

**TEACHING PERCEPTION ABOUT SERVICE TO AUTISTIC STUDENTS IN
SCHOOLS OF FORMOSA-GO AND PLANALTINA-DF**

***PERCEPÇÃO DOCENTE SOBRE O ATENDIMENTO AO ESTUDANTE AUTISTA EM
ESCOLAS DE FORMOSA-GO E PLANALTINA-DF***

***PERCEPCIÓN DEL PROFESOR EN SERVICIO AL ESTUDIANTE AUTISTA EN
ESCUELAS DE FORMOSA-GO Y PLANALTINA-DF***

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ABSTRACT: This paper presents the result of a study about the teaching perception about the care offered to autistic students in public schools in Formosa-GO and Planaltina-DF. The study was carried out in two parts: 1) observations in the classroom of two regular public schools (one in each city); 2) applying a questionnaire to teachers from a regular school and a special education school (one in each city). From the questionnaire answers and observations, it was possible to detect that teachers tend to focus on the limitations of autistic students and not on their potential, which we infer to be detrimental to the teaching and learning process.

KEYWORDS: Autistic students. Teachers. Education.

RESUMO: *Este trabalho apresenta estudo a respeito da percepção docente sobre atendimento oferecido a estudantes autistas em escolas públicas de Formosa-GO e de Planaltina-DF. O estudo foi feito em duas partes: 1) observações em sala de aula de duas escolas públicas regulares (uma em cada cidade); 2) aplicação de questionário a docentes de uma escola de ensino regular e uma escola de educação especial (uma em cada cidade). A partir das observações e respostas aos questionários, foi possível detectar que os professores tendem a focar nas limitações dos estudantes autistas e não em suas potencialidades, o que inferimos ser prejudicial para o processo de ensino e aprendizagem.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Estudantes autistas. Docentes. Educação.*

RESUMEN: *Este trabajo presenta un estudio sobre la percepción docente sobre el servicio ofrecido a estudiantes autistas en escuelas públicas de Formosa-GO y Planaltina-DF. El estudio se realizó en dos partes: 1) observaciones en el aula de dos escuelas públicas regulares (una en cada ciudad); 2) aplicación de un cuestionario a maestros de una escuela regular y*

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una escuela de educación especial (una en cada ciudad). A partir de las observaciones y respuestas de los cuestionarios, fue posible detectar que los maestros tienden a centrarse en las limitaciones de los estudiantes autistas y no en su potencial, que inferimos que va en detrimento del proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Estudiantes autistas. Profesor. Educación.*

Introduction

The Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education of 1996 (LDB) establishes education as the right of all, and as for students with disabilities, they are entitled to preferential care in the regular school system, with specialized support when necessary, and when not possible integration in common classes the attendance must occur in special classes. In addition, LDB establishes that the education system must ensure the adequacy of curricula, methods and resources offered by educational institutions to the needs of students with disabilities (BRASIL, 1996). In turn, the current National Common Curricular Base (BNCC), establishes that “the systems and networks of education and school institutions must be planned with a clear focus on equity, which presupposes that the needs of students are different”⁴ (BRASIL, 2017, p. 15), that is, seeking to somehow include groups that have been historically marginalized, including people with disabilities, thus demonstrating inclusion as a constitutive principle.

Among people with disabilities are students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). In addition to LDB and BNCC, the education of autistic students is also supported by Law no. 12,764/2012, which institutes the National Policy for the Protection of the Rights of People with Autism Spectrum Disorder and establishes the need for autistic students to have specialized support in the classroom, when necessary. According to Law no. 12,764/2012 is considered an autistic person who has a syndrome characterized by:

I - persistent and clinically significant deficiency in social communication and interaction, manifested by marked deficiency in verbal and non-verbal communication used for social interaction; absence of social reciprocity; failure to develop and maintain relationships appropriate to their level of development;

II - restrictive and repetitive patterns of behaviors, interests and activities, manifested by stereotyped motor or verbal behaviors or by unusual sensory

⁴ “os sistemas e redes de ensino e as instituições escolares devem se planejar com um claro foco na equidade, que pressupõe reconhecer que as necessidades dos estudantes são diferentes”

behaviors; excessive adherence to ritualized behavior patterns and routines; restricted and fixed interests (BRASIL, 2012).⁵

This description, also present in the Guidelines for Attention to the Rehabilitation of People with Autism Spectrum Disorder (2014), follows the Manual of Diagnosis and Statistics of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), a standard reference used by health professionals to diagnose mental conditions and behavioral. According to Pinho (2015) from DSM-5, autism falls into the diagnostic category of neurodevelopmental disorders, as a subcategory of Autistic Spectrum Disorders.

