



## THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN THE PROCESS OF INCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES - PCD IN THE CONTEXT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

 <https://doi.org/10.56238/levv16n44-046>

Submitted on: 23/12/2024

Publication date: 23/01/2025

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### ABSTRACT

This article aims to discuss the role of the family in the process of inclusion of people with disabilities - PCD in the context of higher education. The methodology used was qualitative, using the method of exploratory bibliographic survey in books, reports, government websites and articles from Google Scholar, Scielo, Capes journals and ResearchGate. The data analysis instrument was Bardin's content analysis. Regarding the results, it was evident that the role of the family for the insertion of PwD in higher education is indispensable and that it should be the focus of inclusive, public and institutional policies, so that the PwD can be inserted in the educational context and have their potential fully developed.

**Keywords:** Person with disabilities. Inclusion. Higher education. Family support. Public policies.

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## INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, the search for respect for diversity is a fundamental value that permeates the spheres of education, public policies, and interpersonal relationships. In this scenario, the inclusion of people with disabilities (PWD) in higher education emerges as a field of significant relevance, challenging institutional structures and social practices that still perpetuate barriers to the full exercise of citizenship. As Lisboa (2020) points out, disability is characterized by physical, sensory, or intellectual impediments that limit the performance of important activities, constituting a complex, dynamic, and deeply contextualized reality in the historical and social spheres.

Although legislative advances and educational initiatives have expanded opportunities for access to higher education, the inclusion process requires a careful look at the specificities and individualities of each PWD. This perspective includes understanding their demands and creating conditions that not only respect but also overcome the limitations imposed by their conditions. In this context, the family plays a central role, both as a basis for emotional support and as a facilitator of access to educational and social opportunities.

The present study aims to analyze the role of the family in the inclusion of PWD in higher education, considering that the family nucleus can act as a transforming agent, contributing to the overcoming of challenges and promoting conditions that favor the permanence and academic success of this public. From a multidimensional approach, it seeks to discuss how the joint action of the family, educational institutions and society can boost the full inclusion and integral development of PWD in the university environment.

## DEVELOPMENT AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

### THE PERSON WITH DISABILITIES

Contemporary society is full of diversity, so it seeks to maintain through education, information and public policies, respect for difference and the way each one presents themselves. In this context of differences, the person with disabilities is found with their demands and needs.

According to Lisboa (2020), disability is related to physical, sensory, and/or intellectual impairment, causing the individual to have limitations to perform one or more important activities in their life. Also for the author, the definition of disability remains challenging, since it brings together complex, dynamic, multidimensional and questionable elements, in historical and social contexts.

It is necessary to perceive this subject in his individuality, in the society in which he lives, in order to respect his limitations and generate possibilities and conditions to face them.

Next, a brief summary of how people with disabilities have lived throughout history and the achievements they have made to take their place in society will be presented.

## THE PERSON WITH DISABILITIES: HISTORICAL VIEW

According to Pereira (2017), after several situations throughout history that demonstrate the exclusion of people with disabilities, understanding them and their recognition are fundamental for inclusion and social interaction in the contemporary context.

For the author, it is necessary to understand how disability has been part of humanity since primitive times. In this period, the environment was not favorable to people who were born with some deformation or other need that limited it, as environmental conditions prevented survival and forms of group organization. Only the strongest could resist, and it was very common in certain tribes to abandon children with disabilities in inhospitable places, thus making it impossible for them to become adults.

Even with the development of societies and the organization of human groups, the way of treating people with disabilities has remained the same during various periods of history. Corroborating this reality, Piccolo (2022) points out that during the Ancient Age, the child who was born with some congenital impairment should be returned to the one who sent it (gods) to show that the message was received. In this way, it was abandoned in vacant lots or in areas near rivers, cliffs or cliffs, and those who survived this situation were considered to have special powers.

In the periods that correspond to the Middle Ages (476-1453) and the Modern Age (1453-1789), for Martins, Pacheco et al (2021),

the understanding in European societies about disability occurred mainly with the emergence of Christianity. The religious view saw disability as a corrective or a divine punishment, in which the person should get used to it to 'pay' for their sins. (MARTINS, PACHECO et al, 2021, p. 04).

