

CULTIVATING INCLUSIVE AND CARING PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Given the perspective of inclusion adopted as policy in many countries around the world, this study addresses the need to foster caring and inclusive professional identities in English language teacher education. It investigates a specific teacher education program, the Brazilian Government Program for Initial Teacher Education (*Pibid*) in the field of English language teaching at a university in Brazil. The research focuses on two questions: a) In a teacher preparation practicum context, what are possible strategies to allow teacher candidates to develop a caring and inclusive attitude towards their students? b) In which ways do those strategies impact teachers' professional development and identity? As a case study, it adopts an interpretive stance to data, which consists of two program reports and reflective journals written by teacher candidates as they developed English teaching practices with students with disabilities in an elementary school. The theoretical background addresses conceptions of care and inclusion (Noddings, 2005), and areas of competence to be included in the preparation of inclusive teachers. Research findings indicate that the strategies adopted allowed teachers to feel more empowered to transform their classrooms in places where everyone has a chance to learn, and they could potentially be adapted for other contexts.

Keywords: Brazil, Care, English language teacher education, Inclusion, Pibid,

INTRODUCTION

Around the world, schools are becoming increasingly diverse, and teachers are urged to find possible ways to ensure that, through education, all students have equal opportunities and can “experience a positive sense of belonging, identity, safety, learning, and societal contribution” (Schuelka et al., 2019, p. xxxvi). In line with this trend, many countries nowadays adopt an inclusive approach in educational contexts, which requires teaching strategies that make knowledge and development accessible to all students in the learning settings.

In this article, I focus on one of the most fundamental aspects of an inclusive perspective in classrooms, that is, how to foster responsive and mindful teacher identities through powerful experiences in teacher preparation programs. The study was conducted in the context of the Brazilian Government Program for Initial Teacher Education (hereon *Pibid*). *Pibid* is a national complementary formative program set up under the umbrella of one of the public Brazilian research agencies to train teachers to work in the compulsory education system, by granting scholarships to students enrolled in undergraduate teacher education programs. One differentiator of the program is that it grants scholarships not only to university students and professors “but also to public school teachers who supervise scholarship-holders' activities in schools, thus serving as co-trainers of new teachers, in tandem with the University professors” (André, 2012, p.124). As a coordinator of that program in my university, I was supposed to supervise the work of *teacher candidates* (TCs), who were part of the English language

teaching Bachelor of Education (BEd) cohort. Those candidates had to go to an elementary school every week and one of their tasks was to give support to the *students with disabilities* (hereon SWDs), who were included in regular education classes. As a mentor, I had to find ways to lead TCs through a process of personal self-discovery and professional development, as well as engage them in meaningful inclusive teaching practices.

In this paper, I attempt to make sense of that collaborative teacher preparation experience by focusing on two key questions: a) In a teacher preparation practicum context, what are possible strategies to allow teacher candidates to develop a caring and inclusive attitude towards their students? b) In which ways do those strategies impact teachers' professional development and identity?

This is an exploratory case study, which looks at a teacher preparation program involving thirteen teacher candidates in Brazil over a period of two years (2015-2016), as they developed teaching practices with SWDs in an elementary school. It adopts a qualitative and interpretive perspective to analyse data, which consist of two *Pibid* program reports on the activities conducted in 2015 and 2016, and reflective journals written by the TCs. In the reports, I tried to identify the types of strategies proposed to foster an inclusive and caring identity, and in the journals, using thematic analysis as a tool (Opie & Brown, 2019), I examined how TCs represent the impact of those strategies on their professional development and identities.

In the first part of the article, I discuss the concepts of care and inclusion in education and in teacher preparation (Florian & Camedda, 2020; Florian & Pantic, 2017; Noddings, 1984, 2005; Sherman, 2004, 2006, 2013), particularly addressing the issue of SWDs or learning difficulties (Mantoan, 2015) and in the area of English language teacher education in Brazil (Dantas, 2014, 2019; Dourado & Gomes; 2017; Fidalgo & Magalhães, 2017; Maia & Paulino, 2017; Medrado, 2016; Medrado & Celani, 2017). In sequence, I suggest an inclusive teacher's profile and define some categories that will guide the analysis of teacher candidates' journals, taking as a reference the Teacher Education for Inclusion Report of the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2012).

Last, I underscore my positionality as the coordinator of the project investigated in this paper. As such, I am fully aware that, in many ways, my role in the project might reflect on how I may have framed data. I understand, however, that this fact potentially strengthens the research because it simultaneously enables a detached and situated view of the phenomena.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Care and Inclusion in Teacher Education

Why do we need to talk about care and inclusion in teacher education programs?

More than ever, teachers are urged to cater to the diverse needs of students in classrooms as a condition to reach important goals of teaching (Florian & Camedda, 2020; Schuelka et al., 2019;), such as the advancement of literacy; the ability to think critically; and moral development or values (Florian & Pantic, 2017). Consequently, engaged teachers are expected to expand their pedagogical knowledge, related to cognitive abilities (Guerriero, 2015), work on their affective-motivational characteristics (Blömeke & Delaney, 2012), as well as develop the necessary core values, competences and commitment to remove barriers for all, while supporting the needs of specific groups in the process of learning.

