

WHAT THE PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY THINK ABOUT THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE WORK FROM TWO CASE STUDIES¹

O QUE AS PESSOAS COM DEFICIÊNCIA INTELECTUAL PENSAM SOBRE A SUA PARTICIPAÇÃO NO TRABALHO A PARTIR DE DOIS ESTUDOS DE CASOS

Ana Paula Ribeiro ALVES²
Nilson Rogério da SILVA³

ABSTRACT: Work has undergone significant transformations during the course of humanity, having its own sense disturbed and modified. Thus, it becomes questionable to what extent it acts on the humanization of man, or on the contrary, whether, in the present social context, it can contribute to its dehumanization. In this context, the worker with intellectual disabilities is exposed, in addition to the aspects of exploitation and alienation, to constructs about disability, as preconceptions about their abilities, being considered incapable of occupying jobs that require more elaborate and complex duties. The objective of this study was to analyze the perception of the subject with intellectual disability about his/her participation in the labor market. Thus, two people with intellectual disabilities were selected to talk about their experiences and perceptions. For the interviews, the Life Story method was used, and the data were analyzed through Emerging Themes such as: Work as a principle of humanization and Work as a dehumanization principle. The themes emerged were interpreted according to the ideology of historical-cultural theory, which considers the human being, independently of his/her biological condition, as a subject formed by and in relations with the other. The results evidenced the importance of the work in the human development of the participants that were realized professionally and reached achievements that are beyond the financial aspect, covering those specifically human. The participants in this study contradicted what was generally predicted by society to those with intellectual disabilities and demonstrated that it is possible to humanize themselves through work.

KEYWORDS: Work. Human development. Intellectual disability.

RESUMO: O trabalho tem sofrido significativas transformações durante o percurso da humanidade, tendo o seu próprio sentido modificado. Torna-se, então, questionável até que ponto ele age na humanização do homem, ou ao contrário – se, no atual contexto social, ele pode contribuir para sua desumanização. Nesse contexto, o trabalhador com deficiência intelectual está sujeito, além dos aspectos de exploração e de alienação, aos constructos sobre a deficiência, com questionamento acerca de suas capacidades, sendo considerado incapaz de ocupar postos de trabalho que exijam funções mais elaboradas e complexas. O objetivo deste estudo foi analisar a percepção do sujeito com deficiência intelectual sobre sua participação no mercado de trabalho. Dessa forma, duas pessoas com deficiência intelectual foram selecionadas para relatar suas experiências e percepções. Para a realização das entrevistas, foi utilizado o método História de Vida, e os dados foram analisados por meio de Temas Emergentes como: Trabalho como princípio de humanização e Trabalho como princípio de desumanização. Os temas emergidos foram interpretados segundo o ideário da teoria histórico-cultural, que considera o homem, independentemente de sua condição biológica, como um sujeito formado pelas e nas relações com o outro. Os resultados evidenciaram a importância do trabalho no desenvolvimento humano dos participantes que se realizaram profissionalmente e alcançaram conquistas que estão além do aspecto financeiro, abrangendo aquelas especificamente humanas. Os participantes deste estudo contrariaram o que era previsto pela sociedade de forma geral àqueles com deficiência intelectual e demonstraram que é possível se humanizar por meio do trabalho.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Trabalho. Desenvolvimento humano. Deficiência intelectual.

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² Student of the Doctorate Course in Education. São Paulo State University – UNESP. Marília/São Paulo/Brazil. Email: dani_anapaula@hotmail.com. ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0762-7511>

³ PhD Associate Professor. São Paulo State University – UNESP. Marília/São Paulo/Brazil. Email: nilson@marilia.unesp.br. ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8866-0964>

1 INTRODUCTION

The social context experienced by workers with intellectual disabilities is an important aspect for understanding the role they play in society, considering that “what decides the fate of a personality is not the defect itself, but its social consequences, its socio-psychological realization” (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 44).

