

TEACHING DISABILITY STUDIES: CONTRIBUTIONS TO TRAINING IN PSYCHOLOGY

*O ENSINO DOS ESTUDOS DA DEFICIÊNCIA:
CONTRIBUIÇÕES PARA A FORMAÇÃO EM PSICOLOGIA*
*LA ENSEÑANZA DE LOS ESTUDIOS DE LA DISCAPACIDAD:
CONTRIBUCIONES A LA FORMACIÓN EN PSICOLOGÍA*

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Abstract: This research aimed to identify the contributions of teaching disability studies to training in psychology from the perspective of participants in a discipline entitled Psychology and People with Disabilities. The locus of the research was a psychology course at a public university in southern Brazil. Information was obtained through the application of a sociodemographic questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with fourteen people who attended the course and analyzed using the thematic analysis technique. The results showed that the knowledge obtained in the discipline contributed to: the appropriation of the social model of disability and the contributions of feminist disability studies; the identification of disabled people as political people; the expansion of the perception of social barriers and; the appropriation of some elements of the Brazilian legislation on disability. Finally, it emphasizes the relevance of disability studies being included in the curriculum for training in psychology from the perspective of human rights.

Keywords: Disability studies; Ableism; Human rights; Curriculum; Psychologist training.

Resumo: Esta pesquisa objetivou identificar as contribuições do ensino dos estudos da deficiência (*disability studies*) para a formação em psicologia na perspectiva das/os participantes de uma disciplina intitulada “Psicologia e Pessoas com Deficiência”. O *locus* da pesquisa foi um curso de Psicologia de uma universidade pública do sul do Brasil. As informações foram obtidas por meio de questionário sociodemográfico e entrevista semiestruturada com quatorze pessoas que cursaram a disciplina e analisadas a partir da técnica de análise temática. Os resultados indicaram que a disciplina contribuiu para: a apropriação do modelo social da deficiência e das contribuições dos estudos feministas da deficiência; a identificação das pessoas com deficiência como sujeitos políticos; a ampliação da percepção das barreiras sociais; a apropriação de alguns elementos da legislação brasileira sobre a deficiência. Destaca-se a relevância de os estudos da deficiência serem incluídos no currículo para a formação em psicologia na perspectiva dos direitos humanos.

Palavras-chave: Estudos da deficiência; Capacitismo; Direitos humanos; Currículo; Formação em Psicologia.

Resumen: Esta investigación tuvo como objetivo identificar las contribuciones de la enseñanza de los estudios de la discapacidad a la formación en psicología desde la perspectiva de los estudiantes en una disciplina titulada “Psicología y Personas con Discapacidad”. El lugar de la investigación fue un curso de Psicología en una universidad pública del sur de Brasil. La información se obtuvo mediante la aplicación de un cuestionario sociodemográfico y una entrevista semiestruturada a catorce personas que asistieron al curso y se analizaron mediante la técnica de análisis temático. Los resultados indicaron que la disciplina contribuyó a: la apropiación del modelo social de la discapacidad y los aportes de los estudios feministas; la identificación de personas con discapacidad como sujetos políticos; la ampliación de la percepción de barreras sociales; la apropiación de algunos elementos de la legislación brasileña sobre discapacidad. Se destaca la relevancia de la inclusión de los estudios sobre discapacidad en el currículo de formación en Psicología desde la perspectiva de los derechos humanos.

Palabras clave: Estudios de la discapacidad; Capacitismo; Derechos humanos; Plan de estudios; Formación en Psicología.

Introduction

Brazilian Psychology as a science and profession, according to Ana Cruz, Tatiana Minchoni, Adriana Matsumoto, and Soraya Andrade (2017), was strongly pervaded by normative theoretical perspectives which understand the subject from the norm/deviation logic and use technical procedures whose main function is the adjustment of subjects to universalizing social norms. The authors emphasize that this adjustment process was implemented “in schools, factories and companies, in care institutions, in the relationship with justice and, even more emphatically, in the private spaces of psychological clinics” (Cruz et al., 2017, p. 248).

