

## **INCLUSION-ORIENTED PRACTICES: SPEECH THERAPY IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

### ***PRÁTICAS VOLTADAS À INCLUSÃO: A FONOAUDIOLOGIA NA EDUCAÇÃO SUPERIOR***

### ***PRÁCTICAS DE INCLUSIÓN: LOGOPEDIA EN EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR***

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**ABSTRACT:** Higher Education students are included in the target public of Special Education, with Functional Disorders and with distinct socio-educational trajectories. The objective of this research is to verify the presence and performance of the speech therapist in the Centers of Accessibility and Pedagogical Support of Universities through a quantitative and qualitative study conducted with 15 institutions. The results reveal that the speech therapist's best-known performance is related to the communication area, to the detriment of his / her collaboration in the educational process. The emergent need for reflection on inclusive interdisciplinary actions in Higher Education and changes in the formation and work of the professionals involved.

**KEYWORDS:** Higher education. Speech, language and hearing Sciences. Mainstreaming education.

**RESUMO:** Atualmente, estão inseridos nas instituições de Educação Superior estudantes público-alvo da Educação Especial, com Transtornos Funcionais e com trajetórias socioeducacionais distintas. O objetivo desta pesquisa é verificar a presença e atuação do fonoaudiólogo nos Núcleos de Acessibilidade e Apoio Pedagógico das Universidades federais através de um estudo quanti-qualitativo realizado com 15 instituições. Os resultados revelam que a atuação mais conhecida do fonoaudiólogo tange à área da comunicação, em detrimento da colaboração deste no processo educativo. Evidencia-se a necessidade emergencial de reflexão sobre ações interdisciplinares inclusivas na Educação Superior e modificações na formação e trabalho dos Núcleos, do Apoio Pedagógico e dos profissionais envolvidos.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Educação superior. Fonoaudiologia. Inclusão.

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**RESUMEN:** Actualmente, los estudiantes de educación superior están incluidos en el público objetivo de Educación Especial, con trastornos funcionales y con distintas trayectorias socioeducativas. El objetivo de esta investigación es verificar la presencia y el desempeño del logopeda en los Centros de Accesibilidad y Apoyo Pedagógico de las Universidades a través de un estudio cuantitativo y cualitativo realizado con 15 instituciones. Los resultados revelan que el desempeño más conocido del terapeuta del habla está relacionado con el área de comunicación, en detrimento de su colaboración en el proceso educativo. Se evidencia la urgente necesidad de reflexión sobre acciones interdisciplinarias inclusivas en la Educación Superior y cambios en la formación y trabajo de los Centros, apoyo pedagógico y los profesionales involucrados.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Educación superior. Terapia del habla. Inclusión.

## Introduction

The first speech therapy practices in Brazil emerged at the beginning of the 20th century, motivated by political issues and related to the historical and social context of the time. Nationalist opinions considered it necessary to standardize the language, which, according to them, was contaminated by dialectal variations resulting from national and international migratory processes. Thus, in the service of a normalizing education and in search of “speech correction” and language homogenization, the first professionals to exercise clinical speech therapy practices appear (BERBERIAN, 2007).

After a long period of clinical actions with this social function, Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology approaches Education again, but in a resignified way, to meet the educational demands related to the communication problems manifested in this context, having in this environment a vast performance and contribution, as demonstrated Resolution No. 309/2005, of the Federal Council of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology (CFFA, 2005):

[...]the speech therapist must develop actions in partnership with educators that contribute to the promotion, improvement and prevention of alterations in aspects related to hearing, language (oral and written), oral motor skills and voice and that favor and optimize the teaching and learning process (our translation).

For this social function, a specialty of Speech Therapy arises, the Educational Speech Therapy (Resolution CFFa n. 387/2010), which seeks to move away from clinical models of care and incorporates the character of health promotion in order to qualify the teaching and learning processes through its technical and specific knowledge. In this way, it aims to favor the planning and implementation of pedagogical physical environments suitable for

communication, considering the immanent singularity and human heterogeneity in the forms of communication, which corroborates directly with the guarantee of education for all as a human right.

However, according to research by Celeste et al. (2017), few are the self-declared educational speech pathologists for the Brazilian Society of Speech-Language Pathology (henceforth, SBFa). The authors' research revealed that of the 39,731 speech-language pathologists registered with the SBFa in 2015, only 312 responded to the survey in question. Of these, just over 48% have been working in education for less than six years, mainly in the public education system.

