Knowledge and Actions by Professionals of the Specialised Educational Assistance to Deaf Students in Santarém (PA)

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ABSTRACT

Background: Deafness, seen from a cultural perspective, is a constitutive condition of the identities and cultures shared by deaf people. In the context of inclusion policies, the school space brings together intercultural experiences and connections between deaf and hearing cultures. Professionals from Specialised Educational Assistance (SEA) are responsible for seeking ways of accessibility and guaranteeing the rights of deaf students in regular schools. **Objective:** to analyse how Specialized Educational Service professionals from public schools in the municipal schools of Santarém/PA describe practices developed with deaf students to understand what knowledge and actions guide the work of these professionals and what challenges for the pedagogical work are highlighted. **Design:** The research follows the guidelines of the qualitative approach and uses the narrative interview as its main method. **Setting and participants:** The interviews were conducted with nine teachers working in the SEA in different municipal schools in Santarém/PA. **Data collection and analysis:** The interviews were conducted through online resources, and the data obtained orally were transcribed and tabulated from enunciative recurrences. **Results:** In the analytical process, two main unifying axes were produced: the first focused on the knowledge and actions of AEE professionals and the second focused on the challenges for inclusive education. We observed that the processes of inclusion of deaf students in regular schools are challenging and that the narrated experiences characterise and give meaning to the work performed by the SEA teacher and others involved in the care of deaf students. **Conclusions:** The relevance of the work developed in the SEA and the need to expand a collaborative network aimed at school inclusion, involving teachers,

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professionals, managers, instances and student follow-up services to ensure the educational rights of deaf people, are highlighted.

Keywords: school inclusion; deaf students; specialised educational assistance.

Saberes e fazeres de profissionais do Atendimento Educacional Especializado com estudantes surdos no município de Santarém (PA)

RESUMO

Contexto: A surdez, vista a partir de uma abordagem cultural, é condição constitutiva das identidades e culturas partilhadas por surdos. No contexto das políticas de inclusão, o espaço da escola passa a congregar experiências interculturais e conexões entre culturas surdas e ouvintes. É atribuição dos profissionais do Atendimento Educacional Especializado (AEE) buscar formas de acessibilidade e de garantia dos direitos de estudantes surdos nas escolas regulares. **Objetivo:** analisar como os profissionais do AEE de escolas públicas da rede municipal de Santarém/PA descrevem práticas desenvolvidas com estudantes surdos, de modo a entender quais saberes e fazeres pautam o trabalho desses profissionais e quais desafios para o trabalho pedagógico são salientados. **Design**: A pesquisa segue orientações da abordagem qualitativa e utiliza, como método principal, a entrevista narrativa**. Ambiente e participantes**: As entrevistas foram desenvolvidas com nove professores que atuam no AEE, em diferentes escolas da rede municipal de Santarém/PA. **Coleta e análise de dados**: As entrevistas foram realizadas por meio de recursos online e os dados obtidos oralmente foram transcritos e tabulados a partir de recorrências enunciativas. **Resultados:** No processo analítico, foram produzidos dois eixos aglutinadores principais: o primeiro voltado aos saberes e fazeres dos profissionais do AEE e o segundo voltado aos desafios para a educação inclusiva. Observou-se que as experiências narradas caracterizam e dão sentido ao trabalho desempenhado pelo professor do AEE, ressaltando-se os desafios do trabalho desenvolvido. **Conclusões**: Destaca-se a relevância do travalho desenvolvido no AEE e a necessidade de expansão de uma rede colaborativa voltada à inclusão escolar, envolvendo professores, profissionais, gestores, instâncias e serviços de acompanhamento ao estudante, de modo a assegurar direitos educacionais dos surdos.

Palavras-chave: inclusão escolar, estudantes surdos; atendimento educacional especializado.

INTRODUCTION

This article, derived from a completed master's degree research work[1], has the school as its ambience and, more specifically, the Specialised Educational Assistance (SEA) space, in which actions aimed at the inclusion of people with disabilities in the dynamics of school space-time are produced and promoted. The research is theoretically located at the intersection between cultural studies and deaf studies, and its main objective is to analyse how Specialised Educational Assistance professionals in public municipal schools of Santarém, Pará, narrate and describe practices developed with deaf students. In this sense, we asked about the practices described, the knowledge and practices that guide the professionals' work, and the challenges faced in this type of action. Considering the narratives of nine teachers and one professor working in the SEA in the schools above, we identified some challenges in their professional practices and invested theoretically in discussing and reframing such practices.

