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RCMOS – Multidisciplinary Scientific Journal O Saber.ISSN:2675-9128.

HIGH SKILLS WITHIN THE SPECTRUM OF AUTISTIC DISORDER: AN EXPERIENCE REPORT

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Submitted on: 10/26/2021
Approved on: 10/28/2021
v. , ed. 11, p. 01-18, Nov. 2021

DOI: 10.51473/rcmos.v1i11.183

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Summary

This article presents the life experience of a person who was born neuroatypical and who, despite the obstacles that life imposed on him, was able to remodel his mentality, distancing himself from a fixed prognosis and moving towards professional growth. . This break in mentality aimed to provide personal changes and act as an agent of social transformation, with mental reprogramming (of a Neuropsycholinguistic order) for the social insertion of people with singularities or autism spectrum disorder combined with high skills and giftedness. This article used the methodology of writing an experience report and bibliographic review to anchor the analyzes and explain the conclusions that aimed to answer questions related to the development of strategies for changing mentality, in effect, to promote new skills and competencies of a personal nature. and also social. With a transdisciplinary approach, the present study dialogues with the science of contemporary administration while inviting other areas of knowledge such as the science of pedagogy and telecommunications through the use and application of new digital information and knowledge technologies in contexts school for people with disabilities.

Key words: Mentality. Strategy. Technology. Autism Spectrum Disorder. Information.

Abstract

This article presents the life experience report of a person who was born neuroatypical and who, despite the obstacles that life has imposed on him, was able to remodel his mentality, distancing himself from a fixed prognosis and moving towards professional growth. This mentality rupture aimed to provide personal changes and act as an agent of social transformation, with a mental reprogramming (of a Neuropsycholinguistic order) for the social insertion of people with singularities or autism spectrum disorder, combined with high abilities and giftedness. This article used the methodology of writing an experience report and literature review to anchor the

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analyzes and explains the conclusions that aimed to answer questions related to the development of strategies to change mentality, in effect, to promote new skills and competences of a personal nature. and also social. With a transdisciplinary approach, this study dialogues with contemporary management science while inviting other areas of knowledge such as pedagogy science and telecommunications through the use and application of new digital information and knowledge technologies in contexts of the disabled person.
Keywords: Management. Mentality. Strategy. Technology. Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Information

1. Introduction

In 1974, a slight child came into the world, the son of a semi-literate bricklayer and a housewife with schizophrenia. With unique and peculiar characteristics, in 1980, he entered the school, whose pedagogical dimensions and conceptual structures were not prepared to deal with and teach people who were not molded within the standards considered “normal”.

Consequently, this child's life trajectory, considered different at school and in society in general, was traumatic, as the learning environments and their professionals did not yet have the technology or even the intellectual capital to identify and map the characteristics of a mentality that did not “fit” within the expected standards. As a rule, educational environments, which are a stratification of society, seek or rely on fixed mentalities, or try to systematize an average, disregarding both people who are below and those who are beyond what these environments envision. And back in the 1980s, in the historical-cultural context of Brazil, standards, fixed rules and rigid mental models were a constant.

In this sense, society in general always seeks to establish, even if unconsciously, a kind of collective comfort zone, in which everything or all those that are outside these pre-established standards tend to cause dissonance/noise in the structures (whether social, economic, educational, technological and even philosophical).

Going back to the story of that slight child, at the beginning of her adolescence, she was identified as a person with strong traits of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and with high skills. At this stage of life, in addition to encountering attitudinal barriers (along her educational trajectory), she realized that she would need to reestablish a new

neolinguistic programming in order to be able to situate themselves as a human person in their living spaces.

O *mindshift*[two] It was intense and the learning process throughout this special person's life was, throughout his school career, marked by overcoming upon overcoming. Intense changes (endogenous and exogenous) were carried out that provided social engagement as well as sociocultural interaction. As Oakley (2020, p. 13) has already stated: "*Mindshift* It is an intense transformation of life that occurs thanks to learning."

It is worth highlighting that there were many obstacles in the dynamics of adaptation and overcoming of this individual within school environments in the recent past, when it was not yet possible to understand people's singularities.

Faced with a contemporary analysis of current learning environments that still carry, in their genesis, methodologies and processes arising from this recent past, some disturbing questions arise:

- ✓ How to identify and map the characteristics of our mentality?
- ✓ Are people operating with a fixed mindset or a growth mindset?
- ✓ How can we develop strategies to enhance the development of this more promising and successful mentality inside and outside contemporary learning environments?
- ✓ What benefits can be generated from this transformation?
- ✓ Are school environments prepared to deal with individuals with high abilities, within ASD, who challenge teaching models based on predictive models of teaching and learning?

