

Curriculum Adaptations: What do Participants of Continuing Education Program Say about it?

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Abstract

The consolidation of school inclusion paradigm requires changes in education systems to ensure access and learning for all students. The adjustments are one of these fronts and offer flexibility to the curriculum access, but it also requires that teachers are able to do so. In this context, continuing education programs – face and distance learning – have enabled to empower educators to carry out curricular adjustments according to the students' differences. This study aimed to identify what education professionals said about curriculum adaptations and compare whether groups with different experiences differed on how to implement them. Nine hundred and four school workers enrolled in distance teaching continuing program responded to an electronic questionnaire about curriculum adjustments. The collected data were submitted to descriptive and statistical analysis. As a result, significant differences were found among different groups of Regular Education for the categories "Significant adjustment score" and "total of adjustments" while the Special Education groups presented differences only in "Significant adjustment score". There was also positive and weak correlation between "time experience" and the categories of "adjustments". The findings suggest that the time of professional experience favors curricular adjustments, but other factors that corroborated for the execution of these practices should be investigated.

Keywords: School inclusion, Curriculum adaptations, Teachers, Continuing education programs

1. Introduction

According to Brazilian Ministry of Education and Culture ("Ministério de Educação e Cultura" – MEC) documents, the school curriculum can be understood as an integrated process that must be carefully systematized, taking into account previously defined scientific content, teaching strategies, teaching situations and learning assessment ways (Neves, Antonelli, Silva, & Capellini, 2014). In addition to technical formality and pedagogical direction that composes the document, the curriculum reflects a broad societal project (Freitas, 2000; Capellini, 2004; Neves et al., 2014) and can be used as an educational artifact of the elites for segregation purposes (Macedo, 2007).

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Given the diversity of students with special educational needs, the homogeneous curriculum has prevented some of them – as students with autism, for example – to take ownership of the produced historically knowledge (Neves et al., 2014). Under these conditions, the education systems have allowed changes in the curriculum, which favor students learning.

The topic of this study – curriculum adaptations – doesn't have a clear definition in the literature and it is often used as adaptations (Majon, 1997; Marques, 1998), adjustments (Fonseca, 2011, Leite, 2010), modifications (Tomlinson, 2001; Ruiz & Pereja, 2002; Heacox, 2006; González, 2007) or curricular flexibility (Beyer, 2006). In this study, "curriculum adaptations" is taken as adaptations, adjustments or modifications to the curriculum framework, in other words, all the necessary changes in the curriculum to ensure that all students can access it. Thus, this study is aligned to the Oliveira and Leite (2007), Heredero (2010) and Abarca Sos (2013) proposal.

At the end of the 90s, the Brazilian government published the National Curriculum Standards / curriculum adaptations: strategies for the education of students with special educational needs, based on the document "Adaptaciones", elaborated by the Ministry of Education and Science of Spain in 1992. The mentioned documents corroborated the purpose of supporting the teaching practice in aspects involving the learning of all students and considered the diversity within the ordinary classroom, which required easing measures and adaptations to attend to all students, especially the special education students (Brasil, 1999).

This publication aims to create opportunities to the Brazilian education system articulate strategies for meeting the special education students in the ordinary classroom and curriculum adaptations to be carried out. However, the lack of clarification on how to enforce such modifications created other problems, such as the complete replacement of the curriculum for individualized education plan (IEP), totally disregarding the proposed curriculum for other students of the same level of education.

According to Marques (1998), Portugal has used the following curricular adjustment version:

"The curriculum adaptations will build the access roads to the curriculum, highlighted by Vygotsky as means of building alternative paths that will allow the student ascend school knowledge. The curriculum adaptations may develop at various levels ranging from the central power to the local one, to the Educational School Project to the schedules of classes and to individual needs of each student"⁵.

Thus, the Portuguese government understood the curriculum adaptation and strategies adaptation to the individual needs of students. Still, in the view of Ruiz and Pereja (2002), the definition of that country can be understood as "a set of modifications that take place in the objectives, content, criteria and evaluation procedures, activities and methodology to meet students' individual differences" (p.154, Author's free translation). In Brazil, curriculum adaptations are seen from another perspective. In the words of Aranha (2002), the adjustments "must be political measures, administrative, technical and technological, which should be implemented to meet the educational needs of each student" (p.123, Author's free translation).