In this study, my view of inclusive education aligns with what is stated in the American Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004), and with the Inclusion Law in Brazil (Brasil, 2015), that is, I understand that all children and youth with a disability should have access to the general education curriculum. Additionally, I harness the principle of least restrictive environment or, in other words, I believe that to the maximum extent where

appropriate, the education of children with disabilities should take place alongside students who do not have a disability (Zagrodnik et al., 2017).

In Brazil, educational systems are supposed to adopt a paradigm of inclusion, according to which SWDs (visual, auditory, intellectual, or multiple, including some syndromes) or students with global developmental disorders (the most common being related to the Autism spectrum) should attend regular schools. These institutions sometimes hire specifically trained professionals to attend to students' learning needs in rooms with accessibility resources (Brasil, 2015).

The new Brazilian curricular standards, known as the *Base Nacional Comum Curricular* -BNCC- (Brasil, 2017), approaches the theme of inclusion of SWDs by suggesting a school planning process with a focus on equity, which "requires the commitment with students with disabilities, recognizing the need for inclusive pedagogical practices and curriculum differentiation, as established in the Brazilian Inclusion Law" (p. 16, author translation).

In Brazilian classrooms, in practice, there is only one teacher to work with all students, and sometimes there is an aide to take care of the student with a disability. This person, however, does not have to act as a teaching assistant, since s/he is not qualified for that task. Hence, it is always a difficult job for teachers to design activities that might cater to the different needs of all students in their classroom and at the same time reinforce a culture of care, collaboration, and respect among students.

The fact is, with children and youth with disabilities being increasingly placed in regular classrooms, teachers ought to be prepared to respond to that new demand in effective ways. For this reason, teacher preparation programs must incorporate knowledge, skills, and values related to inclusion in their courses and practices (Walton & Rusznyak, 2020). This kind of concern might enable the development of more sensitive and empowered teachers' identities, capable of effecting change.

But what does it mean to develop a caring identity in a school context? What does care mean? Researchers have often pointed out the relevance of teachers adopting a caring disposition when establishing relations with students (Noddings, 2005; Sherman, 2013). In general terms, the two main characteristics related to a caring relationship are *engrossment* and *motivational displacement* (Noddings, 1984, 2005). While engrossment involves *an open receptivity to the cared-for*, motivational displacement refers to *the desire to help and contribute to the other's development* (Noddings, 2005).

As caring relationships presuppose receptivity to diversity and a genuine desire to strengthen feelings of belonging, the development of those dispositions among teachers in initial education could be a good starting point for ensuring more inclusive classrooms. For inclusive practices to become part of teacher education curricula effectively, however, these kinds of programs need to design intentional and well-planned strategies to support the emergence of sensitive teacher identities.

In the next section, I explain what a teacher preparation course of that nature could look like, by conducting a review of some studies that explored the theme of pre-service teacher education guided to inclusion (Bialka et al., 2019; Dantas, 2019; European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012; Florian & Camedda, 2020; Florian & Pantic, 2017; Sharma et al., 2008; Sharma & Sokal, 2015, among others).

Inclusive Teacher Profile

Towards an inclusive teacher profile: Imagining possible preparation pathways

In the field of pre-service teacher preparation, there are many studies that focus either on the necessary instructional skills for teachers to adopt inclusive practices in their classrooms

to support SWDs (e.g. Bialka et al., 2019; Woodcock & Vialle, 2010) or on teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards inclusion (e.g. Dantas, 2019; Sharma et al., 2008; Sharma & Sokal, 2015; Specht et al., 2016). Those studies share the common idea that, for inclusion to become a reality in classrooms around the world, there should be an investment in teacher education programs. This investment would lead to a reframing of contents, practices, and dispositions that might allow "education transitions towards a more inclusive approach to schooling" (Forlin, 2010, p.3).

For approaching contents, practices, and dispositions that are conducive to inclusive environments for SWDs, Rusznyak and Walton (2016) underscore the importance of practicum contexts where teacher candidates have the chance to experience and envisage what could be an inclusive education system. This kind of experience involves, from the part of teacher candidates, the enactment of "pedagogic responsiveness' to students" specific needs (Florian, 2012).

Experiences of practicum, however, are not enough to produce changes towards more inclusive education, if not supported by other aspects of teacher preparation. In 2012, the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education released a report of The Teacher Education for Inclusion (TE4I) project. The report suggests the following four core values as the basis for the work of all teachers in inclusive education: valuing learner diversity, supporting all learners, working with others and personal professional development. Those values are used to propose a set of areas of competence that relate to specific attitudes, knowledge, and skills to be addressed in the process of teacher preparation.

Valuing learner diversity, as a core value, relates to two areas of competence: conceptions of inclusive education and the teacher's view of learner difference. Within the first area of competence, an example of values to be cultivated is that "education is based upon a belief in equality, human rights and democracy for all learners" (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012, pp.11-12). Essential knowledge related to this area entails, for instance, the theoretical and practical concepts and principles underpinning inclusive education within global and local contexts. An important skill suggested would be the development of coping strategies that prepare teachers to challenge non-inclusive attitudes and to work in segregated situations (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, pp. 11-12).

A second core value is to support all learners. It presupposes that teachers have high expectations for all students and will attempt to promote their academic, practical, social, and emotional learning by adopting effective teaching approaches to work with heterogeneous classes. One belief to be fostered is that all learner's voices should be heard and valued. Accordingly, it is recommended that teachers develop knowledge of the different ways in which students can learn and apply that knowledge at the lesson planning stage. They should also know how to differentiate methods, content, and outcomes for learning, when necessary. Thus, an important skill for teachers is being able to address diversity in curriculum implementation (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012, pp. 13-15).

