

DEVELOPMENTS AND PERSPECTIVES ON THE CARE AND SCHOOLING OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND/OR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS



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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the evolutions and perspectives of the care and schooling of people with disabilities and/or special educational needs, considering historical milestones, advances and challenges. The study starts from the creation of specialized institutions in Brazil, such as the Benjamin Constant Institute and INES, and explores the transition from welfare practices to models of educational and social inclusion. The research adopts a qualitative approach based on a literature review, with emphasis on the factors that still hinder the full implementation of an inclusive education. The results highlight that, despite the advances, segregationist practices and prejudices persist that prevent effective inclusion. It is concluded that inclusion policies need to be improved and effectively implemented to guarantee the right to education for all.

Keywords: Brazil. Deficiencies. Special education. Schooling. Inclusion.

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INTRODUCTION

The study of the evolution of special education in Brazil reveals a trajectory marked by advances and setbacks, from the creation of the first institutions in the nineteenth century to the current efforts at inclusion. Historically, people with disabilities have been marginalized or segregated. Only in recent decades, with the evolution of public policies and scientific advancement, has it been possible to establish legal frameworks that promote educational inclusion. However, there is still a long way to go to ensure that these practices are universalized and effective throughout the country.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS

HISTORY OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN BRAZIL

In the specific case of Special Education, Bueno (1993) and Mendes (2001) agree in stating that the historical milestone in Brazil was the creation of the Imperial Institute of Blind Boys and the Institute of the Deaf-Mutes, both located in the city of Rio de Janeiro. The Institute of Blind Boys was born in 1854, and is currently known as the Benjamin Constant Institute. The second appeared three years later, in 1857, and today it is called the National Institute for the Education of the Deaf (INES). These bodies were initiatives of the imperial government and represented fundamental achievements for PWD, opening space for discussions that promoted awareness on the subject (Miranda, 2003).

However, these institutes were deteriorated because of various political, economic, social and moral conflicts. Particular interests prevailed at the expense of the benefits of an entire marginalized class. Dota and Alves (2007) argue that one of the characteristic points of these institutions was their welfare character, which they call a "policy of favor" (p. 06), since they effectively served the purpose of providing assistance to those in need, while the Parisian organizations in which they were inspired saw this aid as a type of work (Bueno, 1993; Miranda, 2021).

Already at that time, doctors began to consider the possibility of educating individuals who had previously been considered uneducable; however, pedagogical practices were still rudimentary and took place in asylums and asylums, through a purely institutionalized process.

The understanding of people with disabilities was formerly limited to the idea of visual, auditory and, to a lesser extent, physical problems, leaving aside mental disability,

about which, for a long time, there was almost absolute silence, not least because the conceptions of mental illness always reflected the social expectations of each period.

From the point of view of its consideration as a problem that demands special direction, mental deficiency began to involve children who demonstrated behaviors different from those expected by society and the school, the behaviors considered common and acceptable (Jannuzzi, 1992). This conception was problematic, because undisciplined children, students with family abandonment and even people who had some comorbidity became part of it. In other words, all these behavioral biases were framed in a single group; Children who were outside the dictated ideal bases were considered abnormal. This highlights the prejudice that the lack of study, the ignorant and segregating view and the absence of critical thinking bring. As the academic and scientific communities of the time were still timidly trying to unravel the genetic mysteries that encompassed disabilities, enlightened vision was moving at a slow pace and not so much importance was given to the identification and classification of diseases, not least because technological resources were still incipient.

In Brazil, at the beginning of the understanding of mental problems, mental disability was not seen as a social threat, nor as a degeneration of the human species, but as a result of environmental misfortunes (Miranda, 2021). However, Jannuzzi (1992) opines that the concern for the teaching of the mentally handicapped was in favor of saving the public coffers, since PWD did not need to be isolated in asylums, asylums or penitentiaries, thus avoiding occasional expenses with these institutions.