At this time, for the aforementioned authors, the person with disabilities becomes the possessor of a human status, holder of a soul, and should no longer be rejected by society as before. The abandonment of these people began to be fought and they began to be supported, especially in asylums and convents. However, this change did not result in their integration into society, as hostility and prejudice continued to be practiced against these individuals, who were still seen as socially useless.

Still for the authors, the families that lived in poverty in these historical periods rescued abandoned children to serve as "bargaining chips", making them beggars, lending them to work in the homes of wealthy people or performing other functions, allowing these families an extra income. Those who reached adulthood remained in the same condition of misery, neglect and abandonment.

The Contemporary Age begins with the fall of the Bastille in France, or the French Revolution, in 1789, and extends to the present day. In this period, many changes occurred in relation to people with disabilities. Next, the reality of these people between the eighteenth century and the twenty-first century will be presented.

## ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PWDS FROM THE EIGHTEENTH TO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

In the eighteenth century, from the French Revolution in 1789, when the values related to Equality, Fraternity and Liberty are driving the relationships between people, disability comes to be seen as a disorder that can be treated, and it is in this period that psychiatric hospitals emerge for the treatment of individuals with mental disabilities, (MONTEIRO et al, 2016). Based on the authors cited, the CREAS (Specialized Reference Center for Social Assistance, 2019) of the city of São Paulo, in its professional training notebook for teachers who work with disabled students, clarifies that this is a period in which commercial capitalism begins and the Bourgeoisie solidifies its power.

In this context, families present several transformations in their dynamics: they start to value their offspring, affectivity occupies space in the relationships with children and show a concern with preparing them for life.

The great advance of medicine in this period made it possible for people with disabilities, who were previously treated as sick, unproductive, living isolated in large nursing homes and hospitals, leaving their families and society alone, to become a field of interest for medical science. (CREAS, 2019, p. 8 - 9).

For CREAS, with the "development" of Medical Sciences, specialized care began to consider disability as a learning problem. And these people are seen as capable of learning and developing skills.

The philosophical-ideological basis that continued in the international scenario between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was that of the segregationist school pattern, based on the homogenization of people according to their biological characteristics - organicist conception (an approach that uses the organism as a metaphor to explain a living and organized system), (BARBOSA; FIALHO; MACHADO, 2018).

Still for the authors cited, in Brazil at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, it was understood that the reception of people with disabilities in the educational system was also a matter of the State and the regular organization of education. It is necessary to plan a public school model capable of housing students with "special needs", thus giving rise to public "special schools" or the implementation of "special classes" in existing schools.

In this scenario, the paradigm of instructional integration emerges, in which students with disabilities - whether physical, sensory or intellectual - would be able to enroll in regular classrooms if they were able to follow the activities and develop skills, at the same pace as the so-called "normal" students. However, those with school performance below the average established by the education system remained separated from the regular network and their enrollment was limited to "special schools".

For Lisboa (2020), during the twenty-first century, there is a great advance in society in relation to people with disabilities. These individuals began to be seen in a different and less discriminatory way, although practices in history demonstrate a contrary version of what we experience today. Even so, due to the current paradigms, there is much to be done in this regard.

In Brazil, some legal frameworks began to support people with disabilities between the 1970s and 1980s. For Lisboa (2020, p.40) "in the early 1980s, the International Year of the Disabled Person (AIPD) was decreed, so it is believed that it was from this period that society began to see these individuals, giving them more visibility".

For Santos and Secundino (2023), the legal frameworks became more effective with the Promulgation of the Federal Constitution of Brazil in 1988, which guaranteed a series of social rights for the population, including access for people with disabilities in the school context, which directly reflected in the educational policy that was consolidated in the early 1990s.

According to the authors, based on these laws, a series of improvements in the educational system began to aim at a quality education that would enable the development of the potential of "people with special educational needs", a terminology printed from the World Meeting on Special Education, and the Salamanca Declaration, which took place in 1994, in Spain, was instituted. (SECUNDINO; SANTOS, 2023).

