


## "INSTEAD OF ME BECOMING ONE WITH THEM, THEY BECAME ONE WITH ME": NARRATIVES OF STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES ENROLLED IN HIGHER EDUCATION

 <https://doi.org/10.56238/arev7n3-179>

Submitted on: 02/18/2025

Publication date: 03/18/2025

Ana Francisca de Souza<sup>1</sup>, César Rota Júnior<sup>2</sup>.

### ABSTRACT

Inclusive education is still a complex and challenging process that demands engagement from different social actors: public authorities, teaching professionals, families, and students with and without disabilities. In this study, a qualitative approach was used, which sought to understand the phenomenon of school inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in higher education, focusing on the interpretation of the experiences narrated by the subjects themselves, based on narrative interviews of seven students with intellectual disabilities enrolled in a public university. After the work of transcription and analysis of the interviews, the (re)construction of the students' trajectories was produced, addressing stories related to basic education, choice of course, university admission, and the challenges of building a space for oneself in the relationships with colleagues and teachers. The results showed that the students perceive the entry into the university as positive, recognize the importance of quotas for this achievement, as well as the figure of the support teacher. However, they still point out the absence of differentiated methodologies by their specific needs, but that, despite the difficulties, recognize the effort of all to advance in the process, feel included in the educational institution and recognize that the undergraduate course has expanded its autonomy and social inclusion.

**Keywords:** Educational Inclusion. Intellectual Disability. Higher education.

---

<sup>1</sup> Psychologist, Master in Education (PPGE/UNIMONTES) UNIFIP University Center (UNIFPMOC) E-mail: [ana.sousa@professor.unifipmoc.edu.br](mailto:ana.sousa@professor.unifipmoc.edu.br)  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-7068-1763>

<sup>2</sup> Psychologist, Doctor in Education (FAE/UFMG) UNIFIP University Center (UNIFPMOC) and State University of Montes Claros (UNIMONTES) E-mail: [cesar.junior@unimontes.br](mailto:cesar.junior@unimontes.br)  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6346-3972>

## INTRODUCTION

Regarding the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities (PwDI) in higher education, it is worrying to observe the scarcity of studies on the subject. The few existing studies address specific themes, such as public policies, the creation of scales, and extension projects, without considering the perspective of teachers and academics with intellectual disabilities. The latter are the main actors involved in the inclusion process and have a lot to contribute with their experiences and perceptions about the process, teaching about their needs and potentialities.

The National Policy on Special Education in the Inclusive Perspective – PNEEPI (BRASIL, 2008) defines as the Target Audience of Special Education – PAEE<sup>3</sup> all students with disabilities (physical, intellectual, visual, auditory), global developmental disorders and high abilities/giftedness, and guides that education systems at all levels are organized to ensure Specialized Educational Service – AEE, for the educational service of these students together with their peers, not allowing any form of exclusion and/or discrimination in the school environment. This is what is established by the Secretariat of Continuing Education, Literacy, Diversity and Inclusion / Directorate of Special Education Policies<sup>4</sup>, which defines Specialized Educational Service – AEE:

[...] set of activities, accessibility and pedagogical resources organized institutionally and continuously provided to PAEE students in the following form: I - Complement the training of PAEE students with permanent and limited support in the time and attendance of students in the multifunctional resource rooms; or II - supplementary to the training of students with high abilities/giftedness. Paragraph 2 - Specialized educational assistance must be part of the school's pedagogical proposal, involve the participation of the family to ensure full access and participation of students, meet the specific needs of PAEE students, articulated with other public policies. Thus, SEA aims to promote accessibility, meeting the specific educational needs of PAEE students. (BRAZIL, 2014)

Far from what is recommended in the legislation, educational institutions do not have differentiated pedagogical practices and didactic resources that favor the learning of these students, making the process of educational inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities more difficult. However, the failure in their learning falls on them and their

---

<sup>3</sup> The National Policy on Special Education from the perspective of Inclusive Education – PNEEPI (2008) defines as students the target audience of special education as all students with disabilities (physical, intellectual, visual, hearing), global developmental disorders and high abilities/giftedness, with people with intellectual disabilities being the target audience of the research a category among the others that make up the group.

