

SCHOOL EVALUATION AND CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES: FROM EXCLUSIONARY POLICIES TO INCLUSIVE APPROACHES

AValiação ESCOLAR E AS CRIANÇAS COM DEFICIÊNCIAS: DE POLÍTICAS EXCLUDENTES A APROXIMAÇÕES INCLUSIVAS

EVALUACIÓN ESCOLAR Y NIÑOS CON DISCAPACIDADES: DESDE POLÍTICAS EXCLUSIVAS HASTA ENFOQUES INCLUSIVOS

Janine Cecília Gonçalves PEIXOTO¹
Olenir Maria MENDES²

ABSTRACT: School evaluation for children with disabilities is a challenge for education professionals. In this sense, this work aims to present some of the results of master's research whose title is "School evaluation in the educational process of children with disabilities from the perspective of elementary school teachers". We aim to understand aspects in school evaluation that are close to formative evaluation from the perspective of elementary school teachers. For this qualitative approach research, we use as methodology the analysis of content and focus group technique. In the teachers' dialogues we were able to understand to what extent the school remains in an excluding logic and for due to this is important to resist and opt for proposals of evaluative work that are close to inclusive principles. We concluded that the teachers organize the pedagogical work for children with disabilities in accordance with the principles of formative evaluation.

KEYWORDS: Formative Evaluation. Children. Disabilities.

RESUMO: *A avaliação escolar para as crianças com deficiências é um desafio para os profissionais da educação. Neste sentido, o presente trabalho tem por objetivo apresentar alguns dos resultados de pesquisa de mestrado cujo título é "A avaliação escolar no processo educacional de crianças com deficiências na perspectiva de docentes do ensino fundamental". Objetivamos compreender aspectos em que a avaliação escolar se aproxima da avaliação formativa na perspectiva de docentes do ensino fundamental. Para essa pesquisa de abordagem qualitativa utilizamos como metodologia de investigação a análise de conteúdo e técnica de grupo focal. Nos diálogos das professoras pudemos entender o quanto a escola permanece em uma lógica excludente e por essa razão é importante resistir e optar por propostas de trabalho avaliativo que se aproximem de princípios inclusivos. Concluímos que, as professoras organizam o trabalho pedagógico para as crianças com deficiências em consonância com os princípios da avaliação formativa.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Avaliação Formativa. Crianças. Deficiências.*

¹ Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU), Uberlândia – MG – Brazil. Master's student in the Postgraduate Program in Education. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1576-6810>. E-mail: janinecgp@gmail.com

² Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU), Uberlândia – MG – Brazil. Professor in the Postgraduate Program in Education. Doctorate in Education (USP). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8607-2632>. E-mail: olenir@ufu.br

RESUMEN: *La evaluación escolar para niños con discapacidad es un desafío para los profesionales de la educación. En este sentido, el presente trabajo tiene como objetivo presentar algunos de los resultados de la investigación de maestría cuyo título es "La evaluación escolar en el proceso educativo de los niños con discapacidad desde la perspectiva de los profesores de educación básica". Nuestro objetivo es comprender aspectos de la evaluación escolar cercanos a la evaluación formativa desde la perspectiva de los profesores de primaria. Para esta investigación con enfoque cualitativo, utilizamos la técnica de análisis de contenido y grupos focales como metodología de investigación. En los diálogos de los docentes pudimos entender cuánto queda la escuela en una lógica excluyente y por eso es importante resistir y elegir propuestas de trabajo evaluativo que se acerquen a principios inclusivos. Concluimos que los profesores organizan el trabajo pedagógico para niños con discapacidad de acuerdo con los principios de la evaluación formativa.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Evaluación formativa. Niños. Deficiencias.*

Introduction

School evaluation is a complex theme and constantly studied by education professionals, especially when there is an intention to promote meaningful learning to children. Currently, the school has not guaranteed significant learning for all, because the socioeconomic and cultural conditions of most students do not allow the performance expected or imposed by capitalist logic (FREITAS, 2003). The school is exclusive and perpetuates the sociocultural exclusion of people. Mantoan clarifies that: "School exclusion manifests itself in the most diverse and perverse ways, and almost always what is at stake is the student's ignorance regarding the scientific standards of school knowledge" (MANTOAN, 2003, p. 13, our translation).

We understand that the differences and diversity inherent to human heterogeneity do not always reach the homogeneous requirements demanded by the organization of the current school system. And this is where we focus our studies.

Likewise, the theme of inclusion, especially when it comes to children with disabilities, is a point of debate and discussion in school institutions. School inclusion is relatively recent in the context of mainstream schools and organizing knowledge, methodologies and procedures that help teachers in the teaching, learning and assessment processes of children with disabilities is not an easy task. Rodrigues (2006) indicates that LDB 9394/96 shows that we live in a moment of transition in the area of special education, in which services, pedagogical modes of organization and adjustments to assist children with disabilities are really necessary.