As the third proposed core value, teachers' ability to work with others towards inclusion: with parents, families, and other educational professionals is paramount in providing support. This value is underpinned by the belief that communication and collaboration with parents and among teachers is a requirement of effective inclusive contexts. For example, it requires knowledge of support systems and the ability to co-teach and work in flexible teaching teams (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012, pp. 15-16).

The fourth core value is an investment in teachers' personal professional development and acquisition of an understanding of teaching for inclusion as a process of lifelong learning. Two areas of competence are part of this core value: (1) teachers as reflective practitioners and (2) the framing of initial teacher education as a foundation for ongoing professional learning

and development. A strong belief in this area of competence is that “teaching is a problem-solving activity that requires on-going and systematic planning, evaluation, reflection and then modified action”, and it demands “methods and strategies for evaluating one’s own work and performance” (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012, p.17).

However, despite being quite comprehensive, the framework presented in this agency’s report does not address the notion of care, which is the focus of this paper. For this reason, I propose a fifth value to be added to it, that is, learning how to *establish caring relationships* with and among all students in a classroom. While this value could be included in one of the four previous core values, I make a case that the issue of caring relationships is of key importance if teachers want to model transformative practices leading to enhanced feelings of receptivity and belonging.

In her work, Noddings (2005) suggests that one of the main beliefs to be strengthened is that the goal of education should be “to produce competent, caring, loving, and lovable people” (p.174). Aligned with this view, I suggest that a concern for students’ ethical development should come together with goals related to intellectual development and academic success (Medrado, 2016).

Additionally, there are invaluable skills that can be acquired by teachers in their professional education that might ensure they can enact caring relations in classrooms. These may include the following aspects: implementing a curriculum that is responsive to learners; accounting for learners’ background knowledge; and articulating that knowledge with prescribed outcomes in productive ways. Similarly, it is also important for teachers to be able to confront episodes of disrespect, violence, or indifference and devise transformative strategies to foster more respectful relations among students; this would include initiating and engaging students in authentic dialogue, through which easy and complex themes may be explored and reflected upon while difference is negotiated and acknowledged. When analysing the views on inclusion shared by participants of this research, I relied on these five core values as discussed above, to make sense of the multiple ideas and perceptions the TCs identified as part of their teacher preparation process.

METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

As mentioned before, this study examines data generated in the scope of the Brazilian Government Program for Initial Teacher Education (*Pibid*). More specifically, I look at a *Pibid* project related to the English language teaching Bachelor of Education (BEd) cohort program, at a public university in Brazil. That project started in 2014 with 26 teacher candidates, under the coordination of two university professors, and under the supervision of three schoolteachers (mentors). The project took place in 6 public schools in the city of João Pessoa, Paraíba, Brazil, and had 4 coordinators, 6 supervisors, and more than 50 undergraduate students in total involved in its activities. There was an average of 8-10 undergraduate students who went once a week to each one of the schools. Among the activities conducted in the English language lessons, I highlight the planning and development of pedagogical practices to promote the educational inclusion of SWDs (Maia & Dourado, 2017). For the study described in this paper my focus is on the teacher candidates who worked at the elementary school in 2015 and 2016, mainly because that was the school and the period in which there were SWDs in the English classes.

In this way, participants are thirteen teacher candidates who were members of the *Pibid* English project between 2015 and 2016. I invited all participants who worked in the elementary school in that period and those who accepted gave me written consent and access to the journals they had written when developing the projects’ activities. It must be said, however, that since the beginning of the activities, all TCs were aware of the national program regulation, which

states that all documents produced by participants are open to the public and can be used as research data upon the university Ethics Committee approval. The study is part of a larger investigation that analyses data generated during the project's four-year period, by looking into different aspects of the formative experience. The university institutional Ethics Committee in Brazil granted me approval for the development of the investigation (Ethics approval document number: 2.683.907).

The thirteen participating teacher candidates are identified with the following codes: TC1, TC2, TC3, TC4, TC5, TC6, TC7, TC8, TC9, TC10, TC11, TC12, TC13. Eight participants were male (TC1-TC3; TC5-TC9) and five were female. Participants' age ranged from 18 to 35 years old, with just two over 30 years old (TC1 and TC13). The journals they produced were written at the end of each month from February to November (2015 and 2016). Not all journals addressed the theme of inclusion, so we pre-selected those which discussed specifically that theme, an average of 3 journals per each participant.

The annual reports analysed were produced by the two coordinators of the program (one of which is the researcher), through a compilation of information found in TC's reports, in addition to the coordinators' data. The coordinators of the program had to submit a report to the Ministry of Education Agency, which supported the program, at the end of each year. Finally, it is important to acknowledge the role of the schoolteacher, who acted as a supervisor/mentor for the TCs and is often mentioned in their journals as a source of knowledge, feedback, and emotional support.

Adopting an interpretive and thematic stance to data, this research has a primarily qualitative nature. The research stands as a case study (Yin, 2018), and the case is the Pibid project developed in a specific school where the processes described took place for a year. There is a presupposition that "understanding in-depth educational phenomena may be the first step for real change, based on the needs perceived by the participants of a specific educational context and for that context" (Esteban, 2010, p. 132). In this way, when mapping the strategies proposed to TCs to work with SWDs and the meanings given by participants to their experience of enacting those strategies, I tried to search for patterns, insights, or concepts (Yin, 2018) that connected to the framework adopted as a reference, that is, the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2012) core values. Additionally, I also considered the themes that emerged from data, that is, I was open to include categories that were not mentioned in the core values. For this reason, the study has both a deductive and an inductive nature.