In 1991, Law no. 8,213, of July 24, popularly known as the Quota Law, determined that private companies should reserve 2 to 5% of vacancies for people with disabilities. Other important documents and decrees aim to ensure a set of rights for the insertion and participation of people with disabilities in the labor market, education and other areas of society. Among them, the Brazilian Inclusion Law - Law no. 13.146, of July 6, 2015, which, overcoming the strictly medical perspective, also considers the social aspects of the disability, in other words, the way society organizes itself to receive this public, ensuring rights in the workplace as equal opportunities, adaptations, technological resources and accessibility. Although this is an important step towards the insertion of people with disabilities and, for many, the only way to enter work, we emphasize that the legislation alone has not been sufficient for these individuals to enter and remain in the competitive market.

Data from the Annual Report on Social Information (*Relação Anual de Informações Sociais* - RAIS) revealed that, in 2016, nationwide, 46.1 million people were in employment, with 418.5 thousand workers with a disability, which implies less than 1% of this population with formal employment. When it comes to workers with intellectual disabilities, the number of hires is even lower, with 34,300, one of the lowest compared to other disabilities (Physical disability: 48.9%; Hearing impairment: 19.2%; Visual impairment: 12.8%; Intellectual disability: 8.2%; and Multiple disability: 1.7% of hires). The data from RAIS (2016) indicate the breach of the law that imposes the obligation to reserve vacancies for hiring these individuals, also showing the preference for some deficiencies over others.

Employers justify that there are vacancies reserved for this public; however, there are no candidates with minimum education and professional qualifications to fill them. They reveal the conceptions constructed about the identity of these workers as people with low self-esteem, unpredictable, professionally disqualified and able to use their biological condition as justification for not performing their work duties. Companies that admit these professionals commonly do not make adaptations to the environment, do not promote training or any methodological strategy for labor inclusion. The hires, therefore, are performed by imperative of the law, but without any effort or modifications to actually perpetuate them (Assis & Carvalho, 2014; Maia & Carvalho-Freitas, 2015; Tanaka & Manzini, 2005).

Given justifications such as low education and lack of professional qualification, activities considered simpler, which do not require more elaborate psychic functions such as creativity, abstract thinking, logical reasoning, among others, and consequently receive the lowest salaries, with few prospects for progression, are reserved to people with intellectual disabilities. It is undeniable that many people without disabilities, considered to be within normal standards, are also in precarious situations of development, do not have their superior functions developed due to cultural neglect and, equally, have their labor force exploited by capital, performing activities considered simple and mechanical. However, all

these characteristics are accentuated for those who, because of disability, suffered historical exclusion, were discriminated against and prevented from developing as human subjects. The identity constructed by society for people with intellectual disabilities puts them in a position of significant disadvantage, often leaving no alternative but to play their assigned role (Alves, 2018).

The insertion of people with intellectual disabilities in the formal labor market, therefore, comprises a scenario of challenges and uncertainties, as it is unknown to what extent the inclusion of the way they are posed can contribute to their humanization or dehumanization. It is also appropriate to question the extent to which the current scenario propagates discrimination and exploitation and, if depriving them of such human experiences, would even be a mechanism of protection, or rather a new guise for the continuity of their labor exclusion (Alves, 2018).

Given the above, the objective of this study was to analyze the perception of people with intellectual disabilities about their participation in the formal labor market. For this, it is essential that the reader considers him/her as a historical and cultural subject, as well as biological, constituted in and by relationships with the other, and which, according to Glat (2009), often learns and reproduces the role of the person with a disability that society has built for him/her.

2 METHOD

This is a Case Study that aims to provide an overview of the problem and identify aspects that may influence and/or be influenced by it (Gil, 2010). The procedure adopted was the Life Story method and the route to its choice was not spontaneous or unintentional. Rather, it was necessary to overcome some uncertainties regarding the procedure, especially considering the specificities of the public concerned, people with intellectual disabilities who were historically stigmatized as unable to talk and reflect on their own lives.

