

# Ethnography: Experiences and speeches in around young people with special educational needs.



Jorge França Santos<sup>(1)</sup>, Sofia Marques da Silva<sup>(2)</sup> / <sup>1</sup>M.Sc. - FMUP, Portugal; <sup>2</sup>PhD. - FPCEUP, Portugal

**INTRODUCTION.** In Portugal, the finding that specialized Units supporting Students with Multi-Disabilities and Congenital Deafblindness – UAEM functioned as spaces for the segregation, determined a new “Legal Regime of School Inclusion” (DL 54 and 55/2018). Thus, the universal and multilevel learning model was established, considering both the students' functional profile and that defined upon leaving compulsory schooling (PASEO) and the UAEM were reconfigured into Learning Support Centers (CAA).

**OBJECTIVES.** Understand the structure and functioning of a UAEM, at the unique moment of its reconfiguration into CAA, located in a 2nd/3rd cycle basic school, in an interior region of Northern Portugal, to evaluate its role in promoting of equal opportunities for students with MD, in learning, participation, socialization, autonomy, transition to life after compulsory schooling and inclusion, highlighting the opinion and meaning of action of social actors.

**METHODOLOGY.** Case study, approved by the ISPUP - EC (nº 18009, 2019), based on ethnography as the main source of data complemented with documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis of data considering the objectives, theoretical references and emerging topics of the study.

**RESULTS. STRENGTHS:** 1) EMAEI team - experience in preparing individualized curricula - PEI, PIT, technical and human support; 2) Physical space: Multipurpose room, GAT - snoezelen space, adapted WC...; 3) CRTIC facilitator of learning, info-inclusion and broad socialization. 4) Contextualized teaching, valuing the practical component, multisensory presentation and pedagogical software; 5) Diversity of classes: Group - Thematic; Cooking and Individual/small group - English, Music and Physical Education; 6) Boccia Practice; 7) Promotion of autonomy, possible – MD, > ALD...; 8) PIT: 2/8 (Gym; Kindergarten.) 9) Culture of Affection, Mutual Help, Participation, Tolerance and Solidarity at UAEM/ CAA.

**RESULTS. WEAKNESS:** 1) Absence of classes with students without SEN. 2) ↓ participation of Regular Education Teachers 3) ↓ Operational assistants, teachers, and technicians in Psychology, Speech Therapy, occupational; 4) Architectural and attitudinal barriers - 6/8 young people with PIT scheduled did not start it - MD Effect 5) ↓ Little use of augmentative communication; 6) ↓ Health/ School collaboration, no student had an individual health plan; 7) Discrimination and prejudice persist, also a reflection of the culture of UAEM/CAA, AE, CIM... - Territory Effect.

**THREATS:** Wars, climate change, poverty and migration determine > population in needs for inclusion and < economic resources available for this.

**OPPORTUNITIES:** Favorable legislation, digital therapy, comprehensive and multidisciplinary training for families, teachers and schools, AI...

**CONCLUSIONS:** UAEM/ CAA promotes equal opportunities, possible, considering the specificities of the Family/ students with MD and Territory but ambiguities are experienced between integration/ inclusion vs segregation/ exclusion. “School for all” is an interactive process, between different levels of power and actors. We found a gap between discourses and practices about inclusion, due to the persistence of barriers and threats, but there are strengths and opportunities in pursuing inclusion.