

# UNEMPLOYED: DIFFICULTIES AND CHALLENGES FACED BY PROFESSIONALS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

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## Abstract

Workers with visual impairment (VI) experience underrepresentation in the labor market, with lower employability rates than the physically or hearing disabled. In this context, this research was carried out with 11 blind or low-vision professionals to identify and understand the difficulties of entering or returning to the job market. The results reveal the existing discrimination in organizations and in society regarding the professional competence of the VI, being also a challenge for these subjects the right to education and work.

**Keywords:** Blindness. Inclusion. Disabled people. Job.

## 1. Introduction

According to the 2010 Census, in Brazil, there are about 1.5 million people with mental/intellectual disability, 3.5 million with visual impairment, 865 thousand with hearing impairment and 1.6 million with physical/motor disabilities. The population of productive age in the analyzed period is 6.5 million, but only 4.9% of workers are in the formal market. There are a large number of people with disabilities – 3.1 million, compared to 306,000 employees – which suggests the informal and precarious work of these workers (GARCIA, 2014).

Data from the Annual Social Information Index (RAIS) for 2016 indicate that 418.5 thousand people with disabilities have a formal employment relationship, representing an increase of 3.8% in relation to 2014 (403.2 thousand), but correspond to only 0.9% of total employment. Regarding the

distribution among the groups of workers, the physical disability comprises 204.6 thousand jobs, corresponding to 48.9% of the disabled people (DPs) employed. Hearing impairment accounts for 80.4 thousand jobs (19.2% of jobs), visually impaired 53.4 thousand employees (12.8%), rehabilitated workers account for 38.7 thousand jobs (9.2% of employees), intellectual disability for 34.2 thousand of the labor links (8.2% of DPs) and multiple disability includes 7.3 thousand jobs or 1.7% of workers with disabilities (BRAZIL, 2017).

Although the historical series 2010/16 shows the increase in the number of disabled workers employed, the data indicate a trend of low participation of people with disabilities in the formal labor market. In six years, the participation of DPs in the employed labor force stabilized below the level of 1% of the total formal jobs in Brazil, according to the table below.

**Table 1 - Employment according to the type of disability (2010/16)**

Deficiency	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Physical	166,690	174,207	170,468	181,464	192,432	200,794	204,554
Hearing	68,819	73,579	74,385	78,078	78,370	79,389	80,390
Visual	17,710	21,847	26,119	33,505	39,580	46,913	53,438
Intellectual (mental)	15,606	18,810	21,317	25,332	29,132	32,144	34,168
Multiple	3,845	4,144	4,696	5,490	6,708	8,108	7,287
Rehabilitated	33,343	32,704	33,311	33,928	35,100	35,907	38,684
Total	306,013	325,291	330,296	357,797	381,322	403,255	418,521

Source: Ministry of Labor (BRAZIL, 2018).

Research by the Brazilian Association of Human Resources (ABRH), i.Social and Catho conducted with 2,949 professionals in the sector in 2016 found that 81% of recruiters hire people with disabilities "to comply with the law." Only 4% said they did it for "believing in potential" and 12% did so "regardless of quota." The survey also indicated that 65% of managers demonstrate resistance to interviewing and/or hiring people with disabilities" (I. SOCIAL, 2016).

**The results indicate that 92% of managers positively assess the performance of people with disabilities**

The research with managers developed by Carvalho-Freitas (2009, p. 130) indicates "there is still a focus on disability and its limitations, rather than on people's potentialities and their possibilities". Regarding the productivity paradigms supported by business logic, the results indicate that 92% of managers positively assess the performance of people with disabilities and "respondents say that people with disabilities perform works similarly as others and that the insertion of these workers does not negatively impact on the company's competitiveness".

Despite Article 93 of Law no. 8,213/91 – the so-called Quota Law – and Decree no. 3,298 / 99, as well as subsequent regulations at the private and public level, there are still very low rates of workers with disabilities in the labor market. Regarding the visually impaired with blindness, in which visual acuity is equal to or less than 0.05 in the best eye with the best optical correction, at low vision, which means visual acuity between 0.3 and 0.05 in the best eye with the best optical correction, to cases in which the summation of the measurement visual field in both eyes is equal to or smaller than 60°, or to the simultaneous occurrence of any of the above conditions (BRAZIL, 2004), the employment rates are worrying. Only 5.8% of the contingent of working age workers are linked to formal work and average wages below those with physical, hearing or rehabilitated employees (GARCIA, 2014).

