ARTICLE

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED EDUCATORS: SCRUTINIZING ACCESSIBILITY[1]

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ABSTRACT: In a society that is constituted by patterned looks and the logic of normality, visually impaired teachers distance themselves from the standards of body, behavior, and ways of being and doing teaching, which causes strangeness. This article is the result of research that aimed to understand how teachers with visual impairments (blind or with low vision) face the challenges of their professional practice by answering the following research issue: how do visually impaired educators narrate accessibility for professional practice? To do so, narrative interviews were carried out with seven visually impaired educators who work in the Basic Educational System in three Southern Brazilian states. The narratives were organized in thematic groups and examined based on the discourse analysis, supported by Foucauldian references. The study points out that the higher the social barriers imposed, the lower the inclusion possibilities for visually impaired educators in professional practice. It also reveals that inclusion and accessibility have been thought of more for students with disabilities and less for teachers, whose professional insertion is recent and still causes strangeness in school spaces.

Keywords: Visually impaired teachers, accessibility, normalization, special education.

EXERCÍCIO PROFISSIONAL DE DOCENTES COM DEFICIÊNCIA VISUAL: TENSIONANDO A ACESSIBILIDADE

RESUMO: Em uma sociedade que se constitui por olhares padronizados e pela lógica da normalidade, os docentes com deficiência visual se distanciam dos padrões de corpo, comportamento, jeitos de ser e fazer a docência, o que causa estranhamentos. Este artigo resulta de uma pesquisa que objetivou compreender como docentes com deficiência visual (cegos/as ou com baixa visão) enfrentam os desafios de exercer a profissão, respondendo ao seguinte problema de pesquisa: de que forma professores/as com deficiência visual narram a acessibilidade para o exercício da profissão? Para isso, realizaram-se entrevistas narrativas com sete docentes com deficiência visual, atuantes na Educação Básica nos três estados da Região Sul do Brasil. As narrativas foram organizadas em agrupamentos temáticos e examinadas a partir da perspectiva da análise do discurso, amparada pelos referenciais foucaultianos. O estudo aponta que, quanto maiores forem as barreiras sociais impostas, menores serão

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as possibilidades de inclusão de docentes com deficiência visual no exercício profissional. Revela também, que a inclusão e acessibilidade tem sido pensadas mais para os estudantes com deficiência e menos para os professores, cuja inserção profissional é recente e ainda causa estranhamento nos espaços escolares.

Palavras-chave: Docentes com deficiência visual, acessibilidade, normalização, educação especial.

EJERCICIO PROFESIONAL DE DOCENTE CON DISCAPACIDAD VISUAL: TENSANDO LA ACCESIBILIDAD

RESUMEN: En una sociedad que está constituida por las miradas estandarizadas y la lógica de la normalidad, los docentes con discapacidad visual se alejan de las normas de cuerpo, comportamiento, formas de ser y hacer docentes, lo que provoca el extrañamiento. Este artículo es el resultado de una investigación que tuvo como objetivo comprender cómo los profesores con discapacidad visual (ciegos/as o con baja visión) enfrentan los desafíos de ejercer la profesión, contestando al problema de investigación: ¿cómo los docentes con discapacidad visual narran la accesibilidad para el ejercicio de la profesión? Para eso, se realizaron entrevistas narrativas con siete docentes con discapacidad visual que actúan en la Educación Básica en los tres estados de la Región Sul del Brasil. Las narrativas fueron organizadas en grupos temáticos y examinadas a desde la perspectiva del análisis del discurso, apoyadas en referencias foucaultianas. El estudio apunta que: cuanto mayores son las barreras sociales impostas, menores son las posibilidades de incluir a los docentes con discapacidad visual en su ejercicio profesional. También revela que la inclusión y la accesibilidad han sido pensadas más para los estudiantes con discapacidad y menos para los docentes, cuya inserción profesional es reciente y aún provoca distanciamiento en los espacios escolares.

Palabras clave: Profesores con discapacidade visual, accessibilidade, normalización, educación especial.

INTRODUCTION

When looking at the school context, it is possible to note that the professional performance of teachers with visual impairments can be considered recent and reflects the struggles fought and won historically by the Special Education people. In a society that is constituted by standardized looks and the logic of norm/normality, teachers with visual impairment are far from body standards, behavior, and ways of being and teaching, which can cause strangeness.

Brazil is one of the countries that stands out when it comes to legislation for people with disabilities, mainly because it has a wide range of laws, decrees, and regulations that establish rules and guarantee the right to inclusion and accessibility for these people. We mainly highlight the implementation of measures and standards that guarantee accessibility, being a primordial right, which grants access to the exercise of other rights.

This article is the result of the Master's dissertation in Education by the first author under the guidance of the second, in the Research Line *Diversity, interculturality and inclusive education. The investigation sought answers based on the following research problem*: How do teachers with visual impairments (blind or low vision) face the challenges of practicing their profession? The following study questions came from the research problem: What are the challenges faced by people with visual impairments in organizing pedagogical practices? How do teachers with visual impairments describe the accessibility of their profession? How do teachers with visual impairments organize work/classes? The motivations for the research emerge from the first author's experiences, a teacher with visual impairment, who graduated in Physical Education and working in this area, and the social and academic relevance of addressing a topic that is still little explored.

Therefore, based on constitutional regulations, this text addresses accessibility, more specifically architectural, urban, and attitudinal accessibility, which are essential for people with disabilities, provided in the Brazilian Inclusion Law (BRASIL, 2015). Accessibility consists of the possibility that people with disabilities have access to and enjoy life in different times and spaces such as work, leisure, and social relationships, with safety and autonomy. Its implementation, at the same time as it puts into practice the right to equal opportunity, provides people with disabilities with participation as citizens.