To improve the quality of life of autistic people, Teixeira (2015) points out that joint interventions involve several professionals, such as psychopedagogue, behavioral therapist, speech therapist, etc.

As part of the daily lives of countless children, the teacher is also a relevant professional for the autistic child. The school is an important element for the development of the autistic child, in the cognitive, social, affective, psychomotor aspects, among others. For this reason, it is important to know how the relationship between autistic students and teachers occurs, and how teachers understand the care offered to autistic students in schools.

Considering the specificities of autistic students and the contexts in which they are inserted, this work presents the result of an exploratory study on the care offered to autistic students in public schools in Formosa - Goiás and Planaltina - Distrito Federal. The research aimed to verify differences between the service offered to autistic students from both cities and the perception of teachers on the topic.

Studies on the insertion of autistic students in schools

In our research, we started from the point of view of the cultural-historical psychology of Lev Vygotsky (1994; 1998) to understand the teaching and learning processes. Historical-cultural psychology presupposes an interactionist conception of the cognitive development of human beings, privileging symbolic mediation and interaction with the other (STOLTZ, 2012). According to Stoltz (2012) Vygotsky's emphasis on symbolic mediation is directly related to the role of history and culture in the psychological constitution of human beings.

⁵ I - deficiência persistente e clinicamente significativa da comunicação e da interação sociais, manifestada por deficiência marcada de comunicação verbal e não verbal usada para interação social; ausência de reciprocidade social; falência em desenvolver e manter relações apropriadas ao seu nível de desenvolvimento; II - padrões restritivos e repetitivos de comportamentos, interesses e atividades, manifestados por comportamentos motores ou verbais estereotipados ou por comportamentos sensoriais incomuns; excessiva aderência a rotinas e padrões de comportamento ritualizados; interesses restritos e fixos (BRASIL, 2012).

For Vygotsky, the superior psychological processes that distinguish human beings from animals, such as consciousness and the ability to reason, are the result of the subject's history of interactions with society and culture since its birth (VYGOTSKY, 1994). That is why Vygotsky paid attention to formal education, since at school the child has the opportunity to learn scientific concepts from his everyday concepts (VYGOTSKY, 1998). It is at school, moreover, that the teacher can act in the child's proximal development zone, that is, serving as a mediator between the child's real knowledge and his potential knowledge.

The emphasis on symbolic mediation must also be present in special education. According to Costa (2006), the zone of proximal development allows to interact with the special education student based on their potential, not their "limitation", with emphasis on the role of language in the interaction. The author points out that special education focused on the limitations of students tends to discrimination and prejudice, impoverishing the universe of students. The education of disabled students must have the same objective as regular education. What needs to be changed are the means to achieve these goals, according to the specificities of each student (COSTA, 2006).

Regarding the appropriate means, Trevizan and Pessoa (2018), in research with an autistic student, emphasize that mediations in family and school contexts must both meet the needs of the subject with ASD as well as be prospective, that is, favor their cognitive development. According to the authors, the relationship of the autistic student with the environment is more direct than mediated by symbols, which requires attention to the material means used. For example, in the case study with a child presented by the authors, the relations between words and abstract concepts needed to be made explicit (often with material objects) for the child's understanding.

Unfortunately, many teachers may not be prepared for the presence of an autistic student in the classroom. Trevizan and Pessoa (2018) warn that certain behaviors of autistic children, such as repeating actions, can be interpreted as simple mechanistic acts by teachers, leading them to be isolated from the rest of the class.

Regarding teachers' understanding of autism, Pimentel and Fernandes (2014) conducted research with teachers from regular and special schools who answered questions based on the aspects of communication, socialization and behavior presented by autistic children. The responses indicate that teachers believed they had to contribute to students' communication and interpersonal relationships. They found that schools provided sufficient assistance, but there were deficits both in relation to the help of other professionals as well as relevant technologies for teaching (PIMENTEL; FERNANDES, 2014). Among the difficulties, the main responses

pointed to the insufficiency in promoting autonomy and interpersonal relationships. The study found that there is a need for a school with an adequate structure, professionals with an appropriate qualification, assistance from a multidisciplinary team, and also guidance and follow-up for inclusion to be effective.

