


## Pedal Project Beyond Vision: Adapted cycling as a citizen practice

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José de Souza Neto<sup>1</sup>, Josivaldo Constantino dos Santos<sup>2</sup>, Roberto Alves de Arruda<sup>3</sup>, Ana Paula Posenti<sup>4</sup>  
and Nadia Silva Moreno Gomes<sup>5</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The extension project "Pedal Beyond Vision" aims to: the integration of the University of the State of Mato Grosso and the community, as well as the construction of autonomy, social protagonism and the apprehension/development of the psychomotor movement of Persons with Disabilities (PCD) through adapted cycling. Another relevant aspect of this project is to enhance cooperation, mediation, and mutual training among all project participants. That is, visually impaired people (the guideds) and non-visually impaired people, the guide athletes. This project addresses social education intertwined with special education/social inclusion, which are worked through the pedagogical practice of teaching cycling adapted to people with visual impairment, in the municipality of Cuiabá-MT. The partnership took place between teachers from the State University of Mato Grosso-UNEMAT and elementary school teachers, belonging to the municipal education network of Cuiabá-MT. This project will take place in non-conventional training spaces (municipal parks in Cuiabá, which have adequate bike paths). The subjects participating in this project are visually impaired people, basic education teachers, UNEMAT teachers and the external community in general. This mediating and cooperative action between the university and the basic education professionals of Cuiabá, provides a new space and new experiences, resulting from the sports practice of adapted cycling, with the purpose of working on the culture of inclusion, the protagonism of the visually impaired, the recognition and overcoming of multiple barriers. The results achieved so far are: adherence of visually impaired people; considerable increase in the number of athlete guides and interaction with the community, especially in the traffic in Cuiabá. Since at first it caused some strangeness. With the development of street activities, to a certain extent, it starts to count on the collaboration of drivers when they come across adapted cycling activities in the city.

**Keywords:** Extension, Inclusive Education, Human Rights, Adapted Cycling, Social Education.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. in Education from the Nove de Julho University (UNINOVE)  
State University of Mato Grosso – UNEMAT – Professor of the Professional Master's Degree in Sociology in National Network (PROFSOCIO)

<sup>2</sup> Dr. in Education from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS)  
State University of Mato Grosso – UNEMAT – Professor of the Professional Master's Degree in Sociology in National Network (PROFSOCIO)

<sup>3</sup> Dr. in Public Policy and Human Education (State University of Rio de Janeiro)  
State University of Mato Grosso – UNEMAT – Coordinator of the Professional Master's Degree in Sociology in National Network (PROFSOCIO)

<sup>4</sup> Master's Degree in School Education from São Paulo State University (UNESP)  
Prefeitura Municipal de Araraquara – teacher of the Municipal Education Network

<sup>5</sup> Graduated in Letters from the State University of Mato Grosso - UNEMAT  
University of the State of Mato Grosso – UNEMAT – Technical Professional of Higher Education



## INTRODUCTION

This project aims to work with visually impaired people, in the construction of autonomy, social protagonism and with the multiple possibilities of doing, existing and being. Related to the process of apprehension/development of psychomotor movement, through adapted cycling. Another relevant aspect is to enhance cooperation, mediation and mutual training among all participants in this project, with reference to social education, sports practices, social inclusion and special education, in addition to exercising the concept and practice of Human Rights for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs).

The "Pedal Além da Visão" project was initially conceived, spontaneously and voluntarily, since 2021, by the teachers: Tiago Oliveira de Lima, who has the condition of a visually impaired person; Professor Zayre Almeida de Lavor; Jonas Juvenal da Silva. Both are psychics and are part of the municipal education network of Cuiabá. Then, in the second half of 2022, the project began to be made viable, with the participation and coordination of Professor José de Souza Neto, when the partnership between the State University of Mato Grosso-UNEMAT, basic education professionals from the municipal school system of Cuiabá and the external community was established. From then on, the project became institutionalized at the university and took on an extensionist and scientific character.