Based on the legal regulations that grant conditions of access that enable the participation of teachers with disabilities as citizens and aim at autonomy, equal opportunity, and the right to be, coexist, and enjoy different contexts and spaces/places, we see that accessibility is something under construction. However, this perspective raises questions such as: are regulations regarding access and working conditions for teachers with visual impairments enforced? By broadening the look at this phenomenon through a Foucauldian lens, supported by Veiga-Neto and Lopes (2007), it is possible to say that all the discursivity surrounding public inclusion policies can be understood as a form of governing bodies. When analyzing the issue from this angle, public inclusion policies aim to place all bodies under the same roof (VEIGA-NETO; LOPES, 2007).

The aforementioned authors emphasize that, with the expression putting everyone under the same roof, "they are referring both to a physical space – such as a *stricto sensu* institutional (school, company, etc.), family space, etc. – and symbolic spaces – culture, identity, diagnostic classification" (VEIGA-NETO; LOPES, 2007, p. 9). Furthermore, they highlight that, to govern the population, it is necessary to promote order, which occurs in the logic of public inclusion policies through the right to equality, that is, through guaranteeing access for all.

In this scenario of public inclusion policies, accessibility becomes a fundamental right and establishes a precondition for access to all other rights in social life. This means overcoming imposed barriers through the right to accessibility. In line with the Brazilian Inclusion Law, in article 3, item IV, barriers are conceptualized and classified as:

> IV - any challenge, obstacle, attitude, or behavior that limits or prevents the person's social participation, and the enjoyment, fruition, and exercise of their rights to accessibility, freedom of movement and expression, communication, access to information, understanding, safety movement, among others, classified into:
> a) urban barriers: those existing on roads and in public and private spaces open to the public or for collective use;
> b) architectural barriers: those existing in public and private buildings;
> c) transport barriers: those existing in transport systems and means;
> d) barriers in communications and information: any challenge, obstacle, attitude, or behavior that makes it difficult or impossible to express or receive messages and information through communication and information technology systems;
> e) attitudinal barriers: attitudes or behaviors that prevent or harm the social participation of people with disabilities on equal terms and opportunities with other people;
> f) technological barriers: those that hinder or prevent people with disabilities from accessing technologies [...] (BRASIL, 2015).

Teachers with visual impairments can teach with dignity and condition if architectural and urban planning accessibility standards are effective and experienced in everyday life to break down such barriers. The concept of visual impairment, in Decree 5,296 (2004), in its Article 5, § 1, Item I, paragraph c), is presented as follows:

> blindness, in which visual acuity is equal to or less than 0.05 in the best eye, with the best optical correction; low vision, which means visual acuity between 0.3 and 0.05 in the best eye, with the best optical correction; cases in which the sum of the visual field measurement in both eyes is equal to or less than 60º; or the simultaneous occurrence of any of the foregoing conditions.

With this in mind, this article sought to understand how teachers with visual impairments (blind or low vision) narrate accessibility to exercising their profession. To this end, accessibility conditions are highlighted, from the moment teachers leave their homes until the moment they arrive

and remain in the space where they practice their profession, considering aspects related to architecture, urban planning, and attitudinal accessibility.

METHODOLOGICAL COURSE

In this study, the narratives of seven teachers with visual impairments, working in the basic education network in the three states of southern Brazil: Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, and Paraná, were analyzed. To select teachers, the sampling technique called snowball was used, which is characterized as a form of non-probabilistic sampling, selected through indication, that is, from a chain of reference. The process starts with the seeds, which can be people nominated by the researcher and who have, in some way, a connection with the research audience. From these seeds, the snowball begins. In this way, the seeds have the fundamental role of indicating new people who meet the research criteria (DEWES, 2013).

The teachers nominated through the reference network and who agreed to participate in the study, following the research criteria, took part in this research. These are teachers working between 2 (two) and 25 years in Basic Education in the three states of Southern Brazil, with academic training in Pedagogy (predominantly), Philosophy, Physical Education, and Geography. To preserve the real identity of each participant, they were identified as Teacher 1, Teacher 2, and so on, until Teacher 7. For this article, we selected statements from teaching narratives relating to accessibility and its implication in teaching, considering the recurrence and relevance of manifestations. The generation of empirical materialities took place through narrative interviews, carried out after approval of the project by the Research Ethics Committee involving human beings, CAAE 39967120.0.0000.0116, at the *Universidade Comunitária da Região de Chapecó - Unochapecó*, with the consent of the researched subjects. The narrative interviews took place via Google Meet, considering the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, and were then transcribed in full. For Andrade (2014, p. 181), "narratives are constituted from the connection between discourses that articulate, overlap, add to each other or even differ or temporize".

To carry out the interviews, a script was adopted with guiding topics that contributed to the organization of the dialogues. The narrative interview allows the researcher to delve into the most diverse contexts and life scenarios. The interviewed subjects, when narrating, recall important facts from their life history, and, in this way, the stories revisited by the narrated words evoke meanings, little by little (SOUSA; CABRAL, 2015). According to the authors, the narrative does not constitute an oral act to be told, but, through the act of telling, the interviewed subject reveals how he/she conceives and experiences things in the world (SOUSA; CABRAL, 2015).

The narratives were organized into thematic groupings, considering the recurrence and relevance of manifestations, and examined based on discourse analysis from a Foucauldian perspective. Some historical aspects and concepts related to visual impairment were addressed and revisited, as well as public inclusion and accessibility policies. The contributions of Foucault and other authors who rely on their theories helped to tense and denaturalize what was stated, regarding accessibility issues, closely linked to the professional practice of teachers with visual impairments.