The imperial period was also the stage for the beginning of the treatment of people with mental illnesses, with the birth of psychiatric hospitals. Dota and Alves (2007) state that, in these places, the blind and deaf were separated, even if there was no need for it. Treatments began at the Psychiatric Hospital of Bahia, in 1874.

Other important milestones were the installation of the Bourneville Pavilion at the Dom Pedro II Hospital, also in Bahia, in 1903, dedicated to the treatment of the mentally ill, the Juvenile Pavilion at the Juquieri Hospital, 20 years later, and the Pestalozzi Institute in Canoas, in 1927 (Miranda, 2021).

According to Mendes (2001), in these institutions, which were intended for the most severe cases, care for minor illnesses was left unattended, which configured a certain neglect of special education. This scenario had a slight improvement in 1891, with the advent of federalism, when school medical inspection was born in view of the interest in the

education of PWD. Years later, in 1841, the Ulisses de Pernambuco Special School and the Alfredo Freire School were born in Recife (Miranda, 2021).

It is worth considering that the interest in special people also reflected a concern with hygiene, thus initiating a segregationist process, given that, in 1911, the school medical inspection appeared, a method that established specific classes for special students and required strategic professional training (Dota; Alves, 2007).

From the 1950s onwards, the Brazilian educational scenario witnessed intense discussions about the quality of educational services for PWD. Between 1948 and 1961, measures were determined that influenced special education, among which the creation of state education councils and the legal guarantee of financial incentives for schools can be highlighted (Miranda, 2021).

According to Mendes (2001), from 1950 to 1959, there was a large increase in the rates of special education establishments for people diagnosed with mental disorders. He considers that, at that time, there were 190 public and regular special education institutions.

From 1958 onwards, due to the incentives offered by the MEC, people from the lower classes were benefited by the implementation of this category of education. The MEC was also responsible for the birth of the National Center for Special Education (CENESP), in 1973, which is now known as the National Secretariat for Special Education (SENESP). The agency was born as a response to the need to manage a proposal to structure Brazilian special education (Mantoan, 2002). After that, the so-called special classes spread throughout the country in order to meet goals (Kassar, 2012).

From the perspective of education, SENESP leveraged educational actions aimed at PWD and gifted individuals, initiatives that were previously only isolated projects from the state sphere.

In the 1970s, as Dota and Alves (2007) argue, the first teacher training courses in special education were born. A few years later, in 1985, the federal government created a committee responsible for taking over the planning and elaboration of policies in favor of PWD, a task that was entrusted to SENESP from 1990 onwards.

Therefore, special education in Brazil began to develop from the nineteenth century, when certain services aimed at special people began to be offered. However, it took more than 100 years for this modality to be effectively integrated into teaching. For Mantoan (2000), there are three major historical periods with regard to this theme: between 1854

and 1956 (private initiatives); between 1957 and 1993 (official actions at the national level); and from 1993 to the present (movements in favor of school inclusion).

According to the author, the first of these moments was marked by the focus on specialized clinical care in partnership with school education, an opportunity in which the most traditional institutions of care for PWD were inaugurated, in the model of the Institute of Blind Boys. From that period to the present day, special education has undergone a series of changes and reconfigurations, processes based almost always on welfare, endowed with a segregating and limiting view, thus attenuating the exclusion of disabled children and young people (Mantoan, 2000; Miranda, 2021).

The second moment mentioned by Mantoan is the emergence of campaigns aimed at each type of disability, with emphasis on the Campaign for the Education of the Brazilian Deaf (CESB). The initiative adopts as its primary purpose the promotion of measures for the education of Brazilian deaf people at the national level, and was indispensable for the decentralization of the school to be made possible and for a project to emerge based on ensuring that the largest number of deaf Brazilian students could learn the Portuguese language, given that this was the main objective of education at the time (Rodrigues; Gontijo, 2017).