Although this study addresses a specific experience of teacher education, it is meant to contribute to the international field of language teacher education, as it sheds light into what the challenges for inclusive education are in Brazil currently and, at the same time, it shares insights into innovative strategies that could be relevant to advance inclusive teachers' identities and inclusive practices in local, national and transnational contexts.

RESULTS

As for the two reports investigated, I coded forty-two phrases suggestive of strategies adopted to foster an awareness of issues of inclusion and care among teacher candidates as they took part in the program. Table 1 below, list the 11 strategies found in the reports:

Table 1: Strategies for raising awareness of care and inclusion among TCs

Number	Strategy	Report Year
1	▪ Giving TCs regular opportunity to work with SWDs on a one-to-one basis in the practicum part of the program, using activities previously designed, under the supervision of classroom teacher.	2015, 2016
2	▪ Fostering an inclusion perspective of education among TCs, strengthening the belief that every student has the right and is able to learn, and that inclusion benefits students with and without disabilities.	2015, 2016
3	▪ Encouraging TCs to rely on observation and on diagnostic reports to identify and collect data about SWDs in classrooms before starting to work with them and motivating TCs to identify challenges to be faced to promote effective inclusion in classrooms.	2015, 2016
4	▪ Organizing study meetings where TCs could have both theoretical and practical discussions on the themes of teaching English to SWDs and inclusive education, often underpinned by academic texts TCs were encouraged to read, including the ones about specific disabilities.	2015, 2016
5	▪ Inviting graduate students and external specialists to contribute to the program by sharing their knowledge and experience about inclusive education and teaching to SWDs.	2016
6	▪ Asking TCs to prepare adapted materials, modified lesson plans and exams to provide for the specific needs of SWDs in English classes.	2015, 2016
7	▪ Asking TCs to design lessons for all students that cater to the needs of SWDs by incorporating multimodal/digital resources and adapted tasks, by modelling caring behaviour, and by raising awareness of students without disabilities to the importance of inclusive practices, motivating their interaction with the peers with disabilities.	2016
8	▪ Organizing mentoring and feedback sessions with TCs, school supervisor and coordinator from the university.	2015, 2016
9	▪ Encouraging TCs to take part in extra-curricular workshops/seminars/conferences on the themes of disabilities and inclusive education and giving TCs opportunities to share knowledge and experience.	2015, 2016
10	▪ Asking TCs to organize a blog where they could post all the inclusive lesson plans and activities designed.	2015, 2016
11	▪ Asking TCs to write reflective teaching journals to record and think critically about their practices in the classroom, including the work with SWDs.	2015, 2016

(Source: Author)

In the TCs' journals, I identified one hundred and seventy-four excerpts (174) related to TC's representation of strategies and to the impact those strategies had on their professional development and/or on their identities. Those excerpts were categorized in 71 themes, associated with specific strategies among those presented in the previous table. Given the limitations of space in this article, I present the analysis of the three most frequently mentioned strategies (numbers 1, 3 and 7 in the table above), looking at how teacher candidates framed them in their journals. The strategies are: a) giving TCs regular opportunity to work with SWDs

on a one-to-one basis in the practicum part of the program; b) encouraging TCs to rely on observation and on diagnostic reports to identify and collect data about SWDs in classrooms before starting to work with them and motivating TCs to identify challenges to be faced to promote effective inclusion in classrooms; c) asking TCs to design lessons for all students that cater to the needs of SWDs by incorporating multimodal/digital resources and adapted tasks, by modelling caring behaviour, and by raising awareness of students without disabilities to the importance of inclusive practices. The table below (Table 2) represents the percentage of themes associated with the three chosen strategies by comparison with the other themes found in TC's journals (71):

Table 2: Percentage of themes coded in TC's journals and corresponding strategy

Number	Strategy	Number of themes associated to strategy	%
7	▪ Asking TCs to design lessons for all students that cater to the needs of SWDs by incorporating multimodal/digital resources and adapted tasks, by modelling caring behaviour, and by raising awareness of students without disabilities to the importance of inclusive practices, motivating their interaction with the peers with disabilities.	14	20%
1	▪ Giving TCs regular opportunity to work with SWDs on a one-to-one basis in the practicum part of the program, using activities previously designed, under the supervision of classroom teacher	13	18%
3	▪ Encouraging TCs to rely on observation and on diagnostic reports to identify and collect data about SWDs in classrooms before starting to work with them and motivating TCs to identify challenges to be faced to promote effective inclusion in classrooms.	10	14%
11	▪ Asking TCs to write reflective teaching journals to record and think critically about their practices in the classroom, including the work with SWDs.	8	11%
2	▪ Fostering an inclusion perspective of education among TCs, strengthening the belief that every student has the right and is able to learn, and inclusion benefits students with and without disabilities.	6	8%
4	▪ Organizing study meetings where TCs could have theoretical-practical discussions on the themes of teaching English to SWDs and inclusive education, often underpinned by academic texts TCs were encouraged to read, including the ones about specific disabilities.	4	6%
6	▪ Asking TCs to prepare adapted materials, modified lesson plans and exams to provide for the specific needs of SWDs in English classes.	4	6%
8	▪ Organizing mentoring and feedback sessions with TCs, school supervisor and coordinator from the university.	2	3%
9	▪ Encouraging TCs to take part in extra-curricular workshops/seminars/ conferences on the themes of disabilities and inclusive education and giving TCs opportunities to share knowledge and experience.	1	1%
5	▪ Inviting graduate students and external specialists to contribute to the program by sharing their knowledge and experience about inclusive education and Teaching to SWDs.	0	0%
10	▪ Asking TCs to organize a blog where they could post all the inclusive lesson plans and activities designed.	0	0%