In this line of thought about schooling, Lima and Laplane (2016) from the analysis of micro data from the Basic Education Census between the years 2009 and 2012, in the municipality of Atibaia/SP, investigated schooling situations of autistic students, examining the topics on access and permanence and also analyzed the acquisition of available therapeutic support. The data showed that there was a high school dropout rate for these students, especially in the final grades of elementary school, and those who were properly enrolled did not attend the classes in which they were enrolled. This is possibly due to the fact that the state network did not provide specialized educational support and the parents' fear of changing the teaching modality.

Schmidt *et al.*, (2016) analyzed the school inclusion of students diagnosed with ASD, by systematizing six studies that took place between the years 2013 and 2015, with the participation of 38 teachers. The results show that, in order to be successful in school inclusion, it is essential that teachers have a positive conception regarding the relationship with the autistic student, taking into account the individual needs and the evaluation of the efficient mechanisms for learning. As for pedagogical practice, the strategies used by teachers are those that use visual resources and the child's interest for lesson planning (SCHMIDT *et al.*, 2016). Another theme was literacy of the student with ASD, as the data indicates that traditional methods are inefficient and there is a difficulty for the teacher to evaluate learning. Although the issue of socialization is one of the most important in the inclusive school context, it is rarely highlighted by teachers and needs to be discussed because “the interaction of students with autism with other colleagues is limited or non-existent, causing many to manifest maladaptive behaviors as an attempt to interaction”⁶ (SCHMIDT *et al.*, 2016, p. 230-231).

In this same perspective Martins and Monteiro (2017) observed the social interactions that occur in the school environment with the child diagnosed with ASD and the teacher, with other colleagues and with the researcher, seeking to understand the child's schooling process. The researchers observed an elementary school classroom, in a special school, consisting of four students, three boys and one girl, diagnosed with ASD. They observed that the teacher had difficulties to interpret the actions of the child with ASD when they were different from the

⁶ “a interação de educandos com autismo com outros colegas é limitada ou inexistente, fazendo que muitos manifestem comportamentos desadaptativos como uma tentativa de interação”

normative standard. In view of these situations, the teacher sought to inhibit unwanted behavior and return to normalcy. Thus, Martins and Monteiro (2017) emphasize that there is a centrality in the difficulties that are characteristic of the disorder and not in the possibilities of interaction, and the educational focus is on methods that tend to value the execution of tasks and inhibition of unwanted behaviors.

The presence of a professional to assist the autistic student during classes can assist in their interactions in the school environment. Vargas and Rodrigues (2018) emphasize that the school mediator is able to recognize the multiple possibilities for the inclusion and individuality of the other, fleeing the view of abnormality.

In terms of schooling, Rodrigues and Angelucci (2018) carried out a survey on academic production about the schooling of individuals diagnosed with ASD in regular classes in Brazil. In many of the studies analyzed, teachers' perceptions of ASD are stereotyped. The research themes revolve around themes such as pedagogical practice and the mediation of teachers with autistic students. The productions highlight specific points, generating a variety of interpretations with an emphasis on what should be part of the school and how the experience should be experienced in the course of educational development; they also point out that the educational focus is beyond the dialogues that involve learning and socialization. Thus, Rodrigues and Angelluci (2018) warn that the education of children diagnosed with ASD has been closer to integration than inclusion, as it is related to a concept of rehabilitation, consequently there is an assumption that the teacher needs a biomedical understanding to carry out their educational activities.

Research methodology

This is a qualitative research, conducted in schools in Formosa - Goiás and in Planaltina - Distrito Federal. The two cities are separated by a distance of about 40 km. Observations were made in two public education institutions in the months of August and September 2019. For this, we selected classes from Elementary School I. The observations occurred in a 2nd year class in the city of Formosa-GO; and a 3rd year class in the city of Planaltina-DF. Regular classes were selected for investigation by the presence of an autistic student among the students. Observation time: 4 hours on three separate days in each class, totaling 12 hours of observation per class.

Observations included notes from an observation script. The observation script highlighted the following points for notes:

- Description of the activities proposed by the teacher;
- Pedagogical resources used during class;
- Interactions between students and autistic student;
- Interactions between teacher and autistic student.

In addition to the observations, the exploratory study also included the application of a questionnaire in two schools: a special education school in Planaltina-DF and a regular elementary school in Formosa-GO. The questionnaire was an adaptation of the one used by Pimentel and Fernandes (2014), and its objective was to understand the perception of teachers about the presence of the autistic student in the classroom and the inclusion process. It counted on questions of identification of the teacher's profile (sex, age, color/race, length of experience as a teacher, education, having special education background), preserving anonymity, and objective questions about the contributions and difficulties in the teacher relationship and autistic student; and a discursive question about what elements the school offers for the student's development.

