competence. In these cases of function deviation, three consequences can be highlighted. At first, the student who needed support was left without it; the second, improper relocation, since it is mandatory to have teachers for replacement when necessary; and the third, the SISP who, in some cases, had not even completed high school, ended up taking responsibility for improvised teaching of a class for a shift or more.

It is worth highlighting the neglect of public authorities with the burden of a professional with an inadequate profile to meet a need that is the responsibility of the managing body. There is a concern to reduce costs, as well as a devaluation and precariousness of teaching, especially with regard to SETA students.

Health care

The function of providing health care was reported in the municipality of Santa Clara, which, theoretically, requires specific knowledge and techniques. An example was the SISP who reported being challenged every day to perform “*passing the probe*” procedures and reported that she was afraid of perforating the child’s kidney. At the time of this report, the professional became destabilized and cried. It is noteworthy that this procedure was performed in the bathroom, on an improvised stretcher, on a table with a mattress. The participant stated that she took the training offered by the municipality, but videos and images were shown and no real training was done, which made her feel insecure in more delicate situations like this and also in cases of seizures. This attribution was not included in the document describing the function of the SISP and the inappropriate place for carrying out such procedures is also highlighted.

Thus, students who need health care also seem to be under the responsibility of the SISP, but without necessarily having adequate training, supervision, and follow-up.

It is noteworthy that, when the need for health care through invasive procedures is identified, the support of specialized health technicians is necessary, but this is not always guaranteed, and students may be taking risks when professionals with insufficient training and unprepared are destined to carry out these interventions.

CONCLUSIONS

Some parents understandably request SISP support for their SETA child because of concerns and fears they have about how their child will be welcomed, supported, and taught in mainstream school. Possibly, one of the most frequent reasons for judicializing the petitions of parents of SETA children in Brazil in relation to the guarantee of the right to education is the provision of a SISP to work with their children at school.

Teachers, even experienced ones, face many challenges in dealing with SETA students in their classrooms, mainly in relation to large classes; if these students lack independence in self-care skills; whether students have complex communication difficulties; challenging behaviors, so that they do not remain seated to engage in the task; if they flee the room; and if moments of aggression appear.

Finally, if these students with support needs have the right to education and are increasingly having access to school, it is unthinkable that a teacher can, at the same time, teach the whole class, provide personalized care services that are not of competence, in addition to responding to the different educational needs of these students with disabilities. Therefore, for some students, the support of these SISP is essential.

However, for system managers, the provision of this professional implies expenses, which are often avoided, forcing parents to seek the support provided for in the legislation in court. And the solution that has been adopted in most cases, if the investigated municipalities served as a sample, is the contracting of outsourced services to recruit, hire, and train these professionals who end up entering the school without knowing what to do and who to respond to.

On the other hand, it appears that, many times, the hiring of a SISP is also done for financial savings purposes when these professionals are hired to replace specialized teachers and fulfill assignments that require competence from teachers. In this sense, in education systems where there is a lack of a broader network of services and professionals, the indiscriminate hiring of a SISP represents a kind of “uberization”, in the sense of being a form of cheapening, precariousness and privatization of support services for school inclusion.

The Brazilian legislation presents an indefinite profile of the SISP and the regulation of this profession is still non-existent, which contributes to the identification of divergences between what is instituted and what is being instituted in practice, since it was possible to identify with the data of the present study. Attribu-

tions beyond what was foreseen, deviation of functions, and mistaken attributions to these professionals were presented. There was a difference between actions according to each reality, which is directly linked to the interpretation of the policy in the municipalities and the support network for inclusion made available, considering the number of professionals, existing resources, partnerships with other municipal bodies and other institutions.

In general, it is clear that the performance of the SISP in the school has been precarious, non-standard and with conflicts and misunderstandings, although the need and importance of this professional in the school context is widely recognized. It was noted that many problems involved political issues, neglect of public bodies and, mainly, financial issues so that the hiring of these SISP has been one more privatization strategy in basic education.

The problems cited are related to low investment in support services for inclusion, training for professionals and the lack of appreciation for education, inclusion, and SETA students. In addition to this political context, the recent performance of these professionals in the school environment causes uncertainties and insecurities. Another factor is the absence of clearer and more defined political guidelines for this position.

Therefore, it is necessary to create a support network of which the SISP is part and is not solely responsible for the process of inclusion of SETA students at the school. This network must be composed of specialized professionals, such as special education teachers, as well as partnerships with institutions and other bodies. In addition, the need to differentiate and define the performance of each professional in the support network was perceived to avoid inappropriate outsourcing and diversion of duties.

In this context, it is worth highlighting the present discussion between two professionals needed in the SETA schooling process, always considering the specificities of the student, which will define the best service, the support professional and the support teacher, different characters that have caused certain conflicts at schools. It is important to make it clear that the support professional has the function of supporting the student in activities in which they do not have independence, such as: “basic care” related to food, mobility, hygiene, “assistance in school activities”, support in the performance of the activity according to the needs of each student with regard to activities that they are unable to carry out alone, among others. Therefore, the minimum education of this professional may be high school completed, which would be sufficient for the function he will develop. In addition, it is essential, in this service, the investment in continuing education and constant monitoring and supervision in its performance.

The support teacher is a higher-level professional with a degree course, preferably specifically in special education who works by supporting the common room teacher in the activities of “planning and teaching” and must work in partnership with the SISP and the other school professionals.

Thus, measures must be taken to regulate the presence of these professionals, defining hiring criteria, improving working conditions, training, and supervision

and ensuring that all other support necessary to guarantee an effective policy is present in schools.

Giangrecco *et al.* (2005) advise that parents and educators, when considering individual support for students with disabilities in common schools, think that this professional can be a valuable resource for students who need it, contrary to this, he can negatively interfere with the student's inclusion, therefore, for this and other reasons, the provision of this type of support should not be indiscriminate, on the contrary, it should be well evaluated to verify if the burden compensates the bonus.

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Conflicts of interest: The authors declare they don't have any commercial or associative interest that represents conflict of interests in relation to the manuscript.

Funding: The study received funding from Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES), process No. 88887.360701/2019-00.

Authors' contributions: Conceptualization, Data Curation, Project Administration, Funding, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Writing – Original Draft: Lopes, M. M. Methodology: Lopes, M. M., Mendes, E. G. Supervision, Visualization, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing: Mendes, E. G.

Received on August 9, 2021
Approved on August 19, 2022