The purpose of this project is to enhance socio-educational and cultural training practices, which take place through adapted cycling. Which are composed of the following dimensions: social education (integrating visually impaired people (VD and non-visually impaired), who interact and mediate the learning of the culture of inclusion, respect/appreciation of differences and the construction of human dignity), special education (adapted methodologies of teaching cycling/of a healthy life/of reading their reality and the challenges to be overcome, the use of adapted materials), social inclusion (the establishment and strengthening of relationships with respect and human dignity, aiming at the social protagonism of the visually impaired person (VD), the construction of their sociocultural autonomy), sports practices (development of their body movement, motor coordination, balance, body awareness, construction of spatial maps, perception of space and the environment around them and physical activity).

Cycling practiced by visually impaired people (DV) requires the use of a Tandem model bicycle (two seats), where two people (a guide athlete and a visually impaired athlete) pedal in synchrony, which enables the use of their physical capacities and motor skills, such as: strength, endurance, balance, and global motor coordination. The athlete-guide is responsible for guiding and stimulating the visually impaired athlete to achieve their goals and overcome their limits, regarding the intensity and duration of the physical effort required, in the process of performing the sports practice, which occur in urban spaces, highways and rural spaces.



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The context experienced by visually impaired people may contain several barriers that hinder their development in the entirety of their lives. Such barriers are generated by the external world. Some of them are internalized by the visually impaired person. In this sense, as if it were something natural and immutable that occurs in their daily social practices. Thus, the reference that everything we experience in our socio-cultural environment/historical time is a product of a social and historical construction is lost.

Among the difficulties experienced by VD, the lack of accessibility and the precariousness of inclusion stand out. The university has this role; to articulate educational actions, in formal and non-formal spaces of education, with the objective of providing opportunities for different subjects to have access to knowledge, to produce and disseminate it. In this sense, the University, together with some professionals from the municipal education network of Cuiabá, proposed this cooperative-collaborative action, which will benefit the external community, either in terms of the use of resources and knowledge made available during this trajectory, or even through access to possible scientific works that will be prepared based on the analysis of this experience.

The person with VD is understood in this project as an integral, cultural, historical subject with dignity. This project will provide the experience of a structured/adapted physical exercise, aiming to help all those involved in this dynamic to have a qualitative life.

Social education is presented in this educational context of adapted cycling, through the establishment of interpersonal relationships and their multiple mediations, with regard to the elaboration of the culture of inclusion, accessibility, protagonism and appropriation of the practice/historical place of the DV subject, the principles of special education and the overcoming of the various barriers. "Thus, non-formal education can be considered as that which the subject acquires during life, a set of knowledge that is constituted in the exercise of citizenship and in social relations" (PAIXÃO, SOUZA, NOVAES, 2019, p.5).

Therefore, adapted cycling is an opportunity for the VD person to have access to a guided sports practice and a new means to establish healthy relationships with the collective, social spaces and with oneself. Special education is presented in this project dynamic; when the guiding athletes dialogue and teach each other, how to approach the DV athlete, what adapted material resources will be made available, how to describe the scenarios that serve for sports practice, the appropriate methodology for the needs of each group, the adequacy of time and the correlation between all participants.

The Statute of Persons with Disabilities defines access to education, sports, leisure, culture, assistive technology and work as fundamental rights for all persons with disabilities. This document



provides several and multiple guidelines on how to carry out educational activities in formal and non-formal spaces of education. (BRASIL, ESTATUTO DA PESSOA COM DEFICIÊNCIA, 2020)

The legal guidelines, which contribute to the formation of social, pedagogical, and educational policy practices, allow us to organize the process of development and systematization of knowledge, whether in formal or non-formal educational spaces. In this sense, it is important to establish articulated situations between the University and the community, which provide people with disabilities with access to and enjoyment of social environments. A differential of this project is precisely the encouragement and elaboration of activities, in non-conventional training spaces (parks, walks through historical places in Cuiabá), the composition of the team that serves the DV athletes; which is composed of teachers, members of the community in general and professionals from other areas.

