OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS OF INCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN BRAZILIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT
Inclusive education in higher education is a topic of increasing importance. Inclusion is essential to reduce educational inequalities, ensuring not only access, but also the permanence of students, promoting equity and social justice. Thus, this study carried out an analysis of the "Overview of the process of inclusion of people with disabilities in Brazilian higher education", the objective of this research is to understand the challenges that higher education has been facing to guarantee these rights and meet the specific needs of students with disabilities. The methodology used was an integrative review that analyzed the relevant academic publications on inclusive education in higher education, available in the databases of the Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations and Scientific Electronic Library Online, from 2014 to 2024. The qualitative results revealed that the inclusion process is still in its early stages, indicating the need to reform inclusion policies in higher education, invest in the continuous training of teachers, improve university infrastructure and implement financial support actions for students with disabilities, aiming to provide the necessary resources to overcome the limitations of disability. It was concluded that it is necessary to monitor more closely the practical implementation of inclusion policies.

Keywords: Inclusion policies. Higher education. Integrative review.

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INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education in higher education goes beyond the academic realm, encompassing student life and the university community. Support programs, extracurricular activities, and partnerships with external organizations promote student inclusion (Bohnert, 2017). This approach is not just about access, but a philosophy that values diversity as a pillar of contemporary education. Inclusive environments promote equal opportunities and contribute to a more just and democratic society (Gotelipe, 2022).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, instituted by the United Nations (UN) in 1948, represents a historic milestone in the defense and promotion of the fundamental rights of all human beings. Among the member countries that signed the declaration is Brazil, which has committed itself to the principles established therein, including the right to education, as expressed in article XXVI, § 1: "Everyone has the right to education" (Souza, 2020).

Global movements have fought for education to be recognized as a universal right, encompassing the right to teach, learn and ensure access for all, regardless of their conditions (Rivero; Gilleta, 2019). In Brazil, several laws and decrees guarantee the access and permanence of people with disabilities (PwD) in higher education (Fernandes; Costa, 2015). The 1988 Constitution enshrines education as a right of all and a duty of the State, ensuring equal conditions for access and permanence in the educational space (Brasil, 1988).

In addition, the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB), Law No. 9,394/1996, establishes as a fundamental principle the respect for diversity and equal educational opportunities. It provides for the provision of special education, preferably in the regular school system, and determines that higher education institutions must promote measures to eliminate barriers that hinder the access and participation of people with disabilities (Brasil, 1996).

Also in the 1990s, international documents such as the World Declaration of Education for All (1990) and the Salamanca Declaration (1994) influenced inclusive education policies in Brazil, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and valuing the diversity of abilities and needs of students (Brasil, 1990).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Decree No. 5,773, of May 9, 2006, stands out, which appoints to higher education institutions with the responsibility of organizing their curricular structure in order to provide teacher training that contemplates

attention to diversity (Brasil, 2006). As Wagner (2009) points out, the teaching profession demands a constant review of its meaning as the paradigmatic transition scenario is faced.

In this context, social representations and the implementation of inclusive actions become crucial. This means that higher education institutions must develop curricula that consider the individual needs and characteristics of all students, including those with disabilities or special needs.

This commitment to diversity and inclusion, evidenced by the National Plan for Human Rights Education launched in 2007 by the Special Secretariat for Human Rights, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Brazil, 2007), aims to promote human rights in education. addressing topics about people with disabilities in the basic curriculum to sensitize students about diversity and inclusion (Brasil, 2007).

These joint initiatives reflect a collective effort to ensure inclusive and diversity-respectful education at all levels of education in Brazil. In consonance, Reis, Borges, and Wagner (2023) state that the human being is unique in all spheres - intellectual, emotional, family, spiritual, social, among others. This individuality implies specific needs in the school teaching-learning process, suggesting that effective inclusion depends on a multifaceted and collaborative commitment between public policies, institutions and society.

The plan also proposes affirmative actions to ensure the access and permanence of people with disabilities in higher education, such as scholarships, curricular adaptations and pedagogical support, eliminating barriers to the full participation of these students (Brasil, 2007).

Further ahead is the achievement of Law No. 13,146/2015, known as the Brazilian Law for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (Statute of Persons with Disabilities), which reinforces the right to inclusive education and establishes specific measures to ensure the accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities in higher education (Brasil, 2015).