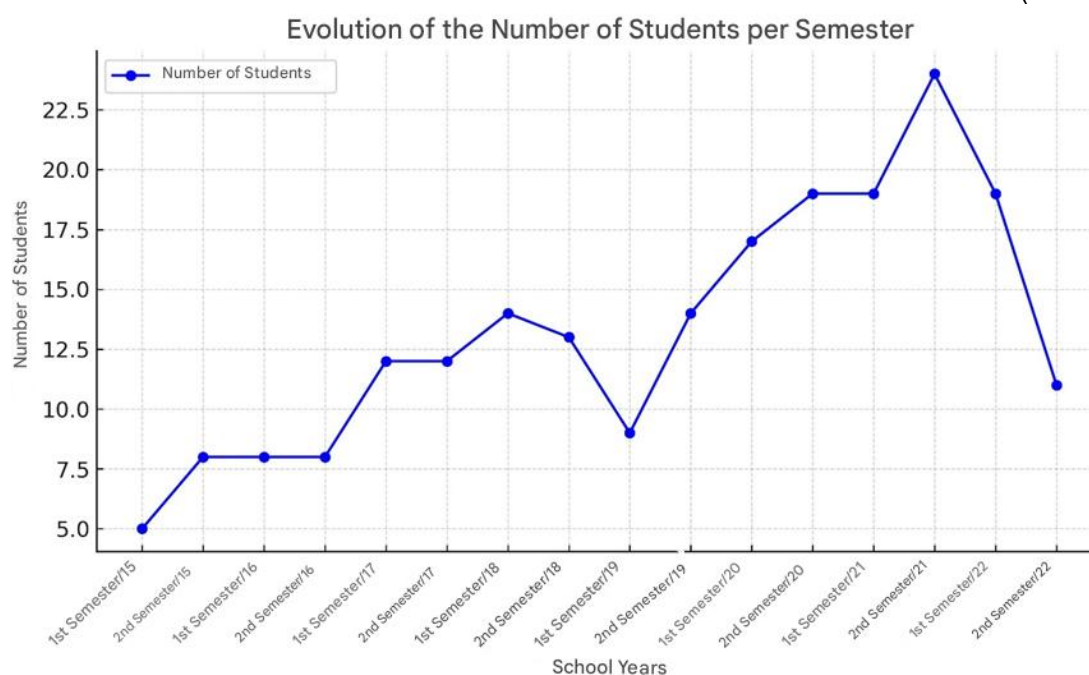
<sup>4</sup> On January 23, 2014, through SECADI / DPEE, it prepared technical note n°4 that defines as Specialized Educational Service - AEE the set of activities, accessibility and pedagogical resources organized institutionally and continuously provided to PAEE students.

condition of disability, blaming them for the low learning without reflecting on the precariousness of teaching. For Santos (2017), exclusionary practices are much more intense for people with intellectual disabilities. Relationships with these individuals are permeated by discrimination, prejudice, and stigmatization, leading to low performance that is not related to their disability condition but to the treatment received and people's low expectations of them.

The inclusion of PwDI in higher education is still perceived by many as a strange phenomenon, but an increasing number of students with this characteristic are entering and graduating from courses throughout Brazil, as shown by INEP data (2020), which portray the reality regarding the number of enrollments of people with disabilities in higher education in Brazilian universities. The data presented by INEP (2020) express the number of enrollments of students targeted by Special Education (PAEE) in higher education in the period from 2014 to 2020, demonstrating that there was a growth in access to this level of education by PAEE students.

The following data show an evolution in the number of enrollments in the Specialized Educational Service Plan (PAEE) at the university studied. This phenomenon occurred after its adhesion to the SISU Program in 2015. This evolution had a sharp drop in the second half of 2022, a situation that could not be answered in this study.

**Figure 1** - Evolution of the number of enrollments of PwDI at the State University of Montes Claros (UNIMONTES).



**Source:** Author's elaboration (2022)

Despite the drop in recent semesters, there is a trend towards an increase in enrollments, creating a scenario that reinforces the legal issues pointed out and requires investments and changes in the functioning of universities in the search for the reception and inclusion of students. But beyond the numbers, the present study sought to highlight a group of people who, throughout their histories and the history of the Brazilian university itself, have been neglected and who need to be heard and understood from their experiences and their stories in the university context.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In this study, the narrative interview was used as an instrument for data collection. According to Muylaert *et al.* (2014), narrative interviews are more appropriate to capture detailed stories and life experiences of the subjects studied. Due to their fecundity, narrative interviews allow the researcher to understand phenomena that the researcher wishes to investigate. They allow him to go beyond the transmission of information or content, making the experience revealed, becoming a great instrument for data production in the field of qualitative investigations. In this study, one to three interviews were conducted with each participant, and they were given ample freedom to talk about their trajectories at the university.

Thus, based on a spreadsheet provided by the secretariat of the researched university, seven enrolled students participated in this study, and they received fictitious names to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, as provided for when the research project was sent to the Research Ethics Committee, which was approved under number 5,239,006. These were the participants: Edson, 22 years old, enrolled in the Theater course; Tiago, 26 years old, enrolled in the Letters/English course; Brayan, 37 years old, enrolled in the degree course in Religious Sciences; Marina, 49 years old, in the Letters/Portuguese course; Alex, 22 years old, in the Physical Education Degree Course; João, 21 years old, in the Undergraduate course in History and Ailton, 29 years old, in the Physical Education degree course.