Maintaining this choice required a lot of thought, adjustments, strategies, planning, and redesign, as open-ended interviewing with broad topics and no direct questions that would provide more direction could make collection more difficult. During the interviews, the participants often shunned the topics or even said very little, some even refusing to talk about a subject considered important for the research.

Thus, adjustments were made in the method of this study to include and meet the specificities of the participants. In this sense, a single trigger phrase as the method suggests (Glat, 2009) was not enough to build their narratives. Then, specific interventions and clarifications were necessary, which highlights the need for methodological adjustments when working with people with particularities, such as those with intellectual disabilities.

2.1 PARTICIPANTS

Participants were selected by means of a convenience sample that met the basic criteria of this study. Thus, the search was for stories of people with intellectual disabilities who entered the formal labor market and were trained in regular schools. The reason for the second criterion is that there are already studies in the literature that included specialized

institutions and the so-called supported jobs, when people with disabilities enter work through the institution. The intentionality was directed to know other trajectories, as well as possible obstacles and possibilities.

The first research participant is fictitiously named Caio, a young man with intellectual disabilities who works at a multinational packaging company. Caio is 25 years old and has always studied in regular schools since Early Childhood Education, and he goes to High School in the mode of education for youth and adults. He took professional computer and replacement courses. In his work, he performs activities that require the formulation of abstract concepts, works with the measurement system, among others, demystifying the conception that this public can only be provided with menial and mechanical services that do not require the capacity for abstraction.

The second participant is fictitiously named Laura, a 35-year-old woman with Down Syndrome. She completed Elementary School and then took vocational courses such as training to be a masseuse that allowed her to enter the job market. She has been working in a pharmacy for homeopathic medicines for nine years and performs various tasks such as bank service, flower handling, massage, among others. Laura's activities require complex skills, both sociability and cognitive, contrary to what is commonly expected and observed from the reality of this public, who are offered services considered simple and mechanical. From Laura's story, interest and questioning arose: what may have contributed to the success of her career? Knowing her perception of what led her to act in a different role than that which is expected by society has become our motivation.

2.2 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT: INTERVIEWS

There was no structured script, but guiding themes such as work, school, and family. Each theme had subtitles that we called clues, if participants needed clarification or more objectivity, since the themes were broad.

With each participant, three meetings were held in their own homes with an average duration of 50 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed shortly after their execution. The transcriptions were performed in full, but with some adjustments and treatment of the speech, in order to preserve the meanings. Only Portuguese errors that made it difficult to read later were corrected and those of the oral language that did not interfere with the reader's understanding were maintained.

The transcriptions were transformed into narrative texts that, disassembled and fragmented, gave rise to a new text, which Moraes (2003) calls "Metatext". In order for the new text to become as clear as possible in view of the decontextualization caused by the fragmentation of the corpus, it was necessary to adapt some narratives of previous or posterior axes to the new sequence, making the meaning as clear as possible.

2.3 DATA ANALYSIS

We used the thematic analysis that happens from the involvement with the data, the search for new meanings and understanding, originating the Emerging Categories (Moraes,

2003). The transcripts were grouped by axes such as School, Family and Work. This process allowed us to be alert and sensitive to the construction of the new, to discover hitherto hidden categories and to relate them to theoretical conceptions.

From the Axes emerged themes that were not established previously, but emerged from the speeches of the participants themselves, which we called Emerging Themes: Training for work and Preparation for the market; Work as a principle of humanization and Work as a principle of dehumanization; Disability as a biological condition and Disability as a social condition. In this paper, we will address the theme Work as a principle of humanization or dehumanization.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research has shown the lack of education of people with intellectual disabilities as the biggest barrier to entry and permanence in the labor market (Lima, Tavares, Brito, & Cappelle, 2013; Pereira & Passerino, 2012). We emphasize that the criterion commonly established by companies for hiring is completion of High School (RAIS, 2016); thus, to perform the duties in existing positions, the candidate must have mastery of reading, writing and elementary calculation. This is an understandable and even low requirement nowadays when access to information and education is facilitated; however, what is worrying is that this requirement is hardly met when it comes to people with intellectual disabilities, and it is, therefore, the biggest justification for entrepreneurs not to hire them (Araújo & Schmidt, 2006; Tanaka & Manzini, 2005; Veltrone & Almeida, 2010; Violante & Leite, 2011).