Within this scenario of rights prescribed in the form of law, the objective of this research is to understand the challenges that higher education has been facing to guarantee these rights and meet the specific needs of students with disabilities.

To achieve the proposal, it was methodologically decided to carry out an integrative bibliographic review. It is an approach that allows the synthesis of knowledge on a specific topic based on the analysis of previously published studies in a reliable database.

This type of review is widely used in academic research to evaluate, critique, and integrate the findings of multiple studies, providing a broader and deeper understanding of the topic investigated. Botelho, Cunha and Macedo (2011) describe integrative review as a method structured in six stages, which include:

1. Choice of the research theme and formulation of the research question, addressing issues pertinent to the theme;
2. Establishment of criteria for inclusion or exclusion of texts during the search;
3. Identification of the selected studies;
4. Categorization of the studies selected in the previous stage;
5. Analysis and interpretation of the results obtained;
6. Presentation of the review carried out, together with the synthesis of the results achieved (*apud* Carvalho, 2020, p. 45).

Thorough completion of all steps was crucial to ensure the legitimacy and accuracy of the results in the review (Kramm, 2019). Each phase ensured the excellence of the analysis, provided significant *insights* into the Brazilian university scenario.

Questions addressed in the text are: have the legislation and inclusion policies been sufficient to ensure equity in the access of students with disabilities to higher education in Brazil? What socioeconomic and cultural barriers hinder the accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities in universities? How does inclusion reduce educational inequalities?

The investigation sought to provide evidence of answers to these complex questions, following the detailed methodology, the categories of analysis, the results and the final considerations.

RESEARCH METHOD

To meet the objective of this research, a qualitative approach was adopted, employing an integrative review that allowed an in-depth analysis of relevant academic publications on the subject of inclusive education in higher education. A search was carried out in the databases of the Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations *(*BDTD), with the following descriptors; "Higher Education" AND "Brazil" AND "Inclusion Policies" AND "Disability". The search period was from 2014 – 2024. The objective of using descriptors and a ten-year search period is to ensure the inclusion of the most recent and relevant

research for the field, with emphasis on current legislation, such as that established by the Ministry of Education (2007).

This legislation addresses the creation and implementation of specific policies and programs, such as scholarships, curricular adaptations, and pedagogical support, aiming to eliminate the barriers that prevent the full participation of students in higher education. In addition to the texts arising from the integrative review, the legislation that regulates inclusive education in Brazilian higher education was also analyzed, in addition to investigations on government initiatives inherent to the theme, through consultations with the Ministry of Education.

This methodology provided a comprehensive understanding of the current trends, perspectives and debates related to inclusive education in higher education, underpinning the analyses and discussions presented in this study. After selecting the appropriate descriptors and defining the search period, the BDTD search was performed, resulting in the retrieval of 25 studies. In order to expand the research, a search was also carried out in the Scientific *Electronic Library Online* (SCIELO) database, using the same descriptors and Boolean operators. However, no results were found and so it was decided to analyze the results available in the BDTD.

Next, the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the studies were defined. The included studies address inclusion policies aimed at students with disabilities enrolled in higher education, within the period from 2014 to 2024, written in Portuguese, with open access containing the text in full, classified within the area of education. The excluded studies were those that did not deal with policies for the inclusion of people with disabilities at other levels of education, outside the scope of higher education, outside the mentioned period, published in areas other than education, and that did not have open access and complete texts for reading.

Of the 25 studies retrieved, 19 were selected for analysis because they met the inclusion criteria; six studies were excluded because they did not meet the established criteria, including two duplicate studies; a study on affirmation policies; and three specific studies on teaching practices, without dealing with inclusion policies. Thus, the analysis was conducted based on the 19 studies that met the requirements of the research, allowing an evaluation focused on inclusion policies in higher education.

Table 1 – Descriptors and results

Descriptors	Selected results	Results analyzed
"Higher Education" AND "Brazil" AND "Inclusion Policies" AND "Disability"	25	19

Source: Prepared by the authors, 2024.

The selected studies were presented in a clear and succinct manner, using a table with year of publication, type of study, title, author, university and repository. This approach, suggested by Souza, Silva and Carvalho (2010), is effective for communicating the results of integrative reviews. The practical and theoretical implications, the limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research were also considered.