	Not linked to any strategy	9	13%
	TOTAL	71	100%

(Source: Author)

As one of the main strategies, the program reports show that TCs were guided to work with SWDs in English classes on a one-to-one basis, using activities previously designed, under the supervision of classroom teacher at least once a week, during one or two years. By being given the chance to work with SWDs, in the context of the program investigated (*Pibid*), TCs reported enhanced satisfaction and boosted self-esteem, because SWDs responded positively to the differentiated activities and approaches proposed. They also mention better understanding of real challenges of classroom teachers to promote inclusion and the development of a positive attitude towards SWDs, as they tried to do their best to ensure students' learning through ongoing interaction. The passages below represent those points¹:

Teacher Candidate 9 (TC9)

It's necessary to provide scaffolding that matches the student level. Real inclusion understands that, and beyond the physical presence of the student in the classroom, it also considers his intellectual development. Thus, I believe that a SWD [special needs] should be present in a regular school; however, his inclusion should involve learning, interaction, and development. (2016)

Teacher Candidate 3 (TC3)

Another observed issue is the way the TCs adopt mediation practices when they propose activities and tests to SWDs [special needs]. It is not enough to use flexibilization; some students need even more support to develop the activities. The TCs recognize that need and offer additional support to those students. (2016)

Equally effective, according to TCs, was learning what kind of teaching practices are disturbing for specific SWDs and should be avoided. It was also important to recognise the limitations of the educational system that may generate frustrating moments for teachers trying to promote inclusive practices in their classrooms and learning how to cope with those discouraging events. Additionally, all TCs underlined gains related to human values, such as establishing caring relationships, a fact that can be inferred from the following excerpts:

Teacher Candidate 2 (TC2)

There are many observed situations in which affection and assertiveness are set aside and there is no presence of kindness. I understand that for a student to learn how to live with the other, it is necessary to practice those three dimensions at school. Without that, the human being tends to selfishness, intolerance, and ends up not accepting differences. (2015)

Teacher Candidate 13 (TC13)

¹ All excerpts from teacher candidates' journals were translated from Portuguese into English by the author. The original version of teacher candidates' excerpts and corresponding translations can be found in a supplemental file to the article (see Appendix A).

In the Project, I am increasingly getting closer to those teenagers [SWDs], understanding their world (the social and affective aspects), and in some way also learning with them. It's rewarding to notice through their words and actions how important you are and how much they appreciate your support. Many times, we must put ourselves in the other's shoes to understand his needs. (2016)

A second strategy frequently referred to by TCs is the use of observation and diagnostic reports to identify and collect data about SWDs in classrooms, and to map the challenges to promoting effective inclusion in classrooms. In their journals, TCs underscored that observation helped them understand students' needs, interests, and patterns of behaviour. Based on those insights, TCs saw themselves as being able to design adapted materials, more flexible tasks with plenty of visual input, and even modify the English curriculum to make it accessible to some students.

In addition to observation, TCs indicated the value of talking to parents or relatives, to the students themselves, and to the classroom teacher to gather useful information about learners with disabilities. Those aspects are projected in the following comments:

Teacher Candidate 3 (TC3)

Another aspect [. . .] we had already talked about in meetings is the importance that we as teachers (TCs) survey family members or guardians of SWDs [special needs]. Those pieces of information are essential for us to become more confident when relating to SWDs and to prepare more objective classes based on the data collected. (2015)

Teacher Candidate 11 (TC11)

Initially, we tried to find out the main deficits/needs of the students officially recognized by the school as special education students through reports provided by the school and by taking part in meetings with school staff. For some time, we studied the situation of SWD [special needs] at school to design adapted exams for them. (2015)

In the same way, by studying the classroom and school environment, TCs were able to spot many systemic challenges that stood as barriers in the process of inclusion for SWDs. Among those issues, they pointed to the lack of appropriate materials, lack of curriculum adaptation and/or modification, inappropriate methodological choices from the part of the classroom teacher, and lack of space for alternative activities. The following fragments of TC's journals articulate challenges they found at schools:

Teacher Candidate 5 (TC5)

I have noticed, after reading texts and after having my experience at xxx School, how much the school is unprepared for the teaching of SWDs (special needs). There is a lack of materials and specific rooms for more individualized work with those students, once in the regular classroom, there are no professionals available to help them, like a monitor or even a more specialized teacher to deal with those special students. (2015)

Teacher Candidate 4 (TC4)

It's a challenge for a public-school teacher to work with SWDs (special needs) without an assistant (aide), in overcrowded classes, and with students who need the adaptation of activities, adapted methodologies that match their real difficulties.