With more updated data, the website of the Federal Council of Speech-Language Pathology points out that there are 147,764 regularized professionals in 2017. Focusing on the question of training, only 62 self-declared themselves as specialists in Educational Speech Pathology (CFFA, 2019). These findings reveal the importance of further studies aimed at mapping the performance of professionals in this area to invest in the continuing education of professionals in this area, in order to reduce the incidence of misconceptions. It is necessary to think about the mechanisms of pathologization and medicalization of socioeducational and/or cultural issues within educational institutions and, for that, speech therapists need to be trained (DONIDA, 2018; DONIDA; SANTANA, 2019).

The actions of the speech therapist in the educational field range from Basic Education to Higher Education, being present in Youth and Adult Education and Special Education, that is, it goes through all levels and types of education. With their specific training on human language and communication, the speech therapist can offer subsidies for the educator's work and for the pedagogical team, helping in the teaching and learning processes and observing the difficulties found in the educational environment in a collaborative way (GIROTO, 1999).

While the actions in Basic Education are already legitimized (CAVALHEIRO, 2001; LUZARDO; NEMR, 2006), the same cannot be said about the actions in Higher Education, considering the low knowledge about the action of Speech Therapy in this context (ZORZI, 2015; DONIDA, 2019).

The first point to be highlighted as relevant to the "doing speech therapy" in Higher Education is the understanding of the current educational scenario. Brazil still faces problems related to the quality of Basic Education, having significant implications for academics entering Universities (DONIDA, 2019; IOSIF, 2007). According to the INAF (2018), only 34% of students in Higher Education can be classified at the full functional literacy level. Still, there are 4% of functional illiterates, that is, those students who, being at a rudimentary

level of literacy, have little command of reading, writing, and mathematics in everyday practices. This fact directly demands speech therapy actions because it is a linguistic problem that directly interferes in the students' academic performance.

Regarding the practices of Speech Therapy in Higher Education, the work of Santana and Soltosky (2014) mentions that the "phonoaudiological practice" is still in an embryonic phase. Nevertheless, the authors highlight several possibilities of actions that can be taken, such as:

- i) i) Participation of the Speech Therapist in the spaces directed to the continued formation, sensitizing and capacitating teachers in discussions that involve: identification and understanding of the demands of students with difficulties; understanding of the political and legal aspects about the teaching and learning of target-public people of the Special Education (SES); discussion of strategies that contribute to the improvement in the teaching and learning process and evaluation, directed to all the students; discussion about the teaching practice in what refers to the pedagogical accessibility; actions of vocal health promotion for the teachers;
- ii) ii) Participation in the Accessibility Centers supporting the development of strategies that contribute to the academic permanence, such as: making referrals, requesting and analyzing clinical reports in partnership with the technical professional of the service; accompanying and developing actions related to the inclusion policy in the institutional scope aiming at its strengthening (seminars, symposiums, lectures, elaboration of informative materials, among others); orientations of each case to the teachers and course coordinators;
- iii) iii) Conducting Literacy Workshops and Portuguese written as a second language for the deaf;
- iv) iv) Providing advisory services to the sectors responsible for the vestibular, as well as for sectors responsible for hiring servers who have diagnoses of disabilities (cerebral palsy, visual impairment, hearing loss) or Specific Learning Disorders (Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder - ADHD, Central Auditory Processing Disorder - CAPD), among others.

It is observed that the university context is attended by subjects that reveal a heterogeneity of social, cultural, economic and historical backgrounds, implying different literacy and literacy conditions and changing the profile of institutions. Due to the different literacy practices and demands in this context, many students end up having academic failure,

reverberating in failures and evasion (BRASIL, 2008; DONIDA, 2018; DONIDA; SANTANA, 2019).

The pedagogical support, provided by the National Program for Student Assistance - PNAES (BRASIL, 2010), is inserted in the context of Higher Education precisely as an action aimed at reducing the disparity between the knowledge that students possess and those required by the University. Therefore, it is aimed at the actions that each institution will propose, focusing on the mastery of reading, writing, and mathematics, as well as academic genres, such as articles, course completion papers, among others (DONIDA, 2018; DONIDA; SANTANA, 2019).

In addition, the pedagogical support also becomes responsible for contemplating in its actions students with Specific Functional Disorders (SFD), although the Accessibility Center can advise this public (DONIDA, 2018; DONIDA; SANTANA, 2019).

Added to this reality is the increase in the number of students entering the Special Education (SES) target audience. The National Education Plan considers the target audience of Special Education from the perspective of Inclusive Education to be students with disabilities (intellectual, physical, hearing, visual, and multiple disabilities), global developmental disorder, and high abilities/super ability, with SES being a type of education that permeates all levels and types of education (BRAZIL, 2008).