Foucault states that when analyzing discourses, it is necessary to be attentive, as they are immersed in "a complex and unstable game in which discourse can be, at the same time, an instrument and effect of power, and also an obstacle, support, a point of resistance and a starting point of an opposite strategy" (FOUCAULT, 2005, p. 96). Discourse, from a Foucauldian perspective, is understood as a "more precise, more concise description of a historical formation in its nakedness, it is the updating of its last individual difference" (VEYNE, 2011, p. 16-17).

Thus, speeches are no longer mere narratives, taking on the proportion of relationships established between people, the time, and the context in which they occur. As Oliveira (2018) states, discourse is not limited only to speech, the act of speech, and what is presented, but it encompasses relationships and actions that have social meaning.

From this perspective, "it is accepted that language is produced, maintained and modified in the context of struggles and disputes for the right to mean. With it and in it is, what is sayable and,

therefore, also thinkable and shareable is constituted, each time, each place and each culture" (MEYER; PARAISO, 2014, p. 3).

TEACHERS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT: NARRATIVES OF EXPERIENCES AND FEELINGS

Box 1 below summarizes information about the teachers who participated in the study, sharing their stories, through narrative interviews, carried out in January 2021. The information aims to situate the reader in the context of empirical materialities. Four teachers who identify as male and three teachers who identify as female were interviewed. However, to preserve the identity of the interviewees, the option was not to differentiate gender in the presentation and highlighting of excerpts of speeches.

Box 1

Teachers participating in the research

Teacher	State	Academic education	Working time	Education stage in which they work	Work style: effective/ contract	Characterization of the disability	Long cane user?
D1	RS	Bachelor's degree in Pedagogy	2 years and 8 months	Elementary Education: Initial Grades	Municipal network: effective	Congenital total blindness: glaucoma that caused retinal displacement	Yes
D2	RS	Bachelor's degree in Pedagogy	3 years and 10 months	Kindergarten	Municipal network: effective	Congenital low vision: malformation	Yes
D3	PR	Bachelor's degree in Pedagogy and postgraduate degree in Special Education and Neuropedagogy	7 years	Resource room	Municipal network: effective	Congenital total blindness	Yes
D4	PR	Bachelor's degree in Pedagogy and Philosophy	25 years	Vocational Education Network	CLT	Congenital total blindness	Yes
D5	SC	Bachelor's degree in Physical Education	8 years	Municipal network (for sports)	Municipal network ACT	Congenital low vision	No
D6	SC	Bachelor's degree in Pedagogy	2 years	Elementary School; Initial series; EJA	Municipal network: ACT	Congenital low vision	Yes
D7	SC	Bachelor's degree in Pedagogy and master's degree in Geography	5 years	EJA; Elementary School; High school	State network: effective	Congenital total blindness	Yes

Source: prepared by the authors.

Accessibility on the way from home to workspace

Although it is not a rule, some teachers without visual impairments, when leaving home for work, get behind the wheel and in the comfort of their cars. Others, who know, take a seat on public transport, or even, those who live close to their work, they walk. This movement, which appears

to be a simple activity, can have barriers for teachers with visual impairments. For this reason, interviewees were asked how they got to their workspaces.

For Teacher 1, accessibility in the municipality where he lives in the state of Rio Grande do Sul is complicated, having to create strategies and memorize places and paths on the way:

> When I got off at the stop near the school, in front of the shopping mall, a new location and, a new sidewalk, so there was a tactile floor. There I can guide myself halfway, until I reach this bridge where there is the sanga and then I have to turn around. There are no sidewalks. So, you have to walk down the street, around the corner of the street. There are manholes, there are a lot of obstacles. Architectural and urban accessibility is poor, and I always have to create strategies (D1).

Teacher 3 lives close to the job but he does not like walking on the sidewalks because they are damaged and come across cars parked on them. Therefore, he prefers to walk down the street or call a car from an app to get there or back, but the journey is relatively easy.

> I generally walk more on the street than on the sidewalk, I don't like sidewalks, because there are a lot of bad sidewalks. So, here it is, it's peaceful. Now, lately, I've been using the app because where I work, going by bus takes a long time (D3).

To get to work, teachers depend on strategies to overcome the lack of accessibility such as remembering places and paths and/or taking an app-based car. To remind readers, as described in the presentation table of the interviewed subjects, only Teacher 5 is not a user of a long cane.[2]

Whether on the home/work or work/home route, landmarks make a difference in the lives of people with visual impairments, enabling them to memorize paths through kinesthetics or the so-called kinesthetic tactile memory. This way of perceiving spaces helps people reach their destinations. On the route covered, everything becomes a reference point: speed bumps, gaps, holes, climbs, slopes, roundabouts, among other possibilities. Such references are perceived, for example, through the body that moves, feeling the rocking of the bus or the unevenness of the sidewalk with the feet or the long cane. In this way, the sensitive body perceives and memorizes the paths that are familiar to it.

Among the movements fighting for people with disabilities, the movement for inclusion and accessibility has been consolidated and gained strength in recent times. However, the concept of accessibility is not restricted just to the tactile floor or, when we think of blind people, to Braille[3]. There are several other fundamental elements to accessibility. According to Article 3, item I, of the Brazilian Inclusion Law (BRASIL, 2015), accessibility means

> possibility and condition of reach for use, with safety and autonomy, of spaces, furniture, urban equipment, buildings, transport, information, and communication, including their systems and technologies, as well as other services and facilities open to the public, for public use or private for collective use, both in urban and rural areas, by people with disabilities or reduced mobility (BRASIL, 2015).