We understand that, in general, the deaf difference continues to be typified as a deficiency in the scope of school education, under a clinical-therapeutic bias, contributing to the maintenance of specific stereotypes informed by notions such as incompleteness, lack, and deficit. In this sense, deafness has historically been understood as an anomaly –something linked to a lack of hearing– to which medical and therapeutic practices must be applied to compensate for the presumed deficit. For a long time, the therapeutic approach was the oralism of deaf people, as argued by Sacks (1998) and Skliar (2015), resulting in the prohibition of the use of sign languages, which generated significant losses for deaf communities (Perlin & Ströbel, 2006). Today, we still see the endurance of statements such as that sign languages should be avoided because they would delay the process of integrating deaf people into the hearing world.

Although today, deaf cultures are broadly recognised as essential, there is still an understanding that those of hearing people would be better, more complete, and more complex. This cultural reasoning is based on power relations within which a hierarchisation of cultures is promoted, hearing privilege is ensured, and how socially, deaf people continue to be considered

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[1] Research project submitted to the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Lutheran University of Brazil, approved on 04/29/2021 under CAAE number 45504621.9.0000.5349.

based on specific limitations, deficits, and sensory deficiencies are not problematised.

THEORETICAL REFERENCES

Deaf studies are one of the theoretical foundations of this research. Deaf studies emerged in Brazil linked to cultural studies and, little by little, acquired visibility and notoriety as it allows us to analyse deaf cultures, sign languages, the experiences of deaf people in their relationship with the hearing world, and the construction of knowledge through deaf cultural practices. Within this field, theories are formulated and investigations are organised with deaf people, enabling the expansion of the area of knowledge, the visibility of deaf narratives, and the recognition that deaf communities are producers of culture. Karnopp and Bossi (2018, p. 213) state that "the idea of deaf culture based on the valorisation of deaf experiences has been transforming and diversifying theoretical analyses in the different academic environments in which this topic is analysed and debated".

One of the concerns in the field of deaf studies is to problematise stereotypes about deaf people, which are propagated especially by maintaining dichotomies such as being hearing/deaf. Under listener logic, sign languages are often seen as less complex than oral languages, which, in turn, are less elaborate than written ones. Furthermore, as Perlin and Ströbel (2006, p. 7) argue, professionals who work with deaf people often adopt only a clinical-therapeutic perspective.

> [They] see deaf subjects as patients or with 'sick ears' who need to be treated at all costs, for example, therapeutic auditory training exercises and speech organ preparation exercises, which are part of the work of the deaf people's teacher when using an oralist approach. In this clinical view, deaf subjects are generally categorised by degrees of deafness and not by their cultural identities.

We agree with the authors that an approach that does not consider cultural aspects restricts the possibilities of thinking about deaf life contexts and challenges faced by deaf people. The deaf difference cannot be thought of merely as a problem whose solution lies in medical or therapeutic intervention to rehabilitate the body and normalise behaviour.

From a cultural perspective, deafness is a constitutive condition of particular identities and cultures in which deaf subjects construct their visual experiences and ways of being and living. The relationships between deaf and hearing people are seen from an intercultural perspective, with bilingualism being a constituent condition of these shared spaces. From a culturalist perspective, we understand that, in the Brazilian context, the first language of deaf people is Libras, and their second language is written Portuguese.

According to Brito (1993), from the perspective of bilingualism, sign language becomes central to developing the deaf person's full capabilities in all spheres of life and knowledge production. As such, Libras supports thought, stimulates cognitive and social development, and provides opportunities for communication between deaf people and between deaf people and hearing people, as long as the accessibility conditions in force in Brazilian legislation are safeguarded. In the same vein, Quadros (2009, p. 40) highlights some of the rights of deaf people:

> [...] the recognition of the deaf person as a citizen who is part of the deaf community with the right to ensure the acquisition of sign language as their first language; the use of signs at school to ensure cognitive development and the teaching of general knowledge; the teaching of auditory oral language with second language teaching strategies and the inclusion of deaf people in school staff.

Therefore, the construction of an intercultural and bilingual educational policy for deaf people requires much more than guaranteeing the use of sign and oral languages; it requires that a cultural, historical, anthropological and political perspective on deafness be mobilised, that the full citizenship rights of deaf people be ensured, that distinct ways of seeing the world, diverse modes of expression of thought and experiences, varied strategies production of cultural content and organisation of knowledge be recognised. In Müller and Karnopp's (2017, p. 3) words, it is necessary to invest in "schooling that respects the linguistic condition of the deaf person and their visual experience as constitutive of a unique way of reading and understanding the world, without, however, disregarding the necessary school learning of Portuguese".

The National Federation for Education and Integration of the Deaf (Federação Nacional de Educação e Integração de Surdos - FENEIS) highlights the importance of bilingual education, which can be ensured through bilingual schools for deaf students or by guaranteeing bilingual education in regular schools, considering the variety of situations and contexts of schooling.

