98 - LEARNING DISABILITIES: A PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHER'S LOOK ON A STUDENT WITH EPILEPSY

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1. INTRODUCTION

As an academic of Physical Education and teacher of private schools in the Vale do Sinos region, with experience with students who have difficulties that fit within the concept of learning disabilities presented by the authors: Fonseca (1995), Smith and Strick (2001), Cauduro (2002) and Winckler and Melo (2006). I felt the need to expand my studies in the specific case of a student, to assist him as a student who needs to be included, as a vogue issue of formal education.

During the time I have been a teacher, I realized how important the teacher is for the student and how a mediation is important for the process education - learning. This article presents a research on a student with many learning disabilities, in the area of writing as well as on logical and motor reasoning. He presents difficulties to concentrate, to situate and to be organized in the space of his notebook. The student's mother states that when her son was younger he went through several minor crises of absence, which would had caused a brain lesion and suspected epilepsy which was subsequently confirmed. Perhaps this is the cause of the student's learning disabilities.

The objective of this article is to present a part of the research of my graduation monograph which had the title: The search for a meaning of learning disabilities: contribution of Physical Education, with the intention to subsidize the teaching practice of those teachers who work with the inclusion of people with disabilities in regular education, in particular those who have students diagnosed with epilepsy.

2. SCHOOL INCLUSION AND EPILEPSY

The school inclusion is a way to combat exclusion. The differences appear daily in the classroom, whether differences in thoughts, beliefs, patterns or even learning disabilities. Thus the most important thing is that people who live in groups know to respect the peculiarities of the other:

[...] the heterogeneity, presents in any human group, is now seen as an indispensable factor for the interactions in the classroom. The different patterns, behaviors, experiences, personal histories, family contexts, values and knowledge levels of the child (and teacher) prints to the everyday school the possibility of exchanging repertoires of world view, mutual aid and consequent expansion of capacity (REGO, 1998, p.88).

In Brazil, there are laws, such as the Law of Education Guidelines and Bases, Law 9.394 of December 20th, 1996 (Brazil, 1996) and Act 7.853 of October 24th, 1989 (Brazil, 1989), that shows that the authorities of our country are addressing the issue and are trying to get more quality of life for all.

The epilepsy, according to Silva and Silva (2004), has been known for a long time, but up to today there are still many myths about it. An epileptic crisis is characterized as a sudden change in the neurological function, which is involuntary, limited and is a consequence of a different discharge of neurons in the central nervous system. The authors also sated that a person can be considered epileptic if he/she has a recurrence of chronic epileptic crises.

The crises of absence, in turn, are generalized crises, when the person loses consciousness for a few seconds. It can happen several times a day. During this fraction of seconds (generally from 10 to 15), the child, by losing consciousness, does not listen or interpret external stimuli, so the student can understand only part of the teacher's explanation.

In respect to people with learning disabilities, we can cite the authors: Fonseca (1995), Smith and Strick (2001), Cauduro (2002), Winckler, Melo et al. (2006) and others, that state that this is a group of people with various disorders, who are considered in this group because they manifested significant difficulties in learning like in writing, speaking, reading, in mathematical reasoning or ability. Yet the term learning disabilities refers not to a single disorder, but to a wide range of problems that can affect any area of performance.

We believe that the professional who works in the initial school years should be prepared during his/her formation to work with students who have learning disabilities in school, in order to include them in all school activities.

3. CHARACTERIZATION OF THE STUDY

For this study we used a qualitative approach of ethnographic character having in view that the researcher have been working in the area of study for four years. The ethnographic research is recommended for those who know in depth the ethos (context) in which they do their investigations according to Molina (2004), Cauduro (2004), Macedo (2006). The instruments used in this research for collecting data are: observations, interviews, field diary and analysis of documents, where the collaborators were: the student in the 3rd year of elementary school and his parents, the professor of Physical Education, the regular class teacher and the class support teacher. The study area was in a private school, located in the city of Dois Irmãos, RS, Brazil. The methodological rigor was based on the triangulation of data. For this article we used one category: School difficulties found, drawn from the research. Following we will make a brief rescue of some theoretical assumptions.

4. SCHOOL PROBLEMS FOUND

Regarding learning disabilities, Saravali and Guimarães (2007) say that to study this term is not easy in the current times. The characterizations used customarily bring with them a number of attributes, which end up increasing the amount of definitions.

In this study, the teachers who work directly with the studied student, whether in the classroom, in support classes or in Physical Education, enumerate the school difficulties presented by the student.

Here, then, are a few speeches made by the teachers who work with the student:

It can be easily noticed that the student knows some letters and numbers, but he cannot order them in a way that makes phrases or words. We can also highlight that some letters and numbers are written with more strength and are as much as a blur (DOC_1).

[...] he has difficulty to remember things, he does something and I ask him to correct, he does it again... He makes the same mistakes... He can repeat the same thing ten times, he makes the same mistakes (E1).

[...] he has more difficulty to understand at the first time [...] (E2).

Several reasons can cause someone to have difficulties in learning; one of them is the deficiency of visual perception. For Smith and Strick (2001), children with visual perception disabilities have problems in understanding what they see. The brain has trouble to interpret what the person sees, and the person actually has no vision problem diagnosed. Thus, the person presents difficulty in recognizing, organizing, interpreting and remembering visual images, then, finally, has difficulty in understanding letters, words, numbers, graphs and maps.

[...] he has the reflexes, and that thing to change direction quickly... he is slower than the others [...] (E2).

When the activity is explained by the teacher, even if the game is already known by the class, it is necessary that the game is repeated at least twice, until the student can participate actively with the other colleagues. Unless when the proposal is to play soccer (OBED_2 / DEF_2).

[...] he presents some difficulties in specific activities for the development of laterality, directionality and balance [...] (E2).

