

Editorial

Unity and plurality in occupational therapy in education: understanding the present and projecting futures in the theoretical and methodological field

Unidade e pluralidade na terapia ocupacional na educação: conhecendo o presente e projetando futuros no campo teórico e metodológico

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It is with great joy and satisfaction that we present the Special Supplement “Education, School, and Occupational Therapy.” This publication stems from the “II International Seminar on Occupational Therapy, Education, and Youth: Theoretical and Methodological Dialogues for Radical Inclusion,” held at the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar), Brazil, on November 23 and 24, 2023. The event brought together various education professionals (occupational therapists and others), as well as researchers and undergraduate and graduate students, with the objective of promoting discussions on the theoretical and technical-political contributions of the field of occupational therapy in relation to the education sector, with a focus on young people, in dialogue with the international context.

The Seminar, in its second edition, represents a collective dream of researchers who, together with Professors Roseli Esquerdo Lopes and Patrícia Leme de Oliveira Borba, are part of the research line “School, Occupational Therapy, and Radical Inclusion,” belonging to the research group “Citizenship, Social Action, Education, and Occupational Therapy.” This group, and more specifically this research line, created in 2016, has incorporated a series of works aimed at learning and academic production associated with occupational therapy in education (Pereira et al., 2021; Borba et al., 2022), the integration and work developed by occupational therapists through formal linkage with the education sector (Souza, 2021), and, from the perspective of social occupational therapy, at the contributions of this subarea in addressing the demands



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related to young people and public schools (Pan & Lopes, 2022; Farias et al., 2023; Reis, 2024). In this direction, the studies have sought to expand the understanding of the possibilities of occupational therapy's contributions to the educational sector (Souza et al., 2021), moving toward the radicalization of inclusive education and broadening the scope of the profession's work in response to the complex demands that persist, especially in the context of Brazilian public schools (Lopes & Borba, 2022).

Representing the efforts of researchers in the years following the first edition of the Seminar on Occupational Therapy, Education, and Youth, held in 2019, the event was organized again in 2023. In this second edition, we were pleased to receive funding through calls from the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes)¹ and the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), as well as support from the Graduate Programs in Occupational Therapy and in Education at UFSCar, which enabled us to bring, in person, researchers from different regions of Brazil and abroad. The event brought together two ongoing research projects involving researchers and graduate students from the aforementioned research line. On the first day, we focused on the discussions and partnerships built through the project "Occupational Therapies in Latin America: Toward Radical Inclusion,"² deepening the debate on the various proposals that have been outlined by occupational therapy in this area across different Latin American countries, particularly Brazil, Colombia, Chile, and Argentina, where this field of knowledge is more consolidated. On the second day, we presented the preliminary results of the multicenter research project "Active and Democratic Care: Theoretical and Practical Contributions for the Implementation of Policies to Support the Return and Permanence of Young People in School in the (Post-)Pandemic Context"³ (Lopes et al., 2024). This research involves five centers from the Metuia Network – Social Occupational Therapy, and we had the opportunity to engage in dialogue with renowned researchers in the fields of occupational therapy, education, youth sociology, philosophy, and history. It was two days of intense work where we envisioned future directions in the theoretical and methodological field that, in its plurality, connects occupational therapy and education.

One of these "future projects," envisioned in November 2023, took shape in January 2024 with the publication of a special call for the articles that compose this Special Supplement, proposed by the authors of this preface. Five of them—Patrícia Leme de Oliveira Borba, Lívia Celegati Pan, Joana Rostirolla Batista de Souza, Magno Nunes Farias, and Stephany Conceição Correia Alves Guedes Reis—are part of the research line "School, Occupational Therapy, and Radical Inclusion," accompanied in this proposal by our colleague Andrea Perosa Saigh Jurdi, who has a long research and professional trajectory at the intersection of occupational therapy and education, primarily in associated with psychology and health. The goal of this Supplement was to gather and share some of the reflections brought by colleagues during the event and to

¹ We extend our thanks to the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) for the funding provided through the Program to Support Events in the Country (PAEP), Process no. 88881.882575/2023-01, as well as to the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) through Process no. 406345/2021-0 and to the Graduate Programs in Occupational Therapy and in Education at the Federal University of São Carlos, which made this event possible, in addition to the entire organizing and scientific committee for their essential work.

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³ Project supported by the CNPq Call no. 10/2023, Process no. 404428/2023-1.

open space for others equally interested in the theme to contribute to the deepening and expansion of the ongoing debate.

Thus, we are pleased to present this Supplement, comprising 13 texts on this theme—seven original articles and six reflective articles—written by a group of 33 authors, predominantly composed of women, most of whom belonging to the Global South, with all having Portuguese or Spanish as their native language (both of Latin origin). Therefore, we present eight texts from Brazil, two from Colombia, one from Argentina, one from Portugal, and one resulting from a partnership between authors from Chile and Colombia.