CESB was developed by Ana Rimoli de Faria Dória as a way to commemorate the first centenary of the creation of the National Institute for the Education of the Deaf. It was born as a continuation of the measures of specialization teacher training to teach in inclusive education schools that were later opened. To this end, Regional Coordination Centers were established in order to plan, supervise and provide technical, educational, material and financial assistance to the Federation Units. Five centers were created, distributed as follows:

CR-1, headquartered in Belém do Pará, covering the states of Pará, Amazonas, Maranhão and the then Territories of Acre, Rondônia, Rio de Janeiro and Amapá;
CR-2, headquartered in Salvador, covering the states of Bahia, Piauí, Ceará, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Alagoas and Sergipe;
CR-3, headquartered in Belo Horizonte, covering the states of Minas Gerais, Mato Grosso, Goiás and Espírito Santo;
CR-4, headquartered in the Federal District, covering the Federal District and the states of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro;
CR-5, headquartered in Porto Alegre, covering the states of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina (Rocha, 2014, p. 74).

The importance of these centers consisted in the fact that they made it possible to structure special classes in public schools, as well as specialized classes, in addition to

offering scholarships for the admission of deaf students to private institutions (Rocha, 2014). Nevertheless, the campaign reinforced the idea that the deaf subject was worthy of pity, with mentalities and guidelines that were against his existence and restricted his learning (Brito, 2013).

In addition, the National Campaign for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Visually Impaired was created in 1958, and the National Campaign for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Mentally Handicapped (CADEME), two years later, in 1960. CADEME aimed to ensure that, throughout the Brazilian territory, the "education, training, rehabilitation and educational assistance of retarded children and other mentally handicapped children of any age or sex" (Mazzotta, 1996, p. 52) was leveraged.

During this period, there was an increase in the number of special classes, especially for the mentally handicapped, in public schools, in view of the university reform and the growth of popular education. In view of this reality, it is important to mention the ideas of Jannuzzi (1992), who considers a proportionality between the increase in study opportunities for the lower classes and the implementation of special classes for PWD, especially those diagnosed with mild mental problems in regular public education (Miranda, 2021).

For Miranda (2003), the 1960s was the period of greatest numerical expansion of Brazilian special schools. She argues that, in 1969, there were already more than 800 institutions, approximately four times more than at the beginning of the decade. In subsequent years, special education was institutionalized, from the perspective of planning and executing public policies.

Still working on the second moment referenced by Mantoan (2000), there is the installation of the National Institute for the Education of the Deaf (INES), already mentioned in previous pages, an organ that still exists and is located in Rio de Janeiro. INES is a reference in the area of deafness and seeks to support the national education policy from the perspective of the deaf person.

In 1972, the Ministry of Education established the Special Education Task Group, which, in partnership with James Gallagher, made the first proposal for structuring Brazilian special education, when CENESP was created, which managed the new proposal (Miranda, 2021).

Years later, in 1994, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), together with the Spanish government, held the World

Conference on Special Educational Needs, which gave rise to the Salamanca Declaration, a document that is considered the most relevant for the dissemination of inclusive education.

This document explains that the enrollment of special students in regular schools should be treated as a priority, in addition to highlighting that

The fundamental principle of this line of action is that schools should welcome all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. They should welcome children with disabilities and gifted children, children living on the streets and working, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized groups or areas (UNESCO, 1994, p. 17-18).

In view of the expansion of opportunities for special students to access regular education, the legal documents that envision this education contemplate the ways in which people should be schooled, involving aspects related to insertion and inclusion, even if this is not an easy task, given the Brazilian sociocultural conditions.

The MEC published the first document that specified the SEA in 2006 (Miranda, 2021), contemplating multifunctional resource rooms. Two years later, Decree No. 6,571/2008 was approved, which presents some determinations on the SEA. In order for this approval, CNE/CEB No. 4/2009 published the Operational Guidelines for Specialized Educational Service in Basic Education, which is a modality of Special Education. Of these guidelines, article 5 is mentioned, which points out:

The SEA is carried out, primarily, in the multifunctional resource room of the school itself or in another regular school, in the opposite shift of schooling, and is not a substitute for regular classes, and can also be carried out in a Specialized Educational Service Center of the public network or of community, confessional or philanthropic non-profit institutions, agreed with the Department of Education or equivalent body of the states, Federal District or municipalities (Brasil, 2009a).