13 teachers answered the questionnaire: 6 from the special school and 7 from the regular school; 11 women and 2 men (one man in each institution). The respondents' average age was over 40 years. According to the IBGE criteria, the color/race was considered: 1 black, 2 white, 9 brown and one did not answer. Considering the length of experience as a teacher, only 3 had less than 5 years; 4 were between 5 and 10 years, and 6 over 11 years. As for education, a distinction between the regular school and the special school must be considered: in the regular school 3 teachers have postgraduate degrees and of these 2 have specialization in special education. At the special school, the 6 teachers have postgraduate degrees, 5 of which have specialization in special education.

Results and discussions

The observations

Observations in regular schools allowed comparisons. The results cannot be taken as a representative sample of the care offered in public elementary education in both cities, since the observations were limited to one class in one school in each city. However, they may raise questions for future research.

The first comparison to be made is in relation to the structure offered by schools. The resource room for students at the school in Formosa-GO is significantly smaller than the school in Planaltina-DF. The resource room is used to assist students in the after hours of classes.

During classroom observations in the 2nd year class (Formosa-GO), the autistic student was assisted by an intern in the Pedagogy course, with no specific formation to work with this audience. There were no activities proposed exclusively for the student during the observations.

On the other hand, in the 3rd year class (Planaltina-DF), the autistic student present was assisted mainly by the class teacher. She helped the student when he was unable to accompany the class in an activity, promoting the zone of proximal development. The student also asked for help when possible. The teacher used materials adapted for games. In a later conversation, the teacher revealed that she has a postgraduate degree in special education. Since she had known the student since the previous year, she knew how to help him during classes. The class did not have an auxiliary teacher, but a monitor who, once a week, accompanied the classes. The monitor had no specific formation (formed in administration, he worked because he passed a public tender).

Here we highlight a better service by the school of Planaltina-DF. The teacher mediated with the student using adapted materials, which Costa (2006) and Trevizan and Pessoa (2018) defend as important in the teaching and learning process of the autistic. However, we do not know whether the results would be the same in a class without a teacher specializing in special education. On the other hand, in both schools the auxiliary professional had no formation to intervene with the autistic student. In the case of Planaltina-DF more serious, since the monitor did not even have a study in the area of education.

On one of the observation days in the 2nd year class (Formosa-GO), the class held the *Prova Brasil*. In applying the test, the conducting teacher guided the reading of the questions for the students, while they answered. Meanwhile, the autistic student sat in the back, waiting. In other classes, the teacher used the blackboard and the book as teaching resources. There was no activity offered by the conducting teacher to the autistic student. This was common on other observation days: the Pedagogy intern was the person who most interacted with the student. Often the autistic student remained in the room without any activity to be done, which caused him to be agitated, getting up from his desk to talk to his colleagues.

In the 3rd year class (Planaltina-DF) it was possible to verify that the planning of the activities of the classes considered the role of the autistic student. For example, one of the activities on everyday words, the teacher used photographs of classmates for better association. The teacher showed concern at other times, such as activities to recognize colors, activities with

numbers and motor activities in general. During the observations, the interactions between the autistic student and the other students in the class were positive. The student participated in the group activities proposed by the teacher and in moments of play he was asked to participate by his colleagues.

Once again, the plausible explanation for the difference in the service offered to autistic students and the way of teaching in different classes can be attributed to the formation of the conducting teacher. We cannot forget, however, the working conditions of the teacher who works in the Formosa-GO class, a larger class. The presence of an auxiliary teacher could solve part of the demand, but what was observed is that only the intern, without yet having adequate formation, was available. This harms mediation, which often needs to be done by a qualified professional, according to Vargas and Rodrigues (2018). The interaction between autistic students and classmates was somewhat different. In the case of Planaltina-DF it was more beneficial, while in Formosa-GO, because they did not know what to do in the classroom, the autistic student was often isolated from others.

The questionnaire

In order to better visualize the data obtained in the questionnaire, we organized them in tables, according to each question. The tables show in the left column the options available for the answer, and in the right column the answers chosen, separated according to the school of the respondent teacher (regular - ER - or special - EE). Teachers could check more than one option for questions. Recalling that 13 teachers answered the questionnaire: 7 from the regular school and 6 from the special school.

