RESEARCH FINDINGS ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL PLAN (PEI) AND THE SCHOOLING PROCESS OF YOUNG AND ADULT STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY

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Abstract
This article aims to discuss aspects of the Individual Educational Plan (PEI) [from here onwards the acronym IEP in English will be used] and the schooling process of young and adult students with a disability. Annotated Bibliography was the method used, where international studies available at Education Resources Information Centre – ERIC (ProQuest) were highlighted. After applying the chosen criteria, 8 studies were found. The results highlight the importance of planning and involvement beyond the school team, such as the family and students during the development and implementation of the IEP.

Keywords: special education, youth and adult education, individual educational plan

INTRODUCTION
The Individual Educational Plan (IEP) may be defined as the educational document developed to plan and follow up the development of Target Audience for Special Education (PAEE) [from here onwards the acronym TASE in English will be used] students in academic, personal, social, motor and professional areas, among others. On one hand, when applying an IEP, the teachers are able to better evaluate the development of the students and apply their revision periodically; and, on the other hand, the object students need to be re-evaluated in order to ensure the eligibility and the integrity of the plan (Glat & Pletsch 2013).

This is an educational plan developed to meet the individual needs of each student, describing their current level of academic performance and establishing learning objectives with deadlines to achieve them and for which support is needed to ensure progress in school. Thus, the IEP enables teachers to better evaluate the development of students, revising progress periodically in order to ensure its eligibility and integrity (Glat & Pletsch 2013).

The eagerness to eliminate educational exclusion is one of the great debates in the field of Education, in an attempt to find favourable alternatives to the inclusion and to the educational processes of the students. In the case of intellectual disability, the cognitive implications require specific demands for learning that include educational and evaluation practices appropriate for these learners. Usually, even after years of schooling, the academic and social advances are low (Glat, Vianna & Redig 2012).

Educational planning structured on the differentiation - the individualization being the means to respond to the individual needs of the learners - may favour the teaching and learning processes. The individualization should be understood as a contextualized action for the students who demand some specificity in the teaching and learning process (Glat, Vianna & Redig 2012).

The IEP is an example of individualized action planning Campos (2016), believes that the differentiation does not mean discrimination or the depletion of teaching practices for the students with an intellectual disability; rather, differentiation “is a tool that allied to the individualization process, may empower the development of these individuals” (Campos 2016, p.58). Moreover,

1 Its target audience for special education is students with disabilities, global developmental disorders and high skills / giftedness. In these cases and others, which imply specific functional disorders, special education works in conjunction with ordinary education, orienting towards meeting the special educational needs of these students (BRASIL, 2008).
An individualised educational planning, periodically evaluated and revised, which takes into consideration the student in their current level of skills, knowledge and development, chronological age, level of education already achieved and short, medium and long-term educational objectives. Family expectations and of the individuals themselves are taken into consideration (Glat, Vianna & Redig 2012, p. 84)

Thus, the IEP should establish aims and objectives which reflect the individual needs of the students; it should be related to the syllabus content, even if there are no restrictions preventing other functional content being added. The IEP should be designed by a team of collaborators that include the family, the student, the school team and the health professionals, when necessary. The team should also adopt strategies which improve the development of the learner, specify the functions and responsibilities of those involved, as well as forms of evaluation and adaptations, when necessary (Tannús-Valadão 2013).

In Brazil, some highlighted studies² about IEPs show how much such a document contributes to the organisation of teaching strategies in the schools and point out the adaptations needed in the syllabus.

Glat and Pletsch (2013) explain that in an IEP the teaching objectives are defined according to the syllabus adopted in the mainstream classroom and show the adjustments and adaptations needed for the learners to achieve the objectives established without prejudice to the learning. Thus, it is possible to think of teaching strategies and adaptations that may favour the learning process of all learners simultaneously.

Avila (2015), on the other hand, establishes that the proposition of collaborative training idealised by special education teachers and other teachers for the development and implementation of an IEP for students with an intellectual disability in the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro, from 2001 to 2012, significantly contributed to the teaching-learning process of teachers with these learners. Their study also includes issues of intellectual disability through the curricular adaptation and/or adjustment related to the students’ individual skills developed throughout the academic year.