Regardless of the definition, the aim is to provide conditions in which all students can be accepted and receive fulfilling and rewarding education (González, 2004). It's important to emphasize that, unlike the procedures and scope of the events that define adaptation, flexibility is linked to the possibility to modify the curriculum, displacing it from traditional rigidity. (Beyer, 2006).

Thus, the adequacy can not be understood as mere modification or addition of complementary activities in the curriculum.

⁵ "As adaptações curriculares constituirão a construção das vias de acesso ao currículo, apontadas por Vygotsky como um meio de construção de caminhos alternativos que permitirão ao aluno ascender aos conhecimentos escolares. As adaptações curriculares podem desenvolver-se em vários níveis que vão desde o poder Central, ao local, ao do Projecto Educativo de Escola, às programações de aulas e às necessidades individuais de cada aluno. (p.23)"[original passage, with free translation of authors].

It requires that the estimated changes relevant in teaching practice are aligned with the principles and guidelines of the Political and Educational Project and the goal of a quality education for all students (Moss, 1996; Deane & Tumber, 1998; Heacox, 2006). This inclusion perspective will require a restructuring of the school and the curriculum in order to allow all students with different abilities, interests, characteristics and needs learn together (Correia, 2005). By analyzing the curriculum modifications, González (2007) added that the individualized curriculum adaptations are the consequences of the adaptation of the proposed curriculum to each educational situation – in this case, personal and individual character.

In general, the emphasis in the curriculum adjustments is on the methodological aspects of teaching than the content itself (Tomlinson, 2008). The inclusion or adaptation of teaching resources in teaching strategies and objectives illustrate pedagogical practices in everyday school life that can be considered curricular adjustments, which cover not exclusionary practices and enable the learning of all students.

From the perspective of inclusive education, the right to take ownership of knowledge from the school curriculum should be guaranteed to the students, regardless of their condition, which is relevant to their life and schooling (Capellini, 2004, Glat & Oliveira, 2003; Abarca Sos, 2013). This historically accumulated knowledge, provided and transmitted through the curriculum, is intentionally selected to promote the socialization of knowledge with a clear commitment to cultural elevation of the masses (Saviani, 2008).

In the collection entitled *Adaptaciones Curriculares*, published by Manzano et al. (2002), the importance of adapting the basic curriculum was explained and the authors state that the educational responses will be as more assertive as the teachers are able to identify the student`s needs.

In Brazilian school system, teachers report that they have difficulties to implement the curriculum adaptations to suit all students, they sometimes even offer different activities, however, they aren`t classified as curriculum adaptations (Gomes, 2012; Silveira, Enumo, & Rosa, 2012; Freitas & Araujo, 2014).

Recent studies (Capellini, 2004; Ferreira, 2006; Jesus, 2009, Capellini & Rodrigues, 2009, Silva, 2011; Fonseca, 2011) have pointed to the challenges and difficulties of implementing an inclusive culture in the school environment. Besides that, it has shown a scenario in which teachers claimed not to feel prepared to handle the work at heterogeneous classes.

This sensation may be related to the wrong belief that homogeneity sets a good pedagogical strategy (Crahay, 2007), which contradicts the principles of inclusion. In the view of Davis et al (1989)

“[...] the difference between individuals of a certain group is seen as primordial to the social interaction that will take place in the classroom: without this inequality it would not be possible to exchange experiences and, consequently, to extend the cognitive abilities by shared effort in the search for common solutions” (p.53)⁶.

Adding to this scenario the lack of clarity in the official documents of Brazilian Ministry of Education, which should guide the actions in Inclusive Education, one consequence of this obscurity of educational policies in Brazil can be viewed in the ineffective way in which schools are organized to meet the diversity and academic needs of students, especially the ones with educational special needs.

⁶ [...] a diferença entre indivíduos de um certo grupo, é tida como fundamental para a própria interação social que irá se dar em sala de aula: sem esta desigualdade não seria possível a troca, e conseqüentemente o alargamento das capacidades cognitivas pelo esforço partilhado, na busca de soluções comuns. (p.53)” [original passage, with free translation of authors].

The literature review of Leite, Borelli and Martins (2013) analyzed the last decade of Brazilian publications on the curriculum subject and it demonstrated a shortage of strategies for effective Inclusive Education. On data obtained by those authors, it was observed an emphasis in theoretical reflections and research involving or validating didactic and pedagogical experiences on curriculum adaptations was practically non-existent.