Given this scenario, this paper presents an investigation carried out with the visually impaired<sup>1</sup> not included in the labor market. The objective is to identify and understand the difficulties that the visually impaired face to return or to enter the labor market, analyzing their work status. As secondary objectives, it seeks to identify the relationship between the professionals and their work and evaluate the inclusion process in this context, as well as to verify if there are differences in relation to the professional opportunities among visually impaired people with congenital and acquired blindness.

The research is characterized by qualitative descriptive research, conducted from in-depth interviews with members of the Association of the Visually Impaired of Canoas (Adevic), with the inclusion criteria to be at economically active age, membership and participation in the institution and signature of the Informed Consent. The interviews were later transcribed and evaluated, giving rise to categories of analysis. Initially, elements related to the context of inclusion in the organizations and the specificities of visual impairment will be presented, followed by an explanation of the method and the results of the investigative process.

## 2. Inclusion and work

Lima, Tavares, Brito and Cappelle (2013) have identified the survival, the need to be useful to society, and the guarantee of financial and personal independence as working senses for people with disabilities. The subsistence and the social relation made possible by the professional exercise evidenced the centrality of the work, being very significant the potentiality of recognition as workers by the others. However, it is important to evaluate the valuation of the experiences in the work as an attribution of the feeling of capacity and utility towards the society giving social visibility to the subject. This perspective suggests a productive dimension, a condition in which the disabled person is socially considered, an issue not confined to this social group, but accentuate itself in the face of existing social values and demands. Enriquez (2014) points out the experience of being present at work in the face of the norms inherent in a job, being important the participation of the human being in other social groups and the investment in other desires beyond the labor context.

In constructing and analyzing the landscape of the inclusion of people with disabilities, Garcia (2014) identifies issues that contribute to the restricted presence of workers with disabilities in the Brazilian labor market: precarious accessibility, stereotypes and prejudices, school and precarious liabilities inadequate and insufficient legislation and cultural issues related to disability.

Carvalho-Freitas and Marques (2009) point out that in society and in organizations, the conception and classification of normality prevails, whereby the condition of the deficiency would be of the order of a deviation, of a disqualification, in which the effort to be undertaken is the suitability to the context, as in the work environment. The authors propose another matrix of interpretation, in which the society and its diversity replace the question, considering "the deficiency as a failure of society to be accessible to all, that is, society, as it is organized, excludes people who do not fall into the normal norm of normality". The authors conclude: "In this sense, the deficiency is in the society which is not organized to be accessible to all" (CARVALHO-FREITAS; MARQUES, 2009, p. 248).

Although there is recognition of the efforts of public policies aimed at the insertion of people with disabilities in the public and private work environment, there is a need for the reflection of companies and their managers beyond mere compliance with the law. It is necessary to consider the "subjectivity of work, interpersonal relations and their reflexes in the experiences of pleasure and suffering in the work" (HOFFMANN; TRAVERSO; ZANINI, 2014, page 708).

Human resource practices implicate in this context. Maccali et al. (2015) found that Human Resources (HR) practices are fundamental for the inclusion of people with disabilities to occur effectively and generate good results since they facilitate diversity in organizations. It was evidenced that HR actions were well structured when in implementation, but they demand maintenance policies for their effectiveness.

Through a survey of HR professionals, Coutinho, Rodrigues and Passerino (2017) have identified that in the mapping of activities to be carried out by workers with disabilities, there is often a lack of knowledge about the possibilities of using assistive technologies, adaptations of tasks or service stations. The absence of strategies to make the functions accessible to workers implies barriers to workers' knowledge and professional development. According to the authors, the impossibility of the worker to perform the activities reveals the responsibility of the subject for the supposed limitations, omitting the social context that does not assume the accessibility as a commitment that goes beyond the old paradigm of integration coexisting with a desired process of inclusion.

