


**AUTONOMY FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES:
REFLECTIONS FROM SPECIAL/INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND THE WORLD
OF WORK****AUTONOMIA DA PESSOA COM DEFICIÊNCIA INTELECTUAL:
REFLEXÕES A PARTIR DA EDUCAÇÃO ESPECIAL/INCLUSIVA E DO MUNDO
DO TRABALHO¹****AUTONOMÍA DE LAS PERSONAS CON DISCAPACIDAD INTELECTUAL:
REFLEXIONES DESDE LA EDUCACIÓN ESPECIAL/INCLUSIVA Y EL MUNDO
LABORAL**

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RESUMO

O artigo analisa a cidadania da pessoa com deficiência intelectual a partir da garantia de direitos fundamentais como a educação e o trabalho, entendidos como pilares para a construção de autonomia e inclusão social. Fundamentado em um recorte teórico de pesquisa de doutorado, o texto aborda como a mudança de paradigmas culturais e legislativos contribuiu para reconhecer a dignidade e o valor dessas pessoas, favorecendo a formulação de projetos de vida que respeitem suas especificidades. A discussão parte da compreensão de que educação e trabalho não apenas garantem direitos, mas também conferem sentido existencial e inserção plena na sociedade.

No eixo da educação, o artigo percorre marcos históricos, desde os primeiros movimentos clínico-pedagógicos no século XIX até as políticas públicas contemporâneas que consolidaram a educação inclusiva no Brasil. Destaca-se a transição de modelos segregacionistas para um sistema educacional que busca atender à diversidade humana em suas múltiplas formas de aprendizagem. Apesar dos avanços legais, o texto reconhece desafios persistentes na efetivação da inclusão, sobretudo quanto ao acesso, permanência e sucesso escolar da pessoa com deficiência, revelando uma exclusão muitas vezes silenciosa e estrutural no cotidiano das escolas.

¹ This chapter represents a review of the study "Autonomy and adulthood of people with intellectual disabilities based on school inclusion and in the world of work" published in the Proceedings of the V International Congress on Inclusive Education – V CINTEDI, held in Campina Grande - Paraíba between June 12 and 14, 2024 and represents a theoretical excerpt of the research in progress in the doctorate of the Postgraduate Program in Education and Contemporaneity at the State University of Bahia – PPGEduC/UNEB.

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Palavras-chave: Educação inclusiva; Pessoa com deficiência intelectual; Direitos fundamentais; Cidadania.

ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the citizenship of people with intellectual disabilities based on the guarantee of fundamental rights such as education and work, which are seen as pillars for building autonomy and social inclusion. Based on a theoretical section of doctoral research, the text discusses how the change in cultural and legislative paradigms has contributed to recognizing the dignity and value of these people, favouring the formulation of life projects that respect their specificities. The discussion starts from the understanding that education and work not only guarantee rights, but also provide existential meaning and full inclusion in society.

In terms of education, the article covers historical milestones, from the first clinical-pedagogical movements in the 19th century to the contemporary public policies that have consolidated inclusive education in Brazil. It highlights the transition from segregationist models to an educational system that seeks to cater for human diversity in its multiple forms of learning. Despite legal advances, the text recognizes persistent challenges in making inclusion a reality, especially in terms of access, permanence and success at school for people with disabilities, revealing an exclusion that is often silent and structural in everyday school life.

Keywords: Inclusive education; People with intellectual disabilities; Fundamental rights; Citizenship.

RESUMEN

El artículo analiza la ciudadanía de las personas con discapacidad intelectual a partir de la garantía de derechos fundamentales como la educación y el trabajo, considerados pilares para la construcción de la autonomía y la inclusión social. A partir de un apartado teórico de investigación doctoral, el texto discute cómo el cambio de paradigmas culturales y legislativos ha ayudado a reconocer la dignidad y el valor de estas personas, favoreciendo la formulación de proyectos de vida que respeten sus especificidades. La discusión se basa en la comprensión de que la educación y el trabajo no sólo garantizan derechos, sino que también proporcionan sentido existencial y plena inclusión en la sociedad.