In an attempt to answer these propositions, this article used the experience report (ER) methodology. Regarding the experience report, Daltro and Faria point out the need to:

> Understand RE as a documentary production affirmed as a work of language, of narratives. The documentary construction of an RE implies, *a priori*, that its author(s), or at least one of them, is a participant in the real-life context under study. Unlike Action Research or a Case Study, RE is not previously thought of as research, it is an effect of meaning, which is why it cannot do without the active participation of the author(s) of the project that is part of it. of the requirement. The meaning of experience, linked to concrete reality, is identified

[two] *Mindshift* is behavioral training with the aim of understanding limitations and developing personal skills. (Wise Institute, n.d.).

> in the process or later, when the subject — already affected by the discourse of science — can locate its theorizing power, for the advancement of a certain field of knowledge (2019, p. 234).

The experience report was not carried out alone, to anchor the analyzes a bibliographical review was used, which sought the perspective of the arguments of authors who discuss the topic, as well as a multidisciplinary study that intercedes and evokes the voices and theories of pedagogy and administration. In this sense, Daltro and Faria state that:

> The handling of the theoretical framework underlying the reading of experience must be aimed at creating new knowledge, based on political and analytical writing, revealing the place from which the author speaks. More than being presented as an essay constructed in the first person singular, it is about offering the reader references about where the experience is being spoken from, singularized and problematized, guaranteeing a dialogue between scientific and often non-scientific knowledge. , with the knowledge involved in the experience under study (2019, p. 234).

In this way, it can be stated that the narrative of an experience report, anchored by bibliographical research, is accessible to all those seeking greater knowledge on the topic addressed.

2Theoretical foundation

In 1980, a State School located in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, received a child who presented singularities. His father was a semi-literate bricklayer and his mother was a housewife, a woman with schizophrenia. Given his family history, it was not expected that in his first contact with academia, more specifically pre-primary, which today corresponds to Early Childhood Education, he would enter already knowing how to read and write.

This knowledge came about through hours of learning with his father, who had become literate late, an issue that was a major obstacle in his life. Therefore, this father decided to interfere in the education of his singular son and with a lot of effort taught him to read and write so that the child would not be a hostage to illiteracy and could, in the near future, keep up with the technological developments that were occurring so quickly. The father's thoughts harmonize with Schwab's statements:

> We currently face a wide range of fascinating challenges; Among them, the most intense and important is the understanding and modeling of the new technological revolution, which implies nothing less than the transformation of all humanity. We are at the beginning of a revolution that will profoundly alter the way we live, work and relate (2016, p. 15).

Being welcomed into learning spaces was not easy, since Brazilian public schools in the 1970s and 1980s did not have the intellectual capital, among education professionals, to work with people with ASD, this being a completely unknown or unknown topic. not very educated.

Added to the autism spectrum disorder, this child had specific abilities. Restlessness and inability to interact socially were complicating aspects of his schooling, as he suffered daily punishments. Among the most common punishments were physical punishments, such as beatings, slaps and pinches, and psychological abuse, such as being forced to remain alone in front of the blackboard, outside the classroom, on a bench in the school warehouse. Some of these punishments were authorized by the child's parents, which inflicted both physical and psycho-emotional pain and suffering. Here, it is important to highlight that in the socio-historical context of the report, a common and common practice was for parents or guardians to authorize teachers to punish their children, including physical ones, in the school environment. With the advent of the Child and Adolescence Statute (1992), this practice was abolished from learning environments.

This small child, given his young age, did not have the exact dimensions of his characteristics, so he made countless attempts to integrate and even participate in the proposed activities, but they were unsuccessful.

In fact, school harassment at the time was a constant and tolerated practice and was present due to its dissonant presence within the school context. Added to all this, there were the disconcerting questions that he asked his teachers and that, sometimes, they were unable to answer, some of these questions were reported later. As a form of punishment, he was taken to the library and was locked alone in that environment, this being another of the common and recurring punitive practices.

The teachers did not know that among their singularities there were two that stood out – hyperlexia[3]and eidetic memory[4]. Therefore, the library environment was a fertile and conducive field for his explorations, as he had at his disposal encyclopedias,

[3]"Hyperlexia is a condition that causes a person to develop exceptional reading skills at an early age, but at the same time lack language skills. Therefore, the child has an intense fascination with letters or numbers and an advanced reading ability." (RUSSO, 2021, para. 1).