Carvalho-Freitas and Marques (2009) conducted research with managers and post-graduate students in Administration and the results identified antagonistic conceptions regarding disability among the participants. There are positions that consider the inadequacy of sectors and activities for the disabled, demonstrating the evaluation of the impossibility by the worker, while others investigated understand

that these subjects can occupy any position in the organizations, as long as there are modifications and the necessary tools of work. In this last paradigm, disability is seen as a social issue, being the responsibility of all the construction of rights for the differences present in the world of work.

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**Disability is seen as a social issue, being the responsibility of all the construction of rights**

In a survey of 1,459 HR professionals (I.SOCIAL, 2016), 52% of the respondents said they knew the Quotas Law well, and 59% of the participants considered that the managers' resistance to interviewing disabled people had diminished. The majority of respondents (86%) say that it is more difficult to find candidates with disabilities, a result that contrasts with the identification of the low quality of the vacancies for inclusion. The professionals recognize that the choice of workers in selective processes does not occur because of their competencies, but because of their deficiency, which is a reversal of the criteria applied to non-disabled people. For 86% of respondents, the main factor for hiring professionals with disabilities is the Quotas Law, 70% of respondents believe that DPs suffer prejudice from colleagues, managers or clients.

There is a contingent of people with disabilities in the informality. In view of the almost 6.5 million in active age identified by the 2010 Census, only 306 thousand had an employment relationship, constituting a low participation rate (53.2%) in the labor market compared to non-disabled workers (77.4%), which also occurs in the unemployment rate experienced by both groups (GARCIA, 2014).

Passerino and Pereira (2014) affirm that informal activities have always been part of the lives of people with disabilities, such as handicrafts and the sale of small products, which, instead of being understood as an alternative to the difficulties of insertion in the formal market, were perceived as justification for productive incapacity. The lack of professional training courses offered to disabled workers reveals this concept by providing training for low-skilled or profitable activities, perpetuating the condition of restricted access to technical or management positions.

Considering the centrality of this research, Garcia (2014) identifies the underrepresentation of people with visual or mental/intellectual deficiency in the formal market, since they represent only a little more than 5% of the vacancies, indicating that there is a deficiencies to the detriment of others. Notably, visually impaired workers face difficulties in insertion, because, in a population of almost 3.6 million people, only 17,000 or 0.5% were employed, according to RAIS 2010.

### **3. Schooling and professional perspectives of the visually impaired**

According to Vilaronga and Caiado (2013, page 64), the educational proposal in force in the country is linked to the interests of the market that leads to "the formation of workers with technological knowledge and flexible skills for the demands of

productivity.” In this perspective, there is a significant exclusion of access to social rights, “a lot of struggle is needed for people with disabilities and their families.”

Trinanes and Arruda (2014) understand that the implementation of the school inclusion process has allowed advancement in educational processes with the visually impaired student, contributing to human integrity, enabling more opportunities for personal and professional achievement, generating more autonomy and conditions of independence. However, they acknowledge that an impasse persists in recognizing the change in pedagogical practice since it is necessary to perform shared and dialogically inclusive actions between the professionals of the regular teaching and the teacher of the Specialized Educational Assistance (in Portuguese AEE), so that together they promote the emancipatory formation of the student.

In the process of inclusion, one of the challenges faced by visually impaired students is the identification of factors that may interfere in this process, such as delay in detection and initiation of possible treatments, family orientation, and teacher training for the performance of activities that stimulate the development of students’ potentialities (FRÓES, 2015).

Silva (2003) analyzes that education for the disabled often refers to philanthropic discourse, which is also present in the attitudes of the private and public sectors. Garcia and Maia (2014) affirm that improvements in accessibility are necessary, as well as the revision and improvement of legislation and the training of schoolchildren and people with disabilities.

According to the Brazilian Education Census (INEP, 2016), 57.8% of Brazilian schools have included students with disabilities, global developmental disorders and people with high skills. In 2008, this percentage was only 31%. In terms of infrastructure, for example, a restroom suitable for students with disabilities or reduced mobility is available in 33% of the schools. In relation to the adequacy of roads and dependencies for the same public, the percentage is 25.8%.