Question 1 “In which areas do you believe that stimulates and contributes to improving the development of your autistic student”, summarized in Table 1, was almost unanimous among teachers from both institutions, pointing out the areas of “communication”, “learning”, “behavior” and “autonomy”. In the options “interpersonal relationships” and “psychomotor development”, was indicated by less than half of the regular school teachers; on the other hand, the “reasoning” option had low adherence by teachers from both schools.

Table 1 - Areas that the teacher believes stimulates and contributes to improving the development of his autistic student

Areas	ER	EE
Communication	5	6
Learning	5	6
Interpersonal relationships	3	6
Behavior	5	4
Psychomotor development	2	6
Reasoning	3	2
Autonomy	5	6

Source: Devised by the authors.

Analyzing the options indicated by the teachers, it is possible to consider that “communication”, “learning”, “behavior” and “autonomy” are areas that teachers believe (or at least hope) to contribute not only in relation to autistic students, but to everyone the others. So, the number of adhesions to these options was expected and is in line with the research by Pimentel and Fernandes (2014). On the other hand, even though the “psychomotor development” area has been highlighted more by teachers of special education (which was expected because they have specific formation and because of the special education function itself), it caused surprise that less than half of respondents in regular school have checked the option “interpersonal relationships”, contrary to part of the result of Pimentel and Fernandes (2014). Considering the concept of zone of proximal development by Vygotsky (1998), which presupposes interpersonal relationships to exist, this may mean a lack of knowledge on the part of teachers about the importance of interpersonal relationships for the development of autistic students, especially those involving the teacher.

Question 2 “In which areas do you find more difficulty with your autistic student”, summarized in table 2, presented the same options as question 1. The alternatives chosen by the teachers were different, according to the school. While in the regular school the most marked options were “interpersonal relationships”, “learning” and “behavior”, in the special school they were “communication”, “interpersonal relationships”, “learning” and “autonomy”.

Table 2 - Areas in which the teacher finds it more difficult with his autistic student

Areas	ER	EE
Communication	2	6
Learning	3	4
Interpersonal relationships	4	5
Behavior	3	3
Psychomotor development	1	3
Reasoning	2	3
Autonomy	2	4

Source: Devised by the authors.

Interpreting these data, it is possible to relate them to the answers to the first question. If, on the one hand, the teachers of the regular school did not mention that they contribute to “interpersonal relationships”, on the other hand it was the area most mentioned by them with regard to difficulties encountered, as well as in the research by Pimentel and Fernandes (2014). Mediation is important in the classroom, for the teaching of scientific concepts (STOLTZ, 2012), and when teachers affirm that autistic students have difficulties in interpersonal relationships at the same time that they do not intervene in these relationships, they may be blaming the condition of the autistic student, when what the school should do is adapt to their conditions, as argued by Trevizan and Pessoa (2018). Another point that deserves reflection is the “behavior” area. What behavior do teachers say they have difficulty with? Unfortunately, the data do not allow us to say, but it is possible that the regular school teachers start from a normative view of what would be the proper behavior of a student in the classroom.

Question 3 “Under what circumstances does your autistic student communicate”, summarized in Table 3, showed significant differences in responses. While in the regular school the most marked options were “to ask for information, objects, comment on facts” and “to interact with the teacher and classmates”, in the special school it was “does not focus on the subject”.

Table 3 - The circumstances under which the autistic student communicates

Areas	ER	EE
To ask for information, objects, comment on facts	5	2
To interact with the teacher and classmates	5	1
Does not focus on the subject	4	4
To protest	2	1
Never try to communicate	0	0

Source: Devised by the authors

In the special school where the research was carried out, most students with ASD do not have sufficient conditions to go to the regular school, which explains the results for this issue with regard to the teachers of that institution. On the other hand, regular school teachers pointed out that autistic students communicate “to ask for information, objects, comment on facts” and “to interact with the teacher and classmates”, which conflicts with their answers to the question 1, who barely mentioned “interpersonal relationships” between the areas that they believe to contribute to the development of the autistic student. Vygotsky (1998) argues that for cognitive development, interactions with language are fundamental, however, even though they recognize that students seek to interact with teachers, they do not consider their contribution in the area of interpersonal relationships.

