

THE TRAJECTORY OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN BRAZIL: FROM EXCLUSION TO INCLUSION

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Avaetê de Lunetta and Rodrigues Guerra¹, Francisco Pires de Castro Júnior², Orivaldo da Silva Lacerda Júnior³, Emanuella Silveira Vasconcelos⁴, Micah Ambrósio dos Santos⁵, Vânia Gomes de Souza⁶, Gabriel Antonio Ogaya Joerke⁷, Jonael Macedo Nascimento⁸, Alessandra Barboza Barros Almeida⁹

ABSTRACT

Special Education has gained increasing prominence in the last two decades as a result of the inclusive education movement, although it has also been the object of criticism due to its exclusivity and the lack of promotion of coexistence between children with special needs and others. The concept of "special education" refers to both an area of knowledge and a professional field. In general, special education encompasses teaching and learning phenomena that have not been addressed by the regular education system, although they have gained relevance in recent years due to the inclusive movement. The purpose of this study is to encourage the State, educational institutions, educators and society as a whole to mobilize to ensure that Special Education in Brazil becomes truly inclusive. The methodological approach employed in this research will be based on bibliographic analysis, carried out through the main academic platforms (such as SciELO, Google Scholar, CAPES Journal Portal and ResearchGate, among others). This research will be supported by materials already published, including articles, books, theses and dissertations that will provide the necessary foundation to discuss the topic in question. It can be concluded that the trajectory of Special Education in Brazil has shown remarkable advances towards inclusion; However, there is still much to be done. It is essential to maintain an ongoing commitment to promoting equal opportunities and respect for diversity, ensuring that all students have access to quality education.

Keywords: Special Education. Inclusion. Inclusive Education. Teaching.

¹ Federal University of São Carlos, UFSCar, Brazil.

² State University of Paraíba, UEPB, Brazil.

³ Federal University of Amazonas, UFAM, Brazil.

⁴ Federal University of Roraima, UFRR, Brazil.

⁵ State University of Roraima, UERR, Brazil.

⁶ Universidad del Sol, UNADES, Paraguay.

⁷ Candido Mendes University, IUPERJ/UCAM, Brazil.

⁸ Faculdade Única, Brazil.

⁹ Must University, United States.

INTRODUCTION

Discussing special education in Brazil requires, in an inseparable way, the analysis of two fundamental elements of our historical trajectory: inequality and diversity. The Brazilian territory is shaped by the plurality of its populations and the narratives that surround them, but this construction occurs in a context of marked disparities. The economic configuration of Brazil and the particularities of its social organization resulted in the coexistence with several problems that directly affected the lives of Brazilian children and young people, many of which persist to the present day: abandoned children on the streets of large metropolises since the seventeenth century, limited educational coverage and, consequently, a high rate of illiteracy, among other challenges.

With the end of the slave regime, many families were not integrated into the productive sector and began to subsist in large cities, without access to minimum conditions of dignity. During the Republican period, a large portion of the Brazilian population unemployed and considered illiterate was labeled as marginalized, having their habits interpreted as unseemly and transgressive of good customs by an elite that perceived the country as backward compared to Europe. As a result, an excluding layer of the population began to emerge.

The expansion of access of students with special educational needs to the regular education system has led the legal and normative documents of special education in Brazil to emphasize how the schooling of this group should be carried out. In 2006, the Ministry of Education released the first document that defined specialized educational service (SES), to be applied in multifunctional resource rooms. In 2008, Decree No. 6,571/2008 was approved, which regulates specialized educational services, among other public policies that deal with inclusion.

The trajectory of Special Education in Brazil reflects the struggle for a more just and egalitarian society, where everyone has access to quality education. There is still much to be done, but it is necessary to recognize the advances made and continue working so that inclusion is a reality in all schools in the country. Diversity is an enriching factor and should be valued in all spaces, including education.