Even in the face of so many specifications, there are still few PWD who have access to inclusive education. These data serve more to validate social marginality than to improve students' student possibilities.

In 1996, another milestone in Brazilian education: the creation of the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB), which shows considerable advances for education, among which the following deserve to be highlighted: the offer of special education, which was expanded to the age group from zero to six years old; the enhancement of the quality of educational services to all students; and the requirement that

teachers be adequately trained to understand the diversity that exists in a classroom environment.

The fifth chapter of the LDB deals with special education and details fundamental aspects. In it, article 58 defines that such education should be offered preferably in regular education, with specialized professional support, when necessary. Even though this support is guaranteed by law, it is still far from reaching schools, and the reality of public education reflects this impasse. Any Brazilian who visits municipal and state schools with a close eye will be able to see the absence of support teachers, a problem that is fundamentally a reflection of the cuts in education funds in the country. This identifies the lack of pedagogical resources and the fragility of teacher training to deal with these students.

Efforts in favor of the rights of PWD have brought many legal achievements, but there is still a distance between theory and practice, because being guaranteed by law does not imply that there will be resources for application. It is necessary to ensure that such achievements are made possible in the practice of daily school life, since the democratization of education is not yet a concrete achievement in Brazil.

The present approach allows us to note that the results of these struggles were considerable, since the subjects benefited from them started from an almost complete lack of care to the implementation of social integration policies. However, one cannot speak only of victories, since there were also setbacks, prejudices and dubious gains.

Laws alone will not ensure that inclusive educational practice comes into force; It is necessary that the school is prepared to deal with the special students who enroll in it, offering them adequate treatment and instilling in other students a sense of equality and welcome.

The vast majority of research on the subject shows that special students experience precarious and segregationist situations in schools, and as a result, they end up being on the sidelines of almost all events, since they do not have support for their needs. This problem is one of the engines that lead to the expansion of debates around the subject.

As assured by Miranda (2003, p. 7),

The theoretical issues of the inclusion process have been widely discussed by scholars and researchers in the field of Special Education, however little has been done in the sense of their practical application. How to include has been the greatest concern of parents, teachers and scholars, considering that inclusion will only be effective if structural transformations occur in the educational system.

Expanding the discussion and data collection on the situation of PWD in schools even benefits the fight against bullying, given that, when little is discussed about this practice, little is known about it and the feelings it causes. Perceptions end up being affected and the hurts and fears generated by bullying are treated as 'freshness'. Teachers who previously did not realize that the student's behavior is often determined by the treatment he is receiving, are now able to better identify these situations of offense and exclusion and give them due care.

It is important to emphasize that decrees are essential to guarantee rights, but inclusive education is not carried out only through them. It is necessary to evaluate their conditions of inclusion in a gradual, continuous, systematic and planned way, because it is necessary that both the special education environment and the regular education system adapt to the new order and build political, pedagogical and institutional practices that enable the increase in the quality of education (Costa, 2016).

REPERCUSSION OF THESE CHANGES AND EVOLUTION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN BRAZIL

Brazil, in rapid development, has educational trajectories similar to other countries. Some stages, conceptions and influences that marked special education in other places influenced and still determine its evolution in Brazil. According to Carmo (1991, p. 27), at the beginning of colonization, among the Indians there was no concern with deficiencies, and the few anomalies found were physical. Children with congenital disabilities were sacrificed. During slavery, disabled slaves were victims of mistreatment, punishment or work accidents.

