


CONTEMPORARY DEBATES ON CURRICULAR ADAPTATIONS: DIVERGENT OPINIONS AMONG TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the history of education, we have witnessed different theoretical positions on curricular adaptations. When referring to curricular adaptation for people with disabilities, the debate becomes more pronounced, as there is no consensus among teachers whether or not the curriculum should be adapted. The problem that guided the reflection was: why is there still resistance from teachers to make adaptations in school curricula? The objectives of this investigative process were: to understand, in the light of the theoretical references, the reasons why the teachers of the common school almost do not make the curricular adaptations; to analyze whether it is due to the lack of initial and permanent training that teachers find it difficult to make adaptations in the curriculum; identify the main pedagogical barriers that prevent curricular adaptations in schools at all levels. The option was for qualitative research, supported by bibliographic research and documents that support the theme of curricular adaptations. References put us in front of a question: the dilemma is - to adapt or not the curriculum, considering that in the space-time of the school students with Specific Educational Needs are occupying common schools at all levels. Results found in the literature have shown us that there is no consensus among teachers as to whether or not the curriculum should be adapted. Considerations, of course, not conclusive, led us to reflect on the vehement need to invest in the permanent training of teachers, with regard to curricular adaptations in schools.

Keywords: Curricular Adaptation. Teacher Training. Students with Disabilities.

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INTRODUCTION

The unveiling of the new century is born, bringing to education the possibility of building in school at all levels, an education model that is capable of including in the same *space-times* all people, regardless of whether they are or are in a situation of disability.

The process of inclusion of people with disabilities, global developmental disorders, high abilities/giftedness has been configured as an education proposal that is capable of including blacks, indigenous people, quilombolas, street minors, and the dispossessed present in various social contexts in schools.

In the light of the literature that emphasizes this issue, we refer to some international movements that bubbled up, such as the World Declaration of Education for All, Jomtien, (Unesco, 1990); the Declaration of Salamanca, Spain (UNESCO, 1994); the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education – LDBEN 9394/96 (Brasil, 1996) and the National Policy on Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education (Brasil, 2008), among others, contributed to the construction of new paradigms that, in Freire's (1992) perspective, need to be liberating, humane and humanizing.

The limits of inclusion in regular schools arise to the extent that our plans are homogeneous, the contents are rigid and the curriculum is inflexible, as if our students learned in the same way, in the same way, in short, at the same time. According to Glat (2004), the greatest challenge of the school today is to teach students with disabilities in a space whose contents, curriculum and teachers' planning are not and are not adapted to the different specific educational needs. Glat is incisive in stating that the inclusion we aim for tries to maintain itself in a deficient school, without structure, bankrupt and what is worse, teachers are not prepared to act with differences.

If one of the principles of inclusion is that students with disabilities can learn together regardless of the difficulties and differences in the classroom, then a question arises: is it possible to learn together, in the same way, at the same time, in the same way, if the curricula, content and teaching are not adapted? This question makes us reflect on another problem: the teacher has difficulties to adapt the curriculum, the contents and their planning, claiming that they have not been, are not and are not prepared to work in the classroom, when the enrollment of students with disabilities, global developmental disorders, high abilities/giftedness is registered in it.

When making use of the theoretical references that discuss curricular adaptations in schools at all levels, it is necessary to emphasize that according to educational legislation

(Brasil, 1998) curricular adaptations are pedagogical measures that must be adopted in various areas, such as: in the pedagogical project of the school, in the classroom, in activities in general and, only when absolutely necessary, should they apply to the individual student. We mean that when referring to the target audience of special education, these adaptations in the curricula are essential, because students with specific educational needs, as well as others, learn at different paces and times.

It is not our intention to conceptualize in this article what curriculum means. However, we need to point out that it, the curriculum, is a social construction, in which teachers, mediators of knowledge, organize themselves to make it more accessible to the dissemination of scientific knowledge. Sacristán (2000, p. 14) shares this premise, when he points out that "the curriculum is not a concept, but a cultural construction. That is, it is not an abstract concept that has some kind of existence outside and prior to human experience, it is rather a way of organizing a series of educational practices". What we want to warn is that at school, at all levels, the teacher needs to be clear that his students with and without disabilities do not learn in the same way, in the same way, at the same time, that is, our students are different, have different expectations and abilities.