Even though it has been about a decade since the studies mentioned showed the lack of education and training of this public that corresponds to the real needs of the labor market (Nascimento & Miranda, 2007), the scenario has not changed, as Lorenzo's (2016) study shows, in which entrepreneurs continue to claim the lack of qualification of subjects with intellectual disabilities who usually do not finish Elementary School.

This problem persists over the years and explains the lower salaries for people with intellectual disabilities when compared to physical, visual, hearing disabilities, with jobs considered simple as shown by RAIS (2016). Lima et al. (2013) found that subjects with hearing and physical disabilities worked in the administrative sector and acquired training and professional qualification, unlike those with intellectual disabilities, who predominantly occupied the positions of auxiliary general services.

Contrary to statistics, the participants of this research studied in regular schools, trained in vocational courses and mastered reading, writing and elementary mathematical calculations; in other words, they met the contraction criteria of the current work scenario. This has enabled them to achieve not only entry but also progression in the companies in which they work.

Caio had other work experiences before his current job. At the age of 15, he sold products from his grandparents' farm, with whom he lives, and helped with planting and harvesting. Later, he obtained his first formal job as a packer in a supermarket. About starting his current job, Caio says:

At the beginning ... everyone believed in me that I could stay there. My supervisor supported me and still supports me [...]. In the beginning, I was cutting and welding [...]. But here I have a chance to grow. Because in the other city I had no chance of growth. (Caio).

Support and opportunity for advancement, as well as prospects for growth, is not always what people with intellectual disabilities find, as indicated by the study conducted by Bezerra and Vieira (2012), who found unequal opportunities in the workplace. In addition, Violante and Leite (2011) pointed out the lack of flexibility of the companies, which suggests that the subject himself has to adapt to their demands, being therefore himself responsible for the success or failure of their inclusion. Caio seems to be aware of the obstacles, perhaps from his previous job experience, and this makes him cherish the current company and he intends to stay and make progress, which does not mean, however, that he himself is not largely responsible for the success of his labor insertion.

Caio's statements during the meetings do not show any flexibility or suitability of the company, no offer of training that would meet his interests or needs; rather, they demonstrate his own efforts to build a curriculum that matches labor market perspectives. To grow in the company, he continued his studies and plans to take a mechanics course to work in the sector of his choice.

Although this was her first job, Laura also progressed, as evidenced by her statement: *"In the beginning I did massage [...], today there is no time left"* (Laura). Laura refers to the duties she performed when entering the pharmacy. At first, she was hired to welcome customers while they were waiting for care and to offer them a massage, which was no small consideration, considering that it is not common to have people with disabilities in direct contact with customers.

However, when co-workers went to another city to take a flower manipulation course, Laura showed interest and took the initiative to question why she couldn't do it either. The owner authorized her admission and, as a result of her good performance in the course, Laura began to work in the laboratory, as well as other sectors that daily provide opportunities to discover her potential. Laura gets support and sees possibilities for progression: *"I feel like I do the things a pharmacist does, shampoo, conditioner, syrup, honey is syrup to put in the bottle"*. She also reports the feeling of security she finds: *"He always took care of me [referring to the employer]. He is careful. He is important. He is important to me to take care of. [...] care, protection"* (Laura).

Caio and Laura found a receptive and conducive environment for development, with support, care and encouragement, and can also glimpse in the other new possibilities, such as Laura who would like to perform the services of the pharmacist and Caio who aims to become a mechanic. Their work activities are meaningful, they feel valued and are fulfilled at work, especially Caio, who had already had experience of discredit and discrimination in his previous job. *"I started working in a market when I was 16 years old; in the beginning, I liked it, but then I quit and left. They exploited me. The salary was ugly"* (Caio).