The Accessibility Centers are responsible for promoting institutional actions of accessibility in the Federal Institutions of Higher Education - FIHEs (BRAZIL, 2005). Thus, Decree No. 7.611/2011 instituted the creation of the Accessibility Centers to meet all FIHEs, inducing, thus, the development of a broad and articulated accessibility policy that will ensure the inclusion of these people to academic life, eliminating communicative, attitudinal, pedagogical, architectural barriers (BRAZIL, 2011). For state and private universities, there are no instituted programs, which does not imply the mandatory creation and/or standardization of these Centers.

In view of the above, it is observed that, in theory, the importance of the Speech Therapist in Higher Education can already be verified. And more, that this health professional should not be inserted in this level of education with clinical-therapeutic actions, but through a work with an educational bias. However, in practice, there is still a lack of research on this topic. Thus, the question arises: Do the teams of the Accessibility and Pedagogical Support Centers of Universities have a speech therapist? Which professionals are part of these spaces? How is the role of the educational speech therapist seen in this context?

Based on these questions, the objective of this research is to understand, in the context of Higher Education, the practice of the speech therapist in the Accessibility and Pedagogical Support Centers and discuss his/her role in the team.

### **Methodological framework**

This research was conducted in 2017, as a result of an End of Course Work of the Speech Therapy course of the Federal University of Santa Catarina.

Thus, the study is characterized as quanti-qualitative, since it involved an online survey on the Universities' websites and application of a questionnaire sent by email and answered by the person responsible for the sector that is usually in charge of accessibility in the institutions.

The option for carrying out the research considering two sectors - the Accessibility and Pedagogical Support Center - is due to the fact that it is believed that the speech therapist would be essential in these spaces. However, it is known that the speech therapist could also be hired by other sectors.

Considering the large number of Brazilian Universities, we chose a methodological cut that comprised the Universities with classifications 4 and 5 in the National Student Performance Exam - ENADE (INEP, 2016).

The participants were the people responsible for the Center for Accessibility and/or Pedagogical Support belonging to Higher Education institutions at the federal, state and private levels. Invitation emails were sent to 70 Universities, and of these only 26 responded affirmatively. Of these 26, only 15 answered the online questionnaire, which were: 12 federal universities, two state universities, and one private university.

The questionnaire involved open and closed questions. Here are some examples: Are there speech-language pathologists hired at the University you work at? Which sector at the University does their hiring take place? What actions do they propose at the University? Is there pedagogical support in your institution? Which professionals are part of the pedagogical support? Is there an Accessibility Center? Which professionals are part of the Accessibility Center? Are there actions directed to the Special Education public?

With the answers of the questionnaires, a Content Analysis was performed (BARDIN, 2010) and the following categories of analysis were established: a) about the Accessibility Centers: i) public attended, ii) actions and iii) professionals that integrate the interdisciplinary teams; b) about the pedagogical support: iv) public attended, v) professionals that work in the

actions, vii) actions developed; and c) about the importance of the speech therapist in Higher Education.

The participants accepted the Free and Informed Consent Term n. 0782/2013, registered in the Network Project CAPES/OBEDUC: "Accessibility in Higher Education: From the analysis of educational public policies to the development of instrumental media on disability and inclusion".

## Results

From the 15 participating universities, we have the data that will be described and analyzed below.

**Table 1** – Description of the Universities participating in the survey by region of Brazil and by definition

REGION	NORTH	NORTH-EAST	MID-WEST	SOUTH-EAST	SOUTH
FEDERAL	2	3	-	4	3
STATE	-	1	-	-	1
PRIVATE	-	-	-	-	1

Source: Research data

## Accessibility Centers

Of the 15 universities that answered the survey, only one does not have an Accessibility Center (hereinafter AC), and this is a state public university. However, this institution has a student assistance center that articulates institutional actions, such as: training programs and assistance to university students, partnerships with entities focused on helping students who are SES targets, among other actions.

As for the date of creation of the AC, it is observed that five federal universities already had the presence of a department to monitor the target students of SES before the Decree n. 7.611/2011 (BRAZIL, 2011) that determined its mandatory nature in the FIHEs.

Among the universities that participated, three presented the creation of the AC in 2012 and six other institutions only in 2013 and 2014, as shown in Chart 1 below.

**Graph 1 – Year of creation of the Accessibility Centers in the researched institutions<sup>4</sup>**



Source: Research data

### Target public served by the Accessibility Centers

The ACs of the Universities configured their services in different ways. Some perform actions with the students at the University itself, and others refer professionals externally to the University.