Although legislation protects the rights of deaf people, there is a long way to go to establish a bilingual education that respects the premises, whether laws or the multiple documents formulated by deaf movements throughout Brazil.

METHODOLOGY

Following Meyer and Paraíso's (2014, p. 15) arguments, we consider that "[...] a research methodology is always pedagogical because it refers to a how to do it". By outlining paths, we construct, in a way, the possibilities for something to be seen. In this sense, the paths are part of the theoretical-methodological tools that shape the objects of study. Paraíso (2004) argues, in this sense, that the theories, concepts, and categories that solidify educational thinking need to be problematised to advance the "already said", the "already thought". With theoretical contributions from cultural and deaf studies, we understand that horizons are opening up for the problematisation and analysis of inclusion processes underway in public educational systems.

Defined as a theoretical field that takes culture as a central element to examine practices, representations, discourses, and ways of being a subject, cultural studies consider the conditions of possibility, power relations, and forms of knowledge that allow us to give meaning to things, experiences, the daily events. Cultural studies is a field in which nomadic knowledge is produced and its practitioners.

> [...] do not seek consensus, but rather engage in critical battles and struggles with each other and against the academy's consolidated knowledge, with its naturalised comprehension of educational spaces and their subjects, crystallised research approaches about and in the school, and common-sense explanations for the most diverse (and complex) behaviours and phenomena. That is, the practitioners of these studies do not seek to assume the role of privileged proponents of immediate solutions to problems that affect contemporary societies -- they are concerned, however, with shedding light on such problems, mapping their conditions of possibility, investigating the underlying modes, circumstances, practices, and subjects. These are political actions with which these studies are primarily concerned. (Bonin et al., 2020, p. 3)

In this sense, analyses carried out in cultural studies do not arise formulas or recipes on how to do better or intervene more effectively, but

problematisations that can offer plural perspectives. In turn, according to Skliar (2015), deaf studies can be considered as a territory of educational research and political propositions that define a particular approach –and not an appropriation– with knowledge and discourses about deafness and the world of the deaf people.

Inspired by these studies and by a profusion of texts produced by deaf and hearing authors, we seek to problematise the practices narrated by SEA professionals who work with deaf students, and in these narratives, we also identify cultural traits of deafness, that is, specific meanings that guide the actions developed with deaf students. As Lopes (2006) maintains, the cultural hallmarks of deafness establish some conditions based on which life, communication, and education for deaf people must be organised. If this cultural trait is often seen as a deficit, nowadays, deaf people, their movements and communities also dispute the meanings of being deaf and give new meaning to cultural and identity traits, signaling their positivity.

We start from the notion of deaf difference and then ask how specialist teachers make sense of the practices and experiences of specialised care for this type of student and the difficulties highlighted within the scope of this educational work.

The method used to produce narratives

To produce narratives, we conducted interviews, as these are ways of mobilising stories, memories, and narratives in which shared meanings in a given culture are expressed. We understand that narratives are not expressions of facts as they occur; instead, they are re-elaborations based on cultural representations and the work of memory. In Larrosa's terms (2011), narratives construct events –in a particular way, in a specific sequence, based on what we consider pertinent to narrate in that particular context. The same event that occurred with several people will be told in different ways and gain different meanings as each person conveys and repositions the fact in a temporal and historical context and through this work of remembering. Furthermore, regarding the act of telling stories, Serpa (2018, p. 94) states the following:

> Sharing experiences, narratives, and reflections produced collectively presupposes assuming writing over which we can have some authorship but not control. It means creating a text where the voices are not just a support point, the pillars where I will erect the building of my wisdom, under which I will raise

my arguments and truths, but precisely the opposite: they are voices that unbalance us, invite us for clash and debate. It means producing a text marked by the movement of voices that cross each other, and as they cross each other, they cause each other to change course, change perspectives.

To produce narratives, we chose to work with interviews, understanding that they are productive tools in education research. Interviews favour understanding the experiential contexts and how each person produces meanings within specific cultural conditions and relationships of power and knowledge in different environments. Andrade (2008) remembers that the school is one of those places where subjects are described, named, and classified. It also mobilises particular knowledge as it selects what counts as valid content or true discourse.

Also, from a post-critical approach, Felix (2014) highlights that the interview is not a neutral and symmetrical zone, free from tension, but rather a discursive event whose construction presupposes involvement from both the interviewee and the interviewer. The interview involves asymmetrical power relations marked by the tension between questioning and answering and by the mutual responsibilities assumed in the act of interviewing or being interviewed. However, in Silveira's terms, whoever is interviewed also exercises power to the extent that they negotiate, refuse to respond or propose argumentative paths that the interviewer did not foresee and cannot control.

