

Labor inclusion of adolescents with intellectual disabilities from ethnographic perspective

La inclusión laboral del adolescente con discapacidad intelectual desde una perspectiva etnográfica

Inclusão laboral de adolescentes com deficiência intelectual a partir de uma perspectiva etnográfica

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Abstract

Currently, in the Cuban educational context, efforts are being made to create spaces for students with intellectual disabilities to be integrated into special schools and receive differentiated attention based on their diagnosis. However, it is observed that at times, the focus on instruction prioritizes the achievement of objectives set by the Ministry of Education, neglecting the preparation for life. In order to address this, a theoretical and methodological systematization was carried out by professors from the University of Holguín and special education teachers in the Holguín region between January and September 2022. This involved reviewing normative documents and consulting specialized literature related to labor inclusion and educational support for adolescents with intellectual disabilities.

Key words: Labor inclusion; teenagers; intellectual disabilities; ethnography

Resumen

En la actualidad desde el ámbito educativo cubano se crean los espacios para que el alumnado con discapacidad intelectual, se vincule a las escuelas especiales y reciban una atención diferenciada, partir de su diagnóstico. La consulta a la teoría pedagógica, permite conocer que en ocasiones se pondera la instrucción a partir de la necesidad de lograr los objetivos trazados por el Ministerio de Educación, de este modo se descuida la preparación para la vida. La realización de una sistematización teórica metodológica liderada por docentes de la Universidad de Holguín y profesores de la Educación Especial del territorio holguinero entre enero y septiembre de 2022, que consistió en la revisión de documentos normativos y la consulta a la bibliografía especializada relacionada con la inclusión laboral y la atención educativa a los adolescentes con discapacidad intelectual.

Palabras clave: Inclusión; adolescentes; discapacidad intelectual

Resumo

Atualmente, a partir do campo educacional cubano, são criados espaços para que alunos com deficiência intelectual sejam vinculados a escolas especiais e recebam atenção diferenciada, a partir de seu diagnóstico. A consulta à teoria pedagógica, permite saber que por vezes a instrução é ponderada a partir da necessidade de atingir os objetivos traçados pelo Ministério da Educação, desta forma a preparação para a vida é negligenciada. A realização de uma sistematização teórica metodológica liderada por professores da Universidade de Holguín e professores de Educação Especial do território Holguín entre janeiro e setembro de 2022, que consistiu na revisão de documentos normativos e na consulta da bibliografia especializada relacionada à inclusão, emprego e cuidados educacionais para adolescentes com deficiência intelectual. Após a análise dos resultados, são feitas avaliações e inferências que apontam para a necessidade de desenhe uma concepção etnometodologica para favorecer a inclusão laboral de adolescentes com deficiência intelectual.

Palavras-chave: Inclusão trabalhista; adolescentes; discapacidad intelectual; etnografia

Introduction

Currently, education establishes standards that aim towards inclusion. These standards show the indicators that certify educational systems based on the educational services they offer, which should be in line with the principle of attention to diversity. Therefore, it is necessary for educational institutions to conceive a school educational project that weighs the strategy for addressing the differences among students.

The inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the workforce is inherent to the reality of all countries, as there is a need to respect human rights without any distinction. However, there is still a need to reinforce, promote, and fulfill state policies to improve their living conditions without considering them as a priority group. In this sense, it is necessary for them to maintain their homes, be active agents, and contribute to the full development of society. This can only be achieved if they are prepared for employment so that they can work for their personal benefit.

This is not an easy task, as we must break free from the disabling trend and achieve an inclusive approach that responds positively to the diversity of people with disabilities. It is important to understand that diversity is not a problem, but an opportunity for the enrichment of society through active participation in family life, education, work, and all social, cultural, and community processes (UNESCO, 2015).

From an academic standpoint, it is important to unify terminology, including the terms inclusion and integration, as there are different perspectives regarding attention to diversity. Inclusive employment refers to a broader approach, as its aim is to guarantee equal employment conditions in terms of tasks, wages, and schedules in companies, just like any other worker without disabilities.