The methodological approach adopted in this study will consist of bibliographic research, which will take place through the main academic platforms (such as SciELO, Google Scholar, CAPES Journal Portal and ResearchGate, among others). This investigation will be supported by previously published materials, including articles, books,

theses and dissertations, which will serve as a foundation for discussions on the subject in question.

The objective of this research is to encourage the State, educational institutions, teachers and society in general to mobilize to ensure that Special Education in Brazil is effectively inclusive. Inclusion is not just about enrolling students with special educational needs in regular schools, but also about ensuring that these students have access to quality education that respects their differences and promotes their integral development.

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND ITS PARADIGMS

Special Education (EE) is configured as a segment of education aimed at students who present: general developmental disorders (GDD) / autism spectrum disorder (ASD); one or more disabilities, whether physical, visual, auditory or intellectual; in addition to high abilities or giftedness. This educational modality can be offered in educational institutions, both public and private, which can be regular or specialized; in common classrooms, specialized rooms or multifunctional environments (SRM); under the supervision of full teachers (generalists or specialists) or educators with specific training in specialized educational service (AEE). It is common to have the support of specialized professionals from different areas, such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, psychologists, psychopedagogues, psychiatrists, and neuropediatricians, among others (GUERRA et al., 2023).

EE, in the context of our educational system, is responsible for ensuring specialized monitoring of students with disabilities, global developmental disorders or high abilities/giftedness. These students often demand actions, resources and pedagogical strategies that are different from those normally available, due to their specific characteristics. This field represents a broad area of research, offering relevant contributions to education.

EE consists of an educational system structured to specifically and exclusively serve students with certain special needs. While some institutions focus on just one category of need, others encompass several. Special education has been the subject of criticism for not facilitating interaction between children with special needs and their peers. On the other hand, schools focused on special education have materials, equipment and qualified teachers. For the regular education system to serve inclusively, it needs to be adapted and transformed pedagogically (GUERRA et al., 2023).

In this way, the objectives of EE coincide with those of general education; However, the difference lies in the way the service is performed, being adjusted to the individual particularities of the students. This approach is based on the promotion of equal opportunities and the consideration of the individual differences of each child through adaptations in the educational system. Thus, all students have the possibility of accessing an education that responds to their demands. In the last twenty years, Special Education has gained prominence due to the movement for inclusive education, although it has also received criticism for its exclusivity and the lack of promotion of coexistence between children with and without special needs.

The purposes of special education coincide with those of education in general. However, the distinction lies in the approach to service, which adapts to the particularities of each student. Thus, institutions that offer specialized education have qualified materials, technologies, equipment, and teachers. On the other hand, the regular educational system still needs adaptations and pedagogical transformations to provide inclusive service. Higher education institutions play a crucial role in promoting social inclusion through work; By enabling access to knowledge, they facilitate recognized participations through knowledge and practices that form professional identities aligned with the prevailing values and ideals.

The proposals for Special Education are produced in conjunction with processes that characterize the educational offer in the country and movements that express broader trends, outlined by the production of knowledge, the definition of educational policies and the action of international organizations. In the context of Brazilian Special Education, it should be noted that there has been evolution, but at a slow pace, prioritizing facilitating access rather than leaving physical infrastructure and human resources without proper adequacy and preparation

Special Education in Brazil continues in continuous steps towards an egalitarian education, because the laws that have greatly benefited the access to education of people with disabilities to education, however that it is learned in theory, when applied in practice is quite different. Because many schools are not prepared to receive these students.

Thus, the interest in studying the theme stems from the need to understand the historical and current context of Special Education, as it is a very relevant theme for society, as well as from the coexistence with the educational reality of an intellectually disabled sister. Education for the disabled, which began in the nineteenth century, was initially based on the segregation model, which offered the first forms of education for the disabled in

Brazil, going through other models until the process of inclusion, not only educational, but also social inclusion of the person with disabilities.