In those speeches it can be perceived that the difficulties reported by the teachers are related to motor skills, which according to Gallahue and Ozmun (2003), are grouped into three categories of movement: locomotion, manipulation and balance. The study of motor skills seeks to understand the mechanical observation of movement and attempts to understand what causes changes on it. It is a fundamental movement pattern established with accuracy, precision and control. According to Cauduro (2002), what is reflected on the body is also advertised in school learning. We can see this from what the teacher says and in the document:

Exchange of letters, paragraph [...] (E1).

[...] in multiplication and division, I feel him with quite difficulty (E1).

You can see that the student can form words, but often he writes one word attached to the other and with a lot of orthographic mistakes, not allowing the reader to understand the text. The writing is done with too much force, thus, the written words are blurry, reducing the readability in some cases (DOC_3).

Smith and Strick (2001) tell us that children who have fine motor disabilities cannot fully control groups of small muscles in their hands. Therefore, it has no influence on the intellectual capacity, but affects their performance at school, because of the difficulty to communicate by writing. These students have trouble in performing any activity that requires drawing or writing. The teacher continues:

[...] and also in understanding the numbers [...] (E1).

In the mathematical challenges presented in the documents examined we can notice that the student faced some difficulties in interpreting mathematical problems, and that he did not have an understanding of the mechanism of multiplication and division. In division he failed to sort the numbers and in multiplication he replaced it by another operation that is of his understanding (DOC_8).

[...] He does not know what comes before, what comes after, the order [...] (E1).

Here we observe the spatial issue, perception and understanding where Cauduro (2002) points out that the difficulties presented evidence that the student can be placed in the state of learning disabilities, psychomotor disorders, minimal brain damage, psychoneurological disorders or lack of attention disorders. Below are the difficulties presented by the student:

During the observation realized, the teacher said that when performing some activities, the student leaves some questions blank and, when questioned, he says that he had not seen that question (OBS_12 / DAS_12).

[...] it is possible to observe some motor differences in directed activities [...] (E2).

The student could not perform a crossword activity, denied having any doubt, but the activity was realized only when the teacher sat beside him for an individualized assistance (OBS_10 / DAS_10).

Based on the concept that learning is a building process, learning disabilities will regress as the student can do his own relationships and is working with his body.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

When considering this category of found difficulties it is clear that the student needs a special supervision from the team of teachers and parents. When included in a regular education class the child requires more attention and care from the teachers. It is necessary that teachers are prepared for a differential teaching, more individualized where the learning pace of the student is respected.

Certainly what makes a difference in schools that have these students are teachers who are committed to education for all, show specific knowledge of learning disabilities as it was said by the authors Cauduro (2002), Smith and Strick (2001), Saravali and Guimarães (2007) among others.

It is necessary to motivate the student, that he understands his disabilities, that he is stimulated to be perseverant, that he knows how to seek alternatives to reduce his deficiencies. For this it is required a team to support the construction of life as aware teachers and parents that help this student to overcome his anxieties caused by epilepsy as well as in his learning process.

The teacher of Physical Education, through motor activities, especially recreational activities, can and should assist this student to have self-confidence, perception, have skills to deal with the body in order to develop and improve his psychomotor ability. Recalling Cauduro (2001), the education of movements should serve as steps to internalize the "body impressions" that enable the child to acquire conscious and satisfactory body domain.

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the results of a segment of a graduation monograph of a Physical Education student, a teacher of regular education, which had the title: The search for a meaning of learning disabilities: contribution of Physical Education. It deals with the learning disabilities of a student with epilepsy and the contributions that Physical Education can offer.

Keywords: Physical Education. Learning disabilities. Epilepsy.

DIFFICULTÉ D'APPRENTISSAGE: UN REGARD DE LE PROFESSEUR D'EDUCATION PHYSIQUE AUPRES D'UN ELEVE EPILEPTIQUE

RESUME

L'article présente les résultats d'une investigation qui fait parti du Travail de Conslusion de Cours (TCC) d'une étudiante académique d'éducation physique, maîtresse d'aprentissage regulière. Le titre du travail etait : « La recherche d'un sens pour les difficultés d'apprentisage : une contribution de l'éducation physique ». Le contenu touche les difficultés d'apprentissage d'un élève épilepthique et les contributions que l'éducation physique peut offrir dans ce contexte.

Mots-clé : education physique, epilepsie, difficultés d'apprentissage

DIFICULTAD DE LA APRENDIZAJE: UNA MIRADA DEL PROFESOR DE EDUCACION FISICA SOBRE UN ALUMNO CON EPILEPSIA

RESUMEN

El articulo muestra los resultados de una parte de la investigación presentada como trabajo de conclusión del curso de una alumna de Educacion Física, maestra de primaria. El titulo fué: la busqueda de un sentido para las dificultades de la aprendizaje;contribución de la educación física. Trata de las dificultades de aprendizaje de un alumno con epilepsia y las contribuciones que la educación fisica puede ofrecer**.**

Palabras-Clave: Educacion Fisica. Dificuldad de la aprendizaje . Epilepsia

DIFICULDADE DE APRENDIZAGEM: UM OLHAR DO PROFESSOR DE EDUCAÇÃO FÍSICA SOBRE UM ALUNO COM EPILEPSIA

RESUMO

O presente artigo apresenta os resultados de parte de uma investigação de Trabalho de final de curso (TCC) de uma acadêmica de educação física, professora do ensino regular cujo titulo foi: A busca de um sentido para dificuldades de aprendizagem: contribuição da educação física. Versa sobre as dificuldades de aprendizagem de um aluno com epilepsia e as contribuições que a educação física pode oferecer.

Palavras-Chave: Educação Física. Dificuldade de Aprendizagem. Epilepsia.