This shows that to have accessibility and inclusion, the uniqueness of each person must be considered. However, we live in a standardizing and normalizing society. In other words, norms are created at each time and anyone who does not meet the established normative standards is considered abnormal. In this sense, Veiga-Neto and Lopes affirm the use of the norm as a strategy of domination and power relations, highlighting that how inclusion policies have been designed and implemented in Brazil "seems to ignore the difference. Thus, instead of promoting education for all, they run the risk of

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[2] A long cane is the instrument that people with visual impairments use to move around space. It is used in front of the body, in a sweeping movement, that is, to explore space.

[3] The Braille System is a universal tactile reading and writing code, used by blind people, invented in France by Louis Braille, a young blind man. Using six raised dots, arranged in two columns, it allows 63 combinations for reading and writing, in addition to mathematical, chemical, phonetic, computer, musical, punctuation and other symbols used in common spelling.

carrying out an inclusion that excludes differences" (2007, p. 947). In this way, everyone is under the rule and no one escapes it. Previously, the norm exterminated, segregated, excluded, and admitted people to hospitals and hospices; now includes, and often, excludes them.

Being a body with a disability is one of the many possibilities of being in the world. In response to this, scholars of the social model of disability are raising debates and proposing a redefinition of the meaning of inhabiting a body that, for a long time, was understood as abnormal. Normality has already been understood in different ways: as a biomedical standard; as a productive order framed by social norms; and as a producer of oppression by the body with variations in functioning. From this perspective, "Disability translates the oppression of the body with impediments: the concept of a disabled body or person with a disability must be understood in political terms and no longer strictly biomedical" (DINIZ; BARBOSA; SANTOS, 2009, p. 97). This means that the truths about how to conceptualize disability vary according to the movements of each historical time.

In this sense, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in its Article 1, defines people with disabilities as those who have "impairments of a physical, intellectual or sensory nature, which, in interaction with various barriers, may obstruct their participation fully and effectively in society with other people" (BRASIL, 2007). This means that being a person with a disability goes beyond what is legally defined: it is, above all, about experiencing daily the restrictions imposed by social barriers that prevent full participation in society.

Corroborating this view, the narratives of the subjects interviewed showed that public spaces, in general, do not favor or comply with the law, which ends up masking the lack of accessibility. For Lopes and Fabris (2020a), although there are few statistical numbers regarding excluded people in Brazil, exclusion based on the new political scenario and the notions of rights of governed subjects is broad, as, at the same time as it welcomes, it prevents participation effectiveness of certain groups in society.

Lopes and Fabris (2020a) characterize this movement of in/exclusion as two sides of the same coin, which implies being included by norms in theory and excluded in practice by the same norms. An example of this is in the speech of Teacher 4 when he says that the path is complicated since tactile floors do not follow some principles and also expresses his perception of what accessibility on sidewalks should be like:

> the tactile floor is a patchwork quilt [...] I think there is a lot of talk about people with disabilities in the field of accessibility but little is said about people with disabilities to see how this should work properly. [...] I think that the best tactile floor that should exist is a legal sidewalk, a good sidewalk, with the removal of more dangerous architectural barriers (D4).

In Teacher 6's narrative, in/exclusion was evident when choosing his job position:

> So, in schools, when teachers are generally ACT (referring to admission temporarily), they get nervous for the following reasons: what is the target audience like? Who will I deal with? I had beyond this nervousness. My God, is there a hole? Does it have a step? Is there a bus stop nearby? Often, when you are facing the person who has to choose a vacancy, you can't keep asking those thousand questions, you just have to choose because there are a thousand people behind you (D6).

This shows that legal support grants the right and condition for people with disabilities to take the test, whether in a public competition or selection process for temporary vacancies and also provides for the reservation of vacancies for people with disabilities. However, the space performance does not provide decent working conditions. Choosing places becomes an adventure, as participants will only discover what the place is like and whether it is accessible by experiencing it. In this case, legal regulations frame and normalize, that is, they place the subject into the competitive market game, naturalizing their presence, which is appeased by the fallacy of inclusion. According to Lopes and Fabris (2020a, p. 46),

> To normalize the subject or naturalize their presence in the population among those who make up the social gradient in which they participate, the individual, in addition to being 'treated'

based on the reference of normality arising from the norm (normation), is quantified and shown as yet another that falls within a zone of normality determined by the notion of inclusion.

Teacher 6 continues his narrative saying that he gave up a job in São José (SC) due to the lack of accessibility. He also says that, when choosing his vacancy, he usually chooses to go to work by Uber (a car called via an app) in the first few weeks, precisely because of the fear of the unknown route and of arriving late. After a while, he "risks" taking public transport. In one of these attempts with public transport, he ended up twisting his foot, which got stuck in a hole, because, when getting off the bus, he needed to walk another long distance. The interviewee narrates:

> I went exploring, I went by bus and then I discovered that the bus didn't stop in front, you had to walk a long way, I think it was about five to ten minutes, but it wasn't straight, you had to turn, make several turns. So, I knew that I wouldn't be able to handle this so easily on my own. [...] Anyway, it didn't have a tactile floor, it was in a peripheral community and had no accessibility whatsoever. There were manholes, and then my foot got stuck in one of those manholes. And then my body moved forward, my foot got stuck there, I twisted my foot and I was sure I wouldn't be able to do it. For some professionals with disabilities, it may not be a very significant barrier to giving up work. But for me, it was, because I kept thinking: 'What if it's raining'? I already suffered going to places I knew, imagine a place I don't know. Then I have to do a lot of laps. I was very afraid of falling, of getting hurt, of not having anyone there to ask for help (D6).