We believe that understanding the challenges of evaluative practices for children with disabilities is to study the conditions, development, limitations and possibilities that favor learning.

It is in favor of a school that rethinks the social function, the didactic-pedagogical organization, the concept of evaluation, the way students perceive in the educational, social, economic and cultural context that we try to think and reflect. From this, we try to investigate how these aspects related to assessment, with a focus on formative assessment and the way children with disabilities are evaluated in school spaces, can favor everyone in the school community: professionals, teachers, students and family members.

Studying formative assessment is a choice; it is to confirm the search for evaluative pedagogical practices that meet more humanizing, inclusive and progressive proposals (FREITAS, 2003). In this regard, formative assessment presents principles of collectivity and inclusion, in addition to concern with the quality of teaching and learning of students, with or without disabilities. For this reason, formative assessment is the theoretical focus of this research.

Formative evaluation means being in favor of a conception of and for learning, which provides constructive, interactive possibilities in the cognitive process and, in pedagogical work, teaching, evaluation and learning do not disassociate, but are an intrinsic part of a joint action, teaching-learning-assessment. (VILLAS BOAS, 2011).

Therefore, this research aims to understand how children with disabilities are served by evaluative practices that favor inclusion, considering teaching, learning and evaluation processes.

Theoretical and methodological paths of research

We present in this article only an excerpt from the master's research whose focus was to analyze school evaluation in the educational process of children with disabilities from the perspective of elementary school teachers. In order to develop such research, we opted for a methodological approach with a qualitative approach, in addition to using the Focus Group technique (GONDIN, 2003) that enabled the collection of information.

The participants were male and female teachers who work in elementary education in public schools in the city of Uberlândia. And for the treatment of information we use content analysis methodology (BARDIN 2016).

The Focus Group technique enabled interaction and relationships between the participants, allowing exchanges of experiences between them. They presented suggestions and ideas, always in situations of trial and error, understanding “error” as an opportunity for learning and transforming the conceptions we have of school (HADJI, 2001). Through content analysis (BARDIN, 2016), we gradually perceived the participants' wishes, pretensions, desires to propose evaluations that could, in fact, include children.

Many teachers look for different procedures to contribute to the educational process, considering the specific educational needs of children with disabilities. In the discussions, we noticed that the teachers highlight the role of the school in relation to pedagogical work with children with disabilities.

We are based on legal documents such as the Law of Directives and Bases of Education, No. 9394/1996 (BRASIL, 1996), Law No. 13,146/2015 (BRASIL, 2015), the National Policy on Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education (BRASIL, 2008), in Ordinance No. 948/2007 (BRASIL, 2008), in the National Guidelines for Special Education in Basic Education (BRASIL, 2001). In addition, we are guided by authors who research this subject such as: Carvalho (2010), Rodrigues (2006), Pacheco (2008), Glat (2009), Mantoan (2006), among others. We used the concept of formative assessment as an ideological option, relying on Fernandes (2006; 2009; 2011), Freitas (1991; 1995; 2003), Hadji (2001), Haydt (2004), Hoffmann (2001; 2003; 2018) Luckesi (2008; 2018), Villas Boas (2011; 2012; 2013; 2017), among others.

In this theoretical discussion, we also delved into authors of Special Education who brought reflections on school evaluation in the context of the area, such as Teixeira and Nunes (2010), Beyer (2013), Oliveira and Manzini (2016), Jesus (2015) and others. The emphasis given by their studies is related to: a) procedures and the conduct of pedagogical practices; b) respect each child's time and pace; c) understand the limitations and, d) choose to consider the potential and possibilities.

Thus, the content analysis, according to Bardin (2016), focused on thematic axes obtained from the discussions of the focus groups carried out and the questionnaire applied. In the categorization of the thematic axes, we selected: 1 - Conceptions of evaluation, approaches to formative evaluation and impacts of the concepts of evaluation in the work with children with disabilities; 2 - Proposals for evaluative works; 3 - Educational process of children with disabilities.

The research was registered with the Ethics Committee under Opinion number 3,234,343.

Research results

Our survey included a limited number of 24 participants. However, we believe that this group symbolically represented, with great sensitivity and disposition, the voices of many other teachers who discuss education, school, teaching, assessment, disability, pedagogical work and children. We emphasize that the teachers participating in the research were motivated during the focus group, in search of answers, suggestions, solutions and possibilities to carry out school evaluation processes different from those experienced today in schools.

In the focus group sessions, the subject revolved around the challenges of school inclusion, the political and historical path of Special Education to date and the confrontations by families and schools in implementing a school inclusion that is not perverse or just a 'make believe' for children with disabilities.