This finding showed the lack of Brazilian literature in reporting professional experiences which could clarify and operationalize inclusive practices, including those related to curriculum adaptations. According to Furini (2006), teaching experiences are valuable conditions because they are opportunities that develop the inclusion of experiences in the school environment and the knowledge from the everyday pedagogical practice procedurally.

However, Bransford, Derry, Berliner and Hammersness (2005) warn that the time of professional and teaching experience is not sufficient condition for educational and inclusive practices to take effect. According to the authors, some teachers can spend years without reflecting on their experience or showing a greater willingness to change their skills in order to meet the challenges of everyday school life. Thus, the professional competence to educate and make adjustments is not merely achieved over time. Without reflecting on the action, it is impossible to have a better pedagogical practice (Berliner, 1986) and to this end it is important to have a constant and continuing teaching education project (Bransford, Derry, Berliner, & Hammersness, 2005).

Vonk (1996), a Dutch author with over a decade of research on beginning teachers, affirmed that there is a transition from a beginner teacher up to an autonomous teacher: "The integration can best be understood as part of a continuing professional development process for teachers". (p. 115, Author's free translation)

Another issue that involves beginning teachers refers to the establishment of a personal and professional identity through teaching practice (Furini, 2006). At the beginning, they get to know the "school culture" (Kennedy, 1999), which may cause a "shock" (Veenman, 1984), subsequently experienced as a period of intense learning.

Considering the importance of knowledge about inclusive practices and curricular adjustment, time of teaching experience (in Education and Special Education) and the possible interrelationship between them, the essential questions of this work are: what do education professionals (teachers, mostly) with different professional experience time say about curriculum adaptations? Are there differences between more and less experienced professionals in the reporting of curriculum adjustments? Do more experienced teachers (in Education and/or Special Education) make more adjustments than beginning teachers?

1.1 Objectives

This study aimed to identify what the participants of continuing education course, in distance mode, say about curriculum adaptations and which adjustment categories are more present in the performance of such professionals with different time of experience in Education and Special Education. It also aimed to compare whether groups with different experiences differed as to the implementation of inclusive practices related to the curriculum (in this case, the curricular adjustments).

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Nine hundred and four school workers enrolled in a distance teaching continuing education program with emphasis on inclusive educational practices for students with intellectual disabilities were part of this research.

This distance teaching continuing education program is named “Práticas Educacionais Inclusivas na área da Deficiência Intelectual” (“Inclusive Educational Practices in the area of Intellectual Disability”) and is promoted by “Ministério de Educação e Cultura – MEC” (Brazilian Education and Culture Ministry) and “Universidade Estadual Paulista – UNESP” (a State University located in Bauru, Sao Paulo).

All graduates of the sixth edition of the course who signed the clarified term of consent were admitted as participants of the research, which correspond to 71.35% of the total of students registered in the database. The ethical guidelines were taken.

2.2 Materials

The material consists of a term, a form and a questionnaire. The clarified term of consent form was a document delivered to the course participants, who declared consent to the participation of research related to the aforementioned improvement course. The form contained socio-demographic identification questions, school education, area of expertise, professional experience of working time and experience with Special Education audience. The questionnaire on curriculum settings was also used in the study Fonseca (2011) and will be described on the next page.

The questionnaire had a list of 34 educational practices and it was designed based on the literature (Majón, 1997; Palomino & Gonzalez, 2004; Coll, 2004; Glat, 2007; Minetto, 2008). These items were considered important in the regular classroom teacher practice to provide the opportunity for access to content and goals proclaimed in education planning – common curriculum of the classroom, considering significant and non-significant curriculum adjustments.

Significant adjustments refer to the previous planning considering specifics of the contents and adjustments in education planning for the development of pedagogical practice. Non-significant adjustments to the curriculum reflect everyday actions generated from previous planning or specific features such as reorganization of practice and developed activities, which should be routinely implemented in pedagogical practice.

2.3 Procedures for Data Collection

The fifth module of the course dealt with the theme “Flexible curriculum and learning styles,” in which the course participants should share a work experience as one of the evaluation activities. This proposal was to plan and implement a didactic sequence with curricular adaptations for students in the class. After completing the activity, the course participants should answer an online questionnaire and indicate which curricular adjustments they have already made or are using in their practice.