The epistemological study conducted on inclusive employment allows us to understand that internationally, non-contributory social and economic benefits are established in favor of people with disabilities. It is stipulated that at least healthcare and pharmaceutical benefits, minimum income guarantee subsidies, subsidies for assistance from a third person, mobility subsidies and compensation for transportation expenses, professional recovery, and medical-functional rehabilitation should be provided. Despite these benefits, it is still necessary to seek additional rights.

Authors Rueda and Córdoba (2016) argue that it is precisely this search for recognition of the rights of people with disabilities that has led to the dissemination of several studies in the last decade to generate scientific evidence that enables the creation or strengthening of programs, projects, and strategies aimed at the inclusive employment of people with disabilities from various perspectives.

Among these perspectives, the quality of life stands out, as identified by studies by Bauwens et al. (2019), Gómez et al. (2020), Verdugo et al. (2019), and Pallisera (2021). These studies identify barriers that limit equal opportunities and define the support that these individuals require to access employment. From another framework, Albarrán and Alonso (2020) found that the main difficulty faced by the population with disabilities and in a dependent situation in Spain was inactivity, meaning there is a considerable number of working-age individuals who are not actively seeking employment.

On the other hand, Hernández and Milán (2020) state that in the world more than 1 billion people, 15% of the world's population, live with some type of recognized disability, a figure that is increasing due to the progressive aging of the population. These people are often unable to participate fully in society due to physical and economic barriers, social prejudices; educational systems that do not consider them and companies that are not prepared to receive them. These points to the need to use an ethnographic perspective to achieve a more efficient labor inclusion, which manages to create equal opportunities, while eliminating the barriers that may exist for people with intellectual disabilities to find jobs.

In Cuba, in the last decade, the researches of Batista (2021) that try to disclose the need to prepare students with some disability for life stand out. There is a matching criterion that labor inclusion constitutes a challenge for special schools, since it is vital to modify the behavior of the agents and employer agencies in the achievement of an inclusive education where the subject with disability is prepared for independent adult life. However, there are few studies on labor inclusion and its influence on the future life of adolescents, particularly in the case of a mild intellectual disability, nor on the ethnographic aspects that should be considered to achieve labor inclusion.

A review of regulatory documents related to the teaching- educational process for the care of adolescents with intellectual disabilities reveals that the issue of labor inclusion, as a process that directs preparation for active socio-labor life, is not sufficiently addressed; nor the particularities of this topic from the school-enterprise integration point of view. The actions aimed at the labor inclusion process are not integrated in a coherent manner and are executed from the school institution with little collaboration from the employer agencies, which have not been provided with methodological and educational resources for the incorporation of adolescents into the workplace.

The process of labor inclusion of adolescents with intellectual disabilities is limited to the preparation for a specific occupation and does not take advantage of other educational environments such as the community and work environments in the search for equal opportunities. On the other hand, it should be noted that educational institutions design and implement actions to address the

diversity and different problems of adolescents in the labor preparation stage, but do not adequately consider the impact of opportunities or barriers to their incorporation into the labor market.

The study of the normative and methodological documents that rule the labor of Special Education in Cuba, allowed to know that it is a necessity the formation of a worker with labor qualities, which are achieved from the adequate methodological treatment of the subjects and workshops, as well as the implementation of strategies in the different levels of management of the teaching-educational process that intervenes in the preparation for life of adolescents with mild intellectual disabilities.

The family, together with the school, participates in this process as mediator by providing the necessary help and support to achieve adult and independent life in these adolescents. Parents play the role of collaborators of the school in labor orientation, but for this purpose they must take into account their interests, aspirations, needs, motives, barriers and opportunities, which allows for individualized work from the adequate school-family relationship. The activities that the school carries out can also be taken as a source of orientation, thus establishing a link between the school and the centers of production and services of the community, an aspect that is not achieved, since the ethnographic perspective is not sufficiently exploited.