Research context and participants

In the present study, we consider the empirical data from interviews conducted in 2021 with nine professionals working in specialised educational assistance in public schools in Santarém (PA). As we were experiencing a period of contagion and risk of worsening the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews took place using digital technology, remotely and synchronously, aiming to protect the health and safety of the participants. Contextualising the broader scenario in which this study was carried out, we inform that, according to data from the Municipal Education Department (SEMED), the municipality of Santarém has 167 schools, of which 123 have specialised educational assistance. The municipal school network has a teaching staff of 5,607 teachers, of whom only 210 work in SEA.

In 2007, the Program for the Implementation of Multifunctional Resource Rooms [Programa de Implantação de Salas de Recursos

Multifuncionais] was launched and, in 2008, with the institution of the National Policy for Special Education from an Inclusive Perspective (Política Nacional de Educação Especial na Perspectiva Inclusiva - PNEEPI), education systems were instructed to guarantee all students the access to regular education (in regular schools), with participation, learning, and continuity at the highest levels of education, provision of specialised care in a complementary manner, and all the necessary support to protect the learning rights of people with disabilities. However, we observed many challenges in Santarém's educational practice. In the municipality, only 34 schools have a multifunctional resource room, while 89 do not have these spaces for SEA professionals. In this context, specialised educational services in municipal schools have been structured gradually, still lacking infrastructure and expansion of services to handle the essential task of including and enabling students to develop fully. In many cases, students are attended by the SEA teacher in rooms used for other purposes, not intended exclusively for students who require specialised educational assistance.

When screening each school in Santarém (PA), we found no clinical care for students with disabilities. This assistance was being offered by the Brazilian Unified Health System (Sistema Único de Saúde - SUS). Schools count on a prospective teacher who assists students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and multiple disabilities. Therefore, to resolve the most urgent problems, schools in Santarém adopt the inclusive education model in which the SEA is offered in resource rooms and itinerant service modalities in the municipality. There are no special classes or specialised schools for deaf students within the school network.

The selection of participants in this study was based on an invitation made to professionals from the Santarém municipal schools on the following criteria: they should teach in Santarém (PA) municipal schools; work in SEA with deaf students; have at least one year of experience in this area; and be assigned to a school with a multifunctional room. The study participants are graduates with specialised courses to work in the SEA. Some are part of the municipality's permanent public staff; others were hired through a serial selection process, having a basic knowledge of Libras, to work in schools with multifunctional rooms. The anonymity of participants will be maintained, with fragments of narratives identified with the generic name "Interviewed" or "Interviewed". In the following sections, we will focus on two main axes of discussion built from the research results: the first focuses on the knowledge and practices of SEA teachers, and the second focuses on the challenges for inclusion within the scope of education school.

RESULTS

The results involve the construction of two main analytical categories: the first focused on discussing the knowledge that supports and mobilises the practices of SEA professionals, and the second analysed the main challenges indicated by participants regarding school inclusion and work in SEA.

There is a recurring statement that SEA professionals need to build specific knowledge about people with disabilities as a starting point for their work. But this knowledge is consolidated in everyday experience and should be expanded and specialised, depending on the situations experienced. There is also the idea that professionals must be in a continuing formative process and responsible for being constantly updated. Interviewee 4, in the following fragments, says:

> [...] For a professional to work today, they must have training in the area, need to know all the deficiencies, know all the categories, and, in the case of deaf people, they need to know sign language, know that one deaf person is different from another deaf person. When we talk about deaf culture, we talk about deaf diversity, even though we are a group. [...] We know that no two people are alike. [...] And understanding these specificities is important to be able to develop the work. [...] The teacher and professional working with specialised educational assistance must be in constant formation. They cannot stop studying, they cannot consider themselves graduated, they must always be learning, seeking or participating in continuing education courses, whether extension, postgraduate studies, or lectures. (Transcript of interview carried out on 08/12/2021)

If, on the one hand, the premise of constant training and the attentive attitude of the professional supports the possibilities of qualified intervention, on the other hand, it has reinforced a feeling of unpreparedness on the part of the teacher to act with inclusion. From the interviewee's speech, one can infer a concern not only with the general knowledge necessary to work in SEA but also with the fact that each deaf child is a unique universe. Beyond the dynamics of sign languages, there are the different processes of insertion of the subject into deaf culture, the ways of using Libras with greater or lesser fluency, family factors –which comprise greater or lesser bilingual experience, and also differentiated understanding of the role of school in the process of acquiring Libras and the Portuguese language.