The link (<http://eduespecial.com.br/index.php>) of the questionnaire was available online and the course participants had 15 days to respond it. From the responses, the data were tabulated and analyzed.

2.4 Procedures for Data Analysis

Data were recorded in the course electronic base and then exported to a *Statistical Package for the Social Science* (SPSS) software, version 21.0. Through this statistical package, statistical analyzes were conducted to characterize the sample, comparing groups` scores (with different professional experiences in Education and Special Education) and identifying possible correlations between variables.

The socio-demographic data were submitted to a descriptive analysis, averaging, standard deviation and percentage.

The questionnaire was recorded in score per item: assigning “1” to situations in which the participant reported curricular adjustment and “0” when it was not made; this score could provide a measurement of how the participants performed significant, non-significant and total adjustments.

The scores quantified by the instrument were crossed with some variables and specific statistical tests were applied to compare groups and correlations.

To check if there were statistically significant differences between the groups with professional experience, the analysis of variance test (ANOVA) was used and the significance level considered was less than 5% ($p < 0.05$). The multiple comparison Tukey test was implemented when a significant difference was identified in order to determine which groups differed from the others.

The analysis of correlations between variables "time experience" (in Education and Special Education) and "scores in curricular adjustments" was made using the Pearson correlation test. It was assumed that the significance level should also be less than 5% ($p < 0.05$).

3. Results

3.1 Population Characterization

The analysis of socio-demographic data allowed creating the profile outline of the study participants. In general, the sample consisted of 890 women (98.5%) and 14 men (1.5%), aged between 22 to 68 years (Mean=39.25, Standard Deviation=7.78, Mode=33).

There was a concentration of students from the State of São Paulo ($n=665$, 73.6%), followed by Paraná ($n=64$, 7.1%) and Federal District ($n=38$, 4.2%). Only 2.54% of the course participants were from the Northeast, distributed among the states of Alagoas ($n=4$), Bahia ($n=9$), Ceará ($n=6$), Pernambuco ($n=2$), Piauí and Rio Grande do Norte (both $n=1$).

Regarding formal education, 93.4% had completed higher education degree ($n=844$), 4% ($n=36$) were finishing their graduation and 0.4% ($n=4$) had only the Magisterium level. Seventeen participants (1.88%) reported being in graduate courses at masters and doctoral level, whether completed or in progress.

The remainder ($n=3$, 0.33%) declared primary and secondary education (complete or incomplete), corresponding to the education level of school support staff.

About the professional profile, the majority (87.4%, $n=790$) stated that was linked to public schools. There was a prevalence of teachers who worked in Primary Education ($n=357$, 39.5%), in kindergarten and pre-school ($n=232$, 25.7%) and Resource rooms ($n=119$, 13.2%). Middle school teachers represented 5.1% of the sample ($n=46$) and the other teachers (Arts, Physical Education and School Reinforcement) corresponded to 1.66% ($n=15$).

Only 3.1% ($n=28$) reported acting as specialized teachers in Special Education and being involved in a special school context. The 107 remaining participants (11.84%) reported technical and administrative functions in schools (such as school administration, teaching coordination, administrative and technical support).

Regarding the education time of experience, 41.6% ($n=376$) attested to have 10-20 years of experience, 26.9% ($n=243$) five to ten years, 16.3% ($n=147$) one to five years and 12.6% ($n=114$) has over 20 years of experience. The remaining 24 participants reported little (up to one year) or no experience in education ($n=12$, 1.3% of the sample).

When it comes to Special Education experience, the observed sampling distribution was: 41% ($n=371$) had no experience; 17.9% ($n=162$) had up to one year; 22% ($n=199$) had one to five years; 10.5% ($n=95$), had five to ten years; 6.3% ($n=57$) had ten to 20 years. Only 2.2% ($n=20$) had over 20 years of experience in Special Education.

3.2 Comparing the Groups with Education Experience

Comparing the groups with different professional experiences in Education, statistically significant differences were found for two of the categories of curricular adjustments. Table 1 summarizes the mean (M), standard deviation (SD) and significance level (p) of the groups for each category of curriculum adjustment.