This universalizing logic is also quite present, although not in a hegemonic way, in the understanding of disability and in professional practices in psychology with people with disabilities. Rhonda Olkin (2017), Dan Goodley (2019) and Marivete Gesser, Pamela Block and Adriano Nuernberg (2019a) point out that the production of knowledge and psychological practices in this context are still quite limited to the biomedical model of disability. By understanding the experience of disability as limited to the body with impediments, this ends up focusing its actions much more on the search for the adequacy of bodies and minds than on the construction of spaces aimed at promoting collective access. Although authors such as Anahi Mello and Gisele de Mozzi (2018), Lucia Leite, Taize de Oliveira and Hugo Cardoso (2019) and Camila Alves and Marcia Moraes (2019) have produced knowledge in psychology based on the field of Disability Studies, according to Gesser, Block and Nuernberg (2019) and Dan Goodley (2019), pathologizing people with disabilities and, often, reducing their experience to a personal tragedy, still predominate in the context of professional practice and even in Psychology training. This perspective contributes to the maintenance of ableism which, according to Anahi Mello (2016), is a process of hierarchizing people with disabilities based on body-normativity that contributes to their treatment as incapable in a generalized way. Furthermore, although many study centers have incorporated the intersectional perspective, there are few that consider disability as a category of analysis of psychology, which at the intersection with gender, sexuality, race, generation, is constitutive of subjectivity, as pointed out by Gesser, Nuernberg and Maria Juracy Ttoneli (2012).

From the organization of the Political Movement of Persons with Disabilities, in the 1970s, a field of studies called disability studies emerged, which had, when it emerged, the social model of disability as the main theoretical model. Michael Oliver (1990) points out that this, in contrast to the medical model of disability, proposed the understanding of disability as a form of oppression by social barriers that hinder the participation of people with disabilities. Débora Diniz (2007) highlights that, with the intake of feminist authors in this field, themes such as the understanding of disability as a category of analysis, the intersectionality of disability with other social markers, the experience of pain, dependence and interdependence were incorporated as issues inherent to the human condition and the perspective of care as a matter of justice. These themes cemented the field of feminist disability studies, proposed by Rosemari Garland-Thomson (2005).

The contributions of disability studies were largely incorporated into the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which was ratified by 182 countries around the world, including Brazil. For the implementation of the CRPD, which was incorporated into Brazilian legislation (Decree n. 186/2008), the Brazilian Law for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities - LBI (Law n. 13.146/2015) was instituted.

Both disability studies and Brazilian legislation on disability have challenged Psychology to rethink the curriculum. It was based on this field of study that the Psychology course at a Public University in southern Brazil sought to build the syllabus of the discipline “Psychology and People with Disabilities” during a curricular restructuring. The program was organized to address the following themes: the historical-cultural meaning of disability; terminologies and concepts of disability; the social context and exclusion of people with disabilities; the Political Movement of Persons with Disabilities; public policies and people with disabilities; models for understanding disability and its implications for professional practice in psychology. The specificity of disabilities and professional performance in psychology with people with disabilities, their families and community were also addressed.

Aiming to politicize students’ understanding of disability, the discipline has sought to include theorists with disabilities in the bibliography and invite disability activists as speakers. This has provided a better understanding of the motto of the Political Movement of People with Disabilities: “Nothing about us, without us”. Carrying out activities such as lifting barriers in a public place has also been used by the professors who teach the discipline to increase students’ perception of the barriers that hinder the participation of people with disabilities.

Thus, the objective of this research was to identify, from the perspective of students of the discipline called “Psychology and People with Disabilities”, the contributions of teaching disability studies to training in psychology. An attempt was made to give visibility to the appropriations of knowledge that are consistent with the CRPD and the LBI, since, from a legal point of view, work in psychology must be based on these legal frameworks.

It starts from the assumption that conceptions of disability mediate professional practices, as highlighted by Leite et al. (2019), and that the appropriation of disability studies can qualify the work in psychology with people with disabilities in the various contexts in which this professional is inserted. Furthermore, considering the inseparability among thinking, feeling, and acting, already pointed out by Bader Sawaia (2014), it is understood that it is essential that psychology students have access to models of understanding disability that break with conceptions that circumscribe it as an experience that demands charitable actions but also that, from the norm/deviation logic, situate it as a disease that requires cure/normalization.