En lo que respecta a la educación, el artículo recorre hitos históricos, desde los primeros movimientos clínico-pedagógicos del siglo XIX hasta las políticas públicas contemporáneas que han consolidado la educación inclusiva en Brasil. Destaca la transición de modelos segregacionistas a un sistema educativo que busca atender a la diversidad humana en sus múltiples formas de aprendizaje. A pesar de los avances legales, el texto reconoce la persistencia de desafíos para hacer realidad la inclusión, especialmente en términos de acceso, permanencia y éxito escolar de las personas con discapacidad, revelando una exclusión muchas veces silenciosa y estructural en el cotidiano escolar.

Palabras clave: Educación inclusiva; Personas con discapacidad intelectual; Derechos fundamentales; Ciudadanía..

INTRODUCTION

The citizenship of people with disabilities is part of a process of change in the cultural and legislative paradigms that have fed (and continue to feed) each other from constant movements that aimed (and aim) to guarantee, as a priority, the right to life, since it has not always been guaranteed in some historical and social contexts, and many others arising from this fundamental right, such as education and work. In this sense, Spavier Alves, Santos and Souza (2023), state that

education and work, important social rights for people with disabilities, bring a sense of the present and a construction of the future in favor of this person, with regard to their autonomy and interconnection with other spheres/sectors of life, giving them existential meaning and the possibility of elaborating one (or several?) life project(s) that recognize their differences in favor of their social inclusion (Spavier Alves; Santos; Souza, 2023, p. 1-2).

Thus, this article, being a theoretical excerpt of the ongoing doctoral research, proposes to discuss the contributions of special/inclusive education and the world of work, in a perspective of autonomy for the life of people with intellectual disabilities that is as broad as possible.

EDUCATION: A NON-NEGOTIABLE RIGHT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The title of this section shows that, first, we are going to analyze the dimension of education, constituted in Brazil as a right of all people and, therefore, the right of people with disabilities – and, in this case, of those with intellectual disabilities. Internationally, it is worth noting that the right to education was already provided for in the Declaration of Human Rights, specifically in article 26, when it stated that "everyone has the right to education" (Brasil, 2013a, p. 23). It is evident that the use of the term "instruction" represents an approximation to formal education which, in Brazil, is developed in the school context, being compulsory and free from the ages of four and seventeen and organized into pre-school and elementary and secondary education (basic education) (Brasil, 2013b).

Thinking about the educational process for people with disabilities requires a reflection on this right itself, whose origin and historical framework are linked to the scope of health in the French context (late 18th century and early 19th century), therefore, from an initially clinical perspective based on the relationship established between physician Jean-Marc Gaspard Itard and Victor, the *sauvage de l'Aveyron*. From this connection, there is a paradigm shift that Caldin (2007) describes: "[...] it is from the chance (or unconsciously sought?) encounter between Itard and Victor that educational innovation is born and the construction of a new perception of disability begins"⁴ (*ibid.*, p. 34).

⁴ On this issue, Caldin (2007) explains that Jean-Marc Gaspard Itard produced two memoirs: *De l'éducation d'un homme sauvage ou des premiers développements physiques et moraux du jeune sauvage de l'Aveyron*, from 1801, and *Rapport fait à son Excellence le Ministre de l'Intérieur sur les nouveaux développements et l'état actuel du sauvage de l'Aveyron*. Still on the issue, another interesting material is *L'enfant sauvage*, a French film directed by François Truffaut between the 1960s and 1970s, based on the work of Jean-Marc Gaspard Itard.

The advent of this perspective has boosted research in the educational/pedagogical field and in Brazil, specifically, according to Mazzotta (2005), the Brazilian educational process for people with disabilities occurs from official initiatives, whose first experiences are recorded at the beginning of the second half of the 19th century for people with visual impairment and hearing impairment/deafness, in specific spaces, such as the Imperial Institute of Blind Boys, in 1854, and the Imperial Institute of the Deaf-Mutes, in 1857, currently, Benjamin Constant Institute – IBC and National Institute of Education of the Deaf – INES, respectively.