In compliance with the legal recommendations of the Ethics Committee for research with PwDI, the initial contact was made with the parents or guardians of the students. Initially, with the mothers, given that the telephone number is available in the spreadsheet provided by the institution's secretariat. A free and informed consent form was made

available, making it clear that participation in the study was voluntary and would only occur if he wished to participate. At the time of the interviews, an initial, informal conversation took place to create a favorable environment for the narrative, followed by the presentation of the initial topic to the student. During the interviews, no questions were asked, only after the end of the interviewee's speech, for some clarification. A field diary was also used, where impressions about the narrative were noted after the interviews. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and analyzed, seeking to reconstruct the school trajectories of these students, emphasizing the university experience.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

To understand the schooling process of people with disabilities in our country, it is necessary to know the different conceptions of disability that have permeated our society throughout history, as well as its relationship with the process of exclusion for this group of people, who for a long time were deprived of exercising their citizenship and neglected to guarantee human rights and public and social policies. Through this, Farias (2017) presents the different ways in which society has organized itself to provide educational services to these people and states that there is a relationship between the way PwDI are seen by society and the violation of their rights.

Thus, Farias (2017) presents the traditional paradigm, the one that considers the PwDI as an inferior being, marked by abnormality, demanding the compassion of others and not rights, and should be protected by other people. In the medical model, on the other hand, disability is conceived as a disease that needs clinical intervention and needs to be attended by professionals and specialists capable of providing services and treatments aimed at its cure. In the human rights paradigm, the person with disabilities is considered as a subject of rights and not as an object of assistance and rehabilitation, evidencing human dignity and postulating that disability can be generated or aggravated by environmental restrictions. These models by the author permeate the education systems and the school trajectory of the interviewees in this research, and during the presentation of the narratives, these models will be resumed.

Thus, the reports of the seven academics that illustrate what is being called into question will be presented below. All are singular characters, but with a point in common that places them in the same place, the place of the excluded in the different social spaces, and the school, which is the main means of access to access the other spaces. From this

point on, we chose to present the data in the first person, valuing the researcher's place in the relationship with the interviewees.

## NARRATIVES AND TRAJECTORIES: BETWEEN INCLUSION STRATEGIES AND HISTORIES OF EXCLUSION

The first participant to be interviewed showed discomfort with the idea of talking spontaneously about his academic trajectory. Rubbing one hand against the other, he asks:

[...] What am I going to say? I can only answer the questions. Which is like... a question would activate something in my head for me to remember... Then, I reminded myself to speak. It's just that at school and college, people ask, and I answer. I can't, like that, talk to anyone. Can't you ask the questions? Then I answered. (Edson)

Edson insists on changing the interview technique by asking questions. But I reassure him, informing him that there is no right or wrong in the information, but only what he remembers and wants to say. The academic resists: "I want to participate, but like this: if I don't remember, is there a problem?" I replied to him that there was no problem, it was for him to say only what he remembered and that he thought was important to him.

The academic expresses in his narrative the place he has occupied in society, of only answering what is asked of him, and also predetermined answers and a conception about himself that he took as truth and incorporated it as his own, using it to direct his choices, including the choice for higher education. Another aspect that can be evidenced in the discourse of the academic is the use of teaching practices that are still very much based on the excessive use of memorization and transmission of knowledge, still used in the daily life of the classroom, increasing the difficulties of those students who do not have the skills to memorize the knowledge transmitted.

When I ask the students to tell me about their academic trajectories, memories of experiences in basic education emerge, crossed by many difficulties: low learning, medicalization, failures, transfers from various schools and the search for strategies by students with intellectual disabilities and their families to adapt to the education systems, which remain with their structures unchanged to serve them.

Before high school, when I was in the third year, I took a bomb twice. My mother took me to Capelo, then the doctor gave me medicine when I went there. Then I had the bus card and I also had the right to have the support teacher. Then I didn't take a bomb anymore. The support teacher helped me even in high school and I went to



Unimontes. She helped me enroll and talked about what it was like there at Unimontes. I didn't know anything, but through the support teacher, I learned. (Edson)  
When I was finishing the third, the school principal called my mother and said: look, this year we're going to have to leave to see what he's going to do next year, because you know he won't be able to go to college, right [LAUGHS] I'm already finishing the Bachelor's degree course and I'm going back to take the bachelor's degree in physical education. (Alex)

Alex's mother, who was listening to our conversation attentively from another room in the house, replied: "No, no. I'm tired of fighting so that they don't treat you badly there at the university." Alex replies in a low voice: "Well, I'm not going. I will. I don't care what my classmates and my teachers do, I let them go." Alex's report highlights the aspect of resilience that people with disabilities had to acquire to face prejudice and ableism, as expressed in the statements of the principal of the school where Alex studied. It also shows the low expectations of teaching professionals for people with intellectual disabilities. The discrediting of the potential of people with intellectual disabilities causes education systems to restrict the educational possibilities offered to them as much as possible (Kassar, 2000).

The reports express the mismatches, as well as the failures and the influence of the medical model, even indicating that the medicine improved his learning difficulties and prevented him from failing. The participants of the study expressed themselves here in the speech of Brayan, who, placing his face between his hands, states:

Since I was little, I have had difficulty. I started in a private school with my brothers, but as I didn't learn there, the principal called my father and asked him to change schools. Then I went to school X.; After a while, my father was called there, and I went to a special school, where I stayed until I finished elementary school. (Brayan)

Another aspect narrated by Edson is welfare, the benefits he had by attending the special school. Only after that did he have the right to transportation and a support teacher. Faced with this issue, Dainez & Smolka (2019) highlight the need for a change in the practices of care for people with disabilities from the medical and welfare areas to the educational area. For this change to be effective, it is necessary to build a public education system articulated with a political and educational project, without a philanthropic nature, which contemplates a human and integral education for this population.