The protagonists of this study were given the opportunity to develop as humans, regardless of their biological status, a fact that differs from so many other subjects with intellectual disabilities who, deprived of culture and knowledge, survive outside the labor

market, of schooling, of society as a whole. Barroco (2012) brings reflection on the conscience that differentiates man from animals, and which is formed during an intense relationship with the world of work. From this perspective, human consciousness is constituted to a greater or lesser extent according to the relations put to this subject, which means that social practice determines what and how much humanity is in man, regardless of his or her organic conditions.

In this sense, we can say that the working relationships put to Laura have fulfilled the role in her development as a human being, leaving behind the paradigms created in relation to the person with Down Syndrome that they are unable to perform their superior functions. Thus, Laura refuses to accept practices involving mechanical and repetitive services, as explained in her following statement:

I don't like to assemble droppers! It is difficult to keep assembling droppers ... and there are two things I do not like, droppers and washing the glass, washing glass for me is difficult. Sometimes they make my head get stressed [referring to co-workers]: "Go to the bank, go to the lottery!". I say: "Oh God, what do I do?". (Laura).

However, questioning, arguing, or even denying oneself are not always easy tasks for people who have historically had their voices silenced. Even having other plans, Caio says he will be transferred from his sector for production reasons. In this case, he, a subject with intellectual disability, produces in greater quantities than the official responsible for the job. Caio does not complain or is enthusiastic about the new position, nor does he express dissatisfaction or express any reaction and, when asked about it, he answers:

They can put me there, I don't care, I assemble right, I do the right size. The little flags like this, little ones like this, in one day I made two hundred. One man made only about ten to twenty, he was distracted. I talk little there, what I have to do I do it, but talking only after I don't have things to do (Caio).

Caio is proud of his production capacity and his answer refers to the course he took to work training: "I learned how to do the right way for the customer, so he doesn't find it bad with us"; "if the boss says to do such a thing, I have to do it". With these internalizations, it is not allowed for him to question or express his wishes, interests and plans as the project of moving to the mechanics sector. Even with prospects of progression at work, Caio lets the company make the decision of where to go "it's either mechanical or anything else they want to put me in". We cannot disregard that Caio's role in society is that of a person with intellectual disabilities; therefore, a subject without active voice in decision making, even if it is about his own life. It is common for family members or health and education professionals to decide when and where they can study, as well as when to stop studying, and not differently, work takes the new position of determining what they can and cannot do. Caio's statements demonstrate the content of his relationships at the company:

I talk little there. I do not like people who get in the way of my job ... Ah, they make jokes there that I do not like [...], if this person came and spoke badly about you, do not listen, be cool... I would say: work quietly and do not even hear what they say about you. (Caio).

Few conversations, people disturbing his work, jokes that displease him, co-workers who speak about “bad” things. In short, these are the social practices imposed on Caio, relationships that contribute, or at least should, to the formation of what is human in himself (Barroco, 2012) and that may explain the difficulty in expressing, talking about his plans, revealing his interests and projects.

In contrast, Laura can express her expectations about how she wants to do her work, prioritizing the autonomy achieved:

I like Carla more. I like her more because she leaves me alone. I was always alone to do my things. It's important for me to do it myself! [...] João Paulo (contractor) is different from me, very different from my quality. He does it his way. I do it my way. Each one has a way. Every once in a while, you have to fight a little, a little fight comes out. (Laura).

To Silva (2009), living in diversity is not the same as becoming a passive and supportive subject, assuming the exclusive role of spectator. Rather, living together collectively means imprinting their individuality, their life experiences, considering them as aspects that tend to enrich relationships. However, it is not a spontaneous and easy task for the person with intellectual disabilities who was constituted in an organized society by the so-called normal. Her individuality is considered inferior and trying to imprint it can be a painful process of fighting and breaking paradigms.