[4]"This type of memory is generally called photographic, as it simulates an instant camera, such as a Polaroid, in action — except that the capture of the photograph is done by the brain. In this way, the person who has this ability can retrieve images from their memory and examine them in detail." (DEMARTINI, 2016, para. 2).

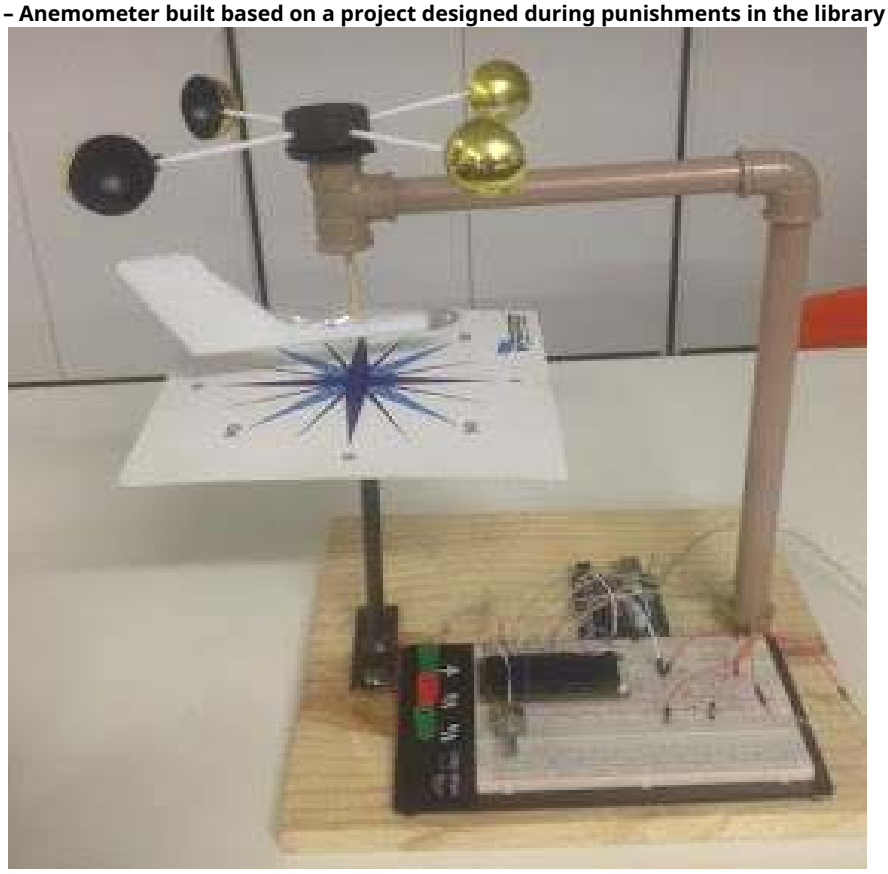
children's books, maps, globes, instruments such as microscopes, projectors*slides*old ones, pantographs, among others.

However, these unmastered characteristics were a great uncontrolled potential. Without obstacles, all these elements were explored by the young student, at a level of depth without stopping, who, upon returning to the learning environments, brought with him acute doubts and even more piercing questions such as:

- ✓ Teacher, what is the origin of the language spoken by the species?*homo sapiens*?
- ✓ If there is gravity within the atmosphere, what keeps the clouds suspended?
- ✓ Why is space dark if the Sun illuminates the entire Solar System?
- ✓ For combustion to exist, there must be oxygen, so how did the sun burn and where is the oxygen in space?
- ✓ If Kepler's three laws and Newton's propositions are obeyed, why don't Saturn's rings fall?
- ✓ If plants breathe through their leaves, why don't plants die in the fall?

Furthermore, the student surprised the teachers by presenting an anemometer (Figure 1), built with homemade materials and its project was conceived during the punishments imposed in the library. In other words, being in the library no longer represented any type of suffering, quite the opposite, it represented the opportunity to have silence and a considerable collection for reading, research and experimentation. It is worth noting that access to computers and the internet was not yet within the reach of public school students at that time.

Figure 1 – Anemometer built based on a project designed during punishments in the library



Source: Private collection

All this disturbing audacity greatly bothered the teachers and other students. Furthermore, because he did not receive answers to his elaborate questions, the young student considered the classes uninteresting and tedious.

