



Convergences and Divergences of Special Education and Social Education

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Abstract

This study aims to assess the convergences and divergences of Special Education and Social Education in a school context, seeking to investigate the relationship between these two domains in a school context and understand how Higher Social Education Technicians (TSES) and teachers of Special Education perceive these relationships in the work they develop with students. A sample composed of seven Special Education teachers and seven Higher Social Education Technicians (TSES) from different geographical areas of Portugal was studied. As a data collection instrument, we used the questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The results obtained made it possible to sustain the relationship and complementarity between Special Education and Social Education, looking at the student as a whole, considering the educational, social, personal, cultural and psychological dimensions.

Keywords: *Special Education; Social Education; Inclusion*

Introduction

Considering different spaces, times and forms of learning, education can be classified into three categories, namely, formal education, non-formal education and informal education. Formal education takes place in school institutions, is organized following a national curriculum, rules and laws, divided into disciplinary areas, it is a type of education whose main objective is to obtain a qualification certificate. Cascais & Terán (2014) Non-formal education develops in “educational situations (non-formal or informal) that are distinct and demarcated from the school format.” (Canário, 2006, p. 198). Finally, informal education is a continuous process, through which human beings acquire and accumulate knowledge and skills, based on daily experiences and contact with the surrounding environment. Cascais & Terán (2014), taking place in contexts that do not have education as their primary intention.

After analyzing the concept of education, we will focus on Special Education. According to Correia (2008), this is defined as a set of resources that must provide specialized services and support

designed to respond to the special needs of a student based on their characteristics and with the aim of working on their potential. These services are carried out in the classroom or outside, with the aim of prevention, reduction and supervision. The term “Special Education” connects school, family and community resources, managing to meet all the needs of students with special educational needs. The objective is to promote learning environments that allow students with educational needs to achieve high levels of success in their academic, socio-emotional and personal independence paths.

When we talk about social and community inclusion, the role that Social Education plays in this dimension is especially educational needstial, considering it as a progressive and continuous configuration of the individual to achieve their development and personal autonomy and achieve participation in society (Ortega, 1999 , cited by Correia, Martins, Azevedo and Delgado, 2014).

Social Education thus aims to empower those with whom it develops its work (individuals, groups, communities) so that there is real social integration, intervening and causing changes whether at a personal, interpersonal level, in the family, at school or in other institutions, with effective change and development.

Social Education plays a fundamental role in the intervention of school education and the integration of the individual into society, favoring their insertion among individuals in the community. The articulation of Social Education with school education is an added value, since school education, being a transmitter of knowledge, must pay special attention to the cultural context in which it is circumscribed, requiring a school culture of a social and global scope in which the individual (student) develops skills and values.

Inclusion assumes that all children and young people have an educational response in an environment that allows them to develop their abilities. “Inclusion in education means ensuring that all students feel valued and respected, and that they can enjoy a true special educational needs of belonging” (UNESCO, 2020, p. 7).

The principle of inclusive school is comprehensive, as it allows equal opportunities for all children and young people of all physical, social and cultural conditions, that is, regardless of belief, ethnicity, culture, economic condition, whether they have it or not. disability, where the quality and success of teaching are equal for everyone (Sanchez, 2001).

The creation of inclusive schools involves three dimensions that stand out: the ethical dimension, referring to the main values that are found; the dimension relating to the implementation of educational policy measures and the dimension relating to educational practices.

The Incheon Declaration reaffirmed Education for All, reiterated in Dakar (2000), which has made a significant contribution to the promotion and progress in education and the defense of other human rights, with there still being a long way to go.

Methodology

One of the aspects of Social Education that interests us is the construction of the Person, the outline of a life project and one of the focuses of work for all those who work with children and young people with disabilities or learning difficulties, it seemed urgent to us analyze and reflect on the articulation that must be made and the “bridges” that can be built between Social Education and Special Education.

In this way, the core of this article intends to assess the complementarity between Special Education and Social Education, with the starting question of this article being:

“What are the convergences and divergences between Special Education and Social Education?”, particularly in the school context.