It is known that, in Brazil, education has recently been treated as a right for all, only after the federal constitution of 1988, followed by the Statute of the Child and Adolescent and other legal norms that guarantee education as a right for all, which represented an achievement for socially excluded groups, especially in the case of people with disabilities

who for a long time had their schooling process carried out in segregated environments, resulting in the accumulation of failure and even culminating in the dropout of many of the educational systems. However, Carvalho (2015, p. 1) warns that inclusion "must be understood as a principle and as a continuous and permanent process. It should not be conceived only as a normative precept, as has happened in many education systems in Brazil".

From this perspective, the university studied, aiming at its adequacy to meet the legal requirements foreseen, has limited its actions to the realization of some isolated affirmative actions, which make them fragile in terms of achieving their purposes. As for affirmative actions, I highlight their adherence to the SISU Program, the reservation of vacancies for PwD, the availability of accessibility resources at the time of the selection process, which has allowed students with disabilities to access higher education, the flexibility of enrollment by subject, the granting of participation of some students in programs with scholarships. However, the lack of dissemination and systematization of access to these actions by academics limits their effectiveness in ensuring the permanence of PwD in the university, making it difficult for these students to complete their undergraduate courses. According to Edson, "It was through ENEM that I passed. Only through ENEM and the quotas did I manage to pass. The quotas were very important to me." Likewise, Tiago says, "I joined Unimontes in 2016. I entered through the quota system because of the disability I have. Quotas are very important."

Another action carried out by the educational institution was the creation of the Inclusive Society Center (NUSI) in 2005, which has the function of developing actions that guarantee inclusive higher education committed to the democratization of access, training of professionals and actions to welcome and ensure the permanence of students with disabilities and other admissions through the quota system (PDI, 2017-2021, p. 80). However, it is necessary to recognize the limitations imposed by the lack of structure in terms of financial and human resources to achieve an educational institution of the size and magnitude of Unimontes with a large headquarters and fields in so many cities in the north of Minas Gerais.

Seeking to improve the permanence of academics with disabilities in the institution, the University Council, on July 4, 2018, established by Resolution No. 015-CEPEX/2018, through the Council of Teaching, Research and Extension (CEPEX) of Unimontes, approved in plenary session the Resolution that provides for the hiring of a didactic support



professional for the Specialized Educational Service of people with disabilities in the institution, which determines that the service of Assistant Professor of Special Education must be requested by the student with disabilities to the course coordinator, who will request from the specific department the hiring of the professional that the student needs, with the necessary didactic and teaching charges.

The existence of legal regulations for the regulation of services and Specialized Educational Services (SES) is important for their effectiveness in the public system, but it does not guarantee that these services will materialize in practice. This is because the regulations determine that the State must ensure "specialized educational care for people with disabilities, preferably in the regular school system".

[...] Before at Unimontes, there was no support teacher, but now there is. Now, in the end, the reality is different, after my family went to court. Now, it's different from what I was used to experiencing before, I had to follow the pace of the class and do the same activities and the same assessment. (James)

I didn't have a separate test, I took the same test as my classmates. yes, it was evaluated in the same way. I never had a support teacher. It is the system, the system of the world is this. People go there, create laws, include you in the system, and then, you have to make do with the teacher, you have to turn around to assist the needy, do you understand? (Mariana)

The reports point to the importance of affirmative actions that promote access to higher education for students with intellectual disabilities and facilitate their permanence in it. The limitations they present do not prevent them from having desires and dreams of entering a University like most young people without disabilities. In this sense, Silva (2021) states that experiences in a university space enable enriching exchanges for people with intellectual disabilities.

In addition to the benefits that attending an undergraduate course can provide for the development and autonomy of people with intellectual disabilities, it is necessary to think about the paradigm of the right that ensures these people access to education at all levels of education, including the principle of lifelong learning defended in the National Policy on Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education (PNEEPEI), 2008 (Brazil, 2008). It is necessary to recognize that education opens paths to access other services, as well as improved quality of life, as illustrated in the following reports:

[...] I say that if we live in a society where human beings study, learn, and know, they will never be deceived. He will never be a person who goes with others because of being influenced by someone. He himself will draw his conclusions and will follow his paths. (Mariana)

Within college I acquired knowledge that I did not know until then before being an academic. I'm doing scientific initiation every Friday, it's a lecture; there is a mini-course and round tables where I learned about discrimination, prejudice, and acceptance of all people. (Brayan)