### **Developing vocational education, from basic to higher level, is essential for the qualification of people with disabilities**

Developing vocational education, from basic to higher level, is essential for the qualification of people with disabilities, as well as promoting training; there is also the possibility of access and permanence in the labor market. Access to education not only supports inclusion in the labor market but also allows for professional growth, enabling more complex activities to be achieved. Vocational education must go beyond the perspective of workers with disabilities and be thought for the employers who hire them, including managers, human resources professionals, and so many other authorities, showing a view that society should be educated for inclusion. Measures and special programs to promote equality in work opportunities for people with disabilities and other workers are still restricted. There are not many alternatives or incentives that focus on adapting the labor market to workers; there are educational investments and in the labor market, but there is still a gap between these investments, training, and education of people, both educational and entrepreneurial (PASSERINO, PEREIRA 2014).



## 4. Method

In order to identify and understand the difficulties that the visually impaired face to return or to enter the labor market, this qualitative and descriptive research had 11 workers as participants. According to Lakatos and Marconi (2003) this research procedure intends to formulate questions to change concepts. Gil (2002) considers that the descriptive perspective is intended to improve ideas, since its formulation is very flexible, so that it allows the consideration of events.

Field research was carried out at Adevic, from the authorization of its board of directors and the subsequent indication of interviewees, who were invited to participate in the investigation. The inclusion criteria for participation in the research were age considered to be economically active, to carry out activities in Adevic and not to exercise paid activity or employment relationship. Participants were contacted by phone or in person when they were in the association, being informed of the content of the survey and its procedures. The subjects who accepted the invitation were given the Informed Consent and scheduled time for the semi-structured interview, which sought to investigate the situations faced by the disabled in the professional scope, guided by the objectives of the research. Subsequently transcribed, the interviews are material analyzed according to Bardin (2010), having been constituted categories constructed through systematic reading, namely: work for the visually impaired; schooling; training; and congenital or acquired disability.

## 5. Presentation and analysis of results

Initially, the presentation of the research participants based on data that show characteristics of the interviewees analyzed during the categories.

**Table 2 - Characteristics of respondents**

Interviewee	Age	Sex	Schooling	Professional activity	Deficiency
E1	32	F	Higher	Administrative Assistant	Acquired
E2	38	M	High school - incomplete	Production assistant	Congenital
E3	36	F	Higher - incomplete	Administrative Assistant	Acquired
E4	31	M	High School	Production assistant	Acquired
E5	25	F	Higher education in progress	Telephonist	Acquired
E6	50	M	Elementary School	Salesman	Acquired
E7	31	M	High School	Production assistant	Acquired

(to be continued)

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E8	29	F	Higher education in progress	Administrative Assistant	Congenital
E9	30	F	Technical education	Administrative Assistant	Congenital
E10	44	M	High School	Air-conditioning assembler	Acquired
E11	59	F	Higher in progress	Housewife	Acquired

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The average age of the workers is 36 years, being six women and five men. The schooling – examined in the category, later – is predominantly high school or higher. Regarding the activities performed by the interviewees, there are seven auxiliary positions, which suggests operational functions and restricted specialization, with no leadership or management positions, even if schooling points to another professional status. Among the participants, three have the disability as a congenital manifestation and eight experienced the disability from illness, intercurrent or accident.

## 5.1 Work for the visually impaired

When analyzing the potentialities in the world of work, there are singular experiences faced by the visually impaired, dimensioned by the existing social ideology and the difference that characterizes them. This is verified in the interviewees' speech of this research.

E7 recounts his personal experience: “[...] when I joined the company, they told me to avoid circulating in the corridors so as not to hurt me, and then they told me: We count on you!”. However, they have allocated him in a certain sector, and even in the face of the recurring assertion that he is important to the company, he does not see opportunities for growth in the organization: “[...] I enter in a position and I will leave the company still in that position, because they think that I can only do that. I've tried to grow, but they will not allow me”.

Corroborating this view, E4 shares that

They always hire visually impaired people to stay on the phone or in production. Often they put us in rooms to stay on the phone without any other form of interpersonal relationship and without any prospect of professional growth.

E1 knows some friends who work, but they had great difficulty getting a job. In his opinion, this difference in opportunity is because employers think it will be more difficult to train the new employees because of their lack of vision, so they often choose someone who has a physical or even hearing disability.