Question 4 “Regarding the behaviors and interests, which you observe most frequently in your autistic student”, summarized in Table 4, presented similar results when we compared the two groups of teachers. The options most chosen by the regular school teachers were “follow orders”, “Resists participating in the proposed activities and/or changes in routine” and “Is aloof and/or indifferent”. At the special school, the options “Presented stereotyped behaviors (persistent repetition of acts and/or speech)”, “follow orders” and “Resists participating in the proposed activities and/or changes in routine” were the most chosen. Caution is needed when interpreting the responses of regular school teachers, as stated by Schmidt *et al.*, (2016) the lack of interaction between the autistic student and classmates or teachers can make this student use maladaptive behaviors as a way of interaction. It may be that teachers have difficulties in interpreting the behavior of the autistic student, as shown by the study by Martins and Monteiro (2017).

Table 4 - Autistic student behaviors most frequently observed by teachers

Areas	ER	EE
Relates to classmates	2	0
Follow orders	5	4
Resists participating in proposed activities and/or routine changes	5	4
Show fears	0	1
Uses people as tools	1	3
Withstands physical contact	3	3
Maintains eye contact with teachers and colleagues	2	1
Improperly attaches to objects and/or rotates objects	3	3
Is aloof and/or indifferent	5	4

Presented stereotyped behaviors (persistent repetition of acts and/or speech)	3	5
Has self and/or hetero aggression (hits others or himself)	1	3

Source: Devised by the authors

In question 5 of the questionnaire, “What is offered as materials, stimulating environment, guidance, for the development of the autistic people to occur?”, Most respondents from the regular school stated that the student has a support teacher, pedagogical games, reading, mobile alphabet, modeling clay, computer activities, specific activities for their development. For example:

Referral to psychologist and speech therapist. Support intern to assist with tasks. Reduced number of students in the classroom. Some teaching materials to work with the child (golden material, memory game, reading cards, word formation, mobile alphabet, etc.) (teacher B).⁷

Analyzing the responses to the regular school, even though the teachers point to the existence of a support teacher, a reduced number of students in the classroom and different materials in class, something similar to the study by Pimentel and Fernandes (2014), this only occurs in the alternative shift activities of students, contrary to what was observed in the regular schools of Planaltina-DF and especially Formosa-GO: autistic students often without a properly qualified mediator; and classes conducted using only the textbook and the blackboard as a resource. As Lima and Laplane (2016) warn, the appropriate educational environment is necessary to prevent school dropout for autistic students.

In the special school, the answers, in general, were concrete materials, structured routine, walks through the school and the commerce, games and toys, referrals for riding therapy, audiovisual materials. Some teachers pointed out that the circumstances will depend on what the student needs.

According to informal reports by teachers at this special school, the objective of this institution is to prepare students for regular school, the same was observed by Rodrigues and Angelluci (2018), who realized that the education of students with ASD is close to the concept of integration, in which it is the students who must prepare for school. The problem occurs, according to the study by Martins and Monteiro (2017), when attention is focused on the child's disability and not on their potential.

⁷ *Encaminhamento para psicóloga e fono. Estagiária de apoio para auxiliar nas tarefas. Número reduzido de alunos na sala de aula. Alguns materiais didáticos para trabalhar com a criança (material dourado, jogo de memória, fichas de leitura, formação de palavras, alfabeto móvel, etc.) (docente B).*

Summarizing the responses to the questionnaires, it is possible to state that regular school teachers tend to give little emphasis to interpersonal relationships with autistic students, focusing more on “disability” than on their potential. Both groups of teachers showed difficulties in this area, and we can infer that many times the teachers of the regular school tend to consider the attempts of interaction of the autistic students as “bad behavior”, since among the behaviors that they most highlighted to observe is “he is aloof or indifferent”. And although they highlight the existence of support material and professionals specialized in assisting the autistic student, this does not match the daily life of regular classes, as we have seen in the observations.

Final considerations

This article seeks to contribute to the understanding of the relationships between autistic students and educational contexts. From the observations in the classroom and the responses to the questionnaires, questions and inferences about the teaching and learning conditions of autistic students emerged.

Since formal education is considered fundamental for the development of the autistic person, supported by its own legislation (for example, Law no. 12,764/2012), it was worrying to note that the realization of this right often does not occur due to the material conditions of schools or interpersonal relationships between teachers and students. From the responses to the questionnaires and observations, it was possible to detect that teachers in regular schools tend to focus on the limitations of autistic students and not on their potential, which we infer to be detrimental to the teaching and learning process.

As this is an exploratory study, the data analyzed here cannot be used to generalize the picture in both cities. But it is possible to weave elements for future research. For example, a significant sample of regular schools and classes in which autistic students are present for observation. Also, larger sample for the application of the questionnaire. Another relevant study would be the survey of teachers who have formation in special education.

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