Table 2 - Selected dissertations and theses

No.	Year/ Type	Title	Author	Repository
E1	2014 Dissertation	A challenge between the ideal and the real: the implementation of educational inclusion actions and the Academic Center in the Agreste	Ianara Alves de ALMEIDA	Federal University of Pernambuco. https://repositorio.ufpe.br/handle/123456789/11781
E2	2015 Thesis	Inclusion of people with disabilities in higher education: Social Representations that produce meanings and (re)design scenarios	Denise de Oliveira ALVES	University of Brasilia. Faculty of Education. http://icts.unb.br/jspui/handle/10482/19100
E3	2015 Thesis	Inclusion of students with disabilities at the State University of Western Paraná – UNIOESTE	Eliane Pinto de GÓES	State University of Rio de Janeiro https://www.bdtd.uerj.br:8443/handle/1/14781
E4	2016 Dissertation	The policy of inclusive education in higher education institutions in the southern region of Santa Catarina	Júlia Graziela Della JUSTINA	University of Southern Santa Catarina https://repositorio.animaeducacao.com.br/handle/ANIMA/3521
E5	2016 Dissertation	Social representations of policies for the inclusion of students with disabilities in higher education: a study with professors from a University in Southern Brazil	Lucélia PERON	Federal University of the Southern Borderhttps://rd.uffs.edu.br/handle/prefix/659
E6	2016 Dissertation	Access and permanence in higher education – strategies and actions of the Division of Accessibility and Affirmative Actions/ DIAF at UFMS	Leila Lima de Souza SANTANA	Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul https://repositorio.ufms.br/handle/123456789/2840
E7	2018 Dissertation	Inclusive policies and the training of the Libras Interpreter Translator (TILS) working in Higher Education	Carlene da Penha SANTOS	Federal University of Paraíba https://repositorio.ufpb.br/jspui/handle/123456789/14699?locale=pt_BR
EE8	2019 Dissertation	Right to higher education for people with disabilities in Brazil and Uruguay: a comparative study in the decade of inclusion – 2006-2016	Manoel Mendes AMORIM	University of Brasilia http://www.realp.unb.br/jspui/handle/10482/36820

EE9	2019 Dissertation	Attitudinal and pedagogical accessibility in higher education: paths for the inclusion of students with disabilities in the university	Jôse Storniolo BRAZIL	Federal University of Pampa https://dspace.unipampa.edu.br/handle/riu/4903
EE10	2019 Dissertation	Inclusion and accessibility in higher education under the focus of federal public policies: The Program to include	Tatiana Gonçalves MUZI	Fundação Getúlio Vargas https://repositorio.fgv.br/items/edba2273-8a0b-4003-9548-ec7584855894
EE11	2020 Dissertation	Education of people with disabilities as a human right: conditions of access and permanence: in the Graduate Programs of the Federal University of Paraíba	Luzia da Trindade SOUZA	Federal University of Paraíba https://repositorio.ufpb.br/jspui/handle/123456789/20478?locale=pt_BR
EE12	2020 Dissertation	Sensory accessibility for access to public higher education by people with disabilities: an analysis of the Pedagogical Projects of the courses within the scope of CAPES and UAB	Weslei Oki de AGUIAR	Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul https://lume.ufrgs.br/handle/10183/218106
EE13	2021 Dissertation	Inclusion and permanence at the University of Brasilia: challenge for undergraduate students with disabilities	Luciana Piccini Moreira LIMA	University of Brasilia http://www.realp.unb.br/jspui/bitstream/10482/41489/1/2021_LucianaPicciniMoreiraLima.pdf
EE14	2021 Dissertation	Inclusion in higher education? perceptions of students with disabilities at the Federal University of Campina Grande – Campina Grande Campus	Muriel Paulino COSTA	Federal University of Campina Grande https://repositorio.ufpb.br/jspui/handle/123456789/20907?locale=pt_BR
EE15	2021 Dissertation	Inclusion of people with disabilities in higher education: UFPB's inclusion and accessibility committee for access and permanence	Paulino Joaquim da SILVA NETO	Federal University of Paraíba https://repositorio.ufpb.br/jspui/handle/123456789/22374?locale=pt_BR
EE16	2021 Thesis	Inclusion in Higher Education: new fabrics for the field of university teaching	Gracy Kelly Andrade P. OLIVEIRA	Federal University of Bahia https://repositorio.ufba.br/handle/ri/34788
EE17	2022 Dissertation	From inclusion to conclusion: a quantitative analysis of the academic situation of students with disabilities at UFPel	Aline dos Santos PEREIRA	Federal University of Pelotashttps://guaiaca.ufpel.edu.br/handle/prefix/9489?locale-attribute=pt_BR
EE18	2022 Thesis	Teaching and inclusion of students with disabilities at the State University of Ceará (UECE)	Tarcileide Maria C. BEZERRA	Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte https://repositorio.ufrn.br/handle/123456789/48538
EE19	2023 Dissertation	Challenges to inclusive teaching practices at the Federal Institute of Paraíba	Carina Alessandra de NÓBREGA	Federal University of Paraíbahttps://repositorio.ufpb.br/jspui/handle/123456789/29848