The use of ethnography favors the process of orientation, preparation and job placement, by allowing the identification of problems in the social environment. It is in the community where the adolescent with mild intellectual disabilities appropriates the particularities of the socio-economic and labor organization of a given territory or locality, through production and service institutions such as: bakeries, libraries, hairdressers, sundry stores, pharmacies, companies, factories, organoponics, among others, as well as the relationships established among family members.

It is necessary, then, to achieve an adequate and natural labor approach in linking the content to be taught with life and work activities of adolescents with mild intellectual disabilities. When teaching the subjects, there are possibilities of integrating the contents with the work activity, by using the workshops, areas and premises of the center. In spite of the unquestionable contributions introduced in Special Education in the territory of Holguín, a holistic approach is still needed to capture the perspective of others, the barriers and the real opportunities that adolescents with intellectual disabilities have for work performance.

The aforementioned elements allow corroborating that there are still insufficiencies that limit the process of labor inclusion. This shows that the theory of labor inclusion makes limited inroads into the formative process of adolescents with mild intellectual disabilities, from a totalizing approach that not only considers the particularities of students with disabilities but also takes into account the social context. After the analysis previously stated, it highlights the need to design an

ethnomethodological conception to favor the labor inclusion of adolescents with intellectual disabilities.

Materials and methods

The study falls within the qualitative paradigm, as its purpose was to understand the process that precedes and follows the job search of adolescents with disabilities from an educational context, in order to improve their labor inclusion in the Holguin context. The design was ethnographic in nature.

In line with the qualitative ethnographic study, various methods of scientific research were employed, including surveys of adolescents with intellectual disabilities, their families, and employers, to obtain a preliminary understanding of topics such as the worker's profile, motivations, fears, strengths, the importance of support, employers' profiles, policies, and regulations for offering opportunities and eliminating barriers for the labor inclusion of these adolescents.

The in-depth interview, with the purpose of identifying the possibilities, difficulties and strengths perceived by the agents involved in the process of labor inclusion of adolescents with disabilities, based on the questionnaire previously applied. Participant observation, allowed observing the activities and interactions of the agencies and agents involved in the labor inclusion process of adolescents with mild intellectual disabilities, a triangulation of the results obtained from the answers given by those involved in the labor inclusion process was carried out.

As an alternative to promote the labor inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities, an ethnomethodological approach is designed based on the criteria of López (2018), and López et al. (2018). This author considers that in the first stage, the family or community selected in advance under intentional criteria or based on the needs of the educational institution is diagnosed. This is done with the purpose of understanding how parents and family members prepare the student for their future through their daily activities and how the student's work qualities develop while performing daily tasks.

In the second stage, the fears and barriers faced by adolescents, as well as their real opportunities in terms of employment, are identified. In the third stage, actions are proposed from the educational institution and through the use of the potentialities of the social context to eliminate barriers and improve job opportunities. Four special schools in the Holguin territory were included in the study, with adolescents with mild intellectual disabilities.

Results and discussion

In the first stage of the ethnomethodological conception, it is identified that the families of the studied adolescents experience tension between care and overprotection, leading to excessive care

in some cases, while neglect and inattention are observed in others. Some families promote autonomy for self-care but overprotect the family member with a disability, limiting the socialization and participation of adolescents in other important spaces for their labor formation.

The study finds that some families promote their development in the educational environment but restrict their autonomy in the workplace. Parenting and caregiving practices that replace or subrogate the decision-making capacity of the person with a disability, contrary to their intention of protection, end up weakening their autonomy, placing them in a situation of greater vulnerability instead of generating alerts to prevent risk situations in the workplace. This is unfortunate because both overprotection and lack of care can lead to isolation of people with disabilities, creating, among other problems, work inactivity.

In most of the families included in the study, a family dynamic is established in which the person has their place and role in the family, where work does not have an essential place. They are more concerned about their validity, functionality, or rehabilitation. It is concluded that there are various fears present in families that mark the family dynamic, which increase when transitioning to the labor world, which is perceived as uncertain and dangerous as the spaces in which the adolescent with intellectual disabilities will participate expand or they reach maturity.