We believe that the participating teachers expressed many anguishes, frustrations, feelings and impotence in the face of contexts. However, we also found that they courageously expressed proposals for adapted works, reliable experiences, essays, reflections, attempts, expectations and actions of "hope" in favor of the learning of children with disabilities.

Data analysis shows that teachers have different conceptions about evaluation between what they believe and what is developed in schools. Many highlight "the test" as the predominant procedure when assessing children with disabilities, however, they criticize this choice and do not agree that this is the way to go. They reveal that the evaluation at school does not constitute a process but occurs at specific moments of the process-product, test-grade. The teachers also point out that evaluations conducted in this way interrupt the daily actions already planned and organized, which could favor the learning of children with disabilities.

Teachers denounce the bureaucratic requirements of the school grading system, emphasizing that they do not favor the development of children's learning. At the same time, the teachers themselves vent that these demands generate feelings of concern, oppression and sadness for them and feel that, for children, they cause frustration, disenchantment and a sense of failure, as they become victims of an imposed and excluding system.

In addition, they highlight the demands of families regarding success and/or failure, indicating that this demand does not help the school development of children with disabilities. Examples appeared in the dialogues that demonstrated the priority that some teachers

perceived in conducting the pedagogical work with the children, preceding the teaching of content and, especially, the establishment of school grades. Some participants also reported situations that they experienced in which the children's knowledge was neglected, especially when there was a requirement to standardize all knowledge from an exclusive perspective.

We note that the participants understand the evaluation in a different perspective, as they emphasize the need to dedicate time to plan, elaborate, apply new pedagogical practices and, consequently, other evaluation proposals. They recognize that the results achieved in the classroom's daily life have more value than an evaluation procedure that only measures and classifies.

They exemplify other possibilities, such as: evaluation during the process; portfolio; self-evaluation; seminars; GV-GO (verbalization group/observation group); observation: daily, weekly, individual and/or in groups, participation and interest, development, behavior, interaction; interviews; informal conversation; development reports; diversified activities; valorization of productions; teacher-student mediation (using materials); evaluation forms; among others.

To corroborate these suggestions, Hoffmann (2018) makes clear the importance of careful observation with specific records mediated by a pedagogical work that meets the needs of each one, according to their uniqueness. According to the author,

It is necessary to 'learn to look' student by student, knowing their life space, their initiatives, their do overs, their affections and disaffections, dissonances, the unusual many times (HOFFMANN, 2018, p. 58-59, our translation).

The teachers demonstrated their intentions to transform evaluative practices. We found some essays that are close to the conception of formative assessment, especially when they exemplify assessment proposals that seek to meet the possibility of learning for children with disabilities, even if it is not yet a predominant action in everyday life.

For the educational process of children with disabilities, teachers understand that it is necessary to teach-learn; evaluate-reassess; plan-replan, establish objectives and criteria, achieve them and realign new actions. In this way, we perceive sensitivity and effort when organizing didactic-pedagogical and evaluative work to achieve learning. For this reason, formative assessment "[...] is a social, pedagogical and political process that puts everyone in a position to learn" (our translation). It implies a process of coming and going from knowledge; it implies learning and teaching, both for the student and for the teacher. It is a

process of dialogicity that occurs between the walls of the classroom, even outside it, daily (MENDES *et al.*, 2018, p. 84, 85).

Teachers promote the learning of children with disabilities when they change the way they teach. Thus, we believe that both children and teachers benefit from the educational triad: teaching, learning and assessment, making the school less exclusive (FREITAS, 2003).

In this sense, we note that there is an intention on the part of the teachers to develop the pedagogical work from the perspective of formative assessment, even if they are not yet aware of it, since they are determined to put the assessment at the service of the child's learning, seeking all the possible ways to act in this direction (HADJI, 1994).

We consider in the teachers' reports, that their actions are close to the principles of a formative evaluation, when they:

- understand and perceive the need for changes in their own attitudes and thoughts when planning school assessments;
- choose to organize the pedagogical work in order to contemplate human development, observing with attention and sensitivity;
- seek assessment practices that understand children with disabilities in their potential;
- adapt the didactic-pedagogical resources to apply the evaluations observing the singularities of each case;
- consider the time and pace of development of each child with a disability who attend;
- make the contents more flexible, prioritizing those that are most meaningful to the child, showing concern with teaching and learning;
- make co-responsible all of the school and family community, with the intention of guaranteeing the full development of children, and;
- carry out differentiated evaluative work proposals, which can promote adjustments in the teaching-learning process.

We chose formative assessment because we believe that it is capable of transforming the way the school views assessment, establishing more inclusive school assessment practices. We understand that formative assessment favors the organization of pedagogical work with a focus on learning; offers visibility to the results achieved in the classroom; and is concerned with diversifying work proposals, in order to ensure learning in all possible ways.