The relevance of studying the contributions of disability studies for training in psychology is related to the impact that this can have on professional practices with people with disabilities. In this sense, the World Report on Disability of the World Health Organization (WHO, 2011), based on a literature review study that integrated studies carried out in different countries of the world, identified that the attitudes of health professionals towards people with disabilities changed after participating in courses, disciplines or classes on the topic.

A survey carried out by Pearson et al. (2016) with the objective of understanding how the curriculum in disability studies influences the perspectives and practices of graduate students in the area of education identified that the participants presented transformations in the conceptualization of disability, in professional practices, and in themselves. The study carried out by Gesser and Reginado Martins (2019) with basic education teachers participating in the Specialization Course in Gender and Diversity at School showed changes in the participants’ conceptions of disability after taking the course “Disabilities and Inclusion”, which moved towards the social model of disability.

Method

The nature of this research is qualitative. In this modality, according to Irene Gialdino (2006), there is a focus on the perspective of the participants about their experiences and meanings, situated in specific contexts. Thus, this study did not aim to have a conclusive and classifying character of the results, but, instead, to situate the processes of appropriation of disability studies in a specific context. This context refers to the Psychology course at a Public University of Southern Brazil, as it has in its curricular structure a mandatory subject called “Psychology and People with Disabilities”, with a syllabus aligned with the legislation in force in Brazil and with disability studies. The theoretical perspective used in this study was that of feminist disability studies.

Participants

The research sample consisted of 14 participants who took the course “Psychology and People with Disabilities”, offered in the new curricular structure of the Psychology course, approved in 2011. As inclusion criteria, the interviewees should have enrolled in the Psychology undergraduate course at as of 2011/1, having completed the course subject with approval and being available to participate in the study.

Instruments

To obtain the information, the sociodemographic questionnaire and the semi-structured interview were used as instruments. The first one aimed to gather information about the research participants related to age, education, race, and work condition, aiming to identify the participants in terms of their intersectional characteristics. The semi-structured interviews covered the following axes: (a) conceptions about disability learned by the participants throughout their life trajectories; (b) contribution of the subject to the appropriation of Disability Studies and change in conceptions about disability; (c) contribution of the subject to professional work in psychology with people with disabilities in diverse social spaces. This last item can only be investigated because the investigated Psychology undergraduate course has basic stages since the first phase, which allows students to be inserted in professional activities.

Data collection proceedings

All students and recent bachelors in the new structure of the psychology course were invited to participate in the study by email. Fourteen people responded to the email confirming their interest in participating. The interviews were scheduled according to the time availability of each participant and carried out in a room at the university with sound insulation to ensure privacy. After reading and signing the Informed Consent Term, the participants completed the sociodemographic questionnaire and then answered the questions of the interview script.

Ethical proceedings

This research was approved by the Ethics Committee for Research with Human Beings of the Federal University of Santa Catarina (CAAE – 12249419.5.0000.0121, Opinion n. 3,527,784). All ethical principles recommended by Resolutions n. 466/12 and no. 510/2016

of the National Health Council were assured. The Free and Informed Consent Term, which contained information about the research, was read and signed by all participants. To ensure anonymity, fictitious names were assigned to the research subjects.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed based on the thematic analysis proposed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006). Therefore, first the data were transcribed and revised through readings and re-readings. From this first stage, we sought to generate codes through data that were relevant to the research. Afterwards, these codes and data referring to them were gathered into themes, which have the characteristic of being broad and bringing together several codes. In the next step, it was verified whether the potential themes responded to the research objective. Afterwards, the themes were named and refined. Finally, the themes were discussed through the presentation of some representative speeches of the participants, relating them to the research question and the literature.

Results and discussion

Table 1 presents the characterization of those who participated in the research. It contains information such as fictitious name, age, sex, race, whether a person with a disability, religion and whether training in psychology is in progress or has already been completed.