Laura shows her individuality when she recognizes that each subject has their own specificities that make them different rather than better or worse, and considers the discussions important for reaching a consensus. She struggles to maintain her autonomy in doing what she likes independently, recognizing how important it is to her development even though she is not always treated equally:

They value my work a lot, but ... it depends, it will depend because there is a day they teach me, and some days they do not! And the formulas are theirs, it depends on what I said, because the formulas are Ellen, Regina's, their formulas and ... it depends in my case (Laura).

Laura interprets as professional devaluation and disregard with her interests the inconsistency and little time of her colleagues to devote themselves to teaching her. She questions why formulas belong to partners who are reluctant to share. Sure of her abilities and achievements so far, Laura, for a brief moment, seems to have her confidence shaken, or at least confused by not understanding why she has not yet achieved her goal, blaming herself in the yearning for justification – “*this part I cannot do*”. Can't she do it due to her organic condition of person with Down Syndrome? Or does she not do it because of the lack of opportunity resulting from the social consequences of the disability, as stated by Vygotsky (1997)?

Kassar (2013) points out that society labels the behavior of people with intellectual disabilities as devoid of meaning and sense, judging them unable to produce culture. Alves (2018) adds that society also finds them unable to signify everyday situations as if they do not understand what happens, what they say or what they think about it.

Vygotsky (2009) suggests that we consider the subject's discourse beyond the meanings of his/her words. This is how we observe, in Laura's speech, her ability to mean and give meaning

to the attitudes of her co-workers, even when words are not spoken to them and gestures are not so explicit, which proves the existence of superior psychic functions, commonly disregarded in people whose disability is intellectual. So when peers say they don't have time to teach her, Laura gives meaning: "They don't value me in the company". When they teach her on some days and others not, Laura interprets: "They do not commit to my work". Likewise, Caio masters language and signs, giving meaning to the situation in which they did not invite him to lunch at his former company. It is necessary to have the capacity of abstraction and attention to the facts that were outlined around him to realize who was invited, who was not, why the person was not invited, the meaning of the situation: "*I suffered discrimination*". Voluntary memory must also be mastered by bringing out past facts permeated by symbolic representations that intertwine with the present facts, forming coherent explanations in an intentional discourse and weaving expectations about the future. "This capacity for meaning is only achieved in the midst of social relations, after mastery of language and signs, being an important cultural acquisition that radically differentiates man from animals" (Alves, 2018, p. 112).

Pino (2005) highlights the ability of man to show meaning and calls it as the unnatural side of nature, which means that the biological and natural condition of the subject acquires a new configuration; this time, symbolic. Thus, it is possible to analyze Caio's ability to signify a seemingly simple situation, but one that takes him out of his uniquely natural condition, transporting him to the symbolic and specifically human world.

As Caio watches the movement around him with watchful and curious eyes, he notices that the inspectors deliver invitations to their co-workers. He was able to, even while doing his work in which he apparently remained focused (perhaps, as the inspectors and colleagues would judge him), hear the whispers and comments about the event. He immediately sought in his memory if perhaps he had not received the invitation either. During this episode, painfully described by Caio, the natural or biological aspects that allowed him to experience the event were highlighted: vision, hearing and immediate memory.

However, the most important of the whole situation is on the unnatural side, that is, on the attributed meaning, which gives the situation in question a new guise, this time symbolic. Caio interpreted (symbolic function) that he suffered a situation of discrimination in which he was not invited due to the social consequences of his biological condition. Adopting the words of Pino (2005), it is up to us to ask "what does culture do in the nature of the world and of man himself? It gives them *meaning*, which they do not have and that by having it they are no longer simply what they once were" (Pino, 2005, p. 170).

The search for understanding the meaning that Caio and Laura attributed to work, even having experienced situations not always friendly, becomes exciting. What are the reasons that led these young people to face the world of work? It is worth noting that both have a comfortable family financial situation and do not depend on work to make ends meet. Travels, restaurants and a comfortable life were already part of the scenario of these subjects, again departing from the reality experienced by many people with disabilities who need a salary to help with household expenses, being the only or greatest motivation for work. This information is relevant to the reflection of the reasons that led them to enter the formal job market, making the formerly quiet life more hectic, with responsibilities and experiences not always pleasant.