Given such reports, the body with disabilities is discriminated against due to false accessibility and causes the experience of inequality. Inclusion is more than accessing university and obtaining an undergraduate or postgraduate degree; it is more than providing equal conditions when taking the test; it is more than being there in person and not being seen or understood; it is much more than being tolerated and integrated. Inclusion goes beyond the limits of understanding and achieves empathy for others.

On the day of the aforementioned accident, a colleague helped Teacher 6. Both got a lift from a person who was passing by on the street at the time and took them to school. On the same day, Teacher 6 resigned because he could not bear the idea of not having the autonomy to get to his workplace safely.

Diniz; Barbosa; and Santos, (2009, p. 67) mention that "The greater the social barriers, the greater the participation restrictions imposed on individuals with bodily impairments". Pieczkowski and Grapilha (2018, p. 217), note that "the inclusion movement, although widely celebrated from the perspective of the rights to difference, also represents concerns and silencing". The silencing mentioned by the authors is portrayed in the report of Teacher 6, who gave up his job due to the barriers imposed by the lack of accessibility, which generates segregation.

Segregation in an extreme form is reported by Dreyfus and Rabinow (2010, p. 3-4), when referring to the Ship of Fools (Narrenschiff), described by Foucault in the work History of Madness, stating that the mad "[.. .] were loaded onto ships and sent down the rivers of Europe in search of their sanity. Confined to his ship, the fool was 'a prisoner in the midst of the freest and most open of routes'." According to Foucault, of all the romantic or satirical ships in the imaginary landscape of the Renaissance, a literary composition borrowed from the old cycle of the Argonauts, characters from Greek mythology (Ship of Princes, Ship of Virtuous Ladies, Ship of Health, among others), the Ship of Crazy - Narrenschiff

> [...] is the only one that had a real existence, because they existed, these boats that carried their insane cargo from one city to another. Mad people then had an easily wandering existence. The cities chased us away from their walls; they were allowed to run through distant fields when they were not entrusted to groups of merchants and pilgrims. (FOUCAULT, 2012, p. 09).

In this time and context mentioned by Foucault, those considered abnormal had their rights denied and were excluded and imprisoned. Comparing different facts, temporalities, and spaces with current affairs, it is possible to say that the norm constitutes the Ship of Fools. Now, it is a

Contemporary Ship that does not have the explicit intention of excluding, killing, or segregating, but that imprisons *abnormal* subjects in their silencing in the face of the right to life, education, work, inclusion, and accessibility, rights guaranteed by the norm. Today, exclusion may not be so explicit, but it happens in other ways.

Teacher 7 says that, on his route, accessibility is sufficient. At the bus terminal, he walks along the tactile floor and receives assistance from inspectors. When disembarking from transport, the driver warns him when to cross the street according to the movement of cars. Furthermore, his report indicates that the place always has a lot of people and that, when needed, he also asks for help. Faced with this scenario, it is worth asking: what does it mean to have sufficient accessibility? Is it walking across the patchwork that is on the tactile floor or needing help to cross the street due to the lack of accessibility? Although the technical standards for architectural accessibility and the floor installation model are supported by NBR 9050, from the Brazilian Association of Technical Standards (ABNT-*Associação Brasileira de Normas Técnicas*), such legal provisions are insufficient. Most of the teaching narratives denounce what is made invisible by the norm: "inaccessible accessibility". The standards, despite being created to provide conditions and access to people with disabilities – in this case, visual impairment –, do not have the advertised effect, negatively impacting the coming and going of teachers on the route taken to get to their workplaces.

Accessibility conditions in the workspace

Having overcome the challenge of reaching the respective professional practice spaces, another one begins by showing the possibility of being a blind or low-vision teacher. We emphasize that this research tells the story of four blind teachers and three with low vision. When asked about the conditions for teaching, Teacher 7 says that everywhere he worked he found minimal accessibility structures. Furthermore, he reports that schools generally have a large space, which makes autonomy difficult and requires help to move around the environment, exemplifying:

> In this state school where I work, there are three or four pavilions. Three are working and one of them is very far from the others, making it very difficult to access. I worked there for a short time, as I told you, because of the pandemic. But it was a place that I had already realized that it would take me a while to understand how it worked and, if I needed to, wow! I'm teaching there, but I forgot some material in the teachers' room... I couldn't do it alone! It would depend on the student... It would depend on someone at the school. Anyway, I would have my autonomy limited there (D7).

The lack of tactile flooring and the lack of handrails on stairs are some of the problems mentioned that limit the autonomy of teachers in the school space. Thus, Teacher 4 states:

> In regular teaching at state public schools, which is the context in which I have always worked, there is no accessibility at all. [...] I adapt, there are stairs to climb, but most of the stairs don't have a safety bar, the so-called handrail (D4).

Teacher 3 says that, at the school where he works, there was a rubberized tactile floor. However, as the floor began to come off, it was removed to prevent accidents even for sighted people, which limited accessibility for people with visual impairments.

Teacher 6 narrates that, during a period of his teaching, he accompanied an autistic student who, once, went down a small dirt ravine that was at the school, a ravine that he was unaware of. The situation generated discomfort and insecurity for the teacher with low vision, as he ended up falling or, in his words, "getting hit by a balloon":

> So I took a balloon. He went down, stayed there calmly and I was there trying to get to him. Then I asked a first-year student for help, who kindly took me to him. So, these are situations that do involve architectural barriers, because I was very lost and didn't even know there was a ravine until I was in it. It was a little ravine, luckily it was small (D6).