The participant also expresses the concept of vision as a capacity for analysis and understanding present in society and in the world of work:



People do not realize that a lack of sight does not stop us from seeing in other ways. There is always fear as to how a VI will perform such activity but today there are several technologies that can favor this. However, there is still prejudice (E5).

E7 shares how organizations perceive the condition of the worker with VI: “[...] they think that the blind person can do almost nothing. For us, there are always the same jobs, those where they think we will not get hurt”.

E9 states that the blind cannot perform the same tasks as a person who sees. As a deaf person would not perform the same tasks as a blind person anyway and complements: “It is a very relative issue; it depends a lot on what should be done, even if it is the same vacancy, it must be adapted according to the profile”.

The statements show that the analysis of the worker’s condition is eminently physical, as well as the adaptation of the professional to the job and not, as expected, the adaptation of the context to the performance of the activity. E8 refers to this dimension while states that difficulties occur, especially when “the company is not willing to adapt its environment to receive a VI.” E2 corroborates “They always lead us to the same functions... sometimes I realize that some deficiencies are privileged, but I do not give up.”

There are participants who do not show differences in employability compared to workers with other disabilities but recognize discrimination:

I, in particular, do not find any difference in any deficiency once I have the same training. However, unfortunately, companies think differently, and for the most part, the vacancies offered to the visually impaired are for a telephone operator, without even analyzing their curriculum and leaving the prejudice ahead. Nowadays a blind man works administratively on an equal basis with a person who can see well, as we have very free screen readers that give us autonomy for the computer domain (E3).

E11 emphasizes the importance of recruiters being able to interview DPs because they perceive “that they do not believe in the potential of the blind.” He would like opportunities, even if it were a day of experience or even a course, where one could effectively assess the worker’s ability. He considers that “employers think that the visually impaired person is not capable of assuming responsibilities or having no responsibility”. However, he believes that modifying this context is also up to the VIs, as many of them settle in front of the barriers: “[...] firstly the disabled have to include themselves, if they impose more, have a voice and take their turn.”

Maccali *et al.* (2015) emphasize the relevance of human resources practices – recruitment, socialization, sensitization, training – for the management of diversity, enabling everyone to develop in the organization, recognizing different ways of thinking and acting, which can constructively dialogue.

Ribeiro and Carneiro (2009) consider that organizations do not adequately include the disabled person in their workforce since they usually give preference to the less

compromising deficiencies, or to those that are supposed to be favorable to the production lines.

Although the Brazilian Inclusion Law (BRAZIL, 2015) guarantees the right to equal opportunities for other workers, fair and favorable conditions of work, the experience of the participants in the research also indicates the restricted experience of these possibilities.

## 5.2 Disability and work: potentialities

In reflecting on the relationship between their professional status and the world of work, respondents recognize limited possibilities, as E1 stating:

The market requires qualification for people without disabilities. For people with disabilities, what I realize by talking to friends is that companies are more concerned about filling quotas and less about qualification.

### Interviewees recognize difficulties due to restricted schooling

Interviewees recognize difficulties due to restricted schooling – E2 and E3 so evaluate it by mentioning not having higher education. Despite that, E11 holds a degree in Mathematics and initially sought qualification in the technical course in Occupational Safety, but was never able to be called to perform the mandatory internship. She understands that “employers are saying that it is because of the crisis. But it’s because of my disability”. She evaluates that she has the capacity to carry out training and give lectures to the collaborators to understand the necessity of the equipment, being fit for the function. Despite investment in training, she was unable to enter the labor market.

E5 considers herself apt for the job market since it attends Human Resources Management and understands that the lack of vision is not an obstacle: “I believe that many companies do not hire visually impaired people out of fear or even unpreparedness. [...] the lack of vision has never been a hindrance; on the contrary, it puts me in a position in which I must always surpass myself”.

E6 feels empowered to act professionally, as it has significant experience in serving the public. He faced many situations of hostility because of his disability, but he continues to work.