The first Constitution of 1824, according to Gaio and Meneghetti (2004, p. 21), promised free primary education to "all citizens", but did not include slaves or people with disabilities. Until 1850, there is no record of care or rehabilitation for these people. Only in 1854, D. Pedro II ordered the creation of the Royal Institute for the Education of Blind Boys, today the Benjamin Constant Institute (IBC), and the National Institute of the Deaf (INES). The first was influenced by José Álvares de Azevedo, a blind man who studied in Paris, and the second by Professor Eduard Huet. For the mentally handicapped, the first records were at the "Juliano Moreira Hospital", in Salvador, and at the "Mexico School", in Rio de Janeiro, in 1874.

Pavilions were created next to psychiatric hospitals, with a medical-pedagogical concern, already demonstrating the relationship between medicine and education in the treatment of children with mental disabilities (Jannuzzi, 1992, p. 34). Works such as "On Education and Medical-Pedagogical Treatment of Idiots", by Carlos Eiras, evidence this connection. In São Paulo, the Public Hygiene and Health Service gave rise to the Medical-School Inspection and, in 1911, created special classes (Jannuzzi, 1992). The Brazilian League of Mental Hygiene, according to Azevedo (1958), related mental deficiency to Prophylaxis problems. In 1925, the São Rafael State School was created in Belo Horizonte, specializing in the education of the visually impaired.

In the absence of state actions, specialized private institutions emerged, such as the Pestalozzi Institute, founded in 1926 in Rio Grande do Sul (Gaio; Meneghetti, 2004, p. 22). According to Mazzotta (1996, p. 42), this institution introduced orthopedics from European auxiliary schools in Brazil. Between 1920 and 1935, the psychopedagogical strand was developed, which, driven by Helena Antipoff, applied Intelligence Quotient (IQ) tests (Jannuzzi, 1992). In 1932, Antipoff created the Pestalozzi Society of Minas Gerais, followed by the Fazenda do Rosário, a re-education center for needy minors with disabilities.

New institutions emerged between 1930 and 1950, such as AACD (São Paulo, 1950) and ABBR (Rio de Janeiro, 1954). Entities for the hearing and visually impaired were also created, as well as special public classes, based on the scientific separation between "normal" and "abnormal" (Gaio; Meneghetti, 2004, p. 22). In 1950, the Association of Parents and Friends of the Exceptional (APAE) was created in Rio de Janeiro, with the support of the Pestalozzi Society.

From the 1970s onwards, the private special education network expanded, accompanied by the public network. In 1971, the Ministry of Education created a task group to evaluate special education, which led to the creation of the National Center for Special Education (CENESP) in 1972, a milestone that initiated systematized actions to improve educational services in Brazil (Padial, 1996, p. 15).

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN BRAZIL TODAY

As highlighted in the previous topics, the inclusion of special students in schools in Brazil took place gradually and began to gain strength only from the twentieth century onwards, even though this field of study was already recognized previously (Reis; Beraldo, 2024).

Early Childhood Education is the first stage of schooling and, in this sense, it is important to think about how Inclusive Education is placed in this phase, which is cited in article 29 of the LDB: "[...] Early Childhood Education aims at the integral development of the child up to six years of age in its physical, psychological, intellectual and social aspects, complementing the action of the family and the community".

The search for special education gains political, pedagogical and cultural contours and, in this sense, the child with special needs needs to be included in the sphere of Early Childhood Education, and it is the teacher's job to mediate the interaction between these students and the others. The interaction is provided for by the BNCC:

It is in the interaction with peers and with adults that children build their own way of acting, feeling and thinking and discover that there are other ways of life, different people, with different points of view. As they live their first social experiences (in the family, in the school institution, in the collectivity), they build perceptions and questions about themselves and others, differentiating themselves and, simultaneously, identifying themselves as individual and social beings. At the same time that they participate in social relationships and personal care, children build their autonomy and sense of self-care, reciprocity, and interdependence with the environment (Brasil, 2017, p. 40).

In the meantime, the BNCC argues that the child needs to interact with the other components of the environment in which he or she is inserted. Something interesting to highlight is that the document reports that, from this interaction, the child is able to differentiate himself in relation to others and identify himself as an individual and social being. In the field of education for people with disabilities, this is particularly beneficial, because both the child perceives himself as a social and unique being and the others learn, from the difference of the classmate, to respect and value human diversity.