Table 1: Results of the Comparison between the Groups According to the Experience in Education in Regard to Non-Significant Adjustment Score, Significant Adjustment Score and Total of Adjustments

	Experience in Education												F	p
	No experience (n=12)		Up to 1 year (n=12)		1 to 5 years (n=147)		5 to 10 years (n=243)		10 to 20 years (n=376)		> 20 years (n=114)			
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Non-significant adjustment score	21.83	2.29	20.58	2.97	20.86	2.49	21.04	2.28	21.29	2.01	21.26	1.80	1.47	0.20
Significant adjustment score	8.33	0.65	6.83	1.80	7.73	1.03	7.98	0.99	8.01	0.95	7.99	0.85	5.42	0.00**
Total of adjustments	30.17	2.25	27.42	3.92	28.59	3.10	29.02	2.82	29.31	2.46	29.25	2.14	3.03	0.01*

M=Mean; SD=Standard Deviation; F=values from ANOVA; p=significance; *p<0.05; **p<0.001

The results show that there are no significant differences between the groups (p=0.2) regarding “non-significant” adjustment score. The groups that reported more “non-significant” adjustments were the ones with “no experience” in education (M=21.83 ± 2.29), followed by the ones with ten and 20 years (M=21.29 ± 2.01) and the over 20 years of experience in education group (M=21.26 ± 1.80). Professionals with “up to one year” of experience in the area were the least reported non-significant adjustments (M=20.58 ± 2.97). Professionals with one year of experience in the area were those who reported less non-significant adjustments (M=20.58 ± 2.97).

Comparing the groups according to the scores in the “significant” and “total” curricular adjustments categories, it’s possible to observe a lower statistical significance level of 5%, which suggests that groups with professional experience in education were different in those categories. The difference between them is in a significance level of 0.001 for the significant adjustment score and 0.05 for total of adjustments.

The Tukey test was used to demonstrate the level of significant difference in the groups. Table 2 presents the level of significance in the comparison between them.

Table 2: Level Of Significance in the Comparison between Groups by Experience in Education Regarding to Significant Adjustment Score

	No experience	Up to 1 year	1 to 5 years	5 to 10 years	10 to 20 years	> 20 years
No experience		.002*	.307	.824	.874	.858
Up to 1 year			.028*	.001**	.001**	.001**
1 to 5 years				.136	.033*	.257
5 to 10 years					.998	1.000
10 to 20 years						1.000
> 20 years						

*p<0.05; **p<0.001

The groups “no experience” and “up to 1 year” showed significant differences (p=0.002) in the Tukey test. This result showed that there were differences between them, and the group of “up to 1 year” made less significant adjustments (M=6.83 ±1.80) than those who had “no experience” in education (M=8.33 ± 0.65).

Still about the category of significant adjustment scores, mean comparisons of the group “up to 1 year” with the other groups showed significant differences ($p < 0.05$) for five groups. Thus, it is suggested that all groups with experience in education that have over one year – “1 to 5 years” ($M = 7.73 \pm 1.03$), “5 to 10 years” ($M = 7.98 \pm 0.99$), “10 to 20 years” ($M = 8.01 \pm 0.95$) and “over 20 years” ($M = 7.99 \pm 0.85$) – make more significant adjustments than the group of “up to 1 year” ($M = 6.83 \pm 0.65$).

It is also possible to observe a significant difference between groups of “1 to 5 years” and “10 to 20 years” ($p = 0.033$) for the category significant adjustment score. Based on the analysis of the mean and standard deviation of these groups, it is noted that the group of “10 to 20 years” of experience in education ($M = 8.01 \pm 0.95$) made more adjustments considered significant than the group “1 to 5 years” ($M = 7.73 \pm 1.03$).

The “total of adjustments” represents the sum of the scores of non-significant and significant adjustments, which highlighted the significant difference between the different groups ($p = 0.01 < 0.05$).

When this difference between groups was statistically analyzed (using the Tukey test), a significance level was indicated ($p = 0.049$) only in the comparison between group “1 to 5 years” ($M = 28.59 \pm 3.10$) and “10 to 20 years” ($M = 29.31 \pm 2.46$). Table 3 shows the level of statistical significance for comparisons between groups in the “total adjustments” category.