Source: Prepared by the authors, 2024. Note: The letter **"E"** is used accompanied by a number to refer to the studies, making reading practical.

The 15 dissertations and the four theses analyzed reveal challenges and advances, highlighting the diversity of approaches and institutional contexts. From international

comparisons, such as between Brazil and Uruguay (Amorim, 2019), to national perceptions (Justina, 2016), research shows a gap between idealized policies and real practices, highlighting the need for improvements in physical, attitudinal, and pedagogical accessibility.

In addition, they emphasize the importance of institutional adaptations, teacher training and continuous support to ensure access, permanence and academic success of students with disabilities.

CATEGORIES OF ANALYSIS

For a thorough and coherent analysis, it was essential to establish classifications based on criteria specific to the scope of the study. These classifications were prepared in accordance with Decree No. 5,773, of May 9, 2006, which deals with the exercise of the functions of regulation, supervision and evaluation of higher education institutions and undergraduate and sequential higher education courses in the federal education system.

Decree No. 5,773, of May 9, 2006, addresses the issue of accessibility in the context of the regulation, supervision and evaluation of higher education institutions and undergraduate and sequential higher education courses in the federal education system. It establishes guidelines and criteria for the provision of inclusive education, covering aspects of architectural, communicative, methodological, instrumental, programmatic and attitudinal accessibility.

This approach aims to ensure that higher education institutions are prepared to meet the needs of all students, including those with disabilities or special needs, promoting equal opportunities and inclusion in the academic environment. Therefore, the categories of analysis were defined *a priori* as follows:

a) **Infrastructure, accessibility and resources:** availability of financial and physical resources, such as ramps, elevators, accessible bathrooms and adapted classrooms, among other aspects, that ensure accessibility for students with disabilities.

b) **Academic and pedagogical support:** academic support programs offered to students with disabilities, such as tutors, educational counselors, and sign language interpreters, as well as curricular adaptations and teaching methods that promote inclusion and accessibility for this audience.

c) **Institutional legislation and policies**: evaluation of national laws and regulations regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in higher education, as well as analysis of universities' institutional policies related to accessibility and inclusion.

The next step was to analyze in detail the data collected in each category, seeking to identify gaps, challenges, and good practices. The data were organized in a table to accurately present the frequency of the categories, offering a clear synthesis of the information collected.

Table 3 – Summary analysis matrix

Study	A-Infrastructure, accessibility and resources	B-Academic and pedagogical support	C-Legislation and institutional policies
E1	X	X	X
E2	X	X	X
E3	X	X	X
E4	X	X	X
E5	X	X	X
E6	X	X	X
E7	X	X	X
E8	X	X	X
E9	X	X	X
E10	X	X	X
E11	X	X	X
E12	X	X	X
E13	X	X	X
E14	X	X	X
E15	X	X	X
E16	X	X	X
E17	X	X	X
E18	X	X	X
E19	X	X	X

Source: Prepared by the authors (2024), based on Botelho, Cunha and Macedo (2011).

When analysing category A) "**Infrastructure, accessibility and resources**", all studies highlighted architectural, attitudinal, physical and systemic barriers. Silva Neto (2021) (E15) revealed considerable challenges in accessing and admitting students with disabilities to higher education, especially due to the limited physical and architectural accessibility of the facilities. Nóbrega (2023) (E19) emphasized the need for resources, assistive technologies, and adapted environments to ensure equal student participation. Pereira (2022) (E17) mentioned structural, social, and cultural obstacles in accessing university for students with disabilities.