From the perspective of Teacher 7, the architecture of schools is exclusionary. It is designed by those who can see and for those who can see, which impacts the way they work and get to the classroom. While visionaries recognize school spaces and environments using their sense of sight, teachers who have a total or partial absence of this sense recognize workplace spaces by exploring other possibilities of perception. In the case of teachers with visual impairment, the body becomes an organ of sight, as the space of that body feels and perceives things in the world. Thus, spatial construction or recognition occurs through the body. The spaces and environments that make up the school must be presented, felt, perceived, and recognized by the body of teachers who cannot see, since, as the highlighted narratives indicate, being in a certain space is not synonymous with inclusion.

The norm and normalization go together, in a game of constant exchange that is necessary to govern. While the norm acts by defining models to be followed, homogenizing bodies, and placing everyone under the same roof, normalization starts from the different curves that involve standards of normality. Foucault highlights that

> [...] the norm is not defined absolutely as a natural law, but by the role of requirement and coercion that it is capable of playing about the domains to which it applies. Therefore, the norm carries a claim to power. The norm is not simply a principle, it is not even a principle of intelligibility; it is an element from which a certain exercise of power is founded and legitimized. (2011, p. 43).

The power relations that emerge from this incessant game seek the pairing of those who distance themselves from the curve of normality (LOPES; FABRIS, 2020a). Faced with the impossibility of participating in non-accessible spaces, teachers with visual impairments have their disability exposed, that is, this aspect of their existence occupies centrality to the detriment of the subject. This sets up attitudinal barriers, as Teacher 7 reports:

> I think the main barrier, when we talk about accessibility, what we face, is the attitudinal barrier. It's a matter of you being in the space, but feeling like you don't belong in that space.

Teacher 7 also adds that society does not recognize blind people in the role of professionals, since the belief that they are fragile and dependent beings has not disappeared. According to him,

> The thing is, if it wasn't in all schools that this happened, it was in 90% of the schools I worked in... Someone – be it the bus driver, the security guard, or the parent of a student – who, when I'm arriving at school, he comes and asks: 'Are you coming to study'? People don't see a blind teacher with a cane coming to school to work. They see a student as someone who needs to be helped and not someone who is there to help. I think it starts with this social perspective that society has on disability: that disability is always the target of charity and can never be in a comfortable situation, in a situation in which the disabled person chooses to be (D7).

In this sense, Ferre's (2001, p. 196) assertion contributes to the understanding of Teacher 7's narrative: "My identity is given to me by others, but I am not that identity, because if they have to give it to me it is because I, in myself, by myself, in my intimacy, do not have it." The mirror image of normality and the lack of knowledge permeating society prevent us from seeing others as capable people. The more distant you are from the identity that others give you, the more you distance yourself from the "Canons of normality" (FERRE, 2001, p. 196) and the more disturbed you become.

This shows that people with disabilities are still seen from the perspective of benevolence and charity, being perceived as incapable, special, poor, who cannot see, who is strange, who is against the grain of being a teacher, and not thought of as capable people, which can be independent. Thus, society around the school community reduces teachers with visual impairments by not being able to see. Those who cannot see do not take a position as holders of knowledge, but as incapable or as someone who needs assistance. It seems that, given the views mentioned by Teacher 7, the sighted

teacher is attributed the identity of a normal person and the teacher with a disability is attributed the identity of the abnormal, outside the norm.

Teacher 3 states that inclusion is funny because when a person, whether blind or with low vision, is a student, they are seen and understood from a place of potential. However, when they graduate, they are seen from another perspective, as a limitation. However, it is as a graduate that the subject of inclusion can have the chance to be seen for their potential. Referring to professional credibility, Teacher 3 highlights:

> the student has capacity and potential, he will achieve it; then the inclusion student arrives at college and finishes the course. There you will see people who believe in inclusion and people who don't (D3).

Referring to attitudinal barriers, Teacher 7 states that he found distrust at school regarding his abilities to be a teacher, especially by parents and fellow teachers, and less by students, who are more confident and supportive. He adds:

> There are people within the school who are suspicious of the possibility of you working alone and working effectively (D7).

Breaking with practices and thoughts of prejudice and exclusion is not a simple task. At all times, teachers with disabilities are put to the test: are they capable? Do you have the knowledge and conditions to practice teaching? The reactions of distrust seem to say that, because he is either blind or has low vision, he is not a person worthy and capable of being a teacher.

The elements narrated so far are reminiscent of Foucault's perspective on the body and discipline. The spaces mentioned by the author as disciplinary are prison, hospital, and school, among others – spaces and places in which disciplinary behaviors, knowledge, and power determine the forms of production, functioning, and dimension of a discipline that scrutinizes bodies in a constant search for normalization, aiming for usefulness and efficiency (FOUCAULT, 2013). Bringing this reflection to contemporary times, the school environment continues to be a space defined by specific disciplines, which emanate different knowledge and powers. Power hierarchizes spaces, behaviors, and power relations, from which no one escapes, not even teachers with visual impairments, who are watched by the eyes of distrust and standardization, which insist on seeing teachers with visual impairments from the perspective of charity, tolerance, and incapacity. These are looks of distrust that, through power relations, insult the teacher in the exercise of his profession, in the so-called professional inclusion. In this regard, Veiga-Neto and Lopes (2007, p. 949) problematize inclusion, stating that:

> [...] By treating difference as diversity, inclusion policies – in how they have been formulated and partly implemented in Brazil – seem to ignore the difference. With this, they defend the inclusion of the different, understanding them as a 'unique stranger', an exotic, a bearer of something that others, normal people, do not have. This way of differentiating results in the paradox of silencing those who were 'already there', of reinforcing notions of normality and abnormality, of proliferating and disseminating norms and related specialized knowledge, and even of generating exclusion.