In 2001, the WHO - World Health Organization, changed the meaning of disability, grouping the norms of the social model, with the publication of the ICF - International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health. In 2000, the Statute of Persons with Disabilities (PL No. 3638/2000) was approved, legislating on the basic rights of this



community. In 2008, the National Policy on Special Education in the Inclusive Perspective was instituted, which allowed the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools in basic education.

Subsequently, in 2015, the Brazilian Law for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (Statute of Persons with Disabilities), Law No. 13,146, of July 6, 2015, was instituted. This law guarantees, among other rights for these individuals, priority care in health units, priority seating in public transport and receipt of income tax refunds and medical services. In addition, it states that all people with disabilities can receive an inclusion aid from the government.

In this section, the history of people with disabilities in society, their segregation in the family, their stay in psychiatric hospitals, and the way they were treated in this path, as well as their struggles and achievements presented in the form of law, were briefly presented.

The section on the access of people with disabilities to higher education will be presented below.

## **HIGHER EDUCATION**

### **LEGISLATION AND POLICIES FOR PWDS**

The person with disabilities is, objectively, present in the daily life of social interactions. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2022), 18.6 million people over 2 years of age have some type of disability in Brazil. They live and need legislation and public policies that enable their permanence and accessibility in all environments.

The Brazilian legislative power only began to interfere in the social dynamics and create laws aimed at people with disabilities after the Federal Constitution of 1988. In addition to ensuring assistance to people with disabilities for habilitation and rehabilitation and promoting integration into community life. From now on, it expressed social security to all Brazilians and guaranteed rights such as:

education, health, food, work, housing, transportation, leisure, security, social security, protection of maternity and childhood, assistance to the destitute, in the form of this Constitution, (BRASIL, 1988).

The results obtained after the Federal Constitution of 1988 promoted greater integration of the Brazilian people. However, it was still necessary to develop public policies aimed at the educational development of people with disabilities. Thus, the Statute of the Child and Adolescent, Law No. 8,069/1990, guarantees specialized care and protected

work for people with disabilities. The integration and permanence of these young people in educational institutions is the result of public policies that have implemented basic rights such as the Free Pass Law, which guarantees free access to the interstate transport system; and the Libra Law, which recognized the Brazilian Sign Language and ensured its application in schools and colleges.

All the rights conquered and recognized made inclusion effective in society. Furthermore, there were gaps regarding other types of disabilities and needs that were only remedied in 2015, when Law 13,146, known as the Brazilian Law for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (Statute of Persons with Disabilities), came into force.

The Statute confirmed that it is the duty of the State, the family and society to ensure the realization of the right to education and the professionalization of people with disabilities. Chapter IV of the aforementioned Law addresses the right to education, and is emphatic in saying that the education system must be inclusive at all levels throughout life. As well as, it warns about the responsibility of the public power to monitor and evaluate whether the legislation is being enforced. This includes quality education, with pedagogical projects that meet the educational needs of each student with reasonable accommodations and in equal conditions to the curriculum used by other students.

Students with disabilities have the right to equal opportunities and conditions for higher, vocational and technical education. Therefore, adapted conditions are enforced in the selection processes for admission to higher education, because according to Art.30 of the aforementioned Law, the service must be preferential with registration forms that enable the candidate to inform the need for accessibility resources and assistive technology. In addition to ensuring time dilation, according to the demand presented by the student with disabilities, to carry out selection and academic activities adopting criteria that consider the linguistic uniqueness of the person with disabilities. Along with the inclusion in curricular content of topics related to people with disabilities and full access to games and complementary activities.

The legislation also guarantees the obligation for the educational institution to provide an accessible and adapted environment, as well as the monitoring of support professionals and intersectoral articulation, to enforce public policies.