Following this same trend, Campos (2016) warns that the process of inclusion of students with an intellectual disability is still complex and fragile, limited by the absence of collaborative work among the teachers, and poor teaching practices with no relation to the syllabus (curriculum scholar), which hinder the educational development of the students. Therefore, an IEP may help the process of inclusion for these students, so that the teaching organisations providing an IEP may make the syllabus more flexible and the learning more meaningful.

Furthermore, the educational propositions may be strengthened by the educational agents involved in the collaborative work for the construction and implementation of an IEP. It is necessary to have the involvement of the professionals and the family in order to develop this process to discuss evaluation and teaching-learning processes, consequently contributing to the inclusion process and development of the students and more responsibility and trust between the professionals throughout the educational action (Campos 2016).

In Brazil, there are guidelines created by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) for the development of individual educational plans. Although Brazilian legislation does not present a uniform model for IEPs, it recommends that the development of IEPs be in the hands of the special education teachers working in the SES “... in articulation with the other mainstream teachers, with the participation of the families and interfacing with the other health sector services, social work, among others necessary for the service” (Brasil 2009, p. 2).

The literature points out a difficulty in the educational management of the schools to organise the development process of IEPs, giving the example of the lack of clarity of the roles of the mainstream teachers and special education teachers during the implementation of an IEP, which contributes to each educational institution developing IEPs in their own way (Mascaro 2017).

According to the guidelines of the National Policy of Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education (Brasil 2008), all TASE students included in mainstream schools, should receive an educational complementation or supplementation offered by, with the consultation of a specialist teacher, the Specialised Educational Service (SES) preferably in a Multifunctional Resource Classes
(MRC), in the shift opposite their normal school hours [in Brazil, most schools run two separate and consecutive shifts of approximately 5 hours each, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon].

The SES service can be organized with different configurations, as in MRC or other possibilities, such as: itinerant teaching, collaborative consulting and collaborative teaching.

A MRC is a support service that offers complementary or supplementary assistance during the shift to the regular room. MRC has materials and equipment to serve students with different educational needs; therefore it requires that the teacher has the capacity to work with the diversity of students (MENDES, VILARONGA, ZERBATO, 2014).

As MRC's have become one of the most privileged actions in the context of Brazilian schools for the realization of SES, which can be complementary or supplementary services, but not substitute for common classes. However, there are doubts about how the work carried out at MRC could be organized. Another challenge is also the articulation of the teachers who work in the MRC with the teachers in the common room. According to Mendes, Vilaronga e Zerbato (2014, p. 27), “each Special Education teacher works in a different way, with no guideline to guide their different pedagogical practices”, although there are several regulations on this service.

The SES is granted to TASE students enrolled in mainstream schools; however, SES is not the only party responsible for the inclusion, but an integral part of the actions developed by the school. That is, it does not replace mainstream teaching and should be offered in the opposite shift of mainstream schooling. Nevertheless, the number of students in TASE has been increasing in the last few years, as a response to the same objectives of the public policies to attach the enrolment in mainstream schools as a guarantee of inclusion.

According to Resolution no. 4 (Brasil 2009):

Art. 2 ‘AEE’s’[SES’s] function is to complement or supplement the student’s training through the availability of services, accessibility resources and strategies that eliminate the barriers that prevent their full participation in society and the development of their learning.

It is understood that the SES proposes the elimination of the barriers that prevent the access to the syllabus and the development of the students; therefore, IEPs may contribute to the development of the organisations and the planning of the educational work for the students with a disability.

In several schools in Brazil the process of collaboration for the implementation of an IEP is still a challenge. Consequently, creating alternatives so these teachers may re-think their educational practice, be it within the SRM space or in the mainstream classroom, would enhance learning; moreover, it would make sense of school for the life of each student.

The objective of this work is to carry out a bibliographic research and describe the studies on the IEP directed at young people and adults with disabilities and reflect on their contributions to the schooling process.