The Special Education Policy from the Perspective of Inclusive Education [Educação Especial na Perspectiva da Educação Inclusiva] (BRASIL, 2008) and the Guidelines for Specialised Educational Assistance [Diretrizes para o Atendimento Educacional Especializado], in Technical Note n. 55 of 2013, highlight, among the many responsibilities of the SEA teacher, the following:

> Monitoring and evaluating the functionality and applicability of pedagogical and accessibility resources used by the student in the regular classroom and other school environments and activities; Planning and producing accessible teaching materials, considering the specific needs of students; coordinating regular education teachers, aiming to provide support resources necessary for student participation and learning; guiding teachers and families on the use of pedagogical and accessibility resources by students, seeking to expand the development of their skills, and promoting their autonomy and independence. (Brasil, 2013, p. 5)

This set of duties calls on the professional to get to know each student, assess whether available resources and materials are adequate, produce new resources and materials suitable for students served at SEA, support the work of teachers in the classroom, and guide families. Thus, we have the constitution of a multifunctional, purposeful, creative professional with a research profile. Faced with precarious conditions for carrying out work in the SEA and in contexts in which the school team does not accept inclusion as a collective policy and political attitude of the school, the exercise of this function is enormously complex. Often, this professional ends up being responsible for ensuring that the inclusion process is successful.

Concerning the required multifunctional and multi-referential profile, one can also ask whether the formative processes adequately support teachers who work in SEA. In the following excerpt from Interviewee 7's narrative, other knowledge linked to education and the deaf culture field is mentioned:

> *[...] The search for knowledge is essential to improve the performance of SEA teachers with deaf people. They must know everything that involves education, inclusion processes and, in more depth, situations related to deaf culture in terms of literacy, linguistic processes, methodology and educational guidelines that govern special education and as a structure, the education of the deaf people, and also participate in the deaf*

> *community and its movements, to be able to carry out the necessary referrals to deaf families and individuals.* (Transcript of interview carried out on 08/20/2021)

At least two types of knowledge stand out in the excerpts presented, which do not contradict each other but point to understandings about the individual work of each teacher and their different way. One is explicitly presented: "knowing all deficiencies" attended to in the SEA of each school to do a good job; the other, from a broader perspective, is to "know everything that involves the education" of subjects and their "inclusion process". In the excerpt from Interviewee 7, specific aspects of working with deaf students are highlighted, involving pedagogical, linguistic and cultural knowledge. It is also indicated that teachers' participation in deaf communities is part of the tools they have for their constant qualification.

Regarding the education of the nine participants in this study, we observed that pedagogy, literature and history academic areas prevail. However, what draws attention is the search for specialised training in special education and inclusion, such as Libras translator and interpreter, special education, psychopedagogy, neuropsychopedagogy, specialised education assistance, and school management. Some participants have more than one specialisation, which denotes a search to learn about fields of knowledge that, in a specific way, could contribute to the challenges of working in SEA.

The logic of continuing and permanent education, repeated many times by the interviewees, seems to indicate that, under their gaze, they will never be ready to work on inclusion processes. It is as if something is always slippery in this space of teaching, and we are adrift. The search for knowledge in psychology, psychopedagogy and neuroscience areas was also mentioned in the interviews, indicating that inclusion is discursively constituted not only from a clinical bias but also from a psychological perspective – part of the knowledge that operates therapeutically. Armed with psychological knowledge, professionals could "draw maps" to guide students' behaviour, integrating them more effectively, who also go through individualisation processes. Lane (1993) indicates significant similarities in how colonisers describe and characterise colonised peoples and how psychologists describe deaf people. In the author's criticism, the psychological descriptions produced within the scope of a "psychology of deafness" often refer more to the elements of a comparison – compared to parameters of normality in which the listener is modelled– than to emotional attributes that result from a long relationship and attention dedicated to the deaf subject. In this sense, the detailed description of the subject's

features and characteristics can be part of the colonisation process and the registration of deafness as a disability. From a colonial perspective, we can think, with Larrosa and Perez de Lara (1998, p. 8), that:

> [...] the otherness of the other remains as if reabsorbed into our identity and reinforces it even more; it makes it, if possible, more arrogant, more confident, and more satisfied with itself. From this point of view, mental illness confirms and reinforces our reason; the child, our maturity; the savage, our civilisation; the marginal, our integration; the foreigner, our country; and the disabled, our normalcy.

One of the fundamental challenges that emerge from the inclusive school proposal is, according to Fávero (2009), that of rethinking and giving new meaning to the very conception of an educator. This is because the educational process consists of creating and developing educational "contexts" that enable critical and creative interaction between unique subjects in an open and receptive attitude to the potential of this interaction. In this sense, some participants in this study maintain that an effective approach between teachers, school professionals, families, and deaf communities is necessary so that new forms of school work with deaf students can emerge.