Table 3: Level of Significance in the Comparison between Groups by Experience in Education with Regard to the Scores in Total of Adjustments

	No experience	Up to 1 year	1 to 5 years	5 to 10 years	10 to 20 years	> 20 years
No experience		.115	.353	.688	.880	.868
Up to 1 year			.687	.323	.149	.204
1 to 5 years				.630	.049*	.333
5 to 10 years					.772	.969
10 to 20 years						1.000
> 20 years						

* $p < 0.05$

3.3 Comparing the Groups with Special Education Experience

Comparisons of mean scores of adjustments based on the time experience in Special Education were also made. Table 4 shows the mean values (M), standard deviation (SD) and significance level (p) of the groups for each category of curriculum adjustment.

Table 4: Results of the Comparison between Groups by Experience in Special Education with Regard to the Scores in Non-Significant Adjustment Score, Significant Adjustment Score and Total of Adjustments

	No experience (n=371)		Up to 1 year (n=162)		1 to 5 years (n=199)		5 to 10 years (n=95)		10 to 20 years (n=57)		> 20 years (n=20)		F	p
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Non-significant adjustment score	21.15	2.21	20.96	2.36	21.25	1.95	21.08	2.21	21.16	1.93	21.80	2.09	0.72	0.61
Significant adjustment score	7.85	1.06	7.93	1.07	8.05	0.83	8.17	0.88	7.82	0.95	8.00	0.86	2.29	0.04*
Total of adjustments	29.01	2.76	28.88	2.92	29.30	2.39	29.25	2.62	28.98	2.39	29.80	2.50	0.89	0.49

M=Mean; SD=Standard Deviation; F=values from ANOVA; p=significance * $p < 0.05$

It was observed that there were no significant differences between groups as it comes to “non-significant adjustments” ($p = 0.61$).

Overall, the “non-significant” curricular adjustments were observed mainly in professionals who were integrated into the group over 20 years of experience in Special Education ($M = 21.8 \pm 2.09$), followed respectively by the groups “1 to 5 years” ($M = 21.25 \pm 1.95$), “10 to 20 years” ($M = 21.16 \pm 1.93$), “no experience” ($M = 21.15 \pm 2.21$), “5 to 10 years” ($M = 21.08 \pm 2.21$) and “up to 1 year” ($M = 20.96 \pm 2.36$).

After analyzing the “Total of adjustment” scores, no difference between groups was found ($p=0.49$). The group that made less adjustments was the “Up to 1 year” ($M=28.88\pm 2.92$), while the group “over 20 years” had the highest mean score of “Total of adjustment” ($M=29.80\pm 2.5$).

The groups with professional experience in Special Education differ from each other for the “significant adjustments” category ($p=0.04$). A thorough analysis that compared the means between these groups (Tukey test), displayed in Table 5, revealed that there was a statistical difference ($p=0.049$) only between the groups “No experience” and “5 to 10 years”, and professionals with “5 to 10 years” had more significant adjustments ($M=8.17\pm 0.88$) than those with “No experience” in Special Education ($M=7.85\pm 1.06$).

Table 5: Level of Significance in the Comparison between Groups by Experience in Special Education with Regard to the Scores in Total of Adjustments

	No experience	Up to 1 year	1 to 5 years	5 to 10 years	10 to 20 years	> 20 years
No experience		.968	.198	.049	1.000	.987
Up to 1 year			.840	.399	.985	1.000
1 to 5 years				.930	.648	1.000
5 to 10 years					.297	.982
10 to 20 years						.984
> 20 years						

* $p<0.05$

3.4 Correlations between time Experience and Curricular Adjustments

Correlation tests were conducted between “time experience” (in Education and Special Education) and the scores of the curricular adjustments categories (Non-significant adjustment score, Significant adjustment score and Total of adjustments). Table 6 shows the correlation coefficients between these variables (r) and the level of statistical significance (p) between them.

Table 6: Pearson Correlation between Time Experience (In Education and Special Education) and Non-Significant Adjustment Score, Significant Adjustment Score and Total of Adjustments

	Non-significant adjustment score		Significant adjustment score		Total of adjustments	
	r	p	r	p	r	p
Time experience in Education	.056	.093	.088	.008*	.078	.019*
Time experience in Special Education	.023	.499	.067	.044*	.043	.196

* $p<0.05$

The results indicate a correlation between “time experience in Education” and “significant adjustment score” ($r=0.88$, $p=0.08$) and “total of adjustments” ($r=0.078$, $p=0.019$) at the level of statistical significance ($p<0.05$). There was also a significant correlation between the “time experience in Special Education” and “significant adjustment score” ($r=0.067$, $p=0.044$).