The delineation of the objectives of this article meets the guiding question, so the general objective of this study can be formulated as follows:

- Understand the convergences and divergences between Social Education and Special Education.

When defining the main objective, other objectives emerge emerging from this complementarity between Special Education and Social Education, namely:

- Identify what type of action Special Education has that coincides with the work of Higher Social Education Technicians;
- Identify what type of action Social Education has that coincides with the work of Special Education Teachers.
- Establish the interconnection between the areas of activity of Special Education and Social Education.

This type of study can be defined in terms of its nature as qualitative research, as it “deals with phenomena: it provides for the hermeneutic analysis of the collected data” (Apollinário, 2004, p. 151). In this special educational needs, Gonsalves (2003) highlights that qualitative research enables the understanding and interpretation of the phenomenon, “considering the meaning that others give to their practices, which imposes on the researcher a hermeneutic approach”. In this type of research, the researcher's interpretation is of crucial importance.

Depending on the objectives we set out to achieve, we launched the challenge to Special Education teachers from several schools in the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon (counties of Lisbon, Sintra and Seixal), located in different socioeconomic contexts, in order to respond to questionnaire surveys in the total of seven teachers. Two Special Education teachers were interviewed.

At the level of Higher Social Education Technicians (TSES), we special educational needsthe questionnaires to several technicians, seven of whom responded. Two Special educational needsior Social Education Technicians (TSES) were interviewed.

The instruments used for data collection were questionnaire surveys and semi-structured interviews with study participants.

The analysis of questionnaire surveys was carried out by preparing analysis grids for open questions, which included their contents, structured by categories, subcategories, indicators and frequency, which were prepared based on the transcription of the answers given. . (Tables 2 and 3)

On the other hand, at the interview level, grids were also created based on parameters that comparatively analyzed the two professionals targeted for interview. (Table 1)

When interpreting the data collected, we aim to promote objectivity in its design.

The analysis grids are supported by content analysis by categories which, according to Bardin (1977), works through operations of breaking the text into units, categories according to analogical

regroupings. Among the different possibilities of categorization, the investigation of themes, or thematic analysis, is quick and effective if applied to direct and simple speeches (manifest meanings).

Table 1 – Semi-structured Interview Responses

	Social Education	Special education
Academic education	Degree in Social Education,	Degree in Modern Languages and Literature and Specialization in Special Education (Cognitive and Motor Domain) Degree in Philosophy, Postgraduate in Citizenship Education, Specialization in Special Education (Cognitive and Motor Domain), Master's and Doctorate in Distance Education and E-Learning, Master's in Pedagogical Supervision.
Professional experience	Social context: risky behaviors, integration problems, risk of dropping out of school, Contexts in disadvantaged socioeconomic environments - students from different ethnicities and dysfunctional families, risky behaviors.	Different pathologies: Autism, Cognitive Impairment, PDHA, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Cerebral Palsy, DAMP. Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Specific language problems (dyslexia, dysorthography), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity, Global developmental problems, Selective mutism.
Professional Practices	Teamwork, development of a socio-educational intervention, complement each other in terms of inclusion, social inclusion work.	Special Education teams help students with special educational needs, complementing the improvement of students' learning paths.
Interconnection between the two areas	Areas must contribute to the acquisition of tools, activities and projects, areas, development of educational, social and psychological skills, life projects that value people.	Without a doubt yes; Yes, the complementarity between specific areas will certainly bring benefits to all students, particularly those who have more learning difficulties.
Biggest challenges	Lack of financial and technical resources, little knowledge of the work of the TSES, lack of responses from competent entities, lack of resources necessary to work with students with difficulties.	Better conditions to support them are more reduced classes, being part of a truly disciplinary team, teachers with reduced hours.