[...] It's about inclusion, it's that they put me there, but the teachers were not yet trained, prepared, to deal with this inclusion. Even that teacher who sometimes I was kind of harsh with her and she was also kind of rude to me because I was kind of lost, and she felt like difficulty teaching me, she wasn't to blame either. Neither she was to blame, nor was I to blame. It is the system, the system of the world is this. People go there, create laws, include you in the system, and then, you have to make do. And the teacher has to turn around to assist the needy [...] Sometimes, the teacher would stop the class for a while to answer my questions. As insignificant as I was, the more the teachers treated me with respect. I will never question the university for having received a kind of aversive treatment, no. I never received that. I learned a lot, and the teachers listened to me, put me in a group, and taught me. I didn't have a separate test, I took the same test as my colleagues. yes, I was evaluated in the same way. But he never treated me badly. Not that. (Mariana)

Among the interviewees, only two reported having prepared to take the ENEM. However, their narratives reveal the importance of their participation in the selection process for admission to the university. In addition to the importance, the need for affirmative actions to ensure access for people with disabilities draws attention. The absence of these actions makes it difficult for this public to access this level of education and corroborates the process of exclusion to which they have been subjected throughout history.

As a result, the interviewees did not show much knowledge about this space/level of education, but they had the desire to attend it. Nevertheless, in higher education, they sought to affirm themselves as human beings who have potential, as a way of escaping prejudice against disability, as illustrated below in the interviewees' statements. "I wanted to go to college in History because I like history. In high school, the subject I liked the most was history," said João. Similarly, Ailton shared: "The choice of the course itself... I like soccer, sports, you know... the choice of course, you know... Since I was a child I like football, it's...". Alex stated: "I chose Physical Education because it was my first option. My second option was animal husbandry because I like the countryside." Edson explained: "Then, as I saw that there was theater, I wanted to do it. Then, then, I started doing theater, because theater, I thought I didn't have many texts." Mariana also shared her experiences:

[..] Oh, in my family, there are already some teachers and people who have degrees in Letters. I always liked the Letters course, right? But I had no idea what the Letters course was like because I thought that if I enrolled in the Portuguese Letters course, I would study the word. [...] I think my desire was greater, to be there, to arrive, to win, to study, to want to learn. Even because of my disability, I thought that by

studying, seeking knowledge, being in the midst of those people, and being in that environment, I would learn a lot for my aggrandizement and my life. As a student who had passed the entrance exam and was entering a university, people would look at me with different eyes. (Mariana)

For [Guimarães \(2014\)](#), entry into higher education can help PwDI in their training, as well as in the development of academic, work, and social skills, developing their autonomy, social participation, transition to the labor market, and adult and independent life. The university is a possibility of expanding the world in the constitution of friendships and meeting new people and cultural development. However, the reports showed that in the case of people with and without disabilities, this process does not develop spontaneously; sometimes, it requires mediation by the teacher, which may not happen.

The regulations provide that the same access measures offered in the selection process must be extended to pedagogical actions in the classroom. In addition to ensuring access, the legislation guides the implementation of affirmative actions at the institutional level, covering the hiring and training of teachers and support professionals, curricular adaptations, Specialized Educational Service (AEE), and adjustments to physical accessibility in spaces such as libraries and laboratories. The responsibility for planning and executing these actions is attributed to the Higher Education Institution (HEI). The absence of these practices creates barriers for the permanence of PwDI in HEIs, increasing their difficulties and resulting in possible failures in learning, which may even lead to dropout from higher education.

I couldn't learn to present the work, I couldn't make friends with anyone... I couldn't... express myself... I couldn't do anything that I think a normal person does... Like, it's... Having friendship, developing conversation, it's like... Do the job right. Then I preferred to lock it up and I'm afraid to go back. I'm afraid to come back, that's it. I'm afraid because of... The first time I went, I didn't like it because I couldn't present work and couldn't make friends. (Edson)

The reports reflect the school failure experienced by the students along unsuccessful trajectories in the institution, assuming responsibility for the failure and strengthening the belief that the adverse experience stems from their disability and/or personal characteristics. This creates a sense of estrangement, making these people perceive themselves as strangers to others.

Participants report that the interaction between colleagues, when it happens, is very important and facilitates their permanence in the course. However, the interactions, which often do not occur, are permeated by prejudices, to become another barrier, making it

difficult for them to participate in group work, because they are not accepted. Edson says: "Like, I look back and remember that in college I was very cornered and closed and didn't interact with my classmates and now I see that I'm afraid to go back." In the same way, for Aiton, "In the relationship with colleagues, I only had difficulties, you know... to do group work, right. to write things down, right... I had a lot of difficulty with that, it's leaving the work to be done at the last minute, you know..." João, on the other hand, reported: "I have a friendship there... with two colleagues [...]. But, I have 30 colleagues. But my friends are just like them. But I talk to others, but they are not my friends."