Reflecting on the educational process of people with disabilities in Brazil, Santos (2007) highlights that the education of people with disabilities is demarcated by three distinct moments based on European and North American influences: education in total institutions, integration and inclusion. For the author, total institutions were predominant until the end of the 1960s, in which education was segregated in relation to students with disabilities. The integration model occurred between the 1970s and 1980s, "[...] whose fundamental principle was the idea of normalization, based on the medical model of disability, emphasized the student and his individual capacity to adapt to the reality of the school" (*ibid.*, p. 11). Also for the author, the inclusion "[...] assumes an innovative and radical discourse based on the principle of accepting diversity. In the inclusion paradigm, the focus is removed from the student, and educational systems must promote changes in their structures to make them accessible to all (*ibid.*).

As with the *sauvage de l'Aveyron*, the initial experiences of a pedagogical or medical-pedagogical nature for people with intellectual disabilities also took place in a health-related environment, specifically, according to Mazzotta (2005), in 1874, at the State Hospital of Salvador, in Bahia, today the Juliano Moreira Psychiatric Hospital. Making a historical leap, Batista (2019) states that the educational process of people with intellectual disabilities in Brazil effectively begins through the National Campaign for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Mentally Handicapped – CADEME, created by Decree No. 48,961/1960.

It should be noted that Law No. 4,024/1961, of guidelines and bases of national education, mentions the "education of the exceptional" (Brasil, 1961) which, according to Sassaki (2011), was "[...] the term used in the 50s, 60s and 70s to designate people with intellectual disabilities" and Law n. 5.692/1971, of guidelines and bases for the teaching of 1st and 2nd grades, mentions "special treatment" for students with physical and intellectual disabilities in grade-age distortion (Brasil, 1971). National campaigns such as CADEME were extinguished with the creation of the National Center for Special Education –

CENESP, through Decree No. 72,425/1973, to promote the "[...] expansion and improvement of care for the exceptional" (Brasil, 1973), therefore, these were initiatives that boosted the education of people with intellectual disabilities.

Making another historical leap, from 1988 onwards, education became the right of all Brazilian citizens and the duty of the state and the family, which should, therefore, ensure it (Brasil, 1988, art. 205), and it is also the duty of the State to guarantee specialized educational care for people with disabilities (*ibid.*, art. 208-III). It is noteworthy that, although legally guaranteed, in this period there was still no precise definition of what this "specialized educational service" would be, because, in Brazil, people with disabilities still lived educational experiences in a substitute system. The effervescence of the discussions on inclusive education that took place at the international level stands out – World Declaration on Education for All – Jomtien (1990); Declaration on Principles, Policies and Practices in the area of Special Educational Needs – Salamanca (1994); Declaration on Education for All – Dakar (2000); Sapporo Declaration (2002); Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006); among others – and that, certainly, fermented a process of discussion and reflection that culminated, at least initially, in the legal change in favor of people with disabilities in relation to school inclusion processes and in other areas in Brazil, because as Spavier Alves (2016) states, "[...] it is necessary to use the perspective of global thought and local action" (*ibid.*, p. 160).

These legislative advances, especially in the educational sphere, are supported by Law No. 9,394 (Brasil, 1996), which provides guidelines and bases for national education, which brings, for the first time, a chapter dedicated to special education and represents an important milestone for the education of people with disabilities, defining it as a modality of school education (*ibid.*, art. 58), although, once again, it is worth noting that the Brazilian educational system was not yet considered fully inclusive, which would occur through the "National Policy on Special Education in the perspective of Inclusive Education" (Brasil, 2008), which definitively places the Brazilian state on the path of educational inclusion of people with disabilities, ensuring the existence of an inclusive system.