Source: Prepared by the authors

Table 2 – Questionnaire responses by survey of Special Education teachers

Category	Subcategory	Registration	Frequency
Learning	Lifelong learning Comprehensive view of the student Holistic vision Success facilitator	<p>“The holistic view of the student.”</p> <p>“The integrated, holistic educational response. Not only Special Education must be related to Social Education, but with other areas such as psychology and health.”</p> <p>“We are citizens and we belong to a community. Respect for each person is all-encompassing. Specific needs are inevitable for everyone throughout life.”</p> <p>“Both need to know and know how to analyze environmental, family, and social factors that facilitate or hinder the individual’s evolution.”</p> <p>“For the success of any intervention, coordination between various actors is a facilitator of success.”</p> <p>“The holistic view of the student.”</p>	5 people
Intervention	Social intervention Integration into school/society and community Socio-educational intervention Intervention - School, family and health	<p>“The TSES aims to provide social intervention to citizens.”</p> <p>“Special Education and Social Education constitute inseparable intervention responses, with the aim of removing barriers to the student inclusion process.”</p> <p>“Special Education will give more tools to students with special educational needs so that they can integrate more easily into society.”</p> <p>“Special Education represents a vital importance for Social Education in order to provide the necessary tools for social changes and educational intervention strategies.”</p> <p>“The intervention focuses on the relationship between contexts - School, Family and Health.”</p>	7 people
Social problems	Conflict issue Social questions Behavior problems Children and young people at risk	<p>“TSES seeks, like the Special Education Teacher, to integrate students with disabilities or who are behaviorally problematic, into society.”</p> <p>“Seeking to integrate the student into society, trying to correct inappropriate behaviors.”</p>	4 people
Factors	Environmental factors Evolution of the individual	<p>“They need to know and know how to analyze environmental, family, and social factors that facilitate or harm the individual’s evolution.”</p> <p>“In analyzing environmental factors, it is necessary to establish a psycho-pedagogical intervention plan, establish a therapeutic and pedagogical intervention plan, establish an intervention strategy.”</p>	1 people

Inclusion	Inclusion Social articulation Deficiency Smaller classes Lack of resources (support, assistants, organization)	<p>“The Social Educator is an agent of change and can develop work in the area of social inclusion, through articulation with other agents of change, namely psychologists, social workers and educators.”</p> <p>“Through the inclusion of students in society, promoting their autonomy, integration and active participation.”</p> <p>“In less serious situations where there is no need for more specialized intervention, such as with students with disabilities.”</p>	5 people
Working with families	Coordination with families Parental failure to appear Parental Education Project Working with family and school	<p>“Response to the student and response to family context.”</p> <p>“Some problems prespecial educational needed by students relate to issues of relationships and school integration or lack of parental skills.”</p> <p>“The intervention focuses on the relationship between school, family and health contexts.”</p>	3 people
Development	Development of personal and social autonomy skills Social development	<p>“Both areas work towards student success, one aspect more focused on the development of academic skills and the other on their social development.”</p> <p>“The Special Education Teacher has a very comprehensive role, not limited to aspects of the student’s personal and academic development.”</p> <p>“The development of personal and social autonomy skills for students with educational needs.”</p> <p>“There may be “crossover” at the level of development of personal and social autonomy competence.”</p>	2 people

Source: Prepared by the authors

Table 3 – Questionnaire responses by survey of Social Education Technicians (TSES)

Category	Subcategory	Registration	Frequency
Socialization	Integration Family Community Student	<p>“The Social Educator can help with the socialization of people with SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS.”</p> <p>“The contribution to working with families and the community is crucial to this internalization.”</p> <p>“The Social Educator must be a bridge</p>	7 people