Because people with disabilities are often not understood, they are often not accepted in a study group, in a conversation circle, in a classroom group, like, there are cliques and then we arrive and they shut up or leave the place [...] there is a look of discrimination and this ends up affecting health. (James)

Then, the girls said Wow! You helped so-and-so, I saw you doing this to her, you asked her to stay on her team, and she didn't want to. I said So what? I don't know anything at all. How is she going to want me? I was very sad. [...] Often. It happened that the teacher gave us teamwork. I do the work in the group, and the person doesn't put my name on the team. When the result came, [SMILES], I asked: but I wasn't on your team. [...] And then, it was the time that these colleagues arrived, whom God sent to me. And they said, it's like this, Marina. The other classmates who were in the room began to see. Then, they said: Wow, we have to change. They had to change because of four, the whole room was transformed. This room here has become the most united, the most loved room. Everyone has become special. Instead of me becoming one with them, they became one with me; they all made special students with me, and we became a family. [...] Everything started to improve there in the fourth period, when I met with the colleagues who arrived in the room, and she knew the laws more than I knew myself, right? So we became a duo, right? Anyway, then it became a quartet, and then the whole room united. Before, some had a lot of prejudice. I say what is different, he suffers this prejudice. Do you think that the smarter ones will want to be sitting with the ones you don't know? They know that it will take work. They will have to explain, explain, explain until I understand. (Mariana)

On the other hand, Brayan reported that:

My colleagues are also interested in doing work with me. We are very united; no one like that is selfish. So, in the most difficult moments. My colleagues and I are very good friends. One helps the other there. So no one has that selfishness. For example I have an older colleague of 47, 48 years old, and he is a father to me.

The students report that when the interaction process occurs, there is a transformation in the behavior of the group as a whole, involving students with and without disabilities. Bonds are strengthened, friendships in the class are consolidated, and difficulties decrease, as mentioned in the National Policy on Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education: [...] the benefit of inclusion is not only for children with

disabilities, it is effectively for the entire community, because the school environment suffers an impact in the sense of citizenship, diversity and learning". (Brazil. 2008)

The participants' reports show vivid memories. Sometimes with crying, laughter. The memories are evoked in a very spontaneous way and seem to allow a reliving of everything that happened in the classroom, a reunion with the past.

The memories of the process of interaction with teachers in the classroom are contradictory. Sometimes conflicting, sometimes considered by them as rewarding. They say they are not met by the professors in their specific needs, but they are grateful for the little they receive. They recognize the challenges faced by teachers, and they recognize that there is a lack of knowledge on the part of the teacher, but they understand that some make an effort to understand them, and others do not.

The relationship with the teachers was good. At first it was a little difficult, because I was shy and the teacher was difficult to talk to until then. But I got used to it. But sometimes, I also don't know what the teacher said and I ask my classmates for help. (Brayan)

In the first moments, the teachers did not want to pay attention to me. I didn't want extra attention, it was just my rights that I wanted. And they questioned it. Over time, the teachers stopped the class a little for my questions, no matter how insignificant they were, they answered and respected me. (Mariana)

The participants' reports, in addition to the lack of teacher knowledge, also reveal their beliefs and conceptions about the condition of disability and the learning of students with disabilities.

I remember some who said this, At the end of class, you go to the teachers' room, and I want to talk to you. And I went and she said: oh, I notice that you have a lot of difficulty, you could have chosen a technical course, which would be easier for you. And I said more, I want an undergraduate course, I want to have a higher education course. It's been my dream since I was a child! Life interrupted me several times, but I'm here, in line, and yet to win. [...] Some teachers are prejudiced. Look at us with prejudice. And look at us like, she's stupid, she has a mental retardation. [...] And as time went by, the teachers saw what kind of I was going to learn. 'I never imagined when I saw you in the 1st period, that you would learn' [...] When I asked for help and said that the teachers had to help me, they said that this was something that the government had imposed, but that they, the teachers, were not prepared to accept this situation of this student included amid the others. (Mariana)

When it's a test, the support teacher does it with me at NUSI, but some teachers stay there with them [...] 'Oh Alex, tell me here what do you want to go to college?' and I said I wanted to go to college to work on the court that I helped there I got the balls and she said that to get the ball I didn't need to go to college. (Alex)

Look, you take a test and make a mistake, and you get to the end and talk to the teacher that you didn't do well and hear from the teacher who speaks pointing with

his index finger: Ah, you have a problem. It's very annoying to hear this from an education professional! The student has a problem in front of his classmates (Tiago)

In the study carried out by Alcoba (2008), who interviewed 32 professors from UNICAMP, it is highlighted that the success in the inclusion of students with disabilities in undergraduate courses is closely linked to the way professors perceive their differences, commit to the equality of students and adjust their pedagogical practices to meet the specific needs of these students.

In the first moments, the teachers did not want to pay attention to me. I didn't want extra attention, I wanted my rights that I wanted. They questioned, said that this was something that the government had imposed, but that they, the teachers, were not prepared to accept this situation of this student included among the others. (Mariana)

In this sense, Raskopf (2022) draws attention to the need to change pedagogical practices in the classroom when working with PwDI. It is necessary to prepare teachers to develop classes that reach all students, regardless of their characteristics, because all students can learn, each in their way and in their own time.