Table 1 - Sociodemographic characterization of participants

Name	Age	Gender	Race	Disability	Religion	Training in Psychology
André	22	M	Brown	No	No	In progress
Alice	30	F	White	No	Catholic	Completed
Brenda	20	F	White	No	No	In progress
Fabiana	23	F	White	No	No	Completed
Joice	22	F	White	No	Agnostic	Completed
Lais	20	F	White	No	Catholic	In progress
Ricardo	38	M	White	No	No	Completed
Soraya	19	F	White	No	Spiritualist	In progress
Vitória	21	F	White	No	No	In progress
Francine	25	F	White	No	Orthodox	Completed
Júlia	29	F	White	No	No	Completed
Jonas	23	M	White	No	No	In progress
Letícia	24	F	White	No	No	In progress
Vicente	30	M	White	Yes	No	In progress

Note. F = female; M = male.

Ten women and four men participated in the research, aged between 19 and 38 years. Thirteen of the fourteen participants characterized themselves as white and one as brown. As for training, eight participants were studying Psychology, and six had graduated for less

than two years and were already working professionally in the area. Only one of the fourteen interviewees was a person with a disability.

To identify the contributions of the subject studied, we obtained the following categories: learning in the field of disability studies; the perception of people with disabilities as political subjects; expansion of the perception of social barriers; and knowledge of legislation about disability.

Learning about the field of disability studies

Learning disability studies is of great importance for professional training in Psychology, since the foundations of this field have been incorporated into the main legislation on disability and are aligned with the human rights perspective, as already highlighted by Gesser, Block and Nuernberg (2019). When asked about their learning related to disability prior to the discipline, interviewees reported that it was based on the biomedical model. Thus, before the discipline, they understood disability as a natural consequence of an injured body and the person with disability as someone who should be the object of care and interventions of biomedical knowledge. The logic of overcoming was also very present, according to Fabiana's report: "[I] understood disability as this personal tragedy, this issue to be overcome". The understanding of disability as a producer of suffering was also very present and can be summarized in Laís' statement: "I remember that on the first day of class the teacher asked us what we were expecting from the discipline and I said it was 'understand the psychological suffering of people with disabilities'". The research results identified that all the participants were able to appropriate the knowledge related to the social model of disability. Most of the interviewees also appropriated the contributions of feminist authors to disability studies.

Social model: disability as a form of oppression

The participants reported that, since the participation in Psychology and People with Disabilities course, they were able to appropriate many elements of the social model of disability. The information obtained indicated that they started to differentiate between injury and disability, lining off the latter as an experience constituted from the barriers present in the social context that oppresses people with bodily variations. They also started to question conceptions that limit disability to a deviation and a pathology and that reiterate the charitable logic, as summarized in Soraya's report: "I think that because of the whole issue of thinking disability as being of the environment and not of the person, it made me lose that look of them as that poor thing". In addition, they came to understand disability as inherent to the human condition, to be experienced by those who will have the privilege of aging. The criticism of the social barriers that hinder the inclusion of people with disabilities was emphasized in the reports of all the participants, and can be illustrated in the statement below:

Understanding that it is the environments that are not inclusive and not the people that cannot be included... Understanding the disability as one more element that accompanies the person and that this does not need to go through all their interaction with the world. (Vincent)

The testimonies obtained in the research indicate that the discipline made it possible for the participants to appropriate the founding principles of the Social Model of Disability that circumscribe disability as an experience of oppression constituted from social barriers. Authors such as Débora Diniz, Livia Barbosa and Wederson Santos (2010) and Gesser, Nuer-

nberg and Toneli (2012) emphasize that the appropriation of this conception aims at a conceptual turn by incorporating social and political issues in disability analysis, breaking with its historical process of pathologizing and medicalization.

In line with the social model of disability, some participants also highlighted the importance of disability being considered through access to rights, subverting the perspective of charity and assistance. This issue was represented by Ricardo's speech, who highlighted:

"I went to this Psychology and People with Disabilities course... without that bias of charity and assistance, on the contrary, right? Through access to rights: social and political and human in general". Then, he also highlighted the emphasis given by the subject to "the importance of having direct contact with people with disabilities to actually have an experience with them, a sensory, affective, physical, social experience with them" (Ricardo).