Other normative acts, such as the "Operational Guidelines for Specialized Educational Service in Basic Education, Special Education modality" (Brasil, 2009b), Decree No. 7,611/2011, which "provides for special education, specialized educational service and provides for other provisions" (Brasil, 2011) and, later, Law No. 13,146/2015, known as the Brazilian Inclusion Law – LBI, ratify this inclusive educational system and provide for its operationalization. Specifically, Chapter IV of the LBI, which deals with the right to education, ensures that people with disabilities have a

[...] inclusive educational system at all levels and lifelong learning, in order to achieve the maximum possible development of their physical, sensory, intellectual and social talents and abilities, according to their characteristics, interests and learning needs (Brasil, 2015, art. 27).

Although education is everyone's right and the educational system must be inclusive, it is necessary to discuss access, permanence, learning and formative success for all people, however, the daily reality of the school environment for people with disabilities generates exclusion, understood as a counterpoint to inclusion. This process often occurs in a silent and perverse way, because the school cannot account for the complexity of the existence of the diversity of its students, whether from their identity belongings, or from the diversity existing in the learning processes themselves when it cannot guarantee different ways and times of learning, because, for Rapp (2018), This diversity is in what students learn (what they perceive), how they learn (how they process) and why they learn (what interests and motivates them). This diversity in learning processes does not depend on whether the student is a person with disabilities or not.

This individual subjectivity of each student signals to us the importance of a school that (re)thinks its teaching processes so that there are, in fact, learning processes for all students, since education is a diffuse right, but the challenge of the school becomes very evident when it comes to students who are in the Special Education audience – with disabilities, with pervasive developmental disorders⁵ and with high abilities/giftedness. Although Lima-Rodrigues and Rodrigues (2024) report that, in a systematic review research with 280 studies from 25 countries, "at least 89 of them show scientific evidence that inclusive education brings short and long-term benefits to the cognitive and social development of all children, with and without disabilities" (*ibid.*, p. 45), the teaching discourse goes in the direction of the lack of professional skills – "I was not/am not prepared to..." or "I do not know how to deal with..." – to promote/guarantee the inclusion of students who are part of Special Education.

Spavier Alves and Valet (2017) argue that "professional competence is increasingly requested in school, that is, the teacher must be prepared – based on consistent and frequent continuing education – to respond to the demands of the contemporary world" (*ibid.*, p. 126). Regarding school inclusion, this issue in relation to teaching professional competence is evidenced by Vieira Marcondes and Coelho Lima (2020) when they highlight that "[...] In all the actions we offer, the search for a 'recipe for inclusion' has always been

⁵ Brazilian legislation still brings the term "pervasive developmental disorders", but updating it, it would be "autism spectrum disorder".

present, accompanied by the statement that "they do not feel prepared to deal with students with disabilities" (*ibid.*, p. 127, emphasis added).

It is worth mentioning that the teacher is not the only one responsible for promoting school inclusion and "[...] The teacher's work as a mediator of the teaching-learning process is not/can be isolated/solitary. In order to be able to build a consistent change in the student's life, the effort must be collective, that is, of the entire school community [...]" (Spavier Alves; Valet, 2017, p. 129), however, it is undoubtedly an essential actor for the school success of all students and, specifically, of those who are in the Special Education public, therefore, the need for initial and/or continuing training in this area of knowledge is manifest. It is necessary to (re)think school inclusion as a collective movement and, in this sense, Lima-Rodrigues and Rodrigues (2024) state that it is opportune to think about teacher training from this perspective and outline

[...] ways to improve and strengthen teacher training from a collective perspective – and not through individual examples of success – that stimulate reflection on the role of public administrations, civil society organizations, and teachers themselves to promote an increasingly equitable and inclusive education for people with and without disabilities (Lima-Rodrigues; Rodrigues, 2024, p. 25).