The project makes it possible for athlete guides, who in many cases did not have direct contact with people with disabilities, to have this new experience and interact with them. In this interaction, it is possible to learn about the challenges faced by the DV, creating the dynamic for these employees to help overcome the barriers that are possible during this period. This relationship and interaction, between DVs and non-DVs, promotes the work of social inclusion, respect and appreciation of differences. They are mediated subjects and mediators of this interaction, who make this culture of inclusion. In these new experiences to be made possible, it is important to think, reflect and problematize the precariousness of this social inclusion.

As the project was organized and proposed to be carried out in Cuiabá-MT, it is also interesting to bring in the body of this text, the legislation of the State of Mato Grosso, about Special Education and its principles. There is this correlation between federal and state legislation regarding Special Education, however, at the state level, the aforementioned legislation focuses more on formal education in conventional/formative spaces. The basic education professionals, who are part of the project's team of athlete guides, also sought to research and understand this reference. During the initial phase of project design, this will be an aspect to be encouraged with the participants; that of seeking knowledge about people with disabilities, either in legislation or in theoretical-scientific materials already produced socially (BRASIL, LEI 11.689, 2002).

The issue of social inclusion is present in the actions that are being carried out, in the promotion and strengthening of humanizing practices, which have as their core the respect and appreciation of differences. This dimension is part of the work with adapted cycling, which is being developed in this project. The visually impaired person needs to have these opportunities; to experience new forms of educational practice and to do physical activity, with the purpose of building healthy relationships/living. According to Pinto (1985), education has its general dimension,



regarding the establishment of social relations, and humanization is made and remade in historical practice, which is consistent with each formation of society and historical period.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology of the project, after institutionalization, has the following stages: Professionalization of the guide athletes, providing continuing education courses, observing all the legal and safety normative requirements for the execution of adapted cycling on the public roads of the city of Cuiabá-MT. It should be said that the training of the guide athletes, as well as the monitoring of the activities are developed with the support of special education and physical education teachers; Elaboration of an action plan to obtain financial resources for the acquisition of bicycles, acquisition of personal protective equipment (PPE), acquisition of a bicycle transport truck, the necessary resources for the acquisition of the material was obtained through the realization of events called "Action among Friends"; Elaboration of a plan to identify the most suitable places for the practice of adapted cycling, establishment of partnerships with sponsoring companies through solidarity adhesion. After these stages, the project starts to establish its actions every Tuesday and Thursday in bike paths and squares in the city of Cuiabá-MT.

## **RESULTS ACHIEVED**

The "Pedal Além da Visão" project, which arose with the spontaneous and voluntary participation of two guide and two guided athletes and only one Tandem model bicycle (bicycle with two seats), over the course of two years, the project currently has seventeen Tandem model bicycles, a bicycle transport trailer, in addition, each guide athlete, as well as the guided ones have the personal protective equipment to carry out the activities. It should be noted that both the bicycles and the transport truck and the PPE were acquired through various events and actions among friends. Thus raising financial resources for the acquisition and maintenance of equipment. In relation to the athlete guides, the project carried out the appropriate training of the volunteers. Currently, there are forty-five guided athletes and forty-seven guided. In all, there are ninety-two participants, who carry out the activities of adapted cycling through scales, since there are more guides and guided people than bicycles available. Finally, it should be noted that this project is renewed annually, ensuring institutionalization and the scientific and extensionist character.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

The "Pedal Além da Visão" Project, which was born from a spontaneous action, in a short time, assumes its extensionist and institutional form with the University of the State of Mato Grosso-UNEMAT. Going beyond the walls of institutionality has always been a mission of UNEMAT and



this project, together with many others, fulfills that purpose. Thus, with specificity to this action, there is the possibility of bringing the university and the community closer together, bringing a mutual exchange of teaching and learning between the active participants of the project. Another relevant aspect to be highlighted lies in the fact that it provides the members of this extension action with the right to citizenship, especially through inclusive education. This fact, for the guided athletes, goes beyond the improvement of physical and mental condition, but also makes it possible for them to perceive themselves as human beings, thus giving the rescue of dignity and expectations of new social conditions.



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