E8 understands that her condition is not different from the other professionals: “Of course we must always be specializing in the area because simple graduation is not enough these days.” She points out that she has worked with the public and currently performs administrative functions: “... This current experience now allows me to do other tasks. Not to mention that this satisfies me, knowing that I am capable of performing more complex functions.” E9 shares the same concept, who is always looking for qualification: “I’ve been unemployed for a year and I see the need to improve. It’s already complicated for a poor visual to get a good job, without qualification it only worsens.”

E10 has lost sight recently and is in the process of rehabilitation offered by Adevic. He says that he has learned a lot because he is still an employer in a multinational company, but away and under sickness, after 23 years of work in the organization. He was a team leader and has been feeling weak for five years, losing his sight because of an accident.

E4 reports that living for him has all been new learning because he has been blind for one year now. In this sense, he does not see himself qualified to return to work, because he is learning to adapt to the new world he is living. He has been taking computer classes and has realized that he is capable of learning, with the empowerment of his teacher.

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**“There is nothing better than feeling that you can be useful”**

Regarding the benefit granted to workers with disabilities (in Portuguese BPC<sup>2</sup>), E1 says she would not give up since the job market for the visually impaired is very small and she cannot risk losing a relatively reliable income for another that may last only three months, which is the time of a contract only for experience. E2 is receiving unemployment insurance and says he would like to get back to work. E3 also agrees not to rely on the benefit, but with the provision “since the same law that applies to the beneficiaries of LOAS becomes valid for retirees due to disability. So, not staying at work, the benefit would automatically go back to her account”. E4 would leave its benefit to fulfill his dream: “Yes, I would give it up, because I think of one day, when I will be more fit with my limitations, to be able to make my dreamed college, not to depend on anyone and to do the things I have always had as goals for my life”.

E5 looks for work to feel more useful, because “there is nothing better than feeling that you can be useful and stand out regardless of anything.” E8 would also dismiss the benefit: “I will not want to be dependent on the government all my life, moreover, when looking for an opportunity at work; I seek not only the financial return, but also my independence.” E9 states that in the period in which she became unemployed, she chose to study: “The benefit is a wonderful aid to those who are in the adjustment period or to those who cannot really perform any task because of their condition. But in my case, no.”

E6 affirms that he does not consider being without the benefit, analyzing the current economic context: “I would not quit. With the crisis, today everything is more difficult, they are reducing people to work, and then they will also reduce the vacancies for people with disabilities.” E7 is in doubt because he is getting unemployment insurance and then he is going to ask for the BPC. “About employment, we do not know what will happen, so I am afraid of what is going to happen”, also referring to the uncertainty about the social scene. E10 does not think to be without the BPC, but he thinks of working without a formal contract, in the informality “because I want to retire and return to the market without a formal contract, the job market is already bad, even worse for people with disabilities.” Faced with its situation, he even hesitates, asking the researcher if it could not harm him in any way, because it would not be something provided for the benefit – to have the condition of work. He

## The division of labor allowed the incorporation of the visually impaired into production

understands that “It is worth it to have my money every month and have something on the outside, if I work, I will not be missing anything” (E10).

Neres and Corrêa (2008) analyze that the division of labor allowed the incorporation of the visually impaired into production, more frequent jobs and operational characteristic. As educational care was provided addressing the educational needs of students with disabilities, the responsibility for their survival fell under the worker, albeit under unequal conditions.

According to Garcia (2014, p. 180): “There is clear underrepresentation in the formal market of visually or mentally/intellectually disabled people, who represent just over 5.0% of the vacancies generated.” In this sense, the author points out access to quality education and overcoming the history of invisibility of people with disabilities as factors that can increase their participation in the world of work.

### 5.3 Schooling and professional training

Three interviewees have a full course and one is attending undergraduate; five participants have completed high school and incomplete high school. Only one interviewee has an elementary education. Considering that four workers have a congenital deficiency and have faced difficulties in schooling in education, mainly referred to special schools – there is a significant training course among those with disabilities.

Silva (2003) points out that the right to education, historically, was based on a philanthropic and assistive discourse, in which learning situations with activities and classes were adapted to their needs. Fernandes and Costa (2015) investigated the contribution of tutors to follow up students with VI in secondary and higher education, recognizing that peer tutoring is a promising strategy in the inclusive process. This potentiality could be transposed to the experiences in the labor field, considering the collaborative and learning character that such relationship establishes.