Let's see below the answers obtained:

**Graph 2 – Students served by the Accessibility Centers<sup>5</sup>**



Source: Research data

In this graph we note that, in addition to the ACs serving the target students of the SES, more than half also meet other demands, such as students with Specific Functional Disorders, and even, in one university, the AC covers all students. In other words, there is no delimitation of public and all the academics who have "singularities" and "specificities" are assisted by this sector.

<sup>4</sup> Ano de implementação dos Núcleos de Acessibilidade = Year of creation of the Accessibility Centers; Quantidade = Quantity.

<sup>5</sup> Estudantes público – alvo da Educação Especial = Special Education target students; Estudantes com Transtornos Funcionais = Students with Functional Disorders; Todos os estudantes = All students.



### **Actions developed by the Accessibility Center**

- i. The ACs should be shown as a response of the FIHEs to provide educational and social support to this new contingent of students, aiming to promote institutional actions that ensure inclusion and accessibility (BRAZIL, 2015). Among the Universities surveyed, the following actions were cited:
- ii. i. Interpretation and translation of Libras = Brazilian Sign Language (present in virtually all universities);
- iii. ii. Availability of audiovisual descriptors and translators of the Braille system;
- iv. iii. Adaptation of pedagogical materials;
- v. iv. Availability of assistive technology equipment (the Braille system being one of the most mentioned);
- vi. v. Availability of trainees who develop functions such as transcription, audiovisual description and ambiance at the institution (two institutions);
- vii. vi. Training for teachers/academic community and pedagogical support (action mentioned in almost all the universities);
- viii. vii. Periodic student follow-up
- ix. viii. Offer of accessibility scholarship (two Universities);
- x. ix. Offer of muscular reinforcement classes for students with physical disabilities.

### **About the professionals who work at the Accessibility Center**

Let's see below which professionals have been hired to work in the AC:

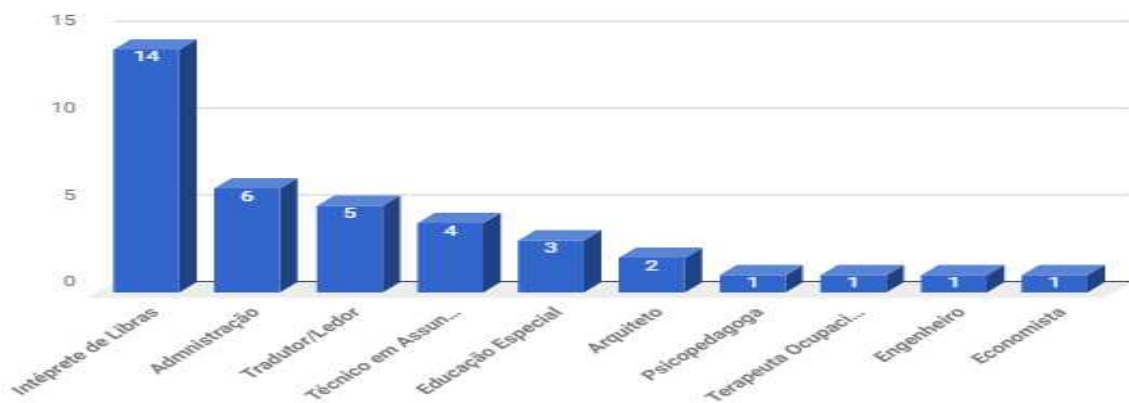
**Graph 3 – Interdisciplinary Accessibility Center Team<sup>6</sup>**



Source: Research data

Based on the answers given, other professionals may work together with the team. Some professionals may be hired by the institution, such as interpreter translators of Libras/Portuguese Language (Libras/LP), for example. Others are invited for inter-institutional partnerships and/or with the community, as there is demand, as we can see in the following chart.

**Graph 4 – Other professionals<sup>7</sup>**



Source: Research data

The Special Education policy (BRAZIL, 2008, 2015) suggests that, for the constitution of the interdisciplinary team of the Accessibility Center, the specialties of these professionals should be considered in relation to the demands found in the University by

<sup>6</sup> No. De profissionais que integram a equipe = No. of professionals in the team; Outros = Others; Pedagogo = Pedagogue; Assistente Social = Social Worker; Psicólogo = Psychologist; Fonoaudiólogo = Speech Therapist

<sup>7</sup> Intérprete de Libras = Libras Interpreter; Administração = Management; Tradutor/Ledor = Translator/Reader; Técnico = Technician; Educação Especial = Special Education; Arquiteto = Architect; Psicopedagogo = Psychopedagogue; Terapeuta Ocupacional = Occupational Therapist; Engenheiro = Engineer; Economista = Economist

students who are SES targets. Thus, the idea is to enable the access, permanence and inclusion of these students, considering their singularities and abilities, eliminating architectural, communication, attitudinal and pedagogical barriers.