		<p>between the student with SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS, family, community and school community.”</p> <p>“When the areas are interconnected, they work with students as a whole, that is, at a pedagogical, social and family level.”</p>	
Inclusion	<p>Inclusive education Inclusive Education for all Person-centered approach Inclusion/peer socialization</p>	<p>“Interconnection for the total development of inclusive education.”</p> <p>“Inclusion implies connection and this connection can be made by the Higher Social Education Technician (TSES).”</p> <p>“It encourages teamwork between peers and collaboration between teachers. A student’s success requires the various professionals to work as a team.”</p>	6 people
Construction of the person	<p>Development and quality of life Full development Fulfillment of the person Life behavior/Construction of one's own person</p>	<p>“Work to develop individual skills is crucial when working with the entire school community.”</p> <p>“I work with the students themselves as well as with the school society”</p> <p>“The importance of developing social and socio-professional insertion skills, as well as others that enhance the construction of the person themselves.”</p>	7 people
Valuation	<p>Valuing non-formal education Individual appreciation, being individual and social Activities that work on values</p>	<p>“Valuing non-formal education and, once again, valuing the individual, as an individual and social being.”</p> <p>“Valuing difference, integration and respect.”</p>	6 people
Intervention	<p>Socio-educational intervention / Social insertion, professional partner</p>	<p>“Development of social and socio-professional insertion skills.”</p>	2 people
Teamwork	<p>Teamwork Group work - class Integration Work student/family/school community</p>	<p>“The social context of students targeted by EMAI teams, using support from various external institutions.”</p> <p>“Working with the students themselves, as well as the school society in general in which they are inserted.”</p> <p>“The work of multidisciplinary teams and a greater range of knowledge only brings</p>	6 people

		benefits to the greater success of the intervention as well as the evolution of the group or individual.” “Work focused on individual and group skills and complementarity.”	
Social problems	Behavior problems, little family support and bullying, Difference	“Students with SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS inserted in problematic socio-educational contexts, where parents have difficulties in dealing with students’ problems and in which the perspective of their future life project.”	2 people

Source: Prepared by the authors

Results and Discussion

The data that stand out in the questionnaire surveys of Special Education teachers are the categories “Learning” (Lifelong learning, integral/holistic view of the student)”, “Working with families” (Parental Education Project) and “Development” (Development of personal and social autonomy skills).

Regarding questionnaire surveys, applied to Social Education Technicians (TSES), the data that stand out are the categories “Socialization” (Integration, Family, Community), “Construction of the Person” (Total Development, Fulfillment of the person) and the “Valuation” (Individual valorization, individual and social being/ valorization of non-formal education), emphasizing that the TSES must be the bridge between the student with SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS, their family and the community (school/social), working the student in their whole (pedagogical, social and family dimensions), thus valuing the student as an individual and social being. Now, this fact is reinforced in the Preamble of Decree-Law n°54/2018 of July 6th.

Another important fact is that Social Education Technicians (TSES) value “Teamwork”, to the extent that working with families is only possible through teamwork between Special Education Teachers, teachers holding class/Class Director/Class Council, several technicians (psychologists, therapists, TSES, among others) and the EMAI team. There must be articulation and a network inside and outside the school (including with clinicians) so that everyone “heads” in the same direction, in the effective construction of the person/young person/child, regardless of their physical, psychological, social limitations and behavioral. This data is in line with Social Education, as “(...) integrating a body of knowledge originating from different disciplinary areas of the social and human sciences, it is assumed to be a confluence territory for research and educational and psychosocial action” (Timóteo & Bertão, 2012, p. 17).

Taking into account the holistic view of education as an approach that aims to understand the human being in an integral way, considering the human being as a whole, as a unique and complex individual, the educational process must take this dimension into account. It is necessary that the ultimate aim of education is to provide students with meaningful learning experiences, expanding their knowledge of what surrounds them, demonstrating to them that they have an important role in society and the greater knowledge they have, the better prepared they are to build their project. of future life in the development of their skills. The categories previously prespecial educational needsted by the two professional classes interviewed converge to an approach of the student as a Person as a Whole, considering:

- Integral holistic view of the student that presupposes the appreciation of the individual being in its multiple dimensions;
- Development of skills for the realization of the Person;
- Focus on networking between school/family/community/external entities.

According to the data collected by questionnaire surveys, three common categories are mentioned by Social Education teachers and Higher Education Technicians, namely, “Inclusion”, “Intervention” and “Social Problems”.

The “Inclusion” category highlights inclusive education and “Inclusion/peer socialization”, again referring to the “Person-centered approach”. On the other hand, they refer to Intervention (socio-educational), as Special Education and Social Education are domains with inseparable interventions that aim to remove barriers to the inclusion of students. Higher Social Education Technicians (TSES) highlight the importance of “Developing skills for social and socio-professional insertion.” In relation to Social Problems, both refer to behavioral issues, conflicts and social issues. This fact is evident in the Preface of the UNESCO Report (2020), which highlights that inclusion in education means ensuring that all students feel valued and respected, and that they can enjoy a true special educational needs of belonging.