Regarding the qualification opportunities, in order to enter or re-enter the job market, E8 is studying HR Management and has advanced English. Meanwhile, E1 claims to be doing Computer and Braille courses at Adevic to be able to update herself in the job market. E4 shares that he is learning to deal with his condition and learned in Adevic that the person with a disability can have a social life and do everything he has done before, but with some limitations. He broadens his considerations contemplating the professional aspect, from the perspective of “having a life without obstacles in the work”.

E2 says he is in search of qualification but states that: “[...] opportunities are very limited, there is not much to take advantage of.” E7 states: “I definitely think about qualifying, but everything is very expensive, they could make things easier.” Emphasizes that now is not looking for work, because the demands are many and the opportunities to study are restricted: “Inclusion exists on paper, but in practice,

no.” E6 participated in several courses and lectures at the company where he worked. However, E3 says that after becoming blind she has taken only one qualification: “After I acquired blindness, I took only a Computer Science course. I had already quit college and I did not go back to the course, but I do not blame my disability.”

E9 remains in constant formation: “Yes, I finished an Administrative Technician course at the end of last year and now I’m taking an English course.” However, E10 points out his difficulty: “My wife was kind of against my coming to Adevic, so I had to find someone to bring me. I arranged it with my neighbor who is retired, so he brings me here. I want to learn because tomorrow no one never knows.”

E5 indicates the constraint she needs to overcome: “Just like for a job, teaching also leaves something to be desired when it comes to accessibility”.

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**“Just like for a job, teaching also leaves something to be desired when it comes to accessibility”**

E11 recalls that, when searching for the technical school to register, with an International Code of Diseases (CID) report, it was initially prevented because it was VI, and it was necessary to contact the direction and pedagogical area to authorize her entry. At the university, she was the first blind student, using resources such as recording lessons and other materials and counting on the support of the course coordination to follow up the training. She realizes that when she receives higher grades from sighted colleagues, she asks about her colleagues and responds that it is necessary to “pay attention to what the teachers are explaining”, as this has been successful in the course of qualification.

The interviewees recognize the importance of qualification in terms of the demands of the labor market and the unpredictability of their future. However, the opportunities for professionalization are considered more restricted due to accessibility, from several perspectives: architectural, transport/displacement, pedagogic and attitudinal.

The research carried out by Bittencourt and Fonseca (2011) with workers in professional rehabilitation indicated the precariousness of the occupations available to the visually impaired, the instability of the labor market, and the incompatibility of the activities offered with the visual condition and the non-compliance with the legislation in force for the re-entry labor market.

#### **5.4 Congenital or acquired disability**

The lack of knowledge regarding visual impairment and its different dimensions can be cause for estrangement and even discrimination in social and work life, since there are different levels of sensorial recognition and perception. The understanding of the differences arising from the congenital or acquired character of the VI is also important, since it implies learning needs very different adaptation to the daily life to the work. E7 manifests how disinformation is reflected in organizations, since it perceives no difference between the treatments of employers to blind or sighted subordinates.

The interviewees, revealing quite diverse conditions that also need to be addressed in the world of work, describe these contingencies. E2 reports:

From my own experience, I who were born blind did not have many difficulties, because my family left me at the school that is a boarding school for the blind in Porto Alegre. There, I learned everything that was necessary for me to survive, thus teaching me a possible profession. However, for others, the difficulties were great.

The experience of E1 involves other confrontations:

It certainly brings many challenges, even to me, that I have been blind for a few years now. Even today, I face new challenges almost every day. Companies have increasingly opened doors for the disabled, but visually impaired people are still somewhat excluded in most businesses.

E10 realizes that people who are born with the vision problem learn easy, because the family is teaching and helping in the day-to-day, as well as schooling and all their social experience. As he lost his vision, the first impact was not having the autonomy he enjoyed when he left alone and drove the car, for example. In this direction, E3 understands that

Experiences turn out to be challenges. When a person thinks that one day will become blind, will he/she walk with his stick on bumpy sidewalks, take buses or train alone, and often serve as an example for some people? Therefore, I can say that if I can become an independent blind man, I can make a difference when I apply for any job, provided I have the training or the course I need.