Justina (2016) (E4), in her research on inclusion policies in the southern region of Santa Catarina, observed the institutions' efforts to meet the needs of students, with

Inclusive Education programs, multifunctional classrooms and specific service centers. These efforts demonstrate a growing commitment to promoting equity in the educational environment, although challenges persist in effectively implementing these policies and ensuring universal and inclusive access to higher education.

The study (E4) highlights several programs to support university students, such as the Inclusive Education Program, operated in the Multifunctional Learning Room (SAMA). SAMA has four centers: Care for Persons with Disabilities, Psychopedagogical Care, Economic Needs and Ethnic-Racial, Afro-Brazilian, Indigenous and Minority Studies. There is also the Scholarship and Financing Program, including the Scholarship Program of the Barriga Verde University Center (UNIBAVE), aimed at the access and permanence of students. The institutions have the Pedagogical Innovation Program Diagnose and Intervene with the National Student Performance Exam (ENADE), seeking to improve the teaching of undergraduate courses.

It is crucial to question whether these programs address all dimensions of inclusion in an appropriate and equitable manner, including socio-economic and ethnic-racial aspects, and whether they receive sufficient long-term support and funding. Although they represent advances, a critical analysis is essential to evaluate their effectiveness and promote continuous improvements towards inclusive and equitable education. Questions arise as to why all universities are not implementing these programs – lack of incentive, internal policies, or lack of interest?

Pereira (2022) (E17) identified significant challenges at the Federal University of Pelotas (UFPel) in fully meeting the needs of students with disabilities, including lack of adequacy of spaces and lack of awareness in the university community. In addition to access, the survey highlights the importance of ensuring the permanence and academic success of students with disabilities. The researcher emphasizes the need for improvements in the institutional environment of UFPel to promote inclusive and egalitarian higher education for all students.

The studies (E2, E4, E9, E11, E13, E14 and E17) highlight the importance of overcoming physical and structural barriers to ensure equitable access to education, especially for vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities. However, it is essential to critically evaluate the concrete actions taken to address these obstacles. Investments in infrastructure and assistive technology are crucial, but it is equally important to address the attitudinal and systemic barriers that perpetuate exclusion. Solving these challenges

requires a holistic and coordinated approach, which includes not only material investments but also cultural and political changes.

In addition, it is crucial to combat the socioeconomic inequalities that persist, preventing children and young people from poorer families from having equal access to education. This requires effective public policies, such as scholarship programs, free school transportation, among other actions that promote opportunities for success (Paz-Maldonado, 2021).

Category B) **"Academic and pedagogical support"** is present in all the studies analyzed and plays a crucial role in promoting inclusive education in higher education. Its objective is to verify whether there are actions by institutions to support students with disabilities, ensuring not only their entry, but also their permanence and successful completion of the courses. However, a worrying gap was evidenced in the studies: the absence of financial incentive programs to subsidize the individual needs of these students.

For example, the implementation of specific scholarships for students with disabilities, which could cover expenses such as adapted teaching materials, assistive technologies, accessible transportation, and specialized support, is an essential measure that is still absent in most institutions. These financial support programs would be instrumental in removing economic barriers and providing a level playing field for all students to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered.

Lima (2021) (E13) reveals that, at the University of Brasília (UnB), students with disabilities face challenges due to the lack of adequate financial support. Although UnB is committed to adaptations to ensure accessibility, financial support is considered insufficient, which can negatively affect the academic experience and the completion of studies. Therefore, the need to improve the effectiveness and consistency of actions is highlighted, as well as to make additional investments to ensure accessibility and permanence under humanized conditions.

In the context of graduate studies, Souza (2020) (E11) states that, at the Federal University of Paraíba, financial support for students with disabilities is insufficient and is still in its early stages. Although quota policies facilitate access, it is necessary to implement not only admission actions, but also measures that guarantee permanence and promote tools and means to meet the specific needs of each university student with disabilities. The absence of specific funds for accessibility and inclusion policies in graduate studies is a

significant limitation. This lack not only creates additional barriers, but also highlights the failure of institutions to ensure equal access to higher education, limiting the academic and professional potential of these citizens.

Social and economic barriers, often invisible, make it difficult for marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities, to access and participate in various areas of life. In education, lack of financial resources can prevent access to adaptive technologies and resources. Low-income families face difficulties with additional costs, such as transportation and adapted materials. Institutions in underserved areas also suffer from a lack of resources and infrastructure, hindering inclusive practices and adequate accommodations for university students with disabilities.