According to this same policy, there are several professionals who can be involved in these interdisciplinary actions: special education professionals, pedagogues, psychologists, speech therapists, social workers, as well as professionals who work as guardianship counselors, community health agents, among others, according to the context of each community (BRAZIL, 2008, 2015).

Although it is determined by this policy that professionals should have specialties that contemplate the actions aimed at these students, the fact is that, for the most part, the participating universities refer that the constitution of the NA should be according to each academic context.

It is interesting to note that there are not only health and education professionals, because inclusive education requires other professionals to make the environment accessible and eliminate all barriers found in the academic environment, for example, hiring professionals such as engineers, architects, among others, to reduce architectural barriers (BRAZIL, 2008, 2011, 2015).

The interpreter translator in Libras/LP was the most cited professional, totaling 14 references. That is, only one institution did not have this professional. The officialization of Libras and its requirement as a curricular discipline in undergraduate courses and Speech Therapy, as well as the officialization of the profession of Translator/Interpreter of Sign Language - TILS (BRAZIL, 2005), caused a change in the education of the deaf, allowing them to reach higher education. Thus, their inclusion is strongly linked to the presence of the interpreter (although it is not only this professional responsible for educational inclusion).

Other frequently mentioned professionals with training focused on accessibility are the Braille Translators/Revisers, Technicians in Educational Subjects, and professionals linked to Special Education. We can see here that the number of professionals who work with the Center/team of accessibility in the Universities varies according to the public to be attended.

However, despite recognizing the autonomy of the institutions in expanding the number of professionals that meet the demands imposed by the situations of entry of students who are SES targets, the actions and training of these professionals are still little known. In other words, it is not known if these professionals perform actions in other sectors of the University or if they are collaborators only in the centers, as well as by which department they are hired by, or if they are federal employees, requiring more research in relation to this data.

It is interesting to note that the number of professionals who give support to Special Education, such as: occupational therapist, psychologist, speech therapist, psycho-pedagogist, or even the SES professional, are rarely mentioned. When these professionals do not exist, one of the institutions mentioned that, for example, the speech therapist does consulting work inside the institution; however, this professional is not assigned to the accessibility sector and, therefore, was not accounted for in the research as present, and the actions performed by him were not described.

If the speech therapist, even if only briefly, is present in the AC, in Pedagogical Support the presence is minimal or almost non-existent. Of the responding universities, only one has this professional working directly in the Pedagogical Support, and this professional also participates in the AC team. It is noteworthy that in this institution there is no Speech Therapy course, which diverges from the characterization performed on the other ACs in the survey that have this professional.

### **Pedagogical support**

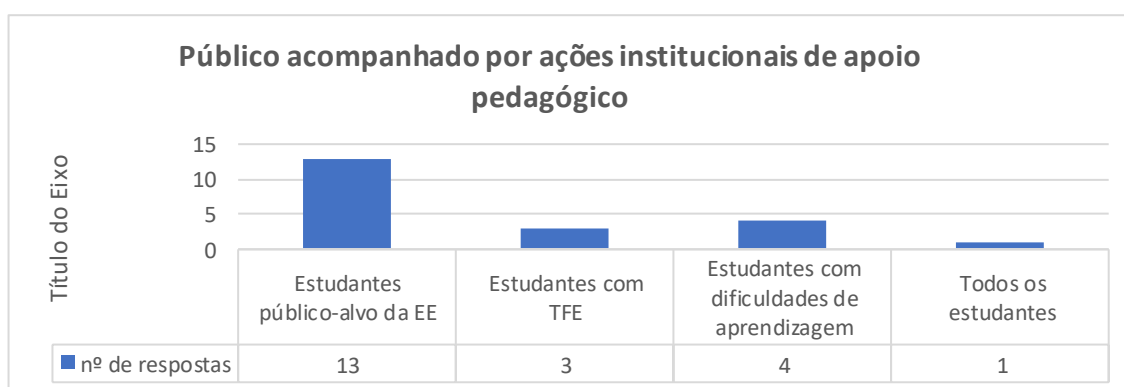
Of the 15 participating institutions, ten reported having a sector/body or department dedicated to students with academic difficulties. Given the university autonomy, the institutions can manage the actions aimed at students with academic difficulties related to low schooling, difficulties with academic literacy, students with Specific Functional Disorders. The PNAES provides several actions that include: student housing, food, transportation, health care, digital inclusion, culture, sports, daycare, pedagogical support, and also includes actions aimed at the access, participation and learning of students with disabilities, global developmental disorders and high abilities and overdose (BRAZIL, 2010).