Thus, thinking about the educational inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities requires structural changes throughout the education system. Some of these changes are related to facilities and equipment, including teaching materials. It is necessary to consider the change in conceptions on the part of teachers about teaching and learning for people with disabilities, as well as to rethink forms of evaluation, understanding education as a right and not just a normative precept. This change in the teachers' view represents the most significant and, at the same time, the most challenging change, requiring training and continuing education to make inclusive education effective. This is because it demands from teachers a new posture in the way they teach, think about disability and get involved in the planning of educational practices that consider the needs and interests of students.

According to the reports, the non-use of SEA by teachers increases their difficulties, so that no matter how hard they try, learning is not consolidated, generating learning difficulties in them and, consequently, successive failures.

For the professional to be prepared, he needs to take preparatory courses to work with inclusion so that he can help this student because it is often very difficult, and the student ends up failing [...] He did not know inclusion because when I went to ask for help, the person thought that I was looking for privileges, and that was not what I was looking for. I wasn't looking for privileges, I wanted my rights [...] I started to have anxiety attacks. I started to panic because I didn't want to see the teacher; every time I saw her, she scared me. (James)



For Balduino (2006), thinking about inclusive education also involves considering the importance of the teacher-student relationship in the teaching-learning process, clarifying the role of regular education teachers as active subjects in this process. They should be involved in the cognitive development of students with disabilities, moving away from the mistaken idea that these students do not learn in the same way as others and, therefore, should be in specialized educational institutions.

There was also a time when we created a *little piece* that the teacher passed on, and then I managed to do it, I liked it a lot, I liked it a lot... That was the time I liked it the most, which was the little piece where she delivered the paper and then it was in a group... Then we each had a character, and then at the time, we had to record and talk about their role... It was the first time I was able to record and speak without the paper. [...] So she asked me to read and write some topics. That I understood. Then, I read and wrote some topics that I tried to understand. Then this was the adapted one. (Edson)

I think that teachers can take a closer look at this, make adjustments to activities, and do activities more focused on the language of the student who is in inclusive education. Use more images [...] Because many times you will come across activities, which the student will have difficulty with and that is why he will not perform those activities (Tiago)

The Specialized Educational Service, guaranteed as a right by the legislation in the researched institution, is still below what is legally foreseen. Some enrolled students have accessed the Specialized Educational Service, but only what the teachers strive to grant. Others have the support of classmates who are voluntarily sensitized to help them. Still others have accessed it through the courts. The students affirm that the teachers use the same teaching practices with all students and do not use different methodologies to serve them. They carry out the same evaluations, in the same time available to the other colleagues.

Brayan expressed that "My internship teacher gave me some PETS, some activities from the Minas Reference Curriculum that was so difficult to adapt, but little by little I adapted". In such situations, Edson says that:

The right jobs passed, which I did as if I could do [...] Some works she managed to adapt; others do not. The teacher would give me the work, and I would try to understand, but I couldn't understand, and then I couldn't deliver, so I decided to stop the enrollment because then I was more relieved.

Ailton also said: "But it's just activities, reviews, files, individually, right? But colleagues give a little help explaining, others don't before she managed to adapt her, she, as the summary was, she had no way to adapt the summary".

The students also reported that the monitoring and assistance by the support teacher in their academic trajectory was very important for their learning process, helping them in the organization of activities and the orientation of academic work. They report that even with the monitoring of the support professional, they still face difficulties in adapting because they were not able to adapt all the contents due to lack of specific knowledge of the discipline and even due to lack of knowledge of methodology, due to divergences with the regent teacher who does not agree with the suggestions of the support professional.

In this way, Thiago obtained other possibilities: "She managed to adapt. Instead of writing a summary, she put them as topics, then I could do it. Instead of a summary, I did it as a topic."

I had a support teacher, and she helped me a lot, and I was able to do it. The support teacher helped me with some jobs, but she couldn't adapt to others. [...] I asked the support teacher for help, and she tried to help me, but she said she didn't know how. The teacher, the other helped me more [...] That year, the support teacher was different and she helped me only more or less and then I couldn't do things [...] Then I asked the teacher to try to adapt, the support teacher, but she said that she couldn't adapt that I had to ask the course teacher to help me [...] Another student with disabilities arrived and she helped him and me. His work was expanded, but she passed on almost the same work to me and me. (Edson)

According to the participants, they take time to access the accessibility center due to a lack of guidance on how to access it and how to request services. Sometimes, only when the regent teacher detects the student's difficulty in the classroom and tells them about the existence of the accessibility center. There is no policy for the dissemination of services that can be accessed by students with disabilities from NUSI, which compromises the effectiveness of SEA in the practice of serving students. The lack of knowledge about the services means that students do not access them to meet their educational needs, increasing their difficulties and, consequently, their permanence.

## CONCLUSION

The Specialized Educational Service (SES), guaranteed as a right by the legislation in the researched institution, is still below what is legally foreseen. In the absence of a systematized policy by the institution to serve these students, each course and each teacher goes through the teaching exercise alone, doing each one differently and according to their conception.