Table 1 – Main inclusion laws in Brazil

Brazilian Inclusion Law (LBI)	(Law No. 13,146, of July 6, 2015)
Hearing Impairment Act	(Law No. 14,768, of 2023)
Law of Bilingual Education of Deaf Users of Libras and Regular Education of the Oral Deaf	(Law No. 14,191, of 2021)
Brazilian Sign Language Law (Libras)	(Law No. 10,436, of 2002)
Monocular Vision Law (Amália Barros Law)	(Law No. 14,126, of 2021)
Law on University Admission Quotas	(Law No. 12,711, of 2012)
Quota Law for PWD	(Law No. 8,213/91)

Source: The authors

Law No. 13,146/2015, known as the Brazilian Inclusion Law (LBI), aims to guarantee and promote, under equal conditions, the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms for people with disabilities, aiming at their social inclusion and citizenship. The LBI is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which is the first international human rights treaty to be integrated into the Brazilian legal system with the status of a constitutional amendment.

Regarding Law No. 14,768, of 2023, it is an important instrument that directly impacts society and legal relations in Brazil. Approved by the National Congress and sanctioned by the President of the Republic, this law brings significant changes in several aspects of Brazilian legislation. One of the main changes brought by the law is related to the protection of consumer rights. In order to ensure a more balanced relationship between consumers and suppliers, the legislation establishes new rules for advertising, abusive practices and civil liability in consumer relations. In addition, the law also promotes changes in the scope of labor law. With the intention of strengthening the protection of workers, the legislation establishes new rules for working hours, remuneration, health and safety in the workplace.

Law 14,191, of 2021, introduces Bilingual Education for the Deaf in the Brazilian Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB - Law 9,394, of 1996), classifying it as an autonomous teaching modality, unlike its previous inclusion in special education. Bilingual education is defined as that which uses Brazilian sign language (Libras) as the first language and written Portuguese as the second.

With the enactment of Law 10.436/02 that took place on April 24, 2002, after long decades of claims by the Brazilian deaf community in search of recognition and inclusion,

we had a great advance in inclusion. Such legislation validates Libras as the natural language of deaf people in Brazil and institutes measures aimed at ensuring its use and dissemination. Therefore, the rule establishes the mandatory inclusion of Libras as a subject in teacher training courses and in undergraduate courses in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology. It is recommended that you read the full text to understand how the law addresses this issue. Brazilian Sign Language plays a crucial role in promoting the social inclusion of deaf individuals, since it is through it that many are able to fully communicate and actively participate in life in society. Contrary to what is often assumed, Libras is not limited to being a gestural representation of Portuguese; It is, in fact, an autonomous language, with its own grammar and specific linguistic structure. Therefore, its formal recognition is critical to ensuring that deaf people have equitable access to information, education, and public services.

On March 23, 2021, an important law was implemented in Brazil, highlighting an essential issue for the inclusion of people with disabilities: monocular vision. Law 14,126/2021, which came into force on that date, establishes that monocular vision must be recognized as a sensory impairment of the visual type for all legal purposes. This measure marks a significant advance in the fight for equal rights and opportunities for those who have monocular vision, especially with regard to access to the Continuous Cash Benefit (BPC) or LOAS (Organic Law of Social Assistance).