The authors also reinforce that the idea about teacher training, given the complexity of the school environment, and point out that

National and international research and legal frameworks on the subject show that, for inclusive education to take place on the school floor, educators demand continuous professional training and training, which supports them to develop skills throughout their careers to act in complex, plural and changing environments (Lima-Rodrigues; Rodrigues, 2024, p. 25).

We agree with the authors and we need to emphasize that it is the duty of the state, whatever its administrative sphere – federal, state and municipal – to propose continuing education of teachers in the context of the diversities that cross the school routine, such as special/inclusive education, however, we emphasize that training can be regularly on the school's agenda, specifically in the weekly activities of pedagogical planning, because it is necessary that it be understood not only as that which certifies after an academic path, but also as that of the day-to-day life of the school. In line with Adornian thinking, this training in the daily life of the school should represent a true education by stimulating the fruitful relationship between critical-reflective thinking and the construction of autonomy and emancipatory processes and that, therefore, will reverberate in the daily relational dynamics of the classroom, especially in the teaching and learning processes. because teachers, based on consolidated epistemological bases, will refute, as Santos (2013) states, that

which Adorno called pseudo-formation, because it restricted education to the adaptation and/or reproduction of a life unworthy of being lived. In this sense, one must think about the challenges imposed by contemporaneity, in the fight against social inequalities, as it is required to take a position in relation to the contexts of social exclusion to which we are invariably subjected (Santos, 2013, p. 28).

If it is necessary to develop professional skills so that teachers can give positive responses to diversities – identity and learning – perhaps the phrase said by teachers could be changed to "I haven't had experience yet..." – which is unlikely – but understand that, even if they had already had previous experiences, from Walter Benjamin's perspective, "[...] Reality, being inevitably temporal, determines relations in different ways and with countless multiple meanings. This means that every experience is always new and unique, no matter how similar it may be to that of others" (Bortolini, 2020, p. 53).

In the face of legitimate concerns regarding teacher training, the process of inclusion of students who are public in Special Education becomes a reality in the Brazilian educational context. According to data from the 2024 School Census⁶ (Brasil, 2025a), Brazilian education registered 47,088,922 enrollments, of which 2,076,825 were in Special Education. Of this total, 1,923,692 enrollments are in common classes (92.63%) and 153,133 (7.67%) in special classes. Also according to these data, there is also an evolution in the number of enrollments of these students in the historical series between 2014 and 2024, as well as, for the same period, there is also an evolution in the number of students enrolled in regular classes and, consequently, a decrease in the number of enrollments in special classes. There was, therefore, a variation of 134.2% between 2014 and 2024 and an annual growth of 8.9% on average, with 17.2% in the last year (Brasil, 2025a).

Also taking into account the data from the last school census (Brasil, 2025a) some characteristics of students who are public in Special Education, those who are enrolled in regular classes, therefore, 1,923,692 people, 587,737 (30.55%) are female and 1,335,955 (69.45%) are male. Regarding color/race, 34.72% declared themselves white; 4.52% declared themselves black and 43.93% declared themselves brown, therefore, 48.45% are black; 0.34% are yellow; 0.39% are indigenous and 16.10% did not declare color/race. Regarding the age group, 75.35% are up to 14 years old; 16.31% are aged between 15 and 17 years; 6.20% are aged between 18 and 24 years; 0.66% are aged between 25 and 29 years; 0.35% are aged between 30 and 34 years; and 1.13% are aged 35 years or older. These students are divided according to their condition as follows: 0.30% are blind; 4.34% have low vision; 0.80% are deaf; 2.07% have hearing impairment; 0.03% have

⁶ Data from the 2024 School Census extracted from the *inepdata* system, available at: <https://x.gd/0UBjk>. Accessed on: June 2, 2025.

deafblindness; 7.66% have physical disabilities; 46.25% have intellectual disabilities; 3.65% have multiple disabilities; 45.97% have autism spectrum disorder; and 2.28% have high abilities/giftedness. Thus, the audience of this ongoing research – people with intellectual disabilities – represents the largest population enrolled in the Brazilian inclusive educational context.