Like a crazy odyssey, he discovered the self-education that fed him into a virtuous cycle. The fascination with instrumental mathematics was a magical and dazzling discovery. Games enchanted him and were like a magnetism directed towards his fields of interest. The fascination with the arts (paintings and sculptures), as well as classical music, increasingly sublimated an incessant search for information and knowledge. Art in general has always been magnetic in the life of the young child. Music, painting and everything related to aesthetics has always been relevant. The art of sculpting was a late discovery, which causes a displacement of reality. In this activity, in addition to effectively exploring everything that your islands of intelligence can offer at a high level of creativity, you can take refuge in a safe place, in which the abstractions and accumulated skills and competencies reveal themselves through your works that can be glimpsed below.

Figure 2 – Sculptures: art as an escape



Source: private collection

When the punishment of being isolated in the library, in addition to the practice of silence, which often helped with mental reorganization, as the learning environments were noisy and distracting, reading the books of Hans Christian Andersen, Aesop's Fables, the tales of the Brothers Grimm and the most beautiful stories of Lucia Casasanta were incessantly absorbed with pleasure and playfulness,*a posteriori*The books of Jules Verne, Isaac Asimov, the Vagalume Collection and the classics of humanity were adventures covered with delight, happiness, acuity and calm, and which would later constitute a source of inspiration

of life and a psychological refuge influencing not only the personality, but also the conduct and positive actions in the formation of the autistic infant's being.

It is worth highlighting that these student experiences were not guided and took place in parallel to the pedagogical purposes of regular education. As if on an unusual adventure and still without control of his singularities, his mind and greed worked like a radar or a runaway dynamo. Only at the age of 12, with the help of a research teacher, who would become a kind of mentor, was it possible to understand his potential and difficulties. This teacher, in a very delicate and very technical way, managed to access the student's islands of intelligence and came across a universe of beauty. But, at the same time, she found a psychological state torn apart by segregation and a certain emotional mutilation caused by mistreatment and violence, largely inflicted by people at school, as well as by family members. This violence left indelible marks on the young student's existence. Not infrequently, an echo of the existentialism of Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus was present when he thought that the best thing for human beings would be not to have been born.

Now counting on the mentoring of the teacher and the participation of his parents, more specifically the involvement of his father, the young student began to dedicate himself with great emphasis to his potential while working on his deficiencies.

At the age of 14, through a project by a company called Assprom, which promoted access to the job market for young apprentices, the then teenager joined a bank, working as a*office boy*. In this new environment, he was enchanted by the computers that occupied almost every space in the company and, again, like a magical magnetism, he was directed to this area. At the age of 17, this enthusiasm for electronics and computers led him into in-depth studies on the subject and culminated in his entry into a polytechnic school on the Computer Technician course, with the deep and fruitful immersion in studies, for 3 years, it guaranteed him three first place prizes in the science and technology fairs that were promoted by the school.

At the end of the technical course, the young man passed numerous entrance exams and chose the Telecommunications Business Management course at a renowned university in Belo Horizonte. His fascination with technology, increasingly sharpened, added to the high level of knowledge acquired through total immersion in cross-cutting themes, constituted a consistent, deep foundation in the search for greater growth.

As an adult, he sought to specialize and, aware of his potential, learned to extract benefits from his singularities, studying four specializations, always with an advanced level of use, which proved to be a vector of great importance. He was invited to teach at Senac and Senai and, realizing that the acquired technical knowledge alone was not capable of solving his anxieties as a teacher and concerned about the high level of school dropouts, he enrolled in his third higher education course, Pedagogy, science of knowledge, and once again, in an absurd immersion, he completed the course and as a result of his research he was taken to the African continent. In Mozambique, he applied part of his studies related to teaching and learning methods and strategies. At that time, the intellectual transformation of young autistic people with high skills increased not only in issues related to Pedagogy, but also in the interweaving of the use and application of technology in dialogue with other areas such as economics, sociology and philosophy.

For years working as a teacher in itinerant undergraduate and postgraduate courses, he went deeper into seeking a *mindset*[5] that could bring well-being while healing the marks left by the mistreatment and violence suffered throughout their educational trajectory. Acting then, as Elrod states:

> Since the beginning of time, ordinary people have pushed the limits of what was thought possible. They had to overcome the same kind of fear and insecurity that holds us back today. We are all born with unlimited potential, but these people figured out how to use it. When you learn to do this, everything changes (2019, p. 17).