In addition to socioeconomic barriers, cultural barriers also play a crucial role in implementing accessibility and inclusion. Attitudes and beliefs rooted in the culture can perpetuate stigmas and prejudices towards people with disabilities, which can lead to discrimination and exclusion in educational and social settings (Poker; Valentine; Garla, 2018).

Furthermore, the lack of representation and invisibility of people with disabilities in the media, popular culture, and public spaces can contribute to the perpetuation of negative and limited stereotypes about their abilities and potentials. This can influence the way these people are treated and perceived in society, creating additional barriers to their full inclusion and participation (Bazon *et al.*, 2018).

To overcome these socioeconomic and cultural barriers (E5, E9, E11, E17 and E18), a joint and coordinated effort of all sectors of society is needed. This includes the implementation of public policies that promote equal opportunities and equitable access to education, as well as actions to raise awareness and sensitization on disability-related issues (Tomelin *et al.*, 2018).

However (E1, E3, E4, E9, E10, E15 and E16), it is essential to invest in continuing education and professional development programs for educators, health professionals, community leaders and other key actors, aiming to promote a culture of inclusion and respect for diversity. This can include training on inclusive pedagogical practices, raising awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities, and promoting inclusive language and communication (Breitenbach; Honnef; Costas, 2016).

Another important strategy is to promote the active participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of social and political life, ensuring that they have a voice and

representation in decision-making processes that affect their lives. This can include creating inclusive and accessible spaces for the participation of people with disabilities in educational institutions, civil society organizations, and government agencies (Fernandes; Moreira, 2017).

From this perspective (E2, E3, E4, E6, E8, E10, E12 and E16), socioeconomic and cultural barriers represent significant challenges for the implementation of accessibility and inclusion, but it is possible to overcome them through coordinated and committed actions by all sectors of society. By working together to eliminate these barriers, one can build a more inclusive, equitable, and welcoming society for all people, regardless of their abilities and abilities (Silva, 2018).

It was found that in category 3)**"Legislation and institutional policies"** appeared in 100% of the studies analyzed. Peron's (2016) (E5) specific critiques of policies for the inclusion of students with disabilities in higher education highlight both the progress made and the persistent challenges. Although these policies have generated reflections in the university community on the rights of people with disabilities, difficulties still persist in the search for effective solutions, due to the lack of resources and continuous training. This results in an inclusion that is often more apparent than effective, evidencing a gap between discourse and practice. Almeida (2014) (E1) complements this criticism by pointing out the discrepancy between the rhetoric of inclusion at the Agreste Academic Center and the lack of concrete actions, highlighting the urgency of creating a truly inclusive university environment.

Costa (2021) (E14) emphasizes the importance of reflecting on the effective implementation of inclusion policies, confronting the discrepancy between enrollment of students with disabilities and population estimates. It highlights the need to consider legal and accessibility aspects to promote genuine inclusion in higher education. This criticism is complemented by Lima (2021) (E13), who emphasizes the importance of listening to the voice of students with disabilities themselves to improve existing policies. Through this connection between points of view, it is perceived that current policies are still unable to guarantee effective inclusion and that there is a clear demand for improvements to ensure the full and equal participation of students with disabilities in the university environment.

Nóbrega (2023) (E19) highlights the State's recognition of guaranteeing the access and rights of people with disabilities through public policies, such as the statute of persons with disabilities, quota policies, and the Incluir program. Meanwhile, Santos (2018) (E7)

points out the persistent difficulties faced by people with disabilities in accessing basic services, underscoring the need for an intersectional approach in the management of public policies to ensure true inclusion. The author emphasizes the importance of guaranteeing the right to difference within equal rights, promoting access and permanence in education for all.

On the other hand, Alves (2015) (E2) highlights the efforts of current policies to ensure the enrollment of people with disabilities in regular and higher education, promoting Inclusive Education. Despite the advances, there are still significant challenges to ensuring the inclusion and academic success of students with disabilities. These perspectives highlight the continuous need for review and improvement of educational policies to ensure effective inclusion.