Thus, it is possible to infer that the meaning of work for the participants of this research is beyond the financial aspect, since, in and through work, they developed intellectually and daily. Caio and Laura were invited to reflect on their own reasons and initially attributed money to the main motivation. However, when provoked by the researcher about the possibility and the right to receive financial aid and stop working, they rejected emphatically, demonstrating the true importance of work for their lives:

I always wanted to work. Now will I receive financial support without doing anything? Ah ... I'll keep working the same way. If you want to give me financial support you can, but I'll keep working the same way! If you want me to retire, you can retire me, but I'll work just the same! (Caio).

The participants of this research spoke about the importance of work in their lives and corroborated the hypothesis that it means much more than the financial aspect, acting directly on the most precious asset of man, in its humanization, even if money is not disregarded.

After I got into work, people treated me well. After I got my job, I became different. I met new people too. Before working, I was shier. (Caio).

My way of being has changed, my way of working. I do everything myself. Nobody gives their opinions. [...]. And it's teaching me too. Time for fun. Playing, having fun, laughing, chatting... (Laura).

Caio highlights the different way he is treated, perhaps with greater credibility, as well as overcoming shyness and socialization. Laura, in turn, emphasizes the autonomy gained, the activities performed independently and the perception that she has earned the trust of society in her work and potentialities. She also mentions the learning, the conversations and the moments of fun. Such experiences would not be possible if they were protected at home, receiving financial aid and expropriation of cultural goods, more significant than the material goods acquired.

The reasons that initially led these subjects to enter the formal labor market were transformed. In this regard, Leontiev (2006) explains that an activity is composed of understandable and effective reasons. In the history of the protagonists of this research, the reasons that led them to enter the world of work are those understandable and common to most people, regardless of their organic condition, such as financial income and the need to pay their basic expenses. However, during the activity development process, understandable motives are transformed and delved into on a deeper level, and the result of their actions becomes meaningful and superior to the initial motives that led them to work (Leontiev, 2006). In addition to paying their expenses, they change inwardly, becoming different people, capable, resourceful, autonomous, as well as outwardly, being respected and considered in their desires and capabilities, and this may be the truly effective reasons for waking up every morning and facing the challenges that come from work.

We can point out differences in the way Laura and Caio positioned themselves in the face of obstacles encountered at work. Laura takes a critical, questioning stance and demonstrating full awareness of her biological and social identity as a person with Down Syndrome. She is aware of the social obstacles she faces due to her organic condition as well as her potentialities and limits. She does not passively accept tasks that she does not think

contribute to her development and clearly expresses her interests, hoping that she will be respected in her specificities.

Caio, on the other hand, assumes a less critical discourse in relation to work, adopting a passive, sometimes even childish stance, as if he fears losing the achievements hitherto acquired if perhaps he would put himself more questioningly or express his interests. He appears confused about his own identity as a person with intellectual disabilities and finds in obedience and exacerbated production the assurance that he will no longer suffer scenes of discrimination. While Laura seems to face and reflect on such situations, Caio seeks to avoid confrontation and not listen to conceptions about him.

The differences in positioning and proper development of what is human in these participants may be a consequence of the way they have been viewed and prepared by and for a society that often teaches the role the people with disabilities must play (Glat, 2009). In the trajectory of the participants, we can highlight the fundamental role that the family played in their constitution, either by encouraging autonomy and self-knowledge, or passivity and uncertainties about their possibilities, highlighting the empowerment of Laura's family.

However, even with the differences in Laura and Caio's development and posture, arising from the way they were constituted, both proved that it is still possible to change through work: "*I was different*" (Caio); "*My way of being has changed*" (Laura), being the original purpose to modify the external nature, and, above all, their own inner nature, becoming humanized through their activity. Thus, "man acts on people and on himself, producing changes in them and in himself" (Pino, 2005, p. 148). The signs were culturally appropriate and came to command Caio and Laura's actions, causing significant interior changes. These subjects acquired self-knowledge and self-control, which are the main characteristics that make us human.