Also in relation to the data available in "inepdata"⁷ regarding the educational indicators for the year 2023, 90.8% were approved, 7.4% failed and 1.8% dropped out, in addition, 2.3% are without an answer for these indicators. Obviously, these data are quantitative and it would be important to reflect on what "approval", "failure" or "dropout" means in a school context in which teachers say they are not "prepared" to guarantee the teaching and learning processes. It is necessary to understand whether this approval is the result of teaching and learning processes that guaranteed the academic success of these students because, Brazilian education, being a right of all and a duty of the state and the family, needs to guarantee "the full development of the person, his preparation for the exercise of citizenship and his qualification for work" (Brasil, 1988, art. 205).

RIGHT TO WORK: REFLECTION ON THE BRAZILIAN CONTEXT

If Brazilian education aims at qualification for work, it should be noted that this right was also announced in the Declaration of the Right of Man, specifically in article 23, which states that "everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to fair and favorable working conditions and to protection against unemployment" (Brasil, 2013a). According to the Federal Constitution (Brasil, 1988), in article 1, item III, one of the foundations of the Brazilian republic is "the social values of work and free enterprise". Article 5, item XIII, states that "the exercise of any work, trade or profession is free, provided that the professional qualifications established by law are met" (*ibid.*) and, specifically, article 6 brings work as one of the social rights (*ibid.*).

Regarding work for people with disabilities, Brazil ratified Convention No. 159, of the International Labor Organization – ILO (Brazil, 2019),⁸ which deals with professional rehabilitation and employment for this population, which was reflected in the enactment of Law No. 8,213/1991, known because of its article 93, which establishes the obligation to

⁷ Data from the "New Panel of Statistics School Census of Basic Education", of the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira, of the Ministry of Education – INEP/MEC, available at: <https://x.gd/S814e>. Accessed on: June 2, 2025.

⁸ In 2019, Decree No. 10,088, of November 5, consolidated the normative acts promulgated by the executive branch in relation to the conventions and recommendations of the International Labor Organization (ILO) ratified by Brazil.

reserve 2 (two) to 5 (five) percent of vacancies for rehabilitated people or people with disabilities in companies with more than one hundred employees (Brasil, 1991).

According to data from Brazil (2009a), the signatories of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in relation to awareness, should promote measures to "[...] the recognition of the skills, merits and capabilities of people with disabilities and their contribution to the workplace and the labor market". Specifically for work and employment, the signatories recognize the right to work for this population "[...] in equal opportunities with other people. This right encompasses the right to the opportunity to maintain oneself with a job of one's free choice or acceptance in the labor market, in a work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to people with disabilities" (Brasil, 2009a) and must adopt specific measures that guarantee this right. The right to work was also provided for in the LBI, specifically in chapter VI, which brings the same bases as the aforementioned convention.

Notwithstanding the legal guarantees on work and employment of people with disabilities, according to data from Brazil (2023), when analyzing the workforce of people with disabilities for the year 2022, "[...] The total number of persons with disabilities of working age was 17.5 million, equivalent to about 10% of the total population aged 14 years and over [...]. However, people with disabilities who were actually in the workforce represented 5.1 million [...]" (*ibid.*, p. 6-7). For the author, "[...] the labor force participation rate in Brazil was 62.7%. However, this rate among people with disabilities drops significantly, to 29.2% (Brasil, 2023, p. 7).

The author also states that the level of education does not represent a great differential for the participation of people with disabilities in the world of work, as occurs with people without disabilities; that the average real monthly income is lower, corresponding to approximately 70% of the national average, and that women with disabilities are at a greater disadvantage, both in relation to their peers without disabilities (34% less) and in the relationship between men and women with disabilities (difference of around R\$ 604); that in relation to color or race, the difference for black people with disabilities and brown people with disabilities is 37% and 34.4%, respectively, below the income of white people with disabilities and, "among black people, those with disabilities recorded income from the main job 27.6% less than those who did not have disabilities. Among browns, this difference was 25.1%" (Brasil, 2023, p. 13).