We emphasize that in the official archives analyzed we find the incentive for studies and continuous formation to better improve school practices and actions that promote the

articulation of pedagogical work among teachers, both in the regular classroom and in the Specialized Educational Assistance (SEA). As well as evidence that suggests the strengthening of formative assessment practices, such as: collective work; co-participation of families and other professionals in the children's assessment process; respect for the person and their uniqueness; among others.

Of course, we understand that school assessment with a focus on learning is still far from being a reality for all students, let alone for children with disabilities. This is because the society in which we live perpetuates the interests of capital and rules out the possibility of an inclusive school that really teaches, in which all children learn. In the conceptual rescue of School Inclusion, we realized how challenging it is for the school, in a macro dimension, to promote accessibility to overcome architectural, attitudinal, urban, technological, communication barriers, among others that interfere in the organization of pedagogical work. We found in the research how much school evaluation is still conducted in a hierarchical manner, with a selective and classificatory character.

The evaluation is still excluding! Therefore, the need to effect significant changes in school evaluation practices, since inclusion is not in the interest of this competitive society, in which there is no space for all people. As stated by Freitas (2003, p. 13-30, our translation), “[...] the school is a historical construction [...] it was not the teacher who invented this logic, it is part of the genesis of the school”. However, we value, recognize and respect that the actions of the teachers participating in our research are moving towards a resistance movement.

Still, we emphasize the importance of revisiting official documents at the federal, state and municipal levels that present suggestions for procedures for school evaluation. These documents indicate that the daily observation procedure is an important ally in the assessment process for children with disabilities, they also point to the diversification of activities in the cognitive, affective, sensory and social dimensions.

Final considerations

We can say that, the research carried out leads us to believe that children with disabilities are benefited in their educational processes: a) when everyone is committed to their schooling; b) when teachers resist the system and look for ways to establish other forms of assessment; c) when the collective becomes co-responsible, creates and applies proposals

for evaluative work that considers the specific educational needs of children, favoring the inclusion movement.

To think and carry out the formative assessment for children with disabilities is to rebel against the capitalist and bureaucratic system and make learning the focus of the school. When analyzing the teachers' conceptions about school evaluation, the impacts of school inclusion on the evaluation for children with disabilities and the teachers' knowledge about formative evaluation, we are faced with the feelings and desires of change that generate transformation intentions, resistance and hope.

We realize that teachers strive to organize other ways of evaluating, avoiding the capitalist, excluding and massifying logic of the school. We note how complex and difficult it is to conduct educational work with and for children with disabilities. We know that transforming the evaluation process at school is a constant challenge for everyone, as it requires changes in conceptions about what we mean by person, teaching, learning, evaluation, time, resources, procedures, among others, in educational processes. It requires us to look for other ways that meet the specific educational needs of children with disabilities, committed to the principle of evaluating for learning.

We are optimistic to recognize that changes are happening, little by little, but they are happening! There is no way to avoid the emerging paradigms related to school inclusion and the assessment of children with disabilities. For this reason, we recognize in the perspectives of most participants: a) that each being is unique, singular and needs a sensitive and specific look in the educational and evaluative process; b) that the intention to evaluate for learning is paramount; c) that establishing links and knowing the specific educational needs is essential to guarantee significant learning for children with disabilities; d) that it is often necessary to diversify the proposals for evaluative work, modifying the methodologies and ways of organizing the pedagogical work to serve children in their singularities; e) that thinking about teaching requires another conception of child, student, person and teaching-learning; f) that the path is to make knowledge and content more flexible, prioritizing those in which children with disabilities may have better conditions and possibilities to learn and; g) that the co-responsibility of the entire school community is fundamental for the development of children with disabilities in their educational process.

We emphasize that living and practicing formative assessment is not easy. We know that there is still a long way to go, because “breaking with the classificatory stigma of evaluation” is not the responsibility of the school alone, but of society. We walk, one step at a time, because there is no way to speed up the steps, we go together, or we will get nowhere.

As highlighted by Mantoan and Baptista (2018, p. 764, our translation): “Formation of people for inclusive education was an opportunity to create and put into practice new ways of teaching without discrimination, never before provided by a public school policy”.

In summary, we believe that these notes support our certainty, that the path taken so far has revealed to us the approximations between the practices of teachers and the principles of formative assessment, thus contributing to the educational process of children with disabilities.

We defend an inclusive assessment perspective, one that establishes a collective reflection among teachers, students and family members and provides a process of learning and teaching considering the singularities of each one. Thus, we understand that school evaluation needs to transcend current systems. Search for new ways to understand ourselves, the society of which we are a part and even the society we aspire to. As a plural collective and teachers, mostly women, resist and struggle to organize mechanisms that materialize this new inclusive school systems that allow the meaningful learning of all people in the school context.

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