

Author(s):Manuela Sanches-Ferreira, Pedro Lopes-dos-Santos, Sílvia Alves (presenting), Cidália Ferreira-Alves

Conference:ECER 2012, The Need for Educational Research to Champion Freedom, Education and Development for All

Network:04. Inclusive Education

Format:Paper

Session Information

04 SES 08 C, Teacher Training

Parallel Paper Session

Time:2012-09-20
09:00-10:30

Room:FFL - Aula 18

Chair:Philip Ferguson

Contribution

Improving the Use of International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health to Document Holistic Functioning Profiles: a Teacher Training Program

Contemporary approaches within the special education field contend that outlining assessment and intervention processes for children with additional needs requires a functional perspective on their needs rather than a developmental point of view about their delays (Florian *et al.*, 2006; Simeonsson, Sauer-Lee, Granlund, & Björk-Åkesson, 2010).

This assumption inspired recent advances regarding special education legislation in Portugal. The Decree-Law 3/2008 prescribed new orientations, introducing the principle that the documentation of students' functioning profiles (FP) should be the basis for eligibility decision-making - replacing the need of a diagnosis - and for planning educational intervention strategies focused on students' participation (Sanches-Ferreira *et al.*, 2010). The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF, WHO, 2001) was the selected framework to support the description of students' FPs.

The ICF portrays a holistic view of functioning from a biopsychosocial perspective, providing a taxonomy for documenting interactions among *body functions and structures, activities and participation* and *environmental factors* (Ustün, Chatterji, Bickenbach, Kostanjsek, & Schneider, 2003).

The ICF framework is also consistent with the *person-environment fit approach*, which states that the promotion of a *?(?) better fit between students' capacities and the educational context (?) has the potential of*

increasing the quality of inclusive practices and consequently respond to the ethical demands that postulate everyone's right to be part of social valued activities and roles? (Silveira-Maia *et al.*, 2011).

Since the endorsement of the new law some problems were identified regarding the way special and regular teachers were framing assessment information and intervention plans within the conceptual grounds underlying the ICF. Although, the ICF was identified with the potential *to develop a more adequate representation of the complex issues arising in the education of children with disabilities?* (Florian *et al.*, 2006, p.42), it has been difficult for teachers to move from a traditional linear description of students' characteristics (unidimensional perspective) to a innovative holistic functioning profile (multidimensional perspective).

It was in this context that we conceived and implemented an in-service teachers' training program intended to promote the development of problem solving strategies focused on the enhancement of trainees' skills in generating more accurate, more comprehensive, and clearer portrayals of students' functional characteristics. The program followed several steps which included theoretical presentations, practical demonstrations, oriented-practices throughout contact sessions and autonomous practice activities.

The aim of this paper was to evaluate the impact of this teacher training program on the descriptions of the students' functional characteristics, by comparing functioning profiles designed prior and after the training program.

Method

119 teachers attended to a 50 hours in-service training program divided in 25 hours of contact hours ? structured in six sessions ? and 25 hours of practical assignments related to training contents. The training program covered: (1) Conceptual models of disability and intervention issues within the realms of a human rights agenda; (2) the ICF structure and its interactive model (3) the use of a problem solving method as a strategy to generate holistic FPs consistent with the person-environment fit approach. In order to evaluate the impact of the program, a student's IEP was provided by each trainee before and after the training (two IEPs generated by each teacher for the same student). The FPs were analyzed in terms of their quality dimensions detected in the description of students' functional characteristics: application of problem-solving strategies; description of students' strengths; interaction between participation and environmental factors. The reliability of the analyses was certified by an intercoder agreement above 85% between investigators.

Expected Outcomes

Results showed that the training program promoted more holistic and accurate descriptions of students' functioning profiles. It was also observed that post-program IEPs reduced their focus on the body functions component in relation to the activity and participation component, which is in line with the ICF framework. These results are discussed in terms of the contribution of the training program for the development of teachers' skills in the ICF use to elaborate educationally relevant functional profiles of students with additional needs. The results are also discussed in terms of the ICF framework as a classification system more compatible with the human rights agenda and of how such framework may contribute to improve European educational policies.

References

Decreto-Lei n.º 3/2008 (Decree-Law 3/2008). Ministério da Educação. Diário da República ? Série n.º 4 ? 7 de Janeiro de 2008, pp. 154?164. Florian, L., Hollenweger, J., Simeonsson, R., Wedell, K., Riddell, S., Terzi, L., & Holland, A. (2006). Cross-Cultural Perspectives on the Classification of Children with Disabilities. *The Journal of Special Education*, 40(1), 36-45. Sanches-Ferreira, M., Simeonsson, R., Maia, M., Pinheiro, S., Tavares, A., & Alves, S. (2010). Projecto da Avaliação Externa da Implementação do Decreto-Lei n.º 3/2008: Relatório Final. Lisboa: Direcção-Geral de Inovação e de Desenvolvimento Curricular. Available in: http://www.dgidc.min-edu.pt/educacaoespecial/data/ensinoespecial/estudo_simeonsson.pdf Silveira-Maia, M., Lopes-dos-Santos, P., Sanches-Ferreira, M., Tavares, A., Alves, S., & Pinheiro, S. (2011). Environmental Approach on Individualized Education Programs: The Use of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) Framework. In *Proceedings of the London International Conference on Education*, UK. Simeonsson, R., Sauer-Lee, A., Granlund, M., & Björck-Åkesson. (2010). Developmental and health assessment in rehabilitation with the international classification of functioning, disability and health for children and youth. In: E. Mpofu, & T. Oakland (editors). *Rehabilitation and health assessment: applying ICF guidelines* (pp. 27-46). New York: Springer. Ustün, B. T., Chatterji, S., Bickenbach, J., Kostanjsek, N., & Schneider, M. (2003). The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health: a new tool for understanding disability and health. *Disability & Rehabilitation*, 25, 565?71. World Health Organization. (2001). *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health*. Geneva: World Health Organization.

Author Information

Manuela Sanches-Ferreira

School of Education of Porto Polytechnic

Special Education

Porto

Pedro Lopes-dos-Santos

School of Psychology and Education, University of Porto, Portugal

Sílvia Alves (presenting)

School of Education of Porto Polytechnic

Special Education

Porto

Cidália Ferreira-Alves

School of Education of Porto Polytechnic, Portugal