At the same time that the need for training intended for inclusion is highlighted, in the case of deaf students, interviewees also give importance to linguistic knowledge and gradual fluency in the use of Libras, an aspect that favours and ensures communication with deaf subjects. However, the question remains about the types of knowledge that have been emphasised in the training processes offered by education networks and academic institutions. Speaking about the beginning of her work at the SEA, Interviewee 9 states:

> *The first feeling wasn't very good, because I really knew practically nothing about deafness, about those students, how to work, etc. So, it was very difficult for me, but we kept searching and we adapted, and learned, and here we are. For me, it was and continues to be learning Brazilian sign language. (...) I think that at least they must know the basics; depending on the child's level, they need to know the basics of sign language. Afterwards, they will improve, but they must know sign language.* (Transcript of interview on 08/25/2021)

Interviewee 8 also indicates that mastering the language requires knowledge beyond knowing how to use signs correctly.

[...] Now, to work, specifically, with deaf students, firstly, the teacher needs to know sign language within its grammar and know methodologies with which they can teach the Portuguese language to the deaf student, as I was guiding the regular teacher with this student who is still learning to read and write. I said, "Look, there's no point in working on syllables; the student doesn't learn by phoneme". They work on the word because they will memorise that word and they will learn it. They will relate the word to the object and anything else and learn the sign, too. So, the minimum requirement for working with a deaf student is that the teacher masters sign language. (Transcript of interview on 08/22/2021)

We agree with Baggio and Casa Nova (2012) that knowing a language means more than knowing how to use it for communication. The authors state that any language is produced in specific historical, social, and cultural contexts; therefore, to understand the language, it is necessary to contextualise it, that is, the concrete experiences of its use, the struggles surrounding its affirmation, and the achievements of user communities. Thus, studying Libras must be accompanied by the contextualisation of its main struggles and the problematisation of representations about deafness that mark the very thought about the language. Thus, the list of knowledge that supports teaching in SEA includes those that leverage the understanding of the cultures and visual experiences of deaf people and their demands in the present time, notably those that refer to school education. When analysing the specialised support services offered by professionals and schools, Mendes (2019) asks whether this "one-size-fits-all assistance" for all students is often considered only a locus of accommodation for differences at school.

As for the second category obtained from the results of the transcribed, systematised, and analysed interviews relating to the challenges indicated by the participants, we noticed an emphasis on the issue of collective participation and responsibility for school inclusion processes. Inclusion processes encourage all professionals' involvement, and it is desirable to create collaborative networks that engage rather than place accountability on the SEA professionals. We realise that there is often an outsourcing of responsibilities that should be of the schools, the teachers and the entire team that works with the deaf student. In this sense, we can think that the knowledge required from the SEA professional would also be essential for other teachers at the school.

Regarding this outsourcing, Interviewee 9 mentions: "We have to get support at work ourselves." One type of support mentioned in the interviews refers to the presence of an interpreter. Interviewee 8 says:

> *If it happened the way it is, with the deaf student having the right to an interpreter, having the deaf teacher to teach them in the resource room, having the teacher in the resource room to teach the Portuguese language, teaching the language as a subject, making that school truly bilingual, if that happened in practice, it would be wonderful. The inclusion process would be wonderful.* (Transcript of interview on 08/22/2021)

The possibility of work anchored in bilingualism is still timidly assumed in the education network studied. The guarantee of an interpreter, a deaf teacher or teachers who work in conjunction with the SEA teacher, for example, are propositions indicated by the interviewee that converge towards broader purposes of guaranteeing bilingual education for deaf people.

Interviewee 5 also highlights the relevance of the SEA professional in the following terms: "[...] *The SEA teacher is there to mediate this conversation, to convey what deaf people, teachers, and students want. The SEA teacher is a very important professional at school because many teachers still do not have this training or do not identify with it, or do not look for it* (Transcript of interview carried out on 08/14/2021).

In some responses, it is possible to glimpse the restlessness of professionals who challenge themselves with the prospect of doing something different in their work. This statement is exemplified by the following excerpt from Interviewee 3's narrative:

> [...] *I was always looking for strategies, resources. I researched, I talked to other teachers who had been working with deaf students for a long time and thus, I was replenishing myself with knowledge, being more confident to work with them. Because I'm a little curious, and I always try to research and update myself on the knowledge that involves the SAE, so, during my trajectory until today, the support from schools where I had the opportunity to contribute to special education, let's say, happened in parties.* (Transcript of interview on 08/09/2021)

To design inclusive education –as a whole, not in parts– we must count on a support network and a joint work project. Regarding the resources (material and human) available, Interviewees 7, 2, and 4 – respectively – said:

> *We have support from prospective teachers and caregivers who go to schools to support those students who do not yet have the autonomy to eat and move around. The support of the students' families is also very important for the work to develop.* (Interviewee 7; transcript of interview carried out on 08/20/2021)

> [...] *I'm at a school where the principal is very supportive, so it becomes more enjoyable when the school is inclusive, when the principal also supports the cause. This is fundamental for the development of our work.* (Interview 2; transcript of interview carried out on 08/06/2021)