In the second stage, it is identified that adolescents have fears related to the risk of mockery, bullying, and other forms of violence they have been exposed to since childhood. There is also fear of the risk of sexual abuse in the environment or the risk to personal integrity due to insecurity.

In other cases, these fears are centered on commuting to the workplace, and within it, some express fear of not achieving the required level of performance, while others fear possible discrimination from coworkers. The prevailing dreams and aspirations are to achieve economic independence for their parents through employment and the desire to have their own life.

These fears guide many behaviors of caregivers and adolescents themselves, leading them to reproduce invalidating messages, which are reinforced by the stigmatizing and stereotypical view of society regarding disability. Overcoming barriers related to the family environment involves turning the family into an ally in promoting autonomy and access to employment. Therefore, it is necessary to promote social interaction in the community context that fosters the development of capacities and experiential learning, enhancing the support that the family should provide to their family member with a disability to access employment. This can only be achieved through the guidance of teachers.

In the third stage, it is recommended to provide preparation in basic job skills, information, support, training, family and community intervention, and accompanying measures with the aim of increasing quality of life, employment inclusion, and job access opportunities. The school should

prevent family members representing individuals with disabilities from substituting their voice and protagonism. Educational institutions should create spaces for advising and supporting parents and family members, enabling them to develop resources and incorporate parenting and caregiving practices that promote autonomy, particularly for adolescents going through the process of maturation.

Through the interaction of family members, with the support of educational institutions, it is important to propose that parent schools and other instances incorporate actions for parents to reflect on the aspects that inhibit employment access, including:

- Identifying situations where they substitute or make decisions on behalf of individuals with disabilities.
- Incorporating work as part of the life plan for individuals with disabilities.
- Counteracting the transmission and reproduction of invalidating messages with alternative messages that recognize autonomy within a context that requires support and assistance.
- Avoiding questioning the fears underlying caregiving practices and strengthening their role in supporting employment inclusion.
- Creating spaces to disseminate the experiences of families whose member with disabilities is employed or highlight their achievements in their pursuit of autonomy.

Within the educational scope, based on the potential of the curriculum, mechanisms should be established to coordinate institutions that provide services to individuals with disabilities and workplaces. This coordination is necessary to define roles, competencies, and opportunities offered by these institutions. Additionally, a differentiated assessment should be introduced based on the difficulty of employment inclusion. This includes considering women with disabilities, individuals entering employment for the first time, and those with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities.

In the employment sphere, it is important to avoid segregating positions and trainings based on disability and gender, both in implementing quotas and employment services. Comprehensive training programs should be developed in stages, culminating in job placement. These programs should include modules on labor duties, rights, and responsibilities, fostering pre-employment support, as well as the development of skills and capacities.

Conclusions

Labor inclusion constitutes a complex process that presents challenges and demands for Special Education, the community, and the workplaces where adolescents are integrated. This work does not conclude when the adolescent enters the workforce; the adolescent and the family, as well as the receiving workplace, require the systematic and systemic attention of the school. The success of

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labor inclusion depends on the educational function of the family and the community, which plays a vital role in providing the knowledge necessary for obtaining and maintaining suitable employment based on individual conditions.

The labor inclusion of adolescents with intellectual disabilities should ensure their preparation for active socio-labor life. This preparation should enable them to obtain and retain a job while achieving full and independent development. The transformations in the education of adolescents with mild intellectual disabilities are not disconnected from what is aimed for other adolescents. These transformations aim to foster their independence according to their abilities, increasing their active participation in societal tasks within the teaching process, as well as in all their school and social activities.

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Conflicto de intereses

Los autores declaran que no existe conflicto de intereses.

Declaración de contribución de autoría

Ana Yaquelin Ciprian Morales: Conceptualización, Investigación, Metodología, Administración del proyecto, Validación, Visualización, Redacción de original.

Idalmis Domínguez Serrano: Dirección de la investigación, Metodología, Curación de datos, Revisión de la redacción.

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