The present study pointed out the need to create a welcoming policy for students with disabilities when they enter the university. This should start by systematizing the data

and forwarding this information to the coordinators of the undergraduate courses and NUSI, allowing them to provide support, guidance, and information to professors about the specific needs of these students. This includes planning a presentation of the university space for students with intellectual disabilities, disseminating information about the services offered by the university, and the methods for requesting them from the educational institution.

The researched educational institution, aiming at its adequacy to meet the legal requirements foreseen, performs only a few isolated affirmative actions, which make them fragile in terms of the achievement of their purposes. The legal apparatus, as well as the increase in enrollment numbers, does not translate into a synonym for educational inclusion. In addition, this study was able to bring to light the trajectories of people with intellectual disabilities within a public university, listening to their experiences, satisfactions, dreams, and difficulties, but mainly pointing out the possibilities of growth and evolution in the construction of a university that is more accessible and open to diversity.

## REFERENCES

1. Alcoba, S. de A. C. (2008). *\*Strangers in the nest: The inclusion of students with disabilities at Unicamp\** [Doctoral dissertation, State University of Campinas]. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12733/1607156>
2. Balduino, M. M. de M. (2006). *\*School inclusion of students with mental disabilities: With the word of teachers\** [Unpublished manuscript, University of Brasília]. <http://repositorio.unb.br/handle/10482/2027>
3. Bauer, M. W., & Gaskell, G. (2002). *\*Qualitative research with text, image and sound: A practical manual\** (P. A. Guareschi, Trans., 2nd ed.). Vozes. (Original work published 2002)
4. Brazil. Ministry of Education. Secretariat of Special Education. (2008). *\*National policy on special education from the perspective of inclusive education\**. <http://portal.mec.gov.br/seesp/arquivos/pdf/politica.pdf>
5. Carvalho, C. L. C. de. (2015). *\*People with disabilities in higher education: Students' perceptions\** [Master's dissertation, University of São Paulo]. <https://doi.org/10.11606/D.12.2015.tde-04092015-104118>
6. Dainez, D., & Smolka, A. L. B. (2019). The social function of the school under discussion, from the perspective of inclusive education. *\*Education and Research, 45\**, e187853. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1678-4634201945187853>
7. Damasceno, N. F. P., Malvezzi, E., Sales, C. de M., & Sales, A. (2018). Narrative as an alternative in health research. *\*Interface - Communication, Health, Education, 22\**(64), 133–140. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1807-57622016.0815>
8. Farias, E. R. S. de. (2017). *\*The inclusion of people with disabilities and special educational needs in regular education: Voices and meanings\** [Doctoral dissertation, State University of Ponta Grossa]. <https://tede2.uepg.br/jspui/bitstream/prefix/1236/1/Elizabeth%20Regina%20S%20Farias.pdf>
9. Guimarães, C. A. S. A. (2014). The intersection between race and poverty in the school trajectory of young black people. *\*Script. UNOESC\**, 515–541.
10. Jovchelovitch, S., & Bauer, M. W. (2002). Narrative interview. In M. W. Bauer & G. Gaskell (Eds.), *\*Qualitative research with text, image and sound: A practical manual\** (P. A. Guareschi, Trans., 2nd ed., pp. [page range]). Vozes.
11. Kassir, M. de C. M. (2000). Marks of social history in the discourse of a subject: A contribution to the discussion about the social constitution of the person with disabilities. *\*CEDES Notebooks, 20\**(50), 41–54. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0101-32622000000100004>

12. Muylaert, C. J., Sarubbi Jr., V., Gallo, P. R., Rolim Neto, M. L., & Reis, A. O. A. (2014). Narrative interviews: An important resource in qualitative research. \*Revista da Escola de Enfermagem da USP, 48\*(Special Issue 2), 184–189. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0080-623420140000800027>
13. Pereira, L. P., Wetzel, C., Pavani, F. M., Olschowsky, A., Moraes, B. M., & Klein, E. (2021). Narrative interview with homeless people with mental disorders: Experience report. \*Anna Nery School, 25\*(3), e20200017. <https://doi.org/10.1590/2177-9465-EAN-2020-0017>
14. Raskopf, M. (2022). \*Intellectual disability and the necessary supports in the expansion of skills for autonomy\* [Unpublished manuscript, Federal University of Santa Maria]. <http://repositorio.ufsm.br/handle/1/26943>
15. Silva, I. F. da, & Redig, A. G. (2021). University experience of students with intellectual disabilities and/or autism at the State University of Rio de Janeiro. \*Education, Society & Cultures, (58)\*, 97–115. <https://doi.org/10.24840/esc.vi58.143>
16. State University of Montes Claros. (2017). \*Institutional Development Plan (PDI) of the State University of Montes Claros (Unimontes), 2016-2020 term\*. <https://unimontes.br/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/PDI-2017-2021.pdf>
17. State University of Montes Claros - Teaching, Research and Extension Council. (2018). \*Resolution No. 015 - CEPEX/2018. Constitutes a Special Commission to analyze a draft proposal that establishes criteria for the hiring of Assistant Teachers of Special Education at Unimontes\*.