Inclusion in classrooms come side -by -side to exclusion. I can only include when I promote equality, when I offer accessibility, when I prepare teachers for quality work in their jobs and, at the moment, this is not what is happening in Brazil. (2016)

A striking source of discomfort for TCs (see TC4 fragment above) is recognizing how difficult it is for the classroom teacher to attend to the needs of SWDs when s/he is working alone. Accordingly, TCs argue not only for the presence of support workers in the classrooms but also for a collaborative effort from the part of all schoolteachers and staff to ensure that SWDs have access to quality education.

Additional challenges identified by TCs refer to the attitudes of others that do not contribute to the fostering of a sense of belonging among SDWs. For example, these may include a lack of assistance and support from their peers without disabilities, segregation, prejudice, and feelings of isolation and discomfort in the classroom. These challenges are reflected in the following excerpt:

Teacher Candidate 3 (TC3)

I consider that the lack of awareness of the group is a decisive factor in the exclusion that occurs within the inclusion process. We need to make it clear for everyone that SWDs have the same rights as the others, and not considering them as part of the class is great violence, not only institutional but also human. It's possible to raise awareness through videos showing scenes of prejudice against people with disabilities, through texts that approach that issue and through SWD's actions towards their peers in the classroom. (2015).

It is inspiring to observe how TC3 urges teachers to model caring behaviour and to raise awareness of students without disabilities to the issues of prejudice and equality, motivating their interaction with their peers with disabilities.

TCs also highlighted the impact of another specific strategy on their professional development, which involved the design of lessons for all students while catering to the needs of SWDs through the incorporation of multimodal/digital resources and adapted tasks. They reported being more aware of the need to include multiple modes of representing meaning in the same lesson, as well as providing all students with various ways to express their learnings and ideas. In fact, this kind of awareness became more common over time as TCs became familiar with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (Meyer & Rose, 2005). The excerpt below illustrates some of those issues:

Teacher Candidate 1 (TC1)

I noticed that the young student, who has Down Syndrome, was determined to make his representation of the words (Take the bus) and then, at the end of the class, I asked the other students to wait for one minute until he finished his drawing, and I showed it to the whole group; he was so happy that his caretaker went to me and thanked us for the attention we gave to him. (2015).

In that excerpt, TC1 mentioned his attempt to ensure that a SWD participated in the lessons at his own pace, working in groups and having the support of peers. The candidate did that by asking the student to share his work in front of the whole class and by recognizing his effort.

DISCUSSION

The analysis presented in the previous session highlights, first of all, that although many strategies were proposed to TCs by the program coordinators to develop more caring and inclusive teacher identities, not all of them were fully accepted or incorporated by all TCs in their practices. Research participants' scarce reference to the effects of some strategies on their teacher education process suggests that each context is unique and therefore not all strategies seem to produce the same kind of outcomes in terms of changes in beliefs, attitudes, and practices related to educational inclusion.

Nonetheless, among the most often cited strategies, it is noticeable a movement towards enacting the key aspects of care, as defined by Noddings (2005): motivational displacement and engrossment. Whether as result of regular interaction with SWDs or due to constant work on the design of inclusive lessons and materials, the fact is that TCs showed enhanced commitment to ensuring quality English learning experience for the SWDs they worked with. Not only that, but they represented a true concern for the well-being of those students; they were also willing to change their values and attitudes to contribute to SWDs' development.

The TCs indicated that the strategies analysed were conducive to more caring teacher identities in multiple dimensions: care at the level of cognitive justice, that is, addressing the need to make knowledge and development accessible for all, and redressing possible sources of imbalance; care at the affective level, by showing signs of strong rapport, meaningful interaction and attentive observation to SWD's needs; and finally care at a broader social level, by standing up for the rights of SWDs in classroom, discussing systemic barriers and proposing alternative practices through innovative lessons and materials.

Considering the core values and knowledge connected to an inclusive teacher's profile (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012), data analysis reveals that TCs could learn to *appreciate learner diversity* as they were engaged in practices of keen observation and interaction with SWDs; they had the chance to strengthen their conceptions of inclusive education, advancing their knowledge on laws, and policies related to inclusion but also learning from experience the real challenges faced by SWDs.

Secondly, the task of designing teaching materials afforded TCs ways of *supporting all learners*, making them aware of the need to develop adapted and/or modified activities/materials to use with specific students as a means to ensure their participation in the lessons. Moreover, TCs became conscious that inclusive education is about finding strategies to make the whole class receptive and willing to include their peers with disabilities in the learning process, with respect and openness.

The fact that the TCs were asked to work in collaboration both among themselves and with the classroom teacher to design lessons, materials, and to overcome challenges contributed to their perception that *inclusive education requires teamwork*, that is, teachers have to work collaboratively with each other. In addition to that, they recognised that parents and other staff at school also have a relevant role to play and should be heard.

By having the opportunity to put themselves in the position of the classroom teacher in their practicum with SWDs, these TCs were able to gain a clearer view of the complex issues pervading inclusion of SWDs, and how it *requires continuous investment in professional development*, much beyond the period of initial education practicum. Therefore, it is the teachers' responsibility to find resources within themselves (i.e., grit, creativity, power) and in their own environment (i.e., books, peers, work collectives), where they can engage in lifelong learning and development.