It is important to emphasize that the legislation regulating inclusive education in higher education is constantly evolving, always seeking to adapt to the demands and challenges present in society. However, its effectiveness depends not only on the existence of laws and regulations, but also on the effective implementation and continuous monitoring by educational institutions and bodies responsible for overseeing and promoting educational inclusion (Guimarães; Borges; Petten, 2021).

Finally, (E1, E4, E5, E7, E10, E15, and E16), it is crucial that educational policies continue to evolve and adapt to the demands of society. The effectiveness of inclusive education legislation in higher education depends not only on the existence of laws, but also on their effective implementation and continuous monitoring. Only in this way is it possible to guarantee an effectively inclusive education, which promotes equal opportunities for all university students, regardless of their abilities or special needs.

RESULTS

The results obtained through a critical analysis are presented below, highlighting the best practices and obstacles to be overcome to promote an inclusive and equitable academic environment.

By adopting an inclusive approach, universities are committed not only to the teaching of academic content, but also to the integral development of each subject, seeking to promote their personal growth, satisfaction and social insertion. This implies not only adapting the physical environment and pedagogical resources, but also creating an

academic culture that celebrates diversity and promotes mutual respect, collaboration, and solidarity among all members of the educational community (Fernandes; Costa, 2015).

In this sense, Inclusive Education is not only a matter of access to or compliance with legislation, it is also an educational philosophy that permeates all dimensions of university life (Oliveira; Bracken; Nakano, 2021). Since the 1990s, Brazil has been adopting educational policies aimed at expanding access for people with disabilities to undergraduate courses throughout the country.

Inspired by more humanized approaches and in line with international literature on inclusive education, these policies aim not only to guarantee the physical access of PwD to higher education institutions, but also to promote a true transformation in culture and educational practices, valuing otherness, diversity and coexistence with the different (Souza, 2020).

This perspective recognizes that inclusion is not limited to the issue of physical or cognitive disabilities alone, but encompasses a broader spectrum of diversities, including ethnic, cultural, religious, gender, and sexual orientation differences. According to the Ministry of Education (Brasil, 2007), in higher education, the effectiveness of special education requires the implementation of comprehensive and coordinated actions whose objective is to ensure the access, permanence and full participation of students with special needs. These actions are essential to ensure that all students, regardless of their individual conditions, have the opportunity to fully enjoy their academic experience.

One of the main areas of action in the promotion of special education in higher education is the guarantee of accessibility. This involves planning and organizing resources and services that promote architectural accessibility, making the physical environments of educational institutions suitable and accessible for all students. Access ramps, elevators, adapted bathrooms and adequate signage are some of the measures that can be adopted to ensure accessibility in the physical facilities of universities and colleges (Brasil, 2007).

In addition, accessibility also extends beyond the physical environment, encompassing communications, information systems, and teaching and pedagogical materials used in higher education. This means that selection processes, classes, research and extension activities, as well as study and evaluation materials, must be made available in an accessible way to all university students, regardless of their individual needs (Brasil, 2007).

In this sense, it is essential that higher education institutions adopt inclusive policies and practices that ensure the accessibility and adaptation of the resources and services offered. This may include the provision of Brazilian Sign Language (LIBRAS) interpreters for deaf students, the use of assistive technologies for students with visual or motor impairments, and the provision of pedagogical support and individualized support for students with specific learning disabilities (Guimarães; Borges; Petten, 2021).

In addition, it is important that higher education institutions promote awareness and continuing education of teachers and other professionals to deal adequately and inclusively with the diversity of needs of university students. This may involve, in addition to continuing education programs, other activities aimed at promoting an institutional culture of inclusion and appreciation of diversity (Rivero; Gilleta, 2019).

The main objective of the National Policy on Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education is to promote adequate responses to the special educational needs of students with disabilities, ensuring the transversality of special education from early childhood education to higher education (Brasil, 2007).

According to Martins, Melo and Martins (2021), in the Brazilian context, the access and permanence of students with disabilities in higher education are guaranteed by specific policies and legislation, as well as by a budget allocated to actions that promote and ensure this inclusion in federal public universities. However, despite these legal advances, many higher education institutions have not yet been able to effectively implement what is required by law, resulting in significant obstacles to the full inclusion of these students.

Although significant advances have been made in inclusive policies in Brazilian higher education, there are still challenges to be overcome to ensure that such guidelines are implemented comprehensively in all universities. A crucial obstacle is the adequacy of pedagogical practices for students with disabilities. Unlike basic education, higher education still lacks sufficient structures and supports to provide a genuinely inclusive and equitable academic experience (Martins; Melo; Martins, 2021).