DEVELOPMENT

In light of the proposed objective, this research has used the procedures of annotated bibliography understood by Marconi and Lakatos (1992, p. 43) as the investigation of bibliographical sources published, such as books, articles and journals, amongst others. According to the authors, this type of research enables “the researcher to get in direct contact with everything that has been written about a certain topic”, allowing them to know the information produced about a certain topic.

This article is part of a Master’s thesis about the Educational Planning for youth and adults in the context of Youth and Adult Education in Brazil.

When considering an IEP as an important strategy to be developed in schools for students with an intellectual disability, it is clear that there are few studies of adolescents and adults in Brazil. Consequently, the present study chose to analyse research in other countries, where IEPs were
implemented earlier and is more systematic.

Aiming at mapping out the international work about IEPs for young and adult learners with an intellectual disability, a search was made in the Education Resources Information Centre – ERIC (ProQuest) database, in April 2019, to analyse the international literature about the topic.

The following expressions were used for the search:

a. “individualised education program” OR “individualised education plan”;
b. “intellectual disability”;
c. “young* AND adult*s” NOT “children”.

780 items were found, which were filtered by:

a. Peer-reviewed (251 results)
b. Academic Journals (228 results)

The time period ranges from January 2014 until March 2019, identifying 56 items. After the selection, the summaries were read to select the studies that dealt with the topic being researched, that is, IEPs for youth and adults with a disability, resulting in the total of 8 studies described as follows.

DISCUSSION

Bray and Russell (2016) completed a comparative case study with five students with learning difficulties in secondary school in two different mainstream schools. Their objective was to examine how the participants interact during the IEP meetings. The results indicate that the meetings take place in a very similar way, although the contexts are different. Usually, the special educators participate more than the other members; there is little discussion and the use of very abstract language, which makes it difficult for the parents and students to understand. When the learning challenges were presented, they rarely resulted in discussions of what the school could do to meet these needs, through training, intervention strategies or syllabus change. Most of the time, the special educator would suggest something the parents or even the student could do at home to face the problem identified. It can be concluded that the involvement of the parents and the students in the IEP meetings is still very limited, that is, there is little involvement in the decision-making process about the educational services and support the student should receive.

Aiming at improving the participation of the students in the IEP meetings, Seong et al. (2015), completed a longitudinal study to analyse the impact of a program promoting the involvement of students with a disability with interventions about self-determination and empowerment. The participants were 143 students divided into two groups, recruited from 49 schools and 30 school districts in six states in the United States (Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas). ChoiceMake was used to support the students to improve their leadership skills and to actively participate in the IEP meetings. The results indicate that the students who received the training showed significant gains on the self-determination scores in relation to making choices, problem resolution, decision making, goal setting, self-defence and leadership, autonomy, self-regulation, psychological empowerment, among others. The interventions enabled the learners with a disability to portray their interests and the transition skills related to work and community life options and readiness.

Along the same lines, the study by Quann et al. (2015) aimed to implement a model with direct participation of the students to support and increase the expectations of self-determination and participation in IEPs. The participants were students with a disability in transition to secondary education. The one-year program involved the participation of the family and of mentors who helped the students to recognise when they needed to ask for help and obtain support. The results indicated that the program enabled greater IEP participation in the self-defence and reinforced the school focus. Also noticed was the beginning of a cultural change in how the school team saw the inclusion. Since then, the inclusion has been not only seen in the success in the classroom, but involved entering university
and the beginning of a career that would enable the student with a disability to become a competent adult.

Berg and Eisenberg (2018) developed a study to determine the relationship between IEP’s learning styles and the use of substances, such as tobacco, alcohol and marijuana. 122,128 students from Years 8, 9 and 10 took part in the study in the US state of Minnesota. The Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) was used for the data collection; it includes a variety of items, such as activities, experiences and behaviour, as well as investigating whether the learner did or did not have an IEP. The results indicated that the students who had an IEP were more likely to consume cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana. The authors suggest the need for teachers to be prepared to develop substance use prevention programs for students with an IEP, considering that the schools are a place of natural intervention and the syllabuses may include prevention and quitting the use of these substances.