To reinforce the effectiveness of the admission of students with disabilities in higher education, the Legislature amended Law 12.711, of August 29, 2012, which provides for the admission to federal universities and federal institutions of technical education at the secondary level and provides other provisions - known as the Quota Law. The changes that include the allocation of vacancies for people with disabilities in Law 13.409, of December

28, 2016, come into force. Thus, it became mandatory that a percentage of vacancies in federal institutions of higher and technical education at the secondary level be allocated to PWD candidates, with a review of the law every 10 years.

In this way, it is possible to validate the efficiency of the State as a promoter of the integration and social inclusion of people with disabilities. From public policies and laws, it is possible to visualize the effective presence of students with disabilities at the various levels of education, with emphasis on broad access to higher education. Only in this way is it possible to foster the construction of an inclusive and integrated higher education, which reaps the fruits of the educational base built from respect and encouragement of education.

## SCENARIO OF THE INCLUSION OF THE DISABLED IN HIGHER EDUCATION: ADVANCES AND CHALLENGES

People with disabilities have conquered spaces in society with the aim of belonging, and become visible, but still surrounded by obstacles that involve both locomotion and psychological aspects.

The discussions for PWDs to be able to enter higher education began with the inclusion policies resulting from the Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education (1996, p.1) which brings us that: "education encompasses the formative processes that develop in family life, in human coexistence, at work, in teaching and research institutions, in social movements and civil society organizations and in cultural manifestations". Also considering the Brazilian Law for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (LBI), Law No. 13,146/2015, which ensures and promotes, under equal conditions, the exercise of the fundamental rights and freedoms of people with disabilities, aiming at their social inclusion and citizenship.

In order to provide students with disabilities with more opportunities at university, the Legislature modified the Quota Law in 2023. 12,711 allocating 50% of the reserved vacancies to various audiences, such as racial, social and disability quotas.

The Houaiss dictionary defines accessibility as "the quality or character of what is accessible" and "ease of approach, treatment or acquisition" (HOUAISS, 2001, p. 52). However, the author Reinaldo Ferraz (2017) mentions that for the Brazilian government, the definition is broader, when it addresses the principle of accessibility as a guarantee of the citizen. Decree No. 5,296, of December 2, 2004, considers that accessibility is the condition for the safe and autonomous use, total or assisted, of furniture spaces and urban equipment, buildings, transport services and devices, systems and means of communication, by people with disabilities or reduced mobility.

In order for higher education institutions to evaluate the established accessibility, it is essential that they are engaged with education, which according to Romeu Sasaki (2007), consists of:

- A) Accessibility Attitude: Promote awareness and awareness activities, in order to eliminate prejudices, stigmas, stereotypes. To stimulate coexistence among students, where respect for the human being is something taught and demanded; The school that builds together with its community a new way of thinking and living school education, replacing old paradigms with new ones, is promoting accessibility.
- B) Architectural Accessibility: Eliminate physical environmental barriers in all outdoor and indoor enclosures. Some examples of barriers are steps, holes and unevenness in the floor, slippery floors, narrow doors, tiny toilets, poor lighting, poor ventilation, poor location of furniture and equipment, among others.
- C) Methodological Accessibility: Knowing, learning and applying the theory of multiple intelligences, the various styles of learning and learning, producing and using didactic materials appropriate to special educational needs, among others.
- D) Assistive technology: Recognize all resources and services that contribute to providing or extending functional capacities of people with disabilities and therefore offer an independent and inclusive life.

It is of paramount importance that interpersonal relationships are experienced in universities, with the exchange of experiences between professors and classmates, enabling students not only to appropriate cultural knowledge, but also to analyze the environment and become aware of their role as transforming human beings.

According to Salamanca (1994) teacher training is one of the axes for the promotion of inclusion, teacher training programs are needed that include responses to special educational needs in inclusive schools. It is also necessary that the teacher himself seeks knowledge about Special Education and is willing to continue in training. In addition, it is also important that there is an appeal to the international community and governments to ensure systemic change and thus build an inclusive, accessible, diverse university with guaranteed rights.