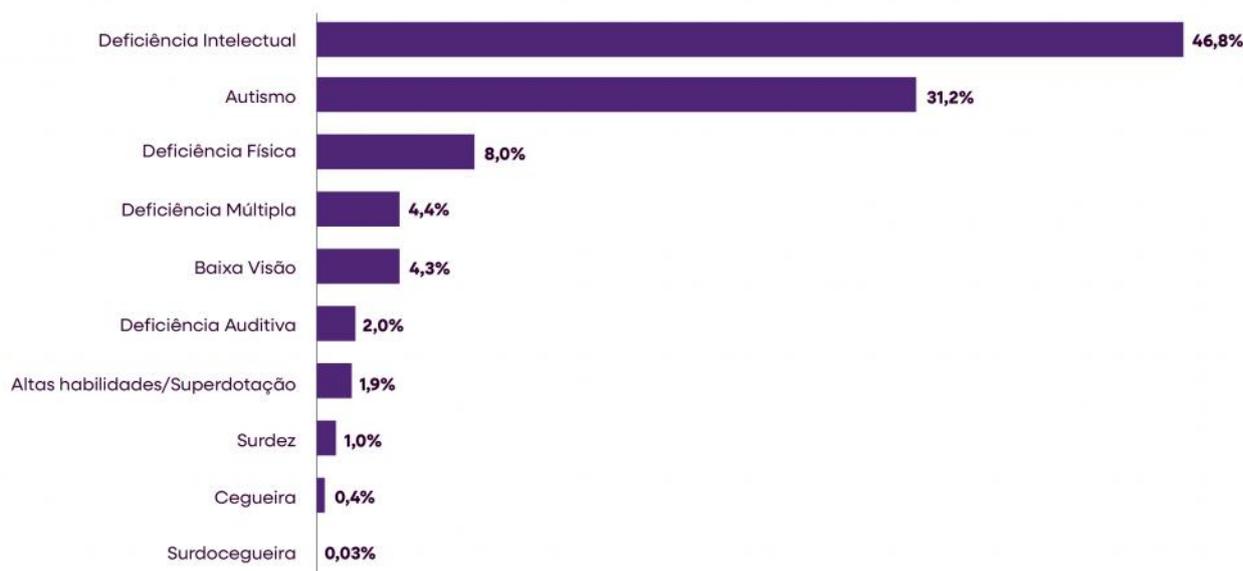
Monocular vision is characterized by total visual capacity in one eye, while the other cannot perceive either light or shape. Before the enactment of Law 14,126/2021, this condition was not automatically considered a disability in Brazil. This often led to the refusal of the BPC for individuals with monocular vision, since without official recognition as a disability, they did not meet the necessary criteria to receive this benefit. After the approval of the law, the main question arose as to whether monocular vision would meet the requirements for granting the BPC, particularly with regard to the definition of disability. According to current legislation, the evaluation of this criterion requires a medical examination. However, many applicants face confusion between the concepts of disability and incapacity to work on the part of judicial experts.

Another important achievement was Law No. 12,711/2012, which ensures the reservation of 50% of vacancies per course and shift in federal universities and federal institutes of education, science and technology for students who have fully attended public high school, either in regular courses or in youth and adult education. The other 50% of the vacancies remain available for wide competition.

Law 8.213/91, which is widely recognized as the Social Security Benefits Law, also plays an essential role in the social protection of workers. This legislation regulates social security rights and benefits, in addition to establishing principles and guidelines for Social Security.

The relevance of this law is evident in several aspects: it determines who is entitled to Social Security benefits and what are the specific conditions for each type of benefit; regulates the requirements and concepts that influence access to the social security benefit; provides protection and assistance in situations of vulnerability, such as illness, work accident, old age, maternity, death or incarceration; and establishes the National Council of Social Security (CNPS), which acts as the highest collegiate deliberation body within the social security system. Law 8.213/91 is also called the "Law of Quotas for PWDs", since it establishes the obligation for companies to hire people with disabilities, promoting their inclusion in the labor market and facilitating access to health services.

Graph 1 – Enrollment in special education by type of disability and pervasive developmental disorder or high abilities/giftedness – Brazil 2023



Source: School Census (2023)

In February 2024, the Ministry of Education (MEC) released the SCHOOL CENSUS OF BASIC EDUCATION 2023 – TECHNICAL SUMMARY, which provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of education in Brazil. With regard to the enrollment of children with disabilities in Basic Education, Youth and Adult Education (EJA) and Vocational Education, Brazil recorded the best results in an analyzed period that covers 2019 to 2023.

