




TEACHER TRAINING AND INCLUSION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN TEACHING LIBRAS IN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to analyze the challenges and opportunities faced by education professionals in the context of teacher training and inclusion of deaf students in schools, with a focus on teaching LIBRAS. The methodology adopted was qualitative and descriptive and was conducted with a sample of 18 education professionals who work in public schools. Data collection was done through semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires, and data analysis used the content analysis technique. The results revealed that teachers face difficulties related to superficial training in LIBRAS, lack of adequate material resources, diversity of fluency levels among deaf students, and challenges in implementing public inclusion policies. The lack of continuous training and the scarcity of specific teaching materials were pointed out as the main obstacles to the effectiveness of teaching LIBRAS. However, participants also highlighted some opportunities, such as increasing the receptiveness of the school community to inclusion and the support of partnerships with LIBRAS interpreters. Continuous training was considered essential for teachers to feel prepared for the challenges of inclusive education, and the use of

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interactive technologies was considered an advance in the teaching process, although with limitations in its formal integration into pedagogical practices. The coexistence between deaf and hearing students, although positive, still faces difficulties in socialization, and many teachers emphasized the need for a collective effort, where all educators, not just those specialized, must be trained to meet the demands of inclusion. In conclusion, the research showed that, despite advances, the inclusion of deaf students in schools requires improvements in teacher training, greater access to pedagogical resources, and a continuous effort to ensure quality and effective education for all.

Keywords: Teacher Training. Inclusion. LIBRAS.

INTRODUÇÃO

Teacher training is a central topic in discussions about improving education, especially when considering the inclusion of students with disabilities. In the context of inclusive education, the challenge of training teachers capable of meeting this diversity is even more evident and is a fundamental aspect of building a truly democratic school environment. In Brazil, the education of deaf students is one of the areas that most demands training for education professionals since Brazilian Sign Language (LIBRAS) is the main form of communication for many of these students. In this scenario, training teachers to teach LIBRAS in schools is revealed as an urgent need to ensure that the rights of these students are respected and met (Andrade et al., 2023). Historically, deaf people have been marginalized and deprived of full access to education. Until the mid-20th century, the dominant pedagogy for teaching deaf people was focused on realization, which imposed learning to speak and lip-read as the only form of communication. However, with the officialization of LIBRAS as a Brazilian language in 2002, and the enactment of the Brazilian Inclusion Law in 2015, a new panorama began to emerge. As a result of these changes, schools began to be challenged to offer education that respected deaf identity and culture, promoting inclusion through the use of LIBRAS (Araújo; Oliveira, 2021).

Implementing LIBRAS in schools requires not only adapting teaching materials but, above all, training teachers who are qualified to teach this language. Teachers often face difficulties in mastering LIBRAS and, more than that, in using it effectively in their pedagogical practices. The lack of adequate and continuous training, often combined with the scarcity of resources and effective public policies, means that teaching sign language remains a major challenge. In addition, many teachers do not have a deep understanding of the specificities of inclusive education, which compromises the adequate meeting of the needs of deaf students.

Another important point to be considered is the diversity present within the deaf community itself. Although LIBRAS is the official language of the Brazilian deaf, it is important to highlight that there are linguistic variations within the deaf community, such as different regional dialects and sign language variations. Therefore, teaching LIBRAS in schools needs to take this diversity into account, preparing teachers not only to teach the language itself but also to deal with these variations, respecting the cultural and linguistic plurality of deaf students. Furthermore, the teacher training process for teaching LIBRAS cannot be limited to learning the language, but must also involve raising teachers' awareness of the specificities of deaf culture and inclusive pedagogical practices (Araújo; Gonçalves; Guedes, 2023).

Teachers need to be prepared to overcome prejudices and stigmas related to hearing impairment and learn to recognize deafness as a linguistic difference, and not as a disability. This requires a closer look at teacher training and the teaching methodologies that can be adopted to ensure that deaf students feel welcomed and respected in the school environment.

The inclusion of deaf students in regular education, with the appropriate support of LIBRAS, is a reflection of a society that seeks greater equity and social justice. However, for this inclusion to be effective, it is necessary to overcome the challenges related to teacher training, which must be well-prepared to deal with the specificities of deaf education. This involves the creation of public policies that offer ongoing training for teachers, in addition to the provision of adapted teaching resources and materials. Only then will it be possible to build a truly inclusive education (Carvalho; Manzini, 2017).

Given the above, the objective of this research was to analyze the challenges and opportunities present in teacher training for teaching LIBRAS in schools, discussing the pedagogical practices adopted, the public policies aimed at inclusion, and the effectiveness of teacher training in this field. The research aims to contribute to the understanding of the main difficulties faced by educators and to point out ways to improve the teaching of LIBRAS, promoting a quality inclusive education for deaf students.