## THE FAMILY OF THE PWD AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE PROCESS OF INCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The social inclusion of people with disabilities is a process that goes beyond the adaptation of physical structures and public policies. This inclusive movement requires a

change of perspective in social relations and begins, in a decisive way, in the family, the first circle of support and coexistence of which the person with disabilities is a part. As Oliveira and Loreto (2022) state, true inclusion only becomes viable when there is genuine acceptance within the family structure itself: "[...] the family network is the first to provide the support mechanisms to the person with disabilities [...] in the process of access and permanence of the individual in the educational sphere" (Oliveira and Loreto, 2022, p. 206). In other words, the family is the central pillar that welcomes, gives strength and encourages the PWD to face the challenges of life, including academic ones.

Each family, with its particularities, has its own dynamics, which includes roles and functions performed by each member, as pointed out by Oliveira and Loreto (2022, p. 204) "Each family nucleus has a specific way of functioning, characterized by the relationships established". In this environment, people with disabilities find their first lessons on how to relate, deal with limitations and overcome themselves. And this initial learning shapes not only confidence, but the way in which the PWD will position themselves in the academic and social world, which is crucial for their inclusion and permanence in environments such as the university.

The confirmation of the birth of a child with disabilities has significant impacts on family dynamics. As Ferreira, Marques and Lucena (2016) point out, culturally, there is an expectation that children will be born healthy, and it is common to hear phrases such as "The important thing is that it is born healthy". When this expectation is not fulfilled, many parents face intense feelings of fear, helplessness, and uncertainty about their child's future. This process can be accompanied by guilt and shame, often generating internal conflicts that reflect on the way the family deals with the child's needs.

In addition, the emotional impact felt by parents can reverberate in all family members, changing relationship dynamics and imposing new challenges on coexistence. In this context, the family needs to reorganize itself to provide the necessary support to the child with disabilities, facing both internal and external adversities, imposed by social and educational barriers.

Family support is not only positive; It is fundamental to the success of a student with disabilities. In more complex educational environments, such as higher education, the presence of a support network that includes the family is a determining factor for the student to have an inclusive experience. Oliveira and Loreto (2022) highlight that, for real inclusion, the support of various segments of society is needed, including the support network for students with disabilities, which begins with those people who are closest, that is, the family, which should be declared as the core of greatest importance. This support, in

addition to being emotional, also involves material and practical resources, such as financial aid, articulation with the university for curricular adaptations, and even the representation of the student's interests in university spaces.

The academic environment can bring additional challenges, such as lack of physical accessibility, limitations in the curriculum, and lack of specialized support, which make family presence even more important. This continuous support facilitates access to resources and, at the same time, encourages PWD to develop towards autonomy, so that they can explore their potential within the academic environment more fully and satisfactorily.

The importance of the family in the life of a person with disabilities is not limited to logistical or financial support. It is in family relationships that the first values are transmitted, which guide the perception of oneself and the world. According to André and Barboza (2018, p.3), "it is through the relationships that the child establishes with the family that he learns moral and cultural values and beliefs". These values form the basis of the personality and resilience of the PWD, factors that become vital in the university environment, where the student needs to deal with academic and social challenges, not always in a fully accessible and inclusive context.

A family that values education and believes in the potential of the student with disabilities directly contributes to their self-confidence and persistence, which increases their chances of success. On the other hand, the absence of solid family support can generate a feeling of insecurity, demotivation and often lead to abandonment of studies. Oliveira and Loreto (2022, p.205) point out that "the family institution is the basis of the individual," being a space where the first emotional and social experiences are provided, which prepare the individual for life in society. With this support, the PWD is able to develop a robust self-esteem, which is essential to deal with adversity in the university course.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In summary, the family plays a central and indispensable role in the process of inclusion of people with disabilities in higher education. More than guaranteeing material and emotional support, the family transmits the values, beliefs and emotional security that the PWD needs to follow a satisfactory academic and social trajectory. Thus, the inclusion process should be seen as a joint effort, where family participation is recognized as essential for the student to feel welcomed and empowered to reach their full potential. Therefore, the elaboration of inclusive policies in universities, institutions and public authorities need to consider family involvement and support as a fundamental part to



ensure that inclusion is not just a structural adaptation, but a truly transformative and integral experience for the student.

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