Therefore, the information obtained by the research showed that there was an appropriation of the social model of disability. In this way, the participants began to understand disability as an experience marked by oppression by social barriers that hinder the social participation of people with disabilities on equal terms.

Appropriations of Feminist Contributions to Disability Studies

Eleven participants also showed that there was an appropriation of conceptual elements limited to feminist contributions to disability studies. Thus, speeches were identified that bring up issues such as the transversality of disability with other oppressive systems and the understanding of this as a category of analysis, dependence, and interdependence as inherent to the human condition, care and its complexity, and the experience of pain. These lessons are presented as significant, since these issues, to a significant extent, have already been incorporated into the CRPD and LBI and can contribute to the implementation of practices in line with what this legislation advocates.

Thus, an essential element brought by the research participants was related to the break with the modern ideals of independence, which cross and constitute the way of conceiving all subjects, denying the condition of dependence and interdependence that, according to Eva Kittay (2015), is inherent to the human condition. In this theme, some participants brought this as an important contribution of the discipline to think about the construction of professional practices that consider different functional conditions of people with disabilities and the adjustments and necessary supports so that, even depending on care for many of the activities of life day, the person can have autonomy to make choices according to their preferences. In this direction, the importance "... of the relationship of human interdependence, [and of] understanding care as an inherent part of existence" (Fabiana) was highlighted. Another participant pointed out that:

One thing I learned a lot from this subject is that autonomy is a relational thing. So, everyone depends on other people, everyone has a care network, everyone will have certain physical and psychological needs that may be triggered at some point in their lives or may need their entire lives. (Julia)

Understanding dependence and interdependence as inherent to the human condition and care as relational, as well as incorporating this understanding into professional practice in psychology can contribute to the qualification of professional practices in the direction of justice, as already highlighted by Gesser et al. (2019). Helena Fietz and Anahi Guedes Melo (2018) emphasize that feminist disability studies open the field for research that recognizes the importance of care for the guarantee of human rights, which is thought of as something that every person shares: the need to be cared for and to become a caregiver at various moments in life.

Finally, another element of feminist disability studies that participants reported having been appropriated in their speeches refers to the perspective of the intersectionality of disability with issues such as gender, race, and social class. Six of the fourteen interviewees brought up this point as a critical issue discussed in the discipline. This intersection was more broadly related to gender issues, although issues of race and social class were also emphasized. The following testimonial demonstrates this:

Also thinking about the transversalities of the human condition, thinking that, I do not know, a woman is different from a man, and a black woman is different from a man, and a black woman with a disability is different from a man, to think a little like that through. (Soraya)

Another participant, regarding the intersectional understanding of disability, highlights: “So, at a certain [moment] I started to see disability as a category of analysis of social phenomena” (Jonas). It is important to highlight that the understanding of disability as an intersectional experience and as a category of analysis, presented in the speeches of the research participants, contributes to expanding the analytical and political potential in different fields of knowledge, as already presented by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2002). Sunaura Taylor (2017) highlights that this understanding also makes it possible to understand how racism, sexism, ableism, and other oppressive systems are articulated to intensify the processes of oppression experienced daily by people with disabilities.

It is important to highlight that, although disability studies were strongly appropriated by the fourteen participants, four of them mentioned, in their speeches, terms such as “normal”, “independence” and “incapacity”, which are strongly related to the biomedical model. Based on Taylor (2017), it is believed that this data is related to the structural character of ableism, which is based on the biomedical model and is reproduced in different areas of knowledge, including psychology.

This topic showed that the interviewees managed, to a significant extent, to broaden the understanding of disability as a complex and intersectional experience, marked by relationships of dependence and interdependence. In addition, they also appropriated the relational character of care and were able to situate it as a matter of justice.

Perception of people with disabilities as political subjects

Another issue pointed out by half of the participants as an important learning was related to the understanding of people with disabilities as political subjects who, through collective struggle, managed to guarantee many rights since the Brazilian Constitution of 88 and later legislation. The research participants pointed out that, before taking the course, they had no idea that there was, in Brazil, a political movement of people with disabilities, which,

through militancy, ensured that the guidelines related to the guarantee of rights persons with disabilities were incorporated into the Constitution. In addition, they did not know the legitimate spaces of social control through which it is possible to propose, implement and supervise actions aimed at people with disabilities.