Of this collection, five articles are directly derived from presentations made by speakers during the “II Seminar on Occupational Therapy, Education, and Youth,” namely: 1) “*Terapia Ocupacional en escuelas de Argentina (1985-2015)*,” authored by Andrea Villagra, who invites us to explore the written productions on occupational therapy in schools based on a review of works presented at Argentine congresses; 2) “*Reflexiones sobre prácticas de terapeutas ocupacionales en la educación superior inclusiva*,” in which Carmem Aleida Fernández Moreno presents, based on her own experience and that of her colleagues, a reflection on the processes of integrating occupational therapy initially within the Directorate of Welfare at the University of Colombia, which later, in 2012, evolved into an Inclusion Observatory, highlighting our profession’s contributions to higher education in these various institutional spaces; 3) “*Terapia Ocupacional en educación en Latinoamérica: un análisis desde la comunidad de práctica terapia ocupacional en educación (TOE)*,” authored by Carolina López Díaz, Eliana Isabel Parra-Esquivel, and Javiera Salazar Rivera, analyzing the practice of occupational therapists in education based on accounts from members of the Community of Practice of Occupational Therapy in Education (TOE) from Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico, Costa Rica, and Panama, problematizing the continued association with special education, though with increasing visibility of practice in regular education; 4) “*Terapia Ocupacional na Educação Básica no Brasil: Um Retrato Panorâmico e Algumas de Suas Vozes*,” a text based on the doctoral thesis of Joana Rostrirolla Batista de Souza, co-authored by Patrícia Leme de Oliveira Borba and Roseli Esquerdo Lopes, presenting the scenario of Brazilian professional practice in Basic Education from different sectors, and of those hired by the public and private education sectors to work in schools; 5) “*Juventude, Escola unitária e o caminho para a formação de dirigentes*,” a text in which Gilberto José Amorim, drawing on Gramscian studies, invites us to think and fight for a unitary school, especially for young people from subaltern classes, providing access to systematic knowledge and a general and humanist culture.

In addition to these texts, we also have the opportunity to explore inclusive education policies in Portugal, deepen debates on Higher Education, Basic Education, and preschool, covering the states of São Paulo and Alagoas and the Federal District in Brazil. We are also presented with two reflective essays: one dedicated to the concepts of autonomy and emancipation and their relation to protagonism within the policy of full-time schools in São Paulo, Brazil; the other drawing on Ivan Illich’s sociopedagogical framework, exploring how his idea of radical deschooling and his educational proposals can inform the professional practice of occupational therapists within the school institution.

There are still many dreams to be dreamed and fulfilled within what our group has termed the “education sector.” One of the challenges lies in the formal recognition of occupational therapy as a profession “within education,” which would imply the hiring of professionals to work in social services and institutions linked to educational policy, as social workers and psychologists achieved with the approval of Law no. 13.935 (Brasil, 2019) in 2019. Along these lines, in the state of São Paulo, Bill no. 177/2024 is currently under review, which would make it mandatory to include occupational therapists in the multidisciplinary teams of public schools of Early Childhood, Elementary, and High School Education in that state (São Paulo, 2024). This project is the result of the efforts of professionals in the field and the Regional Council of Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy of the Third Region (CREFITO-3).

On the one hand, the existence of this law provides institutional support for the recognition and expansion of the socio-occupational space for the mentioned professions; on the other hand, it is known that its implementation continues to require ongoing struggle, tensions, and constant efforts from these professional categories. In the case of occupational therapy, we have not yet achieved this institutionalization, and if we do, it will bring new challenges, ranging from ensuring adequate education for professionals to filling potential job openings. This is particularly relevant since the number of active occupational therapists, approximately 27,000 in the country⁴, is insufficient to meet the demand of the existing schools in Brazil today. The latest Brazilian School Census available (Brasil, 2023) records 121,400 schools that serve only children aged 6 to 14, excluding Early Childhood Education (0 to 5 years) and High School (15 to 18 years).

In this context, we make Freire’s (2013, p. 73) words our own, updating them for the current context: “In my understanding, serious work, meticulous research, and critical reflection around the dominant power that is gaining increasing dimensions have never been as necessary as they are today”. Given the history of our country, this statement must be constantly reiterated so that we do not forget the task of fighting for freedom.

Thus, it is important to act in the face of a cannibalistic capitalism that devours “[...] the natural, political, and social foundations of its own existence – foundations that are also ours” (Fraser, 2024, p. 16). The counter-hegemonic struggle to transform Brazilian education is urgent, committing it to a praxis based on knowledge production and coherent practices, with scientific and critical rigor, guided by an ethical-political principle of democratizing social goods, with citizenship as a guiding axis.

We hope that reading and studying the texts in this Supplement will inspire more people to join us, expanding our scope of accomplishments and possible dreams, so that we can collectively think about and build paths toward radical inclusion.

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⁴ It is worth noting that this figure has been mentioned orally in lectures given by representatives of the Federal Council of Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy, but we have not found this information in any publicly available written source.

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