E8 understands that when born with disability, the person learns to live with the limitation, adapting from an early age. Differently from what it acquires a certain deficiency throughout the life, mainly when it is adult, therefore the period of adaptation becomes more difficult: "With this, she may have difficulties in every aspect of her life, even when it comes to finding opportunities in the marketplace."

E4 analyzes the difference that support in these confrontations can make:

I see a big difference between being born without seeing and losing vision in adulthood. When you are born with this deficiency, early on your parents and family already help you more in your psychological for your development. Now, when a person loses sight already in adulthood, what they expect from the beginning is fear. Yes, afraid that your life is over and you do not have anything else to do, because you do not feel like doing things from day to day. We must always count on the support we receive from our family and friends, who at this time never abandon us.

E5 emphasizes the learning imposed by the disability:

It brings experience and many lessons, both to those who are born with it, and to those who acquire it at some point in life. Nevertheless, especially for these, because the challenge is bigger, it is like a child learning to walk. Moreover, the outer world is not the most receptive, especially the job market. An example of me, that even looking for constant training, I have a lot of difficulty to act in the area of my interest, and when I do, I have limited functions.



E9 was born blind and relates her experience:

[...] I learned to live with blindness and in this way was never very difficult. Of course, there are always some barriers, but that is something else, which allows me to be a motivated and persistent person. It is never easy, but if you do not chase after and settle into difficulties, everything becomes impossible.

The interviewees' considerations point to the end of the differences and singularities often present in the assessment of potentialities and opportunities for visually impaired workers. The conditions for the performance of the functions come from the perspective of adapting the work environment and the often ongoing process of rehabilitation of the worker in many processes of everyday life. Such contingencies need to be considered and developed devices that enhance learning in organizations.

## 6. Final considerations

The qualitative and descriptive research sought to identify and understand the difficulties that the visually impaired face to return or to enter the labor market, problematizing their work condition based on the analysis of interviews with 11 professionals as a data collection instrument.

The respondents identify that there are positions – such as telephonist, production assistant and administrative – that are considered predominantly by companies as being relevant to the worker with VI, which restricts professional opportunities. They assess that the prospects for growth and progression in organizations are very low, as well as participation in selection processes. The results indicate that visual impairment can be neglected in comparison to physical disability or deafness, imposing even more challenges on the professional, even considering the existence of technologies that enhance their performance in companies.

Prevails the rationale, explained in this investigation, of the adaptation of the worker to the vacancy rather than the inverse one, so that the requirement of qualification affects the VI in the labor market even more; however, even with the required qualifications and schooling, there are restricted opportunities, which is attributed to the discrimination and non-recognition of the competencies that the VI possesses as a professional, being referred to the condition of the disability as a limitation.

Having a job is considered as an achievement of independence, autonomy, and social recognition, and the continuity of receiving social benefits (BPC) is justified by some respondents due to the instability of the labor market and fear of loss of income if they cannot get a bond formal employment contract.

The importance of qualification in relation to the requirements of employability and the unpredictability of their future was mentioned by the participants when analyzing their professional perspectives. The context analyzed indicates that the rights to education and work are still a challenge for the visually impaired, a process in which professionals, society and organizations are called upon to contribute.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The term visual impairment is adopted in relation to both blindness and low vision. Subnormal vision or low vision is characterized by 30% or less vision in the best eye, after all clinical, surgical and correction procedures with ordinary eyeglasses. In a low vision, there are difficulties in recognizing facial features, identifying words, signs and various visual elements of daily life (FOUNDATION DORINA NOWILL, [201-]).

<sup>2</sup> The Continuous Benefit (in Portuguese, BPC) of the Organic Law of Social Assistance (LOAS) is the guarantee of a monthly minimum wage for the elderly aged 65 and over or for the person with a disability of any age with physical, mental, intellectual or sensorial impairments of a long-term nature (which has effects for at least two years), making it impossible for him or her to participate fully and effectively in society on equal terms with other people. To be entitled, it is necessary that the income per person of the family group be less than 1/4 of the current minimum wage (BRAZIL, 2017).

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