In a liberating, humane and humanizing education, we would say that from the perspective of inclusion, there are many objectives of curricular adaptations. In this sense, we believe that the primary objective of the adaptations is to guarantee for all students access to and development of the curriculum, the contents taught in schools and the scientific concepts, necessary for all students with and without disabilities.

When referring to curricular adaptations in special education, we sometimes come across a great crossroads: what to do to build an adequate curriculum that is capable of housing in schools three groups of students with various disabilities such as: hearing, visual, physical and multiple; students with pervasive developmental disorders (autism and psychosis) and finally, students with high abilities/giftedness (Brazil, 2010).

The present work is the result of our concerns about the discourses for or against the promotion of curricular adaptations in schools. In this sense, we delve into references that discuss in the educational system whether it is possible to make adaptations in the curriculum in a school flanked by different social subjects.

Scholars of educational policies point out that the implementation in schools of a curriculum capable of meeting the diversity that exists in the education system today, generates a real problem, because the school filled with disciplines, fragmented content

and people composed of indigenous, black, immigrant, elderly, disabled, among others, lead teachers to reflect: what to do to implement in the school a curriculum adapted to this multiplicity of subjects?

In the globalized world, without borders, connected by networks, whose subjects are increasingly present in schools, we are faced with a great problem: to adapt or not the curriculum to this varied universe of people who are entering the *space-times* of schools? At the same time that this question causes us doubts, it invites us to defend that the curriculum needs to be adapted to the needs of these new subjects who are coming to schools hungry for knowledge, with cede of knowledge, in short, in need of breaking with the alienating processes that exclude, marginalize and prevent our inclusion in the various educational spaces.

Obviously, we know that the implementation of an adapted curriculum in schools faces several problems, especially if we consider that we do not see teachers working on the curricular components in an interdisciplinary way. This, in our view, incurs a serious problem: on the one hand, we do not know what the teacher who preceded us worked; on the other hand, we also do not know what our colleague has planned and what he will work on.

Another problem we identified is the fragmentation of contents, which in addition to being decontextualized, do not arouse interest in the curricular component we are teaching. In view of the above, a question arises here: how to promote curricular adaptations in a shattered educational system disconnected from the reality that surrounds us?

In recent decades, our ears have become accustomed to the official government discourse: "inclusive education, school inclusion, people with disabilities". We do not see a problem in this discourse, because we are in favor of the inclusion of all people regardless of whether they are or are in a situation of disability.

In our view, the problem lies in the initial training of teachers in undergraduate courses, who sometimes leave universities without even knowing some didactic resources, teaching techniques and strategies, methodological procedures and curricula adapted to different specific educational needs. Faced with this premise, the reflection we make is: how to include these new social subjects, if we have not been trained? How to promote the mediation of knowledge if we were not allowed this mediation? How can we promote the socio-educational transformation of our students with and without disabilities, if we have

not even started our own transformation? In short, how can we adapt the curriculum to the new demands of the globalized world, if we have not been guided to this arduous task? These questions bother us, as our training is fragmented, the contents are decontextualized, the disciplines are worked on in isolation, far from the reality of our students.

In the current educational situation, one of the biggest bottlenecks in education experienced by teachers, the main mentor of knowledge, is the need to adapt the curriculum in school, especially when there are enrollments of students with disabilities, global developmental disorders, high abilities/giftedness. In view of the above, the research problem that guided this investigation was: why is there still resistance from teachers to make adaptations in school curricula?