Breaking paradigms, the individual did not limit himself to dealing with issues already known, nor to address minor issues that involve points of reflection arising from common sense. What he did was construct a specific point of view, from a determined perspective to bring to light problems related to school inclusion and how the use and application of new technologies can mitigate the suffering of people who, like him, have suffered or still suffer within of school environments. This perspective aims to address complex problems that still present themselves in contemporary times.

Thus, the subject about whom this report tells, sought to study in depth all the issues that permeate education regarding the inclusion of people with disabilities, as well as those within the autism spectrum who have singularities, such as

[5] "O *Mindset* it's how your mind is programmed to think about a certain subject. If our mind were a computer *Mindset* it would be the processor or software that determines how it will work." (Stramaro, 2020, para. 1).

high abilities and giftedness (AH/SD). As in a transgression of good, now fertile in this specialist, there is not only a desire to propose radical changes, but also the desire to put into practice a disruption that causes a revolution with a positive impact on the lives of people with disabilities, with firm and social transformations. blunt.

This vision of the future is in line with Schwab's propositions: “The scale and breadth of the current technological revolution will unfold in economic, social and cultural changes of such phenomenal proportions that it is almost impossible to predict them” (2016, p. 37).

In this sense, their studies draw the attention of partners producing assistive technology (such as the Actcon Group), which, still in the gestational process, need to design pedagogical structures that dialogue with a disruption in contemporary pedagogical praxis, having a dialogue with the use of new technologies to pedagogical purposes in the field of special and inclusive education.

This radicality and disruption needed not only a consistent theoretical basis, but also a creative deconstruction. In other words, a certain indocility can contribute to an inclusive education on a scale that transcends the welcoming and permanence of people with their singularities in learning environments.

In effect, once this individual accepts the challenge, being an expert and having his experiences as a starting point, in addition to his emotional experiences, he sets in motion an audacious and disruptive school inclusion project anchored by the use of new technologies. The multidisciplinary project is called the TiX Educational Program, which has the autistic person as a senior consultant. The project is based on four major pillars listed below and explained in Figure 3:

1. Assistive technologies;
2. Educational platforms;
3. Collaboration platforms;
4. Technical and didactic-pedagogical guarantees.

Figure 3 – Structure of the TiX Literacy Educational program



Source: Prepared by the author

With a specific focus on the inclusion of people with disabilities and the provision of specialized educational services with the use and application of assistive technology, the TiX Literacy Educational Program aims to serve the target audience of inclusive special education. Furthermore, it focuses on providing education professionals with continued training on the subject, encouraging an expansion of possibilities for action, providing learning environments with intellectual capital, as well as*soft skills*[6]It is*hard skills*[7], to face the challenge of educating people with disabilities and high abilities without leaving autistic people out.

In order to evaluate the radicality, dimension and scope of the contribution of the now senior specialist's participation, it is imperative that we know the statistics of the universe of people with disabilities in the Brazilian scenario. In Brazil, in 2020, the number of enrollments in basic education determined for people with disabilities is around one million and 300 thousand enrollments, as shown in Figures 4 and 5.

[6]*Soft skills*These are developed skills that concern social behavior and the way of expressing oneself emotionally. They generally appear in the form of characteristics that refer to personality, such as empathy, communication, organization and flexibility.
[7]*Hard skills*These are all technical skills developed throughout life. Most of the time, this type of skill is acquired from formal education and training.

Figure 4 – Inclusive Education in Brazil – Basic Education Enrollments



Source: Prepared by the author, based on Brazil (2020)

Figure 5 – Inclusive Education in Brazil — Basic Education Enrollment (types of classes)



Source: Prepared by the author, based on Brazil (2020)

With progress that presents itself as a growing and exponential curve of around 276% in 13 years, this population of people yearned for projects that could satisfy their anguish and suffering. This can be monitored based on the data in Figure 6, which shows the total enrollment of people with disabilities in the period between 2007 and 2020.

Figure 6 – Total enrollment of people with disabilities — Period from 2007 to 2020



Source: Brazil (2020)

Since 2015, the Tix Letramento Educational Program has been revolutionizing inclusive education and changing the lives of countless people, not only in Brazil, but also abroad. Cities like Recife, in Pernambuco, already have more than 175 school units with specialized educational services equipped with educational technologies and platforms that serve more than five thousand people with disabilities. This contingent also includes people with ASD, as well as those with high abilities and giftedness. The same happens in the city of Guarulhos, São Paulo, with approximately 61 school units; in Santo André, São Paulo, with 71 units; in São Luís, Maranhão, with more than 50 units covered. Abroad, countries like Israel, Portugal, Ireland. Germany, Finland, Armenia, Costa Rica, the United Kingdom, Mexico and the United Arab Emirates also use this technology.