The percentage of students with disabilities, autism spectrum disorders or high abilities enrolled in regular classes has shown a gradual increase in most stages of

education. Except for EJA, the other phases of basic education show more than 90% of students enrolled in regular classes in 2023. The highest proportion of inclusion is observed in high school, where the rate reaches 99.5%.

Currently, Special Education in Brazil seeks to promote the inclusion of all students, regardless of their special needs, in regular schools. This has been possible through the adoption of inclusive pedagogical practices, the training of teachers trained to meet the diversity of students, and the development of assistive resources and technologies.

Special Education is based on the promotion of equal opportunities, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their particularities, can have access to quality education that meets their diverse needs. In this sense, education must be conceived in a differentiated way, seeking to meet the singularities of each child through the adaptation of the educational system. Technological progression increasingly provides the inclusion of children with special needs in schools, facilitating their educational process and aiming at their integral formation.

Ultimately, this approach represents an essential response to the inclusion of these students in an educational environment. One of the solutions to these demands is the use of technology; with the advancement of Informatics, a new horizon was opened full of communicative possibilities and access to information, configuring itself as a valuable support for people with special educational needs. Considering that learning involves practical action, technology should be seen as a cognitive resource capable of facilitating the organization of work and promoting discoveries, ensuring favorable conditions for the construction of knowledge (GUERRA et al., 2023).

In fact, there are several advantages associated with the use of technologies in the context of teaching-learning aimed at children with special needs. Therefore, the use of technology can arouse interest and motivation in them for the search for knowledge, taking into account their specific demands and interests. Disability should be considered not as an insurmountable barrier, but as a source of strength where the use of technologies plays a relevant role.

However, there are still challenges to be overcome and recommendations for future work in the area of Special Education. It is essential that there is continuous investment in teacher training, ensuring that they are prepared to meet the specific needs of each student. In addition, it is necessary to strengthen the articulation between the different government spheres, schools and families, in order to guarantee the access and permanence of students with disabilities in school.

Another important recommendation is to expand access to assistive resources and technologies, which can facilitate the learning and inclusion process of these students. In addition, it is essential that there is a constant evaluation of educational policies and practices, in order to identify possible gaps and promote necessary adjustments to ensure the effective inclusion of all students.

CONCLUSION

The study on the historical process of construction of special education in Brazil analyzed the trajectory, highlighting the initiatives and legislations that supported the education of the disabled in the country, thus rescuing the foundations and historical aspects that refer to the theme. The historical aspects reveal several educational models for people with disabilities in our country. In the paradigm of exclusion, the disabled person was considered incapable, invalid and it was not up to him to be part of the school system, whether regular or special. In the institutionalization model, people with disabilities were seen from a medical and welfare perspective, therefore, these people were responsible for socially segregated spaces, such as hospitals, nursing homes, convents, where they received the basics for their survival and medical care or treatment, they were then seen as patients and not as students.

In the integrationist model, the segregation of the disabled was also experienced, even with the emergence of the conception of the right to education for the disabled, the educational spaces were restricted to specialized institutions or even special classes in regular schools.

The benefits of the research in question are numerous. In addition to promoting equal opportunities and respect for diversity, inclusion contributes to the development of a fairer, more solidary, and democratic society. In addition, the coexistence between students with and without disabilities enriches the school environment, promoting empathy, tolerance and mutual respect. Therefore, the article in question showed not only an advance in guaranteeing the rights of people with disabilities, but also an evolution in the way society understands and values diversity. Research has played a key role in this process, providing subsidies for the construction of a more inclusive and equitable education for all.

It is concluded that the trajectory of Special Education in Brazil has been marked by significant advances towards inclusion, but there is still much to be done. It is essential that there is an ongoing commitment to promoting equal opportunities and respect for diversity, ensuring that all students have access to quality education.

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