> [...] *The main partners are the school, the management, the management team, the regular education teacher, and mainly the family, too. The family is fundamental in this process of teaching and learning for people with deafness so that they can understand what is being done, and what path is being followed, and can give us feedback from home as well.* (Interviewee 4; transcript of interview carried out on 08/12/2021)

In the concreteness of working in SAE, the challenges are significant, according to Interviewee 2:

> *The SEA teacher goes into the classroom twice a week to help the teacher. So, there is still this challenge, which is why I suggest bilingual schools, or bilingual classes, for us to work every day because it would be necessary for the student to have contact with this language every day. And when the SEA teacher doesn't go, the regular teacher is kind of lost, so this is still a tremendous difficulty that I perceive within the SEA.* (Transcript of interview on 08/06/2021)

According to Zilioto, Alboni, and Vieira (2018), inclusive policies in Brazil have emphasised guaranteeing equal rights and conditions of access to schooling for each and every student. The interviewees emphasise, however, that it is not just about the SEA teacher taking responsibility and being willing to get to know each student in their entire range of differences: tastes,

preferences, reaction to situations, nature of their learning difficulties, for example. From a pedagogical and cultural perspective, more collective practices should be built at school, attentive to the needs of each instance involved in the inclusion process.

The linguistic aspects involving Libras are seen by those interviewed as essential for working with deaf students. Remarkably, some interviewees expressed concern about deaf people's literacy, one of these students' learning rights. As narrated by Interviewees 2, 5, and 6, respectively:

> *[...] For the teachers to work in special education with deaf students, they must master sign language because, as I said just now, the difficulty is to remove this domestic language so you can teach the acquisition of Libras. Teachers must be fluent to work with the deaf student. [...] One of the challenges with deaf students is when we start teaching Libras because you start to work on emerging signs, which are domestic signs. For you to remove this domestic language, for you to apply this language and acquire them, I believe it is a huge challenge. Then, we must acquire a new language, the language of the deaf. As they bring this experience from home, this experience with the home language, which is the emerging language, it becomes much more difficult for you to take that away from them and replace it with Libras.* (Interviewee 2; transcript of interview carried out on 08/06/2021)

> *[...] Literacy for deaf students is one of the biggest challenges. As early as literacy, they need to expand their repertoire of signs, have enough knowledge so that, in the following grades, they can follow the regular education curriculum. Passing on the signs is very easy when the student understands and accepts Libras, but, in some cases, the student does not accept it, and this ends up being a very big challenge.* (Interviewee 5; transcript of interview carried out on 08/14/2021)

> *[...] I often say that the SEA teacher must be prepared for plans A and B and always have a surprise in the bag. Thus, among the activities in SEA's operations, those that always bring encouragement and pleasure, becoming attractive to this clientele, are recreational activities, including games, audiovisual, sensory, etc.* (Interviewee 6; transcript of interview carried out on 08/15/2021)

The excerpts point to the need for mastery and fluency in Libras on the part of professionals, combined with an understanding of the way deaf students learn. The understanding of deafness in a cultural dimension is outlined in the work of professionals in daily contact with students and their ways of learning, expressing themselves, and producing knowledge. As Soares (2004, p. 68) argues, "In a literacy view, the subject needs to start from what they already know to advance. It is up to the school to consider the way of speaking, these subjects' culture".

Interviewee 6 says SEA teachers must "*be prepared for plans A and B and always have a surprise in the bag*". Planning, therefore, cannot be closed, fixed for all students in the same way. There is little space for repetition of practices and a lot of room for research and creation, taking each student in their unique ways of using languages (Libras and written Portuguese), learning rhythms, experiences, and ways to socialise.

Activities planned with deaf students should prioritise images and employ playful resources, including games and audiovisual and sensory materials, as mentioned by one of the interviewees. This would expand the repertoire, foster the use of Libras and allow diverse experiences to be at play in favour of learning for deaf people. Some teachers plan more individualised strategies in the SEA classroom. Other teachers extend this view and point to possibilities for building collaborative networks to work with the inclusion of deaf students in the school context. Thus, as much as we know how complex it is to implement inclusive education offered in regular schools, we seek to create a space for special education to integrate the school's pedagogical proposal, understanding that it is also necessary to consider that many everyday practices still encourage students' exclusion.

The work of SEA professionals can contribute not only to the learning processes of people with disabilities. In the interviews, teachers reinforce the belief that the SEA is responsible for developing and organising pedagogical and accessibility resources, considering students' specific needs. In this sense, the SEA teacher cannot plan their activities separately, isolated from those offered in the classroom for hearing students. If strategies are variable, learning must be guaranteed to everyone, respecting specificities.