As long as public inclusion policies are designed for the abnormal, the exotic, and the strange, the notions of normality and abnormality will be present in governing bodies through power relations. In this sense, policies designed to include may be placing the difference in silent exclusion. In the cases narrated, exclusionary and silent inclusion appear in the form of architectural, urban planning, and attitudinal barriers.

Another factor narrated by teachers about the condition of accessibility to exercise their profession is pedagogical accessibility, which includes training and adaptation of materials for teachers to be able to teach. Teacher 2 begins by highlighting that he went from being a student without accessibility to being a teacher without accessibility. He describes his participation in teacher meetings to discuss pedagogical training, in which accessibility for students with disabilities is discussed. However, on these occasions, accessibility for the visually impaired teacher who is part of the group is not ensured. He reports that:

> People use slides a lot. So, I say that they think about accessibility for children, but they don't think about accessibility for teachers. In the training courses, there are a lot of slides, with a lot of images, and no description.

However, he states that on some occasions he receives the training material in advance by email, which allows for recognition and more effective participation. This narrative shows that some attitudes can provide accessibility for teachers with visual impairments. In certain cases, it is enough to know what is necessary to promote access, providing a different text format, describing slides, or making the material available in advance, actions possible through dialogues that provide knowledge of the uniqueness of the subjects.

Teacher 3 highlights that he receives the support of a teacher who supports him in whatever is necessary, such as adapting teaching materials, which allows him to work with children on addition and subtraction calculations. He highlights that:

> In the gold material, an EVA structure was made so that I could organize the pieces inside. [...] All of this plays a fundamental role for this support teacher (D3).

However, most teachers interviewed reported that they seek to create working conditions, through adaptations made to teaching materials. Teacher 1 reports:

> In the library, I labeled all the shelves with the Braille labeling tape. So when I want, I get what I need.

He says that, for the adaptations to work in the library, the space where he works, it was necessary to make arrangements with another teacher who works in the same place and with the children, so that they keep the books organized in the same place. Organization and arrangements are important for teachers with visual impairments to have control, autonomy, access, and conditions in their work environment. Furthermore, not all teachers have support from an assistant or intern, as is the case with Teacher 1. As they do not have support from other eyes, adaptations and arrangements are important for blind teachers to exercise their profession autonomously. He emphasizes that he wants to have his ability recognized and not just be a person tolerated by attitudes of benevolence.

Duschatzky and Skliar (2001, p. 135) state that "Tolerance weakens discursive differences and masks inequalities". The authors also highlight that "Tolerance is also naturalization, indifference towards strangers" (DUSCHATZKY; SKLIAR, 2001, p. 137). In other words, the norm, through inclusion policies, seeks to naturalize all bodies, so that those who are distanced can be ignored and/or seen as strange. Under the logic of norms and normalization, a person is called strange when his/her specificity and singularity are not known, labeling it as disabled, special, and different, in contrast to those called equal, native, or normal (FERRE, 2001).

The study pointed out that teachers with visual impairments when exercising their profession, generate strangeness because they do not adapt to what is common in a teacher. Or will being a teacher in contemporary times be able to go beyond common barriers and recognize the singularities of a teacher with their way of being and doing?

For pedagogical mediation to take place for teachers with visual impairments, adjustments, investments, organization and time to think about how to do and how to adapt the teaching-learning process are necessary elements. A class led by someone who cannot see or see little "requires the reorganization of methodologies or forms traditionally adopted to conduct the class" (PIECZKOWSKI, 2019, p. 10). In the same way that we think about pedagogical adaptation for students with disabilities, teachers with disabilities need to seek and receive means of adaptation to mediate knowledge.

The means of adaptation stand out in the narratives of Teacher 2 when he says that he adapts and purchases, with his resources, games, and other materials to develop classes. He also highlights the advantages of having an assistant during classes, although he tries not to be dependent on her. He highlights that:

> Then I need her to draw a circle, a square, or a triangle [...] I need to put their names (referring to the students) on the sheets, and then she puts them. Because a thicker sheet is not always used. Sometimes it's with ink, so if you're going to put the name in Braille, it won't stay. So, sometimes, I need her to put the names in ink (D2).

Teacher 4 mentions that accessibility issues related to assistive technology are his responsibility:

> I have a cane, and I have a Braille machine that is mine, which is where I pass on the texts that I will use with the students since I work in Philosophy.

Araujo (2011, p. 11), in his work *Interventions of a blind mathematics teacher (Intervenções de um professor de matemática cego)*, opens up timely questions to be highlighted and reformulated in this regard: "What would you do if you lost your vision and needed to teach mathematics to someone? What would you do if you lost your vision and needed to teach Philosophy, Physical Education, Pedagogy, or even Geography to someone?" According to Araujo (2011, p. 11), "What would be done, in any case, can initially be called a process of inclusive education for the visually impaired", an unusual process that goes beyond the constraints of normalization and requires sensitivity to the other, without labeling or segregating, but breaking standards and norms that dictate what is normal and abnormal in terms of human characteristics, to give space to singularities. As Teacher 5 states, try to get closer to what is expected so that there is acceptance. According to the interviewee,

> It's a strategy I've always adopted. Since my college days, I have always tried to do things closer to normal because of my disability. In addition to getting closer to things, my strategy was to use bright colors in the materials to be able to see. Use arches or cones that are bright colors of lime green, and yellow, colors that I can see from afar, so I can teach (D5).