The course's contribution to the understanding of people with disabilities as political subjects can be exemplified through the following statements: "It opened my eyes to the history of struggles..., to the representation, protagonism, voice of these people" (Brenda); "To understand a little of this historical context of the struggle for rights. Of what is necessary as a public policy so that these rights are respected" (André); and "The study on the movement of people with disabilities in the Constitution of 88, which was a very big fight to have an inclusion" (Laís).

The process of appropriation that people with disabilities are political subjects and that they played a prominent role in the struggle for their rights, present in the participants' testimonies, breaks with the historical process, already pointed out by authors such as Débora Diniz (2007) and Michael Oliver (1990), of placing them as passive subjects, reduced to bodily impediments and worthy of assistance and charity actions. Thus, making the Political Movement of People with Disabilities visible in courses related to disability can corroborate the emergence of narratives that break with the moral stigmas that, based on ableism, consider disability a personal tragedy, oppress and delegitimize people with disabilities.

Expansion of the perception of barriers

Barriers are still present in numerous social spaces, despite the legal advances made in Brazil. These have a strong relationship with ableism, a process that locates the difficulties of social participation in the subject. In addition, as highlighted by Taylor (2017), the ableist narrative instigates the discourse of overcoming, to the detriment of the construction of accessible environments, open to a greater variety of people. Thus, ableism is incompatible with the construction of spaces designed to allow the circulation of different bodies, with varied functional and aesthetic conditions, since at its base it is the subject who must adapt to the context and not the other way around.

The speeches of all the interviewees showed that the knowledge obtained in the course on "Psychology and People with Disabilities" contributed to the expansion of the perception of the barriers that are present in different contexts and how they hinder the social participation of people with disabilities. The knowledge related to the social model of disability, the participation of guests with disabilities to talk about their experiences as people with disabilities and the realization of a field activity called "Raising barriers in a public place" proved to be significant for the expansion of the perception of barriers and their effects on the social participation of people with disabilities.

The students reported that, from participating in the course, when attending various social spaces, such as bars, restaurants, public buildings, when riding a bus, or walking by the places they live, they began to perceive the barriers, according to the students. Letícia's statements: "Wow! This barrier has always been here! I just did not understand", and from Laís: "After I took the course, I started to look at spaces much more critically, both in terms of physical and architectural preparation, and even in other forms of accessibility".

The testimonies obtained in the research also showed that the participants became more sensitive to the possible effects of barriers in preventing the social participation of people with disabilities. In this direction, Soraya points out that she began "to realize how these people are

excluded. As inclusion is much more than just putting a ramp, increasing the letter of the subtitle of a video, I think it encompasses much more.” There were also participants who emphasized the process of exclusion experienced by people with disabilities in the labor market. In this direction, Leticia pointed out that many companies hire people with disabilities with the sole purpose of filling quotas and avoiding tax assessments by the Public Ministry. She states that this attitude keeps people with disabilities in a situation of segregation, exclusion, as it assumes that the person with a disability is not capable of “... taking on a leadership position, a strategic position...”, Finally, he highlights that “[the company] is adapted for people [with disabilities] to stay in a specific place performing a specific function, the space is not really accessible, they cannot really live that place and live that experience like everyone else” (Leticia).

Considering that ableism is structural and produces effects on the way society is built, the course’s potential to produce cracks in ableism is emphasized, favoring the emergence of new sensitivities and ways of conceiving spaces. There is a need for further research to analyze the extent to which the perception of barriers experienced by people with disabilities has the potential to reverberate in inclusive professional practices with this population.

Knowledge about Brazilian legislation on disability

Knowledge about the Brazilian legislation on disability, which is strongly based on disability studies and brings important indications for the adequacy of services offered in different social policies - education, social assistance, social security, health, justice -, is of fundamental importance for the professionals who are inserted in them.