Greene’s (2018) study was designed to help special education teachers and transition teams to write the Individual Transition Plan (ITP). The author discusses some evaluation tools and also presents an example of an ITP, considered a model of transition evaluations used and the results of transition evaluation. With this study, the author hopes to share a few possibilities of high-quality evaluation resources which may be used, as well as favouring and enhancing the ITP’s quality and compatibility, based on the results of the evaluations.

Van Laarhoven-Myers et al. (2014) designed a study aimed to evaluate the students’ and parents’ perspectives in relation to the participation in a project developed through multimedia resources to prepare young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities for self-determination and leadership skills activities. 100 students - aged from 18 to 21 years old - and their parents took part in the study. It was held in three secondary education schools, for 3 years, in conjunction with a transition program based in the community. The model organised by the team was guided, indicating the preferences, needs and support within various aspects of life, such as daily life, work, community participation and communication. The results indicated that the students and the parents were happy with the program. For the students, the items related to the choice of the activities - such as to showing what they wanted to do with their lives, what they would like to do after school and showing how people could help them achieve these objectives - were better ranked.

A study by Cavendish and Connor (2018) was designed to examine the perspectives about the influencing factors on the involvement of the students and their parents in an IEP’s transition planning. The participants were 16 secondary school students, 9 parents and 17 special education and mainstream teachers. A mixed method of study was used with the interviews and the Student Involvement Survey (SIS) was used to measure the level of perception of school support to facilitate the student’s engagement in the planning of their own education and the development of their IEP and transition plans. Rasch’s classification scale was used to analyse the data and to determine the unidimensionality of the initial SIS measure. Meanwhile, the interviews were analysed through constant comparison. Results indicated that in the students’ perception there was no difference in relation to the efforts to facilitate their involvement and their parents’ in the education process. However, the qualitative analysis of the interviews suggests current challenges, such as a lack of specific consideration of individual targets for graduation or a career; few students attend IEP meetings; difficulty to combine IEP meetings with the parents. The study compared the students’, teachers’ and parents’ perspectives in relation to the practices that hinder or facilitate the parents’ and students’ involvement in the IEP meetings.

The importance of the students’ and parents’ engagement in the IEP meetings is the focus of Cavendish, Connor and Rediker’s study (2017). The authors suggest to teachers a guide to focus and promote the participation and the leadership of the students in this process. The authors’ guide models activities to be developed with the parents and the students before, during and after the development of an IEP. In summary, the authors champion the idea that IEP’s development and implementation process is not a simple bureaucratic process, but yet another opportunity to place the learner in the centre of their educational planning in which they can also plan their future. Therefore, teachers have the role of positively supporting the students in this process.
CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDIES ANALYSED

The research data highlights, mainly, the role of the student and their Family in IEPs and points out the challenges still present in the consolidation of this development as well as alternatives to increase the participation, as the educators can organise the IEP development meetings to include the family and the student’s participation. It also argues important aspects for the development of the individual transition plans, presenting evaluation possibilities that may support the design of educational plans.

The analyses of the studies show the IEP’s importance in taking over the schooling process of youth and adults with an intellectual disability; hence, the students and their parents should take part in the discussions about their future and defend their interests and wishes in relation to schooling and the transition process.

IEPs are also an alternative to develop other skills other than access to the curriculum, such as increasing the levels and expectations of self-determination and self-defence of young learners with a disability. Such skills should be included in a transition plan. Thus, the school team and the family need to work toward the development of skills as a means to promote a transition that will ensure more autonomy for the young learners after school. Consequently, activities held outside the school arena may be included, in the community or in the student’s residence.

Considering the development of the ability to live independently, the studies analysed highlight that the transition plan for the students who have an IEP comprises expected goals for the academic year; goals after the end of secondary education; the development of professional and career skills; and the ability to live as independently as possible. Both the parents and the students should take part in the discussions about the transition services; moreover, they should be informed about the progress achieved and the actions that should be taken to achieve the desired goals.

An IEP is geared towards the context of educational actions directed at students with a disability. Thus, it is seen as an alternative that enables educators to plan and organise proposals more directed at curricular access. This research continues to follow these steps, that is, IEPs guided towards the implementation in the mainstream classroom and in the specialised educational service of a female student with an intellectual disability.

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