All this dimension and breadth of the Educational Program coordinated and with senior consultancy developed by the protagonist of this story, has international recognition, among several international awards, highlighting:

- **2018**

  Incorporation into Singularity University's Company portfolio

- **2019**

1 -In March, the Special World Olympic Games for people with intellectual disabilities took place in Abu Dhabi. In addition to the sports program, the World Innovation Challenge took place with more than 180 solutions. The educational program won.

two -The TiX educational accessibility and inclusion solution won the Education category.

3 -Organized by UC Berkeley, it is the most recognized Social Exponential Technologies competition in the world. In March, the TiX educational accessibility and inclusion solution won 1st place overall, competing with 692 technologies from 67 countries.

- **2020**

1 -The TiX literacy educational program was the winning educational solution in the Brazilian semi-final (2020) of the biggest competition*edtechs*of the world.

two -GESAwards evaluated innovative technologically relevant solutions from 1,000 solutions from 104 countries that seek to solve clear and substantial problems based on a consistent and well-founded pedagogical approach.

- **2021**

In January, she represented Brazil in the world final (London), becoming runner-up.[8]

Another pertinent information is that the TiX Letramento Educational Program meets five[9]of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the 2030 Agenda, which aim to positively impact the lives of people around the world with projects that aim to tackle humanity's biggest problems.

[8]To find out more about the awards, visit: https://premiacoes.amigomicro.com.br/.
[9]The five objectives fulfilled by the TiX Literacy Educational Program are: 1. Eradication of poverty; 3. Health and well-being; 4. Quality education; 9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure and; 10. Reduction of inequalities.

Figure 6 — Sustainable Development Goals of the UN 2030 Agenda



Source: United Nations Brazil (2021)

From these experiences, over pain, anguish and suffering and in search of a new mentality and a new *mindset* that was capable of solving problems, strategies were created that allowed the development of new products and services that served and benefited people with disabilities and high abilities, to the same extent that they provoked social transformation. In addition to the people served directly through the educational program, it guarantees employment for more than 200 people. In a creative deconstruction that transforms pain, suffering, and school harassment into engagement with the application of knowledge to positively interfere in critical points of education, capable of causing a positive impact on the lives of thousands of people, acting as an agent of social transformation.

Final considerations

During his academic career, autistic children with high abilities presented indelible marks of the unpreparedness of teachers in the 1980s and in the years that followed in relation to people with disabilities, especially people with high abilities and giftedness, and with ASD.

However, his mentality did not remain static or become stagnant, so much so that he has been benefiting from his peculiarities, with innovative strategies transforming them into

fuel to generate implosion in the search for a profound personal transformation, and, above all, to act far beyond your surroundings. He became a true agent of social transformation, modifying educational structures in several municipalities in Brazil and even abroad.

Their pain, anguish and suffering were not channeled towards evil or to take revenge on society. Quite the contrary, upon realizing the level of social ignorance, these less than noble feelings were transformed into energy and embodied in truly lofty practices and values that motivate you to seek a new mentality and responses on a greater scale.

In order to use new mental models, with a disruption, which mixes pedagogical and technological aspects substantiated with transdisciplinary principles and theories, in order to relate practical knowledge (including psychological and emotional) to theoretical knowledge, it bases the applicability, construction and application not only of new mental models, but an action of good that transforms life experiences into products and services that positively impact the lives of thousands of other people, especially those with disabilities, high abilities and those with ASD.

These transformations can only be achieved through a radical change in the attitude and mentality of society as a whole. Changes require transformations that aim to creatively deconstruct old paradigms, heal old wounds with new propositions of well-being for people, incorporating new emotional skills and competencies (*soft skills*) with new skills and technical competencies (*hard skillss*) that are capable of revolutionizing structures that need change.

There is no way to measure the benefits that could arise from the transformations caused by the disruption resulting from the change in mentality, as happened with the TiX Letramento Educational Program, which serves inclusive education in several cities in Brazil and around the world. Supported by solid pillars of assistive technology and technological innovation, based on transdisciplinary empirical and theoretical knowledge, it evokes experiences while projecting itself into pedagogical, technological and administrative dimensions to impact the lives of thousands of people. It provokes a true revolution.

To conclude, the subject about whom this text reported is revealed. The frail boy, born in the 1970s in Belo Horizonte, who learned to transform his pain into motivation

to change the reality around him is the same person who, in this personal account, shared part of his story when writing this article.

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