It is important to highlight two distinct aspects of the work. In the beginning, work acts as the creator of human society, as well as of man himself in an intense process of humanization. With the transformations that occurred over time, from the capitalist advent, the work activity became meaningless, taking the form of wage labor. Deformed in its true sense, work deforms with it the man himself, who sees it only as a necessary burden for his survival, and no longer as a need for human achievement, becoming a stranger to what he produces (Antunes, 2005). Man loses his most precious good, exchanges what is human, access to cultural goods, the development of his superior functions, for a salary incapable of meeting his needs, but guaranteeing his survival.

Amid this scenario of hopelessness and separation between manual and intellectual labor (the latter being the privilege of the few), two subjects with intellectual disabilities contradict all that was foreseeable as the current social context of work, the socially attributed stigmata to them, the biological limits of disability and countless other obstacles, and they redeem their genuine meaning at work. They transform inwardly, build new possibilities for development, and create specifically human social relationships. Work allowed them not only to be regarded as disabled, but as cultural subjects, workers who, like everyone else, have limitations that are overcome by mediations of instruments, signs and humans, restoring their true meaning.

And advancing in abstraction, this same autonomous, self-determined worker and producer of useful things will render capital meaningless and superfluous, generating the social conditions for the flourishing of an authentic and emancipated subjectivity. Thus, giving new meaning to work and giving life a new meaning. Rescuing the dignity and sense of social humanity that the present world is making collapse. (Antunes, 2005, p. 66).

To Lorenzo (2016), even with adversity, not working can cause even more harmful consequences to the life of people with disabilities. Although with flaws such as discrimination, devaluation and even fragmentation of labor activity, Caio and Laura proved that human development through work is possible; thus, the gains are immeasurable when compared to adversity.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Two stories were presented in order to demonstrate that work is an important instrument of human development. Through work, these people transformed the external context, broke stereotypes and social standards by proving that they can work in companies and perform activities that demand superior psychic functions such as creativity, abstraction, language and concepts, among others. Caio and Laura resisted the conceptions built about them linked to disability and enhanced the opportunities offered. Work allowed them to change internally, to discover what they are capable of, and to see their accomplishments even in the face of incredulous glances. They became independent, critical, autonomous and developed cognitively through the work activities in which they could unite theory with praxis. Reclaiming the true meaning of work, they became humanized, transformed the outer nature, and beyond, their own inner nature into symbolic beings.

The success of the stories presented is not due to a single isolated action of an institution or individual, but it has occurred through joint work, in which various instances, such as family, legislation, education, health and business fulfilled their role of empowering, providing opportunities and support services that gave to people with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to have access to historically neglected cultural goods.

The biological substrates have been expanded, since there are no limits to the action of the culture that is able to act even on the impediments arising from the disability. The well-articulated language, the meanings attributed to the other's behavior, the entrance and the progression in the work is evidence of the specifically human cultural action on the natural one, allowing these subjects to perform activities not normally seen and considered impossible for a person with intellectual disabilities, such as working in a pharmacy laboratory.

Although there is in the literature important research addressing the perception of people with disabilities, as well as work through the view of contractors and special or regular institutions, this paper differs by addressing the importance of work in the human development of these subjects. The study may contribute to raising reflections on the role of education in relation to work, not being understood as two dissociated processes; rather, work and education are completed and unified. We understand that educating for work consists of worrying about the integral formation of a subject who, after acquiring scientific concepts and

developing his/her superior psychic functions, becomes humanized through his/her activity, regardless of his biological condition. This format is in no way like the mere technical training of a specific function, nor is it the fragmentation between education and work.

The stories presented in this paper are not common and highlight the need for changes in society beyond inclusive discourse, since there is sometimes no consistency between discourse and practice. Only in this way will other stories like those of Caio and Laura become commonplace, rules, and not rare exceptions.

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