Thus, actions, departments/agencies or institutional sectors aimed at this public are in constant changes and reformulations, given the specificities of each university community, also assuming other social functions, among them: the expansion of access to cultural assets and the recognition of differences and identities shared by students within the institution, psychological, social and health support, among others. Pedagogical support is included or not according to the actions of the institutions and there is no obligation to create specific sectors/organs or departments with this direction.

## Public served by institutional actions aimed at Pedagogical Support

Although ten participants mentioned that they had an institutional sector/body or department focused on pedagogical support, here we see that 14 institutions responded about the public accompanied by institutional actions focused on pedagogical support. In other words, there were more answers about actions in the institutions, although not all of them had organs or sectors delegated exclusively for this purpose within the University.

**Graph 5 – Public accompanied by institutional actions of pedagogical support<sup>8</sup>**

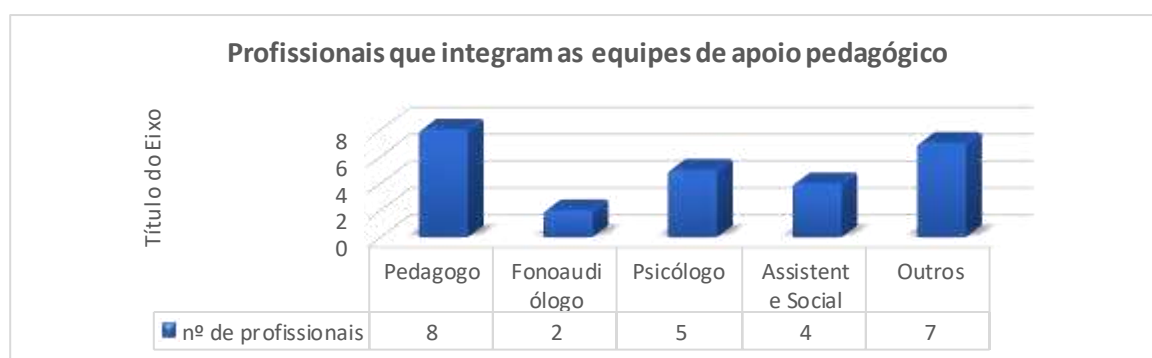


Source: Research data

## Professionals who integrate the institutional actions of pedagogical support

We see below the distribution of these professionals:

**Graph 6 – Professionals who integrate the institutional actions of pedagogical support<sup>9</sup>**



Source: Research data

<sup>8</sup> Público acompanhado por ações institucionais de apoio pedagógico = Public accompanied by institutional actions of pedagogical support; Estudantes público alvo da SES = SES target students; Estudantes com TFE = Students with Specific Functional Disorders; Estudantes com dificuldades de aprendizagem = Students with learning difficulties; Todos os estudantes = All the students

<sup>9</sup>; Profissionais que integram as equipes de Apoio Pedagógico = Professionals who integrate the institutional actions of pedagogical support; Pedagogo = Pedagogue; Fonoaudiólogo = Speech therapist; Psicólogo = Psychologist; Assistente Social = Social worker; Outros = Others

The professionals most commonly found in Pedagogical Support are the pedagogues, present in almost all the institutions. This makes sense, since the work done with these students in the institution should be of a pedagogical nature. The psychologist was another professional commonly found in more than half of the institutions, followed by the social worker. Technicians in educational matters, occupational therapists, psychopedagogues, and physical educators were other professionals found in this service.

In the option "Others", the participants mentioned the following professionals who are also part of the institutional actions: technicians in educational matters, occupational therapist, psychopedagogue, university employees, physical educator, undergraduate and graduate students, and administrative assistants.

### **Actions developed in Pedagogical Support**

The actions developed in Pedagogical Support take on a different character from the actions of the Accessibility Center. The answers about the actions were characterized in this research in two groups: pedagogical actions and therapeutic actions, as observed below.