In the scenario of inclusive education as a whole post-LDB, according to studies by Neves (2024), Brazil faces a series of challenges, especially with regard to professional performance, but it has also experienced many evolutions, as is the case of the National Policy on Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education (PNEEPEI), instituted in 2008, with a view to guaranteeing the right to education for all, including people with disabilities, global developmental disorders, and high abilities or giftedness.

This policy seeks to promote school inclusion, arguing that students with special needs should attend regular schools, with specialized support. This support is offered through accessible pedagogical services and resources, such as multifunctional resource rooms, assistive technology, and specialized professionals, aiming at comprehensive and inclusive education.

PNEEPEI was established by Decree No. 6,571:

DECREE NO. 6,571, OF SEPTEMBER 17, 2008.

Provides for specialized educational service, regulates the sole paragraph of article 60 of Law No. 9,934, of December 20, 1996, and adds a provision to Decree No. 6.253, of November 13, 2007.
(Brazil, 2008)

This decree emerges as a milestone in the educational history of Brazil, contributing to the elimination of barriers that segregate students with disabilities and ensuring that these students are contemplated with a quality education, based on respect and appreciation of individual capacities.

It is also important to highlight Decree No. 6,949/2009, the result of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, held in 2007. This decree establishes general rights for people with disabilities, including in the field of education, and reaffirms equal opportunities, the prohibition of discrimination and the promotion of accessibility in all sectors, including education, ensuring that students with disabilities have access to the regular education system with adequate support (Brasil, 2009b).

The Convention held in 2007 also served as the basis for another important document: the Statute of Persons with Disabilities, established by Law No. 13,146/2015, which establishes the rights of persons with disabilities in Brazil, aiming to promote their social inclusion and full citizenship. This law addresses accessibility in various spheres, such as education, health, work and transportation, seeking to eliminate barriers that may limit the social participation of people with disabilities (Brasil, 2015).

However, even in the face of these advances, Neves (2024, p. 11) argues that "challenges persist, including the lack of adequate infrastructure in many schools, insufficient teacher training to deal with students with special education, and the need to raise society's awareness of the importance of inclusion."

In this regard, Morais et. al (2024) argue that one of the main challenges is to change mentality, given that prejudice on the part of many school communities is still great. This problem includes, according to the aforementioned authors, "resistance to new pedagogical practices and the lack of preparation of education professionals to deal with diversity", barriers that "may represent obstacles to the effectiveness of school inclusion" (Morais et. al, 2024, p. 46).

Matos, Silva, and Miranda (2021) consider another problem that plagues the current scenario of inclusive education in Brazil: the lack of resources. In this sense, it is understood that, since the government does not adequately allocate funds for investments in education as a whole, inclusive education ends up being greatly impaired, as it depends on specific materials and structures, which, with the absence of financial resources, cannot be achieved.

In the meantime, it is essential that all actors involved — from educators to managers and civil society — work together to consolidate this inclusion. It is necessary to create an educational culture that encourages students to value human diversity and respect differences, so that Special Education fulfills its role of guaranteeing everyone's right to learning.

CONCLUSION

Despite the progress made in special education in Brazil, the challenge of consolidating inclusive education remains. Cultural and institutional barriers still limit the full participation of students with disabilities in the regular education system. For inclusion to become a reality, a continued commitment to implementing effective policies and combating segregationist practices is necessary. The reflections presented in this study highlight the need for a constant reassessment of educational strategies, in order to provide all individuals with the right to quality education.

Despite the significant advances in special education in Brazil, the challenge of making inclusion a concrete reality still persists. Cultural and institutional barriers limit the full participation of students with disabilities in the mainstream education system. For inclusion to solidify, a continuous commitment to the implementation of effective policies and the overcoming of segregationist practices is essential. Based on this, the reflections presented in this study emphasize the importance of constantly reviewing educational strategies, ensuring the right to quality education for all.

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