OBJECTIVES

Our objectives in this reflection were to discuss, in the educational system, the possibilities of implementing, in schools, curricular adaptations, especially taking into account that there is a multiplicity of subjects from various realities. In this sense, we propose to achieve the following objectives: to understand, in the light of theoretical references, the political reasons why teachers in regular schools do not make curricular adaptations; to analyze whether it is due to the lack of initial and permanent training that teachers find it difficult to make adaptations in the curriculum; identify the main pedagogical barriers that prevent curricular adaptations in schools at all levels.

METHODOLOGY

Our option in this theoretical reflection was for qualitative research. To this end, we rely on Lüdke and André (1986, p. 11) when they mention that: "qualitative research has the natural environment as its direct source of data and the researcher as its main instrument".

As it is a bibliographic study, we use Severino (2016, p. 123), when he states that in bibliographic investigations "the researcher starts from existing research to support his work".

If we consider that our reflection also used documents to support this investigation, we rely on Piana (2009, p. 122) when he points out that "documentary research has some advantages because it is a 'rich and stable source of data': it does not imply high costs,

does not require contact with the research subjects and allows an in-depth reading of the sources".

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In regular schools, especially when students with disabilities, global developmental disorders, high abilities/giftedness are enrolled, many elements impede, or at least hinder, the process of school inclusion of these new subjects who are entering the school's *space-time*. This premise is shared by Mesquita, (2010, p. 312), when he points out that,

[...] The idea of adaptation, posed by the curriculum policy, reveals the perspective not of unity, but of homogenizing the official curriculum. From how much the educational policy, despite the advances made possible by the proposal of inclusive education, still allows itself to be caught by the contradictions inherent to its discourses, such as the statement above "adaptation of the regular curriculum".

In the light of the references that discuss whether the curriculum should be adapted, adequate or differentiated in schools, especially if there is the presence of students with disabilities in them, different theoretical positions are denoted. Rodrigues (2003, p. 92) argues that the curriculum should be differentiated by claiming that:

[...] The curricular differentiation that is sought in inclusion is the one that takes place in the environment in which students are not separated based on certain categories, but in which students are educated together, seeking to take advantage of the educational potential of their differences, in short, a differentiation in the class assumed as a heterogeneous group.

We share this idea to the extent that our schools whose realities are different, we think that the curriculum should be differentiated, in order to serve all students, including the public of special education in an inclusive perspective.

Obviously, we know that in the new century inclusion is for us, like globalization, there is no turning back. The integrated classrooms are gone, we live in another reality, the one that defends the principle that all children with or without disabilities should learn together, without segregation, exclusion and social marginalization. This can be experienced in the writings of Mesquita (2010, p. 314), when he emphasizes that:

Based on the assumption that inclusion aims to value and respect diversity, it is therefore important to consider it as a starting point for the acceptance of difference, rather than its stigmatization. In this way, it will begin to break with

segregationist practices, envisioning integrative actions that see "normality" in difference.

The democratization of the school, the discourse of education for all, all together for an inclusive education, are nomenclatures that we have come to hear in the twenty-first century. When referring to curricular adaptations, we defend this possibility, as our different students, coming from the most varied ethnic realities, specific educational needs, gender and diversity, we see in Sacristán, (2000, p. 16) that it is through the curriculum that we eliminate or at least reduce these barriers. In this sense, he points out that "It is also through it that we will be able to guide educational work from an inclusive perspective". This possibility can only be made effective at school if regular education teachers and special education teachers work in partnerships, exchanging experiences, being collaborative and cooperative with each other, because teaching in an inclusive perspective requires joint efforts and not isolated, decontextualized pedagogical action, out of the reality that surrounds us.

If we refer to the National Curriculum Parameters – PCN – (Brasil, 1998, p. 33), it is possible to point out that in order to make curricular adaptations, when these refer to the public of special education, we need to pay attention to the following criteria "what the student should learn; how and when to learn; which forms of teaching organization are more efficient for the learning process and how and when to evaluate the student". In our conception, if teachers in their initial and permanent training are well trained, they will certainly have no difficulties in making these adaptations, especially if their students are from special education in an inclusive perspective.