METHODOLOGY

The research carried out was descriptive and qualitative, with the main objective of understanding the experiences, challenges, and practices of education professionals in teaching LIBRAS in schools. Descriptive research seeks to portray a phenomenon in detail, without manipulating variables, allowing an in-depth view of the topic in question. The qualitative approach proved to be essential to explore the perceptions, feelings, and meanings attributed by participants to their pedagogical practice, considering the specificities of teaching LIBRAS and the inclusion of deaf students (Lima; Domingues Junior; Gomes, 2023; Lima; Domingues Junior; Silva, 2024; Lima; Silva; Domingues Júnior, 2024).

The research sample consisted of 18 education professionals who work in different public schools. These professionals were selected based on specific criteria, such as direct involvement in teaching LIBRAS, experience with deaf students, and time working in the area. The diversity of the sample, composed of teachers from different areas of knowledge and with varying levels of experience, allowed for a more comprehensive analysis of the

challenges and opportunities perceived by these educators in the context of teacher training for teaching LIBRAS.

Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews, which allowed for a more open and flexible conversation with the participants, allowing them to share their experiences and reflections on the training they received to teach LIBRAS, the difficulties they faced in their daily school routine, and the strategies they adopt in their practices. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in full, to ensure that the professionals' statements were analyzed faithfully and accurately.

In addition to the interviews, questionnaires with open questions were administered, allowing the participants to elaborate their responses more reflectively on topics such as the impact of the training received, the adequacy of public policies for inclusion, and the use of LIBRAS in the classroom. The combination of interviews and questionnaires allowed for data triangulation, enriching the analysis and increasing the reliability of the results.

After data collection, the qualitative analysis phase began. The analysis was carried out using the content analysis technique, which allowed for the identification and categorizing of the main ideas and recurring themes in the participants' statements. Based on this analysis, it was possible to understand the main challenges faced by educators in teaching LIBRAS, such as the lack of adequate training and the scarcity of teaching resources, as well as the opportunities that arise with the improvement of teacher training and the implementation of more effective public policies.

RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of the collected data revealed a series of challenges and opportunities perceived by education professionals in the context of teaching LIBRAS and the inclusion of deaf students in schools. In general, the research participants expressed concerns about the adequacy of the training they received to deal with the linguistic and cultural diversity of deaf students. According to respondents E3 and E01, "the training offered was superficial, and there was a lack of practice to teach sign language in the classroom daily". These statements highlight one of the main gaps pointed out by teachers: the need for more in-depth and applied teaching, which considers the reality of the school environment.

Another aspect frequently mentioned by participants was the difficulty in dealing with diversity within the deaf community itself. E5 commented that "not all deaf students have the same level of fluency in LIBRAS, which makes teaching more complex". This statement reveals one of the difficulties faced by educators, who often need to adapt their teaching

approaches to deal with the varying levels of knowledge of sign language among deaf students.

In addition, witness E8 highlighted that “there is no training that prepares teachers to deal with these different linguistic and cultural contexts”. The lack of material resources was also mentioned as one of the main barriers to the effective teaching of LIBRAS in schools. E2 stated: “The lack of specific teaching materials for teaching LIBRAS is a major obstacle. We have to resort to videos on the internet and improvised materials, which is not always effective”. This report points to the lack of adequate infrastructure in schools, especially about access to pedagogical resources that can contribute to learning sign language more dynamically and engagingly.

Regarding the impact of public policies on the inclusion of deaf students, some professionals expressed optimism but also identified limitations. E4 reported: “The laws are good, but their application in schools is flawed. There is a lack of ongoing training for teachers, and many still do not know how to effectively use LIBRAS in their classes.” E4’s statement shows that, although public policies for the inclusion of deaf students are recognized, there are still challenges in the effective implementation of these standards. In daily pedagogical practices.

However, participants also highlighted some opportunities and advances in their teaching practices. E7 noted that “over time, the school community has become more receptive to inclusion, and public policies have encouraged teacher training.” This statement indicates that, despite the difficulties, there is a movement to improve the inclusion process, with more teachers being made aware of the importance of LIBRAS training and adequate care for deaf students. E6, in turn, stated that “partnerships with LIBRAS interpreters and the deaf community have been fundamental to enriching the teaching and learning process.”

The issue of prejudice was also addressed by the research professionals. E10 reported that “many students and even other teachers still see deafness as a disability, and not as a cultural and linguistic difference.” This statement reflects an important barrier that needs to be overcome in the school environment to promote true and effective inclusion. E9, however, highlighted that “by interacting and working together with the deaf community, we were able to change the perception of deafness and raise awareness among colleagues about the importance of LIBRAS”.

Continuing education was a central issue in the interviewees’ statements. According to E1, “Initial training to teach LIBRAS is not enough; we need refresher courses and ongoing pedagogical practices”. This report highlights the importance of continuing

education so that teachers feel prepared to deal with the new demands of inclusive education, in addition to ensuring that their knowledge of LIBRAS is deepened throughout their careers. E11 also added: “The training I received was good, but it was a one-off. I believe that it would need more practical moments and monitoring in schools”.