Last, in terms of *establishing caring relationships*, TCS had plenty of opportunities to relate to SWDs, to show affection, respect, attention, and a deep concern with learners' academic achievement and well-being. Because the candidates were asked to interact with

SWDs in a variety of teaching situations, they could gradually develop reciprocal trust and respect with those students. Moreover, they learned to think of strategies to develop a responsive attitude among all students concerning their ethical responsibility in relation to inclusion, so that all learners, including those with disabilities, felt they belonged and were cared for at school.

CONCLUSION

This article aimed at investigating strategies adopted in a specific teacher education program in Brazil to motivate teaching candidates to develop a caring and inclusive attitude towards their students with disabilities. It also intended to analyse how those strategies impacted on teacher candidates' professional development and identity.

A total of eleven (11) broad strategies were identified in the two annual *Pibid* reports taken as data, and 9 (nine) of them were found in the two reports. From that list, I selected the most prevalent strategies and looked at how they were represented in thirteen teacher candidates' journals, by looking at the meanings and insights TCs gleaned from those strategies

Research findings indicate the relevant impact of the strategies analysed on TC's professional development and identity. Candidates seem to have gained considerable experience on how to work with SWDs, particularly because they had the chance to work directly with learners for a long period, studying about some disabilities in general and trying to know and understand the needs of each student they worked with. Not only that, but TCs could identify many challenges that stood as barriers to the inclusion of all students in English classes, among which they highlighted the lack of resources, insufficient preparation from the part of the classroom teacher, and little classroom support for her to enact inclusive practices, insufficient school resources to promote inclusion and above all, a lot of indifference from students without disabilities towards their peers with disabilities.

Regarding the aspect of care, the passages identified in TC's journals reveal a dynamic of motivational displacement, which led them to do their best to promote SWDs' well-being and sense of belonging in the English language lessons, as well as to strengthen students' language learning process. Additionally, TCs seem to have become aware of the SWDs' challenges and were willing to understand their identities and to engage in meaningful and empathic interaction, that is, they enacted an attitude of engrossment, which is another indication of caring relations (Noddings, 2005).

Some of the strategies also enabled a movement towards more inclusive teachers' profiles. As it was discussed, TCs state the three selected strategies had effects on multiple dimensions of their professional development and identities. Thus, they could build a more powerful view of inclusion; they learned to appreciate the diversity of abilities, learning styles, and differences in the classrooms where they worked. Accordingly, they became more sensitive to diversity and more aware of the dangers to teach as if every student learned in the same way.

In sum, this study brought to light useful strategies to encourage the development of caring and inclusive teachers that seem to have produced beneficial effects for the participants involved in a specific teacher preparation program in Brazil. This fact attests to the positive outcome of that program, but it also strengthens the claim that if we want to create inclusive classrooms, where all students feel they are supported and cared for, it is fundamental to ensure that teachers can enact caring and inclusive practices, while still in initial education, so that they might become more sensitive to differences, and feel empowered to transform their classrooms in places where all students have the chance to learn, with dignity and happiness.

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APPENDIX A

Original version of teacher candidates' excerpts and corresponding translations

<p>Vários são os exemplos observados em que são deixadas de lado a afetividade, a assertividade, e que não é trabalhada a amorosidade. Entendo que para o aluno aprender a conviver com o outro, torna-se necessária a prática destas três características no âmbito escolar. Sem isso, o ser humano tende para o egoísmo, a intolerância, e acaba por não aceitar as diferenças (P2, 2015).</p> <p>The are many observed situations in which affection and assertiveness are set aside and there is no presence of kindness. I understand that for a student to learn how to live with the other, it is necessary to practice those three dimensions at school. Without that, the human being tends to selfishness, intolerance and ends up not accepting differences. (P2, 2015).</p>
<p>Com o Projeto eu estou cada vez mais me aproximando desses adolescentes, entendendo o mundo deles (o meio social e afetivo) e de certa forma aprendendo também com eles. É gratificante perceber em suas ações e atitudes o quanto você é importante e o quanto ele gosta da sua ajuda. Muitas vezes é necessário nos colocarmos no lugar do outro para só assim entendermos a sua necessidade. (P13, 2016).</p> <p>In the Project, I am increasingly getting closer to those teenagers [SWDs], understanding their world (the social and affective aspects) and in some way also learning with them. It's rewarding to notice through their words and actions how important you are and how much they appreciate your support. Many times, we must put ourselves in the other's shoes so as to understand his needs. (P13, 2016).</p>
<p>Outro aspecto observado é a forma como os bolsistas abordam a mediação na realização das atividades e avaliações propostas aos alunos com deficiência. Não basta somente flexibilizar, alguns alunos precisam de um auxílio maior para desenvolver as atividades e os bolsistas reconhecem essa necessidade e oferecem um suporte a mais para estes alunos (P3, 2016).</p> <p>Another observed issue is the way the TCs adopt mediation practices when they propose activities and tests to SWDs [special needs]. It is not enough to use flexibilization; some students need even more support to develop the activities. The TCs recognize that need and offer additional support to those students. (P3, 2016).</p>
<p>É necessário oportunizar os andaimes ao nível do aluno. Uma verdadeira inclusão enxerga isso, pois além da presença física do aluno em sala, ela considera também o seu desenvolvimento intelectual. Sendo assim, defendo que o aluno com NE deva sim estar presente na escola regular, contanto, que a sua inclusão envolva também aprendizagem, interação e desenvolvimento. (P9, 2016).</p> <p>It's necessary to provide scaffolding that match the student level. Real inclusion understands that, for beyond the physical presence of the student in the classroom, it also takes into account his intellectual development. Thus, I believe that a SWD should be present in regular school; however, his inclusion should involve learning, interaction and development (P9, 2016).</p>
<p>Outro aspecto que é abordado no texto e que nós já comentamos em reuniões é a importância de nós enquanto professores (bolsista) fazermos um levantamento com os familiares ou responsáveis pelos alunos com necessidades especiais. Essas informações são fundamentais para que tenhamos mais segurança na nossa relação com o aluno e até preparar aulas mais objetivas mediante as informações coletadas. (P3, 2015).</p> <p>Another aspect covered by the text and which we had already talked about in meetings is the importance that we as teachers (TCs) conduct a survey among family members or guardians of SWDs. Those pieces of information are essential for us to become more confident when relating to SWDs and to prepare more objective classes based on the data collected. (P3, 2015).</p>
<p>Inicialmente, buscamos através dos relatórios feitos pela própria escola e nas reuniões com o corpo pedagógico da escola saber os principais déficits/necessidades desses alunos reconhecidos pela escola oficialmente como alunos especiais. Durante um tempo, estudamos a situação dos alunos com necessidades especiais da escola, a fim de realizar provas adaptadas para esse público. (P11, 2015).</p> <p>Initially, we tried to find out the main deficits/needs of the students officially recognized by the school as special education students through reports provided by the school and by taking part in meetings with</p>