Given this report, some questions are raised. Who includes whom? Who is accessibility for? The growth and expansion of public inclusion policies and the increase in students with disabilities in higher education are a reality, even if in many situations they represent exclusionary inclusion. Araujo (2011) understands that, for teaching carried out by blind teachers to happen with autonomy and quality, it is necessary to think about different means and adaptations, but, for this, it is necessary to want it and make it happen.

The adaptations and means mentioned by the author are present in what Pieczkowski (2019, p. 6) writes about mediation in Higher Education with students with disabilities when he states that "[...] living with a difference is a teaching and, more than merely coexisting, it is necessary to recognize the other in their differences and reinvent teaching". Although it is a field that is still little explored, being a teacher and having a disability is a contemporary reality. Living with differences is a demand of everyone and for everyone, implying finding possibilities based on differences. However, to achieve this, it is necessary to change lenses and adopt a new perspective, devoid of standards and nuances of an exclusionary and ableist inclusion, which dictates the normal and idealizes bodies, behaviors, and ways of being, doing, moving, and being a teacher.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research enabled to broaden the sensitive perspective to the other person, as it pointed out a certain time and context, in which public policies made possible to guarantee inclusion and accessibility can mask silenced exclusion. In this sense, the highlighted in/exclusion shows that inclusion and accessibility in the professional practice of teachers with visual impairments are also considered political and social challenges. It also showed that talking about the professional practice of teachers with visual impairment goes beyond addressing pedagogical issues, also requiring discussion related to coming and going.

Teachers with visual impairment, when talking about accessibility in the exercise of their profession, considered aspects of the journey from their homes to the work environment. Each teacher narrated the accessibility of the route according to their perception and experience, understanding

accessibility as insufficient or as absent, but not an impediment to reaching the professional practice space. The vast majority of subjects interviewed highlighted the lack of accessibility on urban roads.

They also narrated the lack of accessibility on sidewalks or the absence of sidewalks, which forces them to memorize places through reference points and create strategies for getting around, as well as depending on the help of other people, such as the driver of the public transport or urban terminal inspectors. Another point highlighted by the reports is the difficulty in choosing a job vacancy, because, when making such a choice, the teacher is unaware of the path and fears the obstacles and barriers he may encounter along the way, which could lead to giving up their job.

In the workspace, despite the existence of standards that guarantee and regulate accessibility, teachers need to be protagonists of their inclusion. Most of them highlighted inaccessibility in workplaces, mentioning the absence of tactile flooring and the lack of handrails on stairs as limiting individual autonomy. They also emphasize that architecture is predominantly exclusive, being designed by those who can see and for those who can see. In school spaces, attitudinal barriers are highlighted, which cause the perception that teachers with visual impairments are incapable or present in the educational space as students – in this case, students with disabilities. While teachers without disabilities are attributed the identity of a teacher and the normal person who teaches, teachers with disabilities are attributed the identity of abnormal and the suspicion of inability to practice the profession.

Also, the majority reported that they seek to create working conditions through adaptations of teaching materials. It is also evident that the purchase, with one's resources, of adapted games and materials and the selection of different ways of adapting material for work are practices that are part of teaching those with visual impairments.

The study also reveals that organized adaptations provide greater autonomy for practice without dependence or the need for an assistant. However, it was possible to notice that the presence of an assistant also constitutes a way of improving working conditions, since the eyes of those who see become an extension of the teacher who cannot see, providing support for the preparation of pedagogical materials, such as cutting, drawing, identification of ink works and adaptations of materials, as well as the organization of students, when necessary. Technological accessibility or other resources are the responsibility of the teachers who mentioned making use, during the working space/time, of screen readers, the Braille machine, and the long cane.

The highlighted narratives show that being in a certain educational space as a teacher is not synonymous with inclusion, since, to practice teaching, investments, adjustments, organization and time are necessary to think about how to do it and how to adapt to teach. This means that a class led by teachers with visual impairments, whether blind or with low vision, "requires sensitivity, planning and reorganization" (PIECZKOWSKI, 2019). Therefore, when allowed to work as a teacher, without providing the necessary conditions for inclusion and accessibility, people with visual impairments end up being *fitted* into the standards of normality, which are delimited by the norm, inferiorized, and *framed* "in a zone of normality determined by the notion of inclusion" (LOPES; FABRIS, 2020b, p. 46).

Thus, addressing disability goes beyond discussing a body, gesture, or behavior, reaching the restrictions caused by a system of norms, which prevents the full participation of teachers with disabilities and is directly influenced by socially imposed barriers. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that movements in favor of accessibility and inclusion are growing, which shows that we are experiencing a process of achievements and improvements in the living conditions of people with visual impairments. Tensing what is stated does not mean being pessimistic, but highlighting the complexity of this process, especially in a society that regulates, normalizes, inferiorizes, and excludes difference. Tensing the inclusion and accessibility of teachers with visual impairment is going beyond the constraints of standardization and reflecting on the place of disability and how much of this disability is the result of a lack of accessibility, be it architectural, urban planning, or attitudinal, and not exactly of the person.

Finally, we emphasize that this article does not intend to point out certain, generalizing, and definitive answers, nor to point out solutions or end discussions that have recently been announced. With the reflections exposed here, we seek to provoke tensions, in the conviction that it is necessary to denaturalize what is said about teachers with visual impairments and their role in teaching.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1 - Author of the project, active participant in conducting the interviews, analyzing the empirical materialities, and writing the article.
Author 2 - Project advisor, co-author of the article, an active participant in the analysis of empirical materialities, and writing of the text.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with this article.

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