Regarding the pedagogical strategies adopted, E12 stated that “we try to use videos and visual resources to help with learning LIBRAS, but often these resources are not enough to explain the concepts clearly”. This comment indicates that, despite the teachers' efforts, the pedagogical strategies adopted are not fully effective without the proper support and training. E15 also reported that “we have tried to adapt the teaching based on the abilities of each student, but the challenge is great when there is no uniformity in the level of learning of LIBRAS”.

Another relevant aspect was the role of technology in the LIBRAS teaching process. E13 noted that “technology has helped a lot, with applications and online platforms that teach LIBRAS more interactively, but there is still a lack of integration of these resources into formal pedagogical practices”. This statement highlights the potential of technologies but also points to the lack of integration between them and the formal school curriculum. E14, on the other hand, highlighted that “the use of digital platforms with videos and interactive classes has facilitated learning, but teachers also need to know how to use them effectively”.

When asked about the receptiveness of deaf students, many teachers stated that the adaptation to the school environment was positive, but that teaching LIBRAS still faces logistical and methodological difficulties. E16 stated: “Deaf students have shown themselves to be very motivated to learn, but the lack of a well-defined methodology for teaching LIBRAS makes the process more difficult”. This report is crucial, as it shows that, although deaf students are motivated to learn, the educational context does not offer an efficient structure for this learning.

In addition, many educators pointed out that, although the inclusion of deaf students is a significant advance, the practice of teaching LIBRAS in schools is still seen as an isolated responsibility of a few professionals, especially those who work directly with these students. E18 stated that “we cannot expect only LIBRAS teachers or interpreters to be responsible for the inclusion of deaf students. All teachers need to be trained to meet this demand”. This statement reveals the need for a collective effort to ensure the inclusion and learning of LIBRAS at all levels of education.

The coexistence between deaf and hearing students was also a topic addressed by the participants. E17 emphasized that “interaction between deaf and hearing students is

essential, but hearing students often have difficulty understanding and communicating with deaf students, which makes the socialization process difficult". This report points to the need for strategies that promote integration between different cultures within the school, to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for everyone. Finally, the interviews revealed a general feeling that, although teacher training in LIBRAS has advanced in recent years, years, there are still many challenges to be overcome. E19 summarized the situation by stating: "Inclusion is a long and ongoing process. Teacher training needs to be improved, and resources need to be more accessible so that we can offer quality education to deaf students."

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research showed that, despite advances in public inclusion policies and in raising awareness about the importance of teaching LIBRAS, the challenges for teacher training and the effective inclusion of deaf students in schools remain significant. The lack of adequate and ongoing training for teachers, combined with the scarcity of specialized resources and teaching materials, was one of the main obstacles identified by the participants. The scarcity of practical training and the lack of ongoing training for educators in the use of LIBRAS in the classroom were identified as the main limitations for quality inclusive education.

In addition, the research revealed that diversity within the deaf community, with different levels of fluency in LIBRAS, constitutes an additional challenge for teachers. Many teachers do not feel prepared to deal with these variations, which compromises the effectiveness of their teaching practices. Teacher training should therefore be designed to take into account the linguistic and cultural diversity of deaf students, providing teachers with tools to adapt their teaching to the specific needs of each student.

Another important aspect identified was the resistance of some educators and students to the inclusion process, evidenced by mistaken perceptions about deafness. The lack of awareness about deafness as a linguistic and cultural difference, rather than a disability, hinders pedagogical work and integration between deaf and hearing students. Teacher training, therefore, needs to include a component that addresses awareness of the specificities of deaf culture, to combat prejudice and promote more inclusive education.

Despite the challenges, the research also indicated that there are opportunities to improve the teaching of LIBRAS in schools. Collaboration between teachers of different disciplines and LIBRAS interpreters has proven to be an effective strategy for promoting inclusion. Furthermore, the use of digital technologies and resources, although not yet fully

integrated, has proven to be an important tool to complement the teaching of LIBRAS and facilitate the learning of deaf students.

Based on the results found, it is possible to conclude that the effective inclusion of deaf students in regular education requires continuous and specialized training for teachers, as well as an adequate infrastructure, with teaching materials and technological resources that meet the needs of these students. The implementation of public policies that encourage ongoing training and adaptation of the school curriculum is essential to ensure the effectiveness of LIBRAS teaching and promote inclusive education.

Therefore, the research contributes to the understanding of the main challenges faced by education professionals and offers support for improving teacher training, highlighting the importance of a more comprehensive and integrated approach in the LIBRAS teaching process. Overcoming the identified barriers and implementing effective public policies are essential for the inclusion of deaf students to be truly effective and for LIBRAS teaching to become a consolidated practice in schools.

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