The reflections on curricular adaptations are justified by the need to adapt teaching and curriculum to the specificities of students with more severe disabilities. In our conception, this incurs a serious problem, not least because, in many situations, we run the risk of giving up content relevant to the process of its formation. This premise is shared by Michels (2006, p. 409) when he emphasizes that "we can, in this logic, fall into the trap according to which, in the name of respect for differences, students are excluded from their right to knowledge". This danger may occur, as we are not sure whether the curriculum should be adapted to those students who have some more severe special needs.

Today, one of the dilemmas that teachers face in their pedagogical daily life is the doubt: whether or not to adapt the curriculum to students with specific educational needs.

In view of this assertion, Cenci and Damiani (2013 p. 722) point out that: "by defending curricular flexibility/adaptation, one may be legitimizing processes of exclusion in the scenario of education that is intended to be inclusive". In this context, it is the role of the school, the educational system and the teachers, of course, once well trained, to be able to teach all students, whether they are subjects with or without disabilities or not.

In the context of a school open to diversity, we have to be clear that our students need to be well instructed in their training process. The problem is that by defending differences, we sometimes deprive our students of mastering scientific concepts relevant to the construction of different knowledge, as well as to their intellectual development.

Scholars of school inclusion, spread across different countries, are incisive in affirming that curricular adaptations constitute the basis for making a true inclusive proposal effective in the educational system. In this sense, Heredeiro (2010) argues that the curriculum needs to be adequate, aiming not only at the inclusion of some, but also of all who are entering schools. We share this assumption, insofar as in our conception, curricular adaptation has brought advances to the work of teachers with students with disabilities.

As an educator, an advocate of school inclusion for all people, we need to be aware of the pitfalls that curricular adaptations can also bring us, to the extent that, once implemented by unsuspecting pedagogical coordinators, managers and teachers, they can reinforce the formation of ghettos understood here as exclusionary, that is, what Rodrigues (2006) calls exclusionary inclusion.

What we intend, when we defend curricular adaptations in schools, we want our students, different, coming from diversity, to be able not only to enter schools, compose government statistics, thicken the distorted discourse of inclusion, we want these new subjects in an inclusive perspective, to succeed and remain at the various levels of education. This is not utopia, this is possible.

(IN)CONCLUSIVE NOTES

Our reflections on this theme are not final, nor at least conclusive, because the discussions on curricular adaptations still require many debates, studies and questions from teachers, who on the one hand propose that the curriculum be adapted to the specific needs of students with disabilities, on the other hand, there are many doubts about how to make these adaptations in schools at all levels.

The defense for the adoption of scientific concepts is not intended to condemn curricular adaptations. On the contrary, in the inclusive school, we think that adaptations are necessary for the concepts to have a greater power of scientificity, to the extent that our students do not learn at the same pace, in the same way, at the same time.

By returning to the question that guided the reflection, here called "why is there still resistance from teachers to make adaptations in school curricula?", the study showed us that in the *space-time* of the school there are still many doubts about whether or not to adapt the curriculum to students with specific educational needs. It is not a question of teachers needing to adapt the curriculum and content to each student with a different specific need. It is also not a matter of building a plan to meet each disability. We think that teachers need to understand that what must be adapted are the didactic resources, the methodological procedures, the teaching strategies, so that students, with and without disabilities, can learn from diversity in the classroom.

In the light of the specialized literature that defends adaptations in the school space, Silva and Moreira (2008, p. 2657) point out that:

[...] The curriculum should not be conceived in such a way that the student is the one who adapts to the molds that the school offers, but as a field open to diversity. This diversity is not in the sense that each student could learn different content, but rather learn content in different ways.

The authors mean that the curriculum needs to be open to different specific ethnic, cultural and social needs.

Our reflections in this study made us think that if the school insists on maintaining a rigid curriculum, loaded with content, it can become one of the greatest causes of exclusion and marginalization of students with disabilities included in regular schools. We want to say that it is not the students who have to adapt to this model of school that we have today. We cannot run the risk that the curriculum will become the stigma of differences, in which each student has a different curriculum and content, reduced to his or her specific educational needs.

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