<p>school staff. For some time, we studied the situation of SWD at school in order to design adapted exams for them. (P11, 2015).</p>
<p>O mais difícil foi perceber que sem o apoio de um outro professor eu não conseguiria ter trabalhado com o aluno com deficiência intelectual nem acompanhar todos os grupos para dar-lhes suporte dentro do tempo estipulado para aquela aula (P1, 2015).</p> <p>The most difficult thing was to notice that without the support of another teacher, I would not have been able to work with the student with intellectual disability, nor give support to him in the period of that lesson. (P1, 2015).</p>
<p>Percebi, a partir da leitura de textos e a partir da minha vivência na escola XXX, o quanto essa escola está despreparada para o ensino de pessoas com necessidade especiais. Há falta de materiais e salas específicas para um trabalho mais individualizado com esses alunos, já que em sala não estão disponíveis profissionais que os auxiliem, como um monitor ou até um professor mais atualizado em sua capacitação para lidar com esses alunos especiais (P15, 2015).</p> <p>I have noticed, after reading texts and after having my experience at XXX School, how much the school is unprepared for the teaching of SWD (special needs). There is lack of materials and of specific rooms for more individualized work with those students, once in the regular classroom, there are no professionals available to help them, like a monitor or even a more specialized teacher to deal with those special students. (P5, 2015).</p>
<p>É um desafio para um professor de escola pública trabalhar com alunos que tenham NEE sem um apoiador (auxiliar), com turmas superlotadas e com alunos que necessitam de adaptações de atividades, de metodologias adaptadas para a realidade de suas dificuldades. A inclusão em sala de aula caminha a meu ver de mãos atadas a exclusão, eu só incluo quando distribuo oportunidade de igualdade, quando dou acessibilidade, quando capacito o professor a trabalhar com qualidade nas suas atribuições e no momento não é o que acontece no Brasil. (P4, 2016).</p> <p>It's a challenge for a public-school teacher to work with SWD without an assistant (aid), in overcrowded classes and with students who need the adaptation of activities, adapted methodologies that match their real difficulties. Inclusion in classrooms come side by side to exclusion. I can only include when I give opportunity for equality, when I offer accessibility, when I prepare teachers for quality work in their jobs and at the moment this is not what is happening in Brazil (P4, 2016).</p>
<p>Observei que o jovem aluno, que possui a síndrome de Down, estava empenhado em fazer sua representação das palavras (take the bus) e então ao término da aula pedi aos outros alunos que esperassem um minuto até que ele terminasse seu desenho e o mostrei para a turma inteira; ele ficou tão feliz que sua cuidadora dirigiu-se a mim para nos agradecer pela atenção que o dedicamos. (P1, 2015).</p> <p>I noticed that the young student, who has Down Syndrome, was determined to make his representation of the words (<i>Take the bus</i>) and then, at the end of the class, I asked the other students to wait for one minute until he finished his drawing, and I showed it to the whole group; he was so happy that his caretaker went to me and thanked us for the attention we gave to him. (P1, 2015).</p>
<p>Considero a falta de conscientização do grupo um fator decisivo nessa exclusão dentro do processo inclusivo. Precisamos tornar claro a todos que os alunos com deficiência possuem os mesmos direitos que os demais e que o fato de não considerá-los parte da sala é uma grande violência não só institucional como também humana. É possível trabalhar a conscientização por meio de vídeos que mostrem cenas de preconceito contra pessoas com deficiência, através de textos que abordem essa temática e por meio de atitudes dos mesmos com os colegas na sala de aula. (P3,, 2015).</p> <p>I consider that the lack of awareness of the group is a decisive factor in the exclusion that occurs within the inclusion process. We need to make it clear for everyone that SWDs have the same rights as the others and not considering them part of the class is great violence, not only institutional but also human. It's possible to raise awareness through videos showing scenes of prejudice against people with disabilities, through texts that approach that issue and through SWD's actions towards their peers in classroom. (P3, 2015).</p>