**Chart 1 – Actions taken to support students in the institution**

<i>Leveling courses (reading and interpretation of text and mathematics), study groups in all areas, monitoring.</i>
<i>Psycho-pedagogical monitoring in the psycho-pedagogy clinic; monitoring by students through the Supporter Program; orientation meetings for teachers and coordinators of the courses in which there are students with disabilities.</i>
<i>Psycho-pedagogical attendance and therapeutic follow-up.</i>
<i>Training, individualized and group attendance</i>
<i>Semiannual pedagogical monitoring of students with low performance, inclusive monitoring, publicizing PROACE's actions, individualized pedagogical assistance...</i>
<i>Programs of training and assistance to students</i>
<i>Offering workshops on study organization and basic subjects, such as calculus and Portuguese</i>
<i>Monitors the performance of undergraduate students, providing assistance or referring them to specialists when learning difficulties are detected. It is responsible for actions or programs that may help students in their career planning, in their adaptation to higher education and in any academic difficulties that may be verified. It operationalizes the selection of the Academic Monitoring Program (PROMA), the Support to student participation in scientific, artistic-cultural, and extension events, and financial support to students to carry out field research, technical visits, and study trips to complete the conclusion work of UNILA's undergraduate course, as well as actions aimed at graduates.</i>
<i>Pedagogical monitoring, educational campaigns, study guidance</i>

Source: Research data

Examples of pedagogical actions are: reading, text interpretation and calculus courses, study groups in all areas, tutoring, study organization workshops, pedagogical and psycho-pedagogical support, training programs, and referrals. Examples of therapeutic actions are: psychological and psycho-pedagogical therapeutic accompaniment inside the University.

It is believed that the answers about clinical work inside the University are directed to students with Functional Disorders and are pedagogical work performed by the Specialized Educational Service (SES). That is, individualized care, with a purely pedagogical character and complementary to teaching, a practice that has been growing with the advent of inclusion. This clinical care, however, is not an agenda, nor should it be performed by speech therapists within the educational institution, since this practice is forbidden.

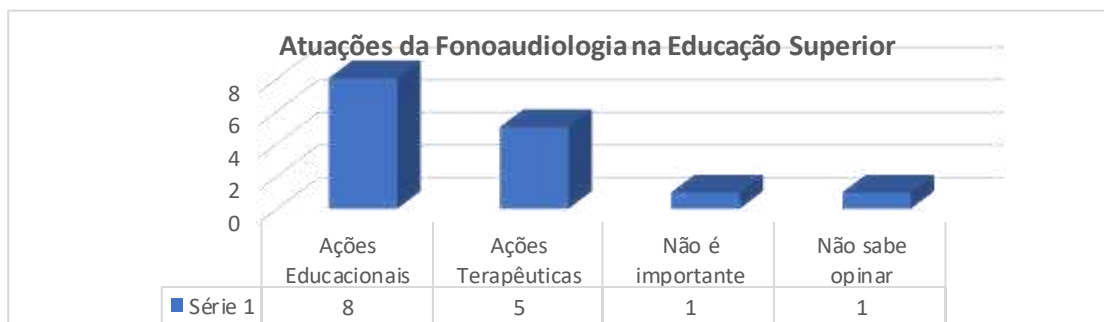
Here, the Speech Therapy professional can develop a good therapeutic work facing the pedagogical difficulties acting in the clinic, but, inside the institution, he or she can tie his or her knowledge to the other Pedagogical Support professionals and develop actions such as stimulation of literacy practices, activities aimed at working with different discursive genres; reflection with teachers, helping them to adapt the theoretical-practical proposals, among other actions, and that can reach a larger audience than the therapeutic services, since the academic scenario has changed due to the different literacy practices, cultural capital, and different socioeconomic sectors (DONIDA, 2018). That is, actions with educational character are expected, as provided by the specialty of Educational Speech Therapy, and not clinical.

### **Importance of Speech Therapy in Higher Education**

The answers were categorized into four groups: a) actions related to the *competence of the speech therapist* in education (educational actions); b) actions related to a more clinical character (therapeutic actions); c) did not know how to describe; d) disregards the importance of this professional.

Although they are not specifically therapeutic, the actions described ideologically mark the idea that the health professional can better diagnose the students' problems, as follows:

**Graph 7 – Performance of Speech Therapy in Higher Education<sup>10</sup>**



Source: Research data

Among the 15 institutions surveyed, 14 considered the presence of the Speech Therapist in Higher Education important, but only eight cited the competence and the "doing" of Speech Therapy to assist in the promotion, prevention and institutional needs aimed at inclusion. Another five universities cited the importance of this professional for diagnostic purposes and clinical interventions. One University could not justify its answer and one institution thinks that Speech Therapy is not important, revealing a lack of knowledge about the specialty of Educational Speech Therapy. Below are some answers given by the responsible people, categorized by themes: i) educational actions; ii) "therapeutic" actions; iii) does not know how to inform and; iv) is not important:

**Chart 2 – Comments on the actions of Speech Pathology at the University**

<b>Educational actions</b>	<i>"The importance of this professional is given by the possibility of actions in regular education and special education in the inclusive perspective. These actions are related to training, consulting and advice to teachers, group actions with students, guidance to various education professionals, referrals, among others. "Because of their specificities and competencies, I consider the professional with this training to be a fundamental part of the inclusion process."</i>
<b>Therapeutical actions</b>	<i>"Because they can diagnose and assist with their technical knowledge in the interventions necessary for the development of these students" "We have a lot of difficulty in diagnosing these specialties"</i>
<b>Does not know</b>	<i>"I do not have much knowledge about the work of speech therapists in higher education. However, from my daily experiences, I see this professional acting mainly with deaf and oralized students."</i>
<b>Not important</b>	<i>"The monitoring that goes on at the University must be permeated by pedagogical issues, not clinical ones"</i>

Source: Research data

<sup>10</sup> Atuações da Fonoaudiologia no Ensino Superior = Performance of Speech Therapy in Higher Education; Ações educacionais = Educational Actions; Ações terapêuticas = Therapeutical Actions; Não é importante = Not important; Não sabe opinar = Does not know



The results point to the low valorization of the speech therapist in the context of Higher Education, considering that, of the 15 institutions, only three hired this professional. In view of the answers, it can be seen that there is still a lack of knowledge about the work and the wide-ranging activities of the speech therapy professional. The performance is not (re)known in the field of education, although the Speech Therapy has been focused on the educational area for more than ten years (CFFA, 2005). The most known performance of this professional is related to the communication area, however, from a therapeutic point of view, even inside the University, forgetting the collaboration of this professional in the educational process in face of the human diversity. It can be seen that there is still little (re)knowledge about the actions and performance of the speech therapist in Higher Education (SANTANA; SOLTOSKY, 2014).

What is observed in this research is that, despite the Affirmative Action Policies (BRAZIL, 2010) and the Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education (BRAZIL, 2008) have favored diversity in the University, the support to students with Specific Functional Disorders or that are target audience of the SES has not yet legitimized the Speech Therapist's space as a necessary professional in this scenario.

This is because the speech therapist's work in the context of education, regardless of the segment in which it is inserted, does not override the autonomy of the other professionals who make teaching and learning happen, as well as the other school functions (BERBERIAN, 2007; GIROTO, 1999). The performance of the educational speech therapist is as a collaborator of the processes involved and developed in educational institutions, being part of the team and starting from the interdisciplinarity, the joint action, in the search for improvements that promote and maximize the quality of teaching, whether in Basic or Higher Education.

This research highlights, therefore, the urgent need for reflection on interdisciplinary and inclusion actions in Higher Education, and, also, a change in the conception of the Accessibility Center and the professionals involved in the actions, aiming to guarantee the right to "education for all". Thus, if education is for all and Brazil is a signatory of the Inclusive Education Policy, it is believed that the speech therapist is an important professional in the context of Higher Education, participating in the Pedagogical Support team and in the constitution of the Accessibility Centers, helping the access and permanence of all students.

## **Final remarks**

It is concluded in this research that federal universities already have an Accessibility Center or an agency that serves students targeted for Special Education, as a result of public policies of inclusion and accessibility. However, this does not seem to occur with the other institutions, seeing the small number of state and private universities that responded to this research. This silence may mean the absence of NA and/or even a distance from the theme to avoid commitment.

The possibility of characterizing the professionals involved as to their performance and presence showed that there are professionals from different areas working in this sector in the universities. The professionals least identified in the ACs were pedagogues, followed by psychologists. Health professionals such as speech therapists and occupational therapists were also little mentioned, which shows a lack of knowledge about the actions of these professionals in the educational area.

This way, there is still a reductionism in relation to the several professionals who may collaborate in the inclusion process, as it was observed that most of the professionals hired are those who work directly with accessibility resources, such as actions involving translation to Braille or even architects for planning architectural barriers. Or, still, those who work with specific barriers, such as the linguistic barrier, in the case of the Libras interpreter. Considering the educational issues and that the work with language/learning, communication and interaction cross the educational process, there would also be the need for the participation of professionals such as psychologists and speech therapists in the teams.

This research, therefore, showed us that the speech therapist is a professional who is not very present in the University and, when present, it is not always linked to the accessibility sector and the practices of Educational Speech Therapy, which corroborates studies previously conducted (SANTANA; SOLTOSKY, 2014).

Although our research has delimited the hiring of speech therapists in the Center for Accessibility and Pedagogical Support, it is also noteworthy that the actions of Speech Therapy cannot focus on the University actions only focused on the identification of students with difficulties. But in a larger scope, in the prevention and promotion of health for the entire university community, also promoting the breaking of barriers, not only linguistic, but attitudinal, with the promotion of a better quality of teaching and learning for students coming from different contexts, thus avoiding social and educational exclusion.

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