It is worth noting, however, that the categories mentioned as “Learning”, namely the holistic view of education, “Socialization”, “Construction of the Person” converge into the domains of “Inclusion” and “Intervention”; which are only possible if there is, on the one hand, a relationship between the student/family/community within the scope of socialization; on the other hand, the holistic view of students presupposes previous mastery, but also work that goes beyond the programmatic contents of the different curricular subjects, but also focuses on the acquisition of skills and tools that come from a socio-educational intervention project, that enables a vision/project for a future life after completing their schooling. Hence the importance of Higher Social Education Technicians (TSES) in schools, since “The relational dimension of the social educator’s action develops close to the subjects’ daily lives” (Timóteo & Bertão, 2012, p. 21).

In this special educational needs, inclusive and equitable quality education must be ensured, and lifelong learning opportunities must be promoted for all (Incheon Declaration, 2015), requiring the action of all stakeholders in a socio-educational intervention project that promotes inclusion.

It should also be noted that in addition to students with certain pathologies, there are students with learning difficulties that are a reflection of the economic and sociocultural environment in which they are inserted, requiring real work in the integral dimension of the construction of the individual, where the action of the Higher Technician of Social Education (TSES) is crucial, as Social Education is “an action that promotes and dynamizes a society that educates and an education that integrates and that, in turn, helps through education to avoid or repair social difficulty or conflict” (Esteban, 2005, p. 111).

After detailed analysis of the data during the investigation, it seems that we can point out the convergences and divergences between Special Education and Social Education, according to the interviews and questionnaire surveys that we applied to Special Education teachers and Higher Education Technicians. Social (TSES):

Table 4 - Divergences and convergences between Special Education and Social Education

Special Education	Social Education
<p>Divergences</p> <p>Formal education</p> <p>Content-centered learning Success in the learning path (academic) Little information about the role of the TSES at Schools Team work with elements of Special Education Parental Education</p>	<p>Divergences</p> <p>Non-formal education</p> <p>Reinforcement of the prespecial educational needs of TSES in the EMAI team Teamwork with all those involved in the student's educational process Socialization Building a life project</p>
<p>Coverages</p> <p>Education Holistic vision Development of educational and social skills/acquisition of tools Socio-educational intervention Inclusive school Person-centered approach</p>	

Source: Prepared by the authors

In short, although Special Education and Social Education outline their action plans in the field of formal and non-formal education, respectively, both are peremptory in stating that their work must consider the student as a Person as a whole, that is, at a cognitive, social, emotional, psychological level, considering the context in which it is inserted. Higher Social Education Technicians (TSES) reinforce the construction of a life project insofar as education is the basis of an individual's life, developing their empowerment through knowledge and promoting changes in their autonomy in a society in need. constant mutation (Ortega, 1999, cited by Coelho, Carvalho and Mucharreira, 2019).

Conclusion

Education is the lever for the dissemination of social inequalities and a field of opportunities for everyone, regardless of their physical, mental, social, cultural and economic condition, taking into account the individuality of each person in their uniqueness and dignity.

In this special educational needs, inclusive education is a process that contributes to achieving the objective of social inclusion, whose actions embrace diversity and build a special educational needs of belonging, rooted in the belief that each person has value and potential, and must be respected, regardless of their origin, abilities or identity (UNESCO, 2020).

With the preparation of this article, we intend to demonstrate and conclude that Special Education and Social Education can intersect in different areas of activity, as the roles of Special Education Teachers and Special educational needs Social Education Technicians (TSES), they interconnect in their field of work and intervention in schools in favor of inclusive education, opening the range of opportunities to all students who for some reason have a handicap.

In this special educational needs, with the development and need for a more inclusive school and society, the areas of Special Education and Social Education are fundamental for the development, autonomy, training and integration of children and young people with educational needs or other reasons for exclusion.

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