The lack of investment in accessibility resources, such as assistive technologies and specialized professionals, is a challenge for the inclusion of students with disabilities in higher education. They often face physical, communicational, and pedagogical barriers that limit their access to knowledge and participation in academic life (Martins; Melo; Martins, 2021). A joint effort by government, educational institutions, civil society, and students is needed to overcome these challenges and create a higher education that is truly inclusive

and accessible to all, in line with the principles of equal opportunities and respect for human rights (Breitenbach; Honnef; Costas, 2016).

According to the Ministry of Education (Brasil, 2007), in higher education, specialized educational services (SES) are crucial for the inclusion and academic success of students with special educational needs. Specialized professionals offer support tailored to the individual needs of students.

This includes professionals such as the support teacher, psychopedagogues, Libras interpreters and assistive resource technologists, who play essential roles in individualized support for students with special educational needs. While the support teacher offers direct assistance in the student's areas of difficulty, assisting in the understanding of the content and the development of specific skills, the psychopedagogue evaluates the learning difficulties and implements strategies to overcome them. The Libras interpreter facilitates communication between deaf and hearing students, while the assistive resources technologist guides the use of devices and *software* to access academic content. These professionals and services are crucial to promote inclusion and ensure equal opportunities in the academic environment (Fernandes; Costa, 2015).

In addition, the AEE covers qualified professionals in guidance and mobility, who help visually impaired students in locomotion and adaptation to the academic environment. Professionals specialized in autonomous living activities offer support for the development of daily skills necessary for the autonomy of students with disabilities (Fernandes; Costa, 2015).

Alternative communication is also an area addressed by specialized educational service, used to help students with difficulties in verbal communication. These professionals can use resources such as symbols, communication boards and electronic devices to facilitate the interaction and expression of students (Guimarães; Borges; Petten, 2021).

In addition, this educational support involves specialists in the development of mental skills, such as memory and reasoning, and curriculum enrichment programs are offered to stimulate academic growth (Fernandes; Costa, 2015). The adaptation of pedagogical materials is essential, including optical resources and assistive technology for different needs (Brasil, 2007). In short, specialized service in higher education aims to provide personalized support to students with disabilities, promoting inclusion and academic success.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The present study addressed the "Overview of the process of inclusion of people with disabilities in Brazilian Higher Education", highlighting challenges and advances faced by institutions. We started from the initial questions: do inclusion laws and policies ensure equity in access to higher education in Brazil? Given the diversity of contexts and resources, is it necessary to adapt policies for effective implementation? What socioeconomic and cultural barriers hinder accessibility and inclusion in universities? How does inclusion reduce educational inequalities?

It is concluded that, despite significant advances in policies and legislation to ensure access and permanence of students with disabilities in universities, there are still many challenges to be overcome. Although Brazil has a solid legal basis to promote inclusion, these legislations are relatively recent and are still in the process of being implemented in most universities.

It is an emerging process that demands familiarity with the laws and the construction of procedures for their implementation. This movement is dynamic and challenging, the main obstacles identified include the lack of adequate infrastructure and sufficient resources, such as assistive technologies and qualified professionals, to meet the specific needs of students with disabilities.

In addition, the lack of awareness and training of teachers and other professionals also represents a significant challenge. It is essential that everyone in the educational process is prepared to deal inclusively with the diversity of needs of university students, ensuring the necessary support for their full academic potential. Another relevant point is the need to strengthen pedagogical guidelines aimed at students with disabilities in higher education. While in basic education there is a broader structure of services and resources, in higher education these guidelines are still incipient.

It is crucial for universities to develop inclusive policies and practices to ensure accessibility and adaptation of the resources and services offered. The promotion of inclusive education in higher education is the responsibility of all those involved – educational institutions, government, civil society and students. Only through a joint effort will it be possible to overcome obstacles and build inclusive, accessible and equitable higher education.

It is recommended that future studies be carried out to explore more deeply: monitoring and evaluation of inclusion policies; impact of continuing education of teachers

in the promotion of inclusive practices; availability and use of assistive technologies in Brazilian universities; effectiveness of financial support programmes for students with disabilities; and strategies to promote an institutional culture that values diversity and inclusion, combating attitudinal and cultural barriers.

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