When asked about the current Brazilian legislation related to disability, only six of the fourteen participants specifically remembered the CRPD and LBI. Despite this, all of them presented the understanding that there are laws aimed at the inclusion of people with disabilities and cited elements present in Brazilian legislation such as the importance of including people with disabilities at distinct levels of education, in the labor market, in the community, to guarantee accessibility and to combat discriminatory processes. This coherence between the elements brought by the participants and what the legislation advocates are related to the process of appropriation of the social model of disability, which was widely incorporated both in the CRPD and in the LBI. Although these elements appear diffuse throughout the testimonies, we reproduce here two statements that bring those that were most pointed out by the participants:

Inclusion laws, as far as I know, are the percentage of mandatory vacancies that companies have for people with disabilities, of people with disabilities no longer being separated from a special school, right? ... If they attend regular education as well... The issue of current legislation in relation to quotas in public universities has changed. (Francine)

This law is truly clear in the sense that the federal, municipal, and state governments need to create public policies and ways to include people with disabilities in regular schools, using various tools and technologies that already exist today. (Ricardo)

Brazilian legislation on disability is one of the most advanced in the world in terms of guaranteeing rights, as highlighted by Isabel Maior (2017). However, the challenge of disseminating it and building social practices aimed at its implementation still prevails. Bruno Martins (2016) highlights that the existence of legislation and knowledge of it is necessary, but not enough to produce a social transformation in the field of disability. The author also adds that it is necessary to create a culture of rights for people with disabilities. Laws must be followed by a cultural transformation and become effective in courts. However, knowledge about the legislation and its operation can be particularly important to help psychology professionals to identify violations of rights, carry out intersectoral referrals, as well as to build professional practices aimed at guaranteeing rights.

Final considerations

The research aimed to identify, from the perspective of students of the subject called “Psychology and People with Disabilities”, the contributions of teaching in the field of disability studies for training in psychology. The information obtained indicated that the participants appropriated elements of the social model of disability and the contributions of feminist disability theorists. Topics such as the understanding of disability as an experience of oppression, the transversality of disability with other oppressive systems and the understanding of disability as a category of analysis; dependence and interdependence as inherent to the human condition and care as fundamental to guaranteeing the dignity of people with disabilities were presented as major contributions of the subject. It is important to highlight that the elements presented are fundamental, as they make the understanding of disability complex from an analytical and political point of view, and are aligned with the human rights perspective present in Brazilian legislation and claimed by the Political Movement of People with Disabilities.

The study showed that the course also contributed to the identification of people with disabilities as political subjects, and to the acquisition of knowledge related to the trajectory of struggles for rights, which is important for breaking with the historical understanding of these people as sick, passive, and worthy of charity. All the participants reported that they started to identify the barriers present in society that are obstacles to the social participation of people with disabilities, not perceived by them before. The testimonies indicated that knowledge about the social model of disability, the participation of people with disabilities in the discipline as speakers and the activity of lifting barriers were fundamental for them to begin to perceive these barriers. The study showed that there is a need for the legislation knowledge to be deepened, since, although the participants knew some of the rights provided, they did not have a broad understanding of it.

Although the study brings essential elements to make visible the importance of teaching disability studies in psychology training, it is worth noting that it has some limitations. The first limitation refers to the impossibility of generalizing the results obtained for all psychology curricula in Brazil, since the study had a small sample (14 participants) from a single university. Although it was not the objective of this article, the information obtained indicates that the completion of basic and professional internships, in addition to other subjects taken throughout the training, which address issues of gender, sexuality, race and the psychosocial effects of violations of rights were also cited at times as important to expand training on

disability. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that there is a greater propensity for people who consider disability-related courses to be important for training to participate in research such as the one proposed here, as they believe it is important to make visible the contributions of the incorporation of disability studies into the curriculum in psychology. Thus, there may be students who had different perceptions about the subject under study.

Finally, considering that ableism is structural and constitutive of relationships and social spaces, it is necessary to carry out further studies to analyze, in depth, the extent to which the subject has the potential to transform social practices in contexts strongly marked by ableism. Thus, it is recommended to carry out research with psychology professionals who studied the subject and who act professionally in different social policies and fields of activity, aiming to analyze the power of the subject for the construction of anti-ableism practices.

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