The interviews also make it possible to affirm that the classroom, the class teacher, the SEA professional, the Libras translators and interpreters, the school management and the family are seen as articulated instances that support teaching and make meaningful learning for deaf people. However, the research also highlights the need to plan practices that provide opportunities for students'

interactions in class. In this sense, working with projects seems to offer more space for sharing activities, which involves other teachers and requires more collective and integrated planning. In this sense, Interviewee 1 defends this type of work as something that favours deaf children's learning:

> *[...] One activity I highlight that is central to SEA's special education work is working with projects. I really like this movement of social projects, and I realise that practical activities favour the acquisition of knowledge by the target audience of special education.* (Transcript of interview on 08/04/2021)

As the interviewee argues, working on projects at school can broaden the perspectives for the development of the deaf subject based on their own deaf identity (Lacerda, 2006); however, it must involve interdisciplinary work integrating deaf and hearing students. The organisation of teaching and learning through projects cannot be seen as the only way of teaching (Ziliotto et al., 2018; Santos et al., 2019).

CONCLUSIONS

The Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education (BRASIL, 1996) points to fundamental aspects of this process of inclusion of deaf students in regular education: curricula, resources, and methodologies suitable for this audience. However, as we saw from practices reported by teachers, it is not just about what and how to teach students. It is about how the professional in this area considers and works with differences in the classroom, such as the deaf difference. The possibility of working with projects could emphasise bilingual education more. However, all the regulations that support the right to bilingual education are still little demonstrated by educational policies in society and at school. In this sense, Alencar (2016) states that, in inclusive classes where deaf and hearing students are present, communication occurs more in Portuguese, where the Libras language is used only by the sign language translator and interpreter (SLTI). Furthermore, communication with other subjects at the school ends up being superficial and insufficient for the demands in question.

The discussion about the knowledge and practices of SEA professionals is based on the assumption that they are in a continuous construction process and that they become operational in specific practices in conditions that are not linear, fixed or stable. The centrality of the continuing education process is highlighted, not only for SEA teachers but for the entire school community.

SEA professionals seek to expand the range of knowledge to work with deaf people, whether in specific courses taken by their commitment and investment or in more collective movements involving education networks.

The study indicates the need to problematise how schools are prepared to receive deaf students, the resources available, and the teams of professionals they have to provide quality educational services capable of safeguarding the learning rights of deaf students.

The narratives discussed in this text explain how the work of SEA professionals includes concerns, tensions, searches, desires, and, above all, the desire to promote, in the best possible way, the school learning of students, especially deaf children and young people enrolled in public schools in the municipality of Santarém, Pará. The narratives allow us to understand the ethical dimension of daily work at SEA and are marked by challenges, difficulties, and impasses, sometimes without the necessary structure and support.

When working with deaf people at SEA, the interviewees and the interviewee put the language and linguistic rights of deaf people at the forefront. In the narratives highlighted in this article, the SEA professional is called upon never to stop learning Libras to become fluent and contribute to the realisation of these students' rights. At the same time, there is an echo of voices that affirm the need for Libras to be a language used daily at school, not just by deaf people and specialised sectors.

The data generated in this study allowed us to think that literacy of deaf students involves more than the repetition of literacy practices of reading and writing, which are seen as separate processes. The teaching and learning process involves Libras and written Portuguese as the second language for deaf students. This process will require planning pedagogical strategies that trigger learning aimed at the student's communication with teachers and classmates.

Based on a broad understanding and supported by a cultural vision of deafness, some interviewees assume the political perspective of bilingualism, understanding that teachers should have support to know, identify, and work with cultural, linguistic and epistemological aspects of deaf people. The school is understood, in this case, as an intercultural space where the foundations for bilingual education must be built. However, it is worth highlighting that these bases still seem very far from being established in most situations narrated.

The legislation establishes that the State must provide quality school education and, under an inclusive bias, without discrimination, based on equal

opportunities. Both the Special Education Policy from the Perspective of Inclusive Education [Política da Educação Especial na Perspectiva da Educação Inclusiva[(BRASIL, 2008) and the Guidelines for Specialised Educational Assistance [Diretrizes para o Atendimento Educacional Especializado] (technical note n. 55 of 2013) indicate knowledge and actions to guide SEA professionals. However, these suggestions presuppose the existence of schools equipped with pedagogical and accessibility resources, with conditions to meet the specific needs of each student. They also presuppose articulations between the SEA, regular education teachers, and students' families to strengthen deaf students' learning.

AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

GSC conducted empirical research, interviewing and transcribing the research data presented. GSC, ITB, and RRK worked collaboratively and jointly on the first drafts, defining the theoretical-methodological outline, data selection and analysis, discussing the results and writing the article. ITB proofread and presented the final version of the work.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data supporting the results of this study will be made available by the corresponding author, GSC, upon reasonable request.

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