It should be noted that although some correlations have achieved significance level ($0.067 < r < 0.088$, $p < 0.05$), they can not be considered to be high.

Thus, it is considered the positive and weak correlation between these variables, suggesting that they are correlated with the scores of curricular adjustments, but there are other variables involved in that product/result.

4. Discussion

The main goals of this study were to identify the issues that underlie curricular adjustments by education professionals reporting and compare them to their professional experience time. The results allowed drawing a picture of how the curricular adjustments in Brazilian context are conducted from the perspective of those professionals who participated in the continuing education course in the distance mode.

A first important aspect refers to the characterization of the participants. In general, there was a prevalence of women participants in the sample. This result is in agreement with the literature and confirms the feminization of work in the area of education, especially in the initial years of elementary education and early childhood education (Batista Neto & Freire, 2013).

The distribution of participants by professional performance should also be highlighted because it directly affects the results. Although mostly comprised of teachers (88.16%), there was a heterogeneous sample in which 107 participants were administrative and support staff. As this study aimed to investigate what all people enrolled in the continuing education course have said about curricular adaptations, these participants were not excluded of the analysis.

The participants without any training or teaching experience – such as the secretaries and support staff for example – indicated an important aspect of creating an inclusive school. In this regard integrating these participants to the study indicates the importance of involving the whole school community in the production of a culture of inclusive practice, which requires that all involved in this process are properly trained.

However, the responses of these participants may have altered the results and hampered the elucidation of some questions of this study, such as the relationship between time of teaching experience and the implementation of curricular adjustments. This issue was clearly noted when observing the scores of the total adjustments for each group, in which the group "no experience" – composed partly of these participants – had the highest average score. Since they are not in classrooms, their answers may have been given from their daily observations. Future studies may take this methodological care, conducting more specific studies with teachers only.

Whereas the majority of participants were teachers, it was noted that the number of participants without graduation was not even 1%, evidencing compliance with Brazilian law regarding higher education for teachers from the 1996 LDB – "Lei de Diretrizes e Bases" (Brazilian Law of Directives and Bases) (Brasil, 1996). Studies of Palomino and Gonzalez (2004) and Fonseca (2011) corroborate these findings, stating that teachers have college degrees mostly.

However, higher education can not guarantee that the teacher is able to perform curricular adaptations. The studies of Capellini (2004), Mineto (2008) and Milk, Borelli and Martins (2103) pointed precariousness in higher education or the lack of curricular adaptations subject in the curriculum or eminently theoretical subjects, with greater emphasis on legislation and/or in history than in pedagogical practices.

Although there has been an increase in the number of Special Education students in regular classes recently, almost half of the course participants of this study have not yet had any experience. The question that arises is whether it is given opportunity to all teachers, in an equitable manner, to interact and promote curricular adjustments for students that demand.

One hypothesis could be that the teacher that the school considers the most prepared is the one who ends up getting these students, making it difficult for everyone else to learn from this process.

By correlating the data, it was observed that the group that performed fewer adjustments was the one with less experience, which is worrying because this is the target that had the latest training, which allows us to infer about the fragility of initial teacher training.

Studies of Berliner (1986) and Bransford, Derry, Berliner and Hammersness (2005) also indicate this concern, considering the importance of investing in continuing education since the challenges of everyday school life are not always the object of analysis and reflection during the graduation courses.

The group that performed more adjustments was the most experienced one, which is also worrying: is it done on the basis of their empirically experience? What is the theoretical framework to ensure the learning of all students? Or do these professionals, even with extensive experience, sought specific training to adapt their practices to this “new” pedagogical practice that should include the learning of all students?

Overall, the percentage of professionals who make curriculum adjustments is low, especially because these results were generated from conducting an evaluation activity in an education training course. Do these professionals in their daily teaching practice plan, implement and evaluate adjustments? How do the implemented strategies favor the learning of all students?

5. Conclusions

As a result, significant differences were found among different groups of Regular Education for the categories “Significant adjustment score” and “total of adjustments” while the Special Education groups presented differences only in “Significant adjustment score”. There was also a positive and weak correlation between “time experience” and the categories of “adjustments”. The findings suggest that the time of professional experience favors curricular adjustments, but other factors that corroborated for the execution of these practices should be investigated.

6. References

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