Just as some social markers – color/race, gender, for example – impact the lives of thousands of Brazilians, according to the data mentioned above, the social marker "disability" generates inequalities and exclusion processes that are aggravated when intersected with

social markers, such as color/race and gender. Specifically, it is also possible to note that although the right to work is a legal guarantee for people with disabilities, accessing it requires overcoming barriers – often attitudinal, but also urban, architectural, transport, communications, and technological barriers (Brasil, 2015) – so it is important to focus on the phenomenon to understand these differences.

OUTLINING THE RESEARCH: THEORETICAL-CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES

Regarding the inclusion of people with disabilities in the two areas brought (educational and labor), we verified legislative advances and cultural setbacks. It is possible to verify that inclusion is guaranteed in both contexts, through robust legislation to guarantee these rights, but, from the reading of the numbers brought by Brasil (2023), we see setbacks in the culture of inclusion in these two areas or, even, that the response of Brazilian society to legislative requirements is still slow. Despite these observations about advances and setbacks in the inclusion process, the data prove the presence of people with disabilities in educational and work spaces.

Thinking, therefore, about the person with intellectual disabilities who had access to these two areas, the main question of this research arises: "how do the processes of inclusion at school and in the world of work favor the construction of the autonomy of the person with intellectual disability?", whose main objective is to analyze how inclusion at school and in the world of work can trigger processes of construction of the autonomy of the person with intellectual disability. The relevance of this study takes into account the academic and social spheres. In general terms, in relation to the social sphere, this research can give clues about the processes of inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities and whether these two spheres (educational and work) have a positive impact or not on the acquisition of their autonomy. From an academic point of view, the research intends to discuss the categories of autonomy, people with intellectual disabilities, inclusion (school and in the world of work) and training that can boost other academic productions.

OUTLINING THEORETICAL-CONCEPTUAL CHOICES

The definition of "person with intellectual disability" intertwines two concepts: the first, "people with disabilities" and the second, "intellectual disability". According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,⁹ of 2006 (Brasil, 2009a), people with disabilities "[...] are those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments,

⁹ This convention was ratified in Brazil by Decree No. 6,949/2009.

which, in interaction with various barriers, can obstruct their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with other people" (*ibid.*). Although an approach to the medical field is not of interest in this ongoing research, the concept of intellectual disability is still related to this perspective. Thus, according to the *American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* – AAIDD (2021), intellectual disability "[...] it is a condition characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior that originates before the age of 22" (*online*, our translation).

According to Schalock, Luckasson and Tassé (2021), "intellectual disability" is the term currently used to replace the outdated term "mental retardation". For the authors,

the term ID encompasses the same population of individuals previously diagnosed with mental retardation in number, type, level, type, and duration of disability, as well as the need for individualized services and supports by people with that disability. In addition, every individual who is or has been eligible for a diagnosis of mental retardation is eligible for a diagnosis of intellectual disability (Schalock; Luckasson; Tassé, 2021, p. 1).

Still from this perspective of terminological evolution, Crochík *et al.* (2024) affirm the importance of this importance, by defining that intellectual disability "[...] it is an evolving expression that represents the conceptual revision of confronting the repetition of prejudice and discrimination, through segregation or marginalization" (*ibid.*, p. 459). The authors also state that the AAIDD is responsible for recognizing and validating this new nomenclature "[...] replacing expressions such as mental retardation, mental disability, among other existing terminologies that underestimated the possibilities of development of people with intellectual disabilities" (*ibid.*).

Data from the 2022 Demographic Census (Brasil, 2025b) show that in Brazil there are 14,400,869 people with disabilities, of which 2,689,666 have functional difficulties of the type "permanent difficulty in communicating, performing personal care, working or studying because of some limitation in mental functions". When bringing up the issue of evolution in nomenclature, it is interesting to note the approximation of this research with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health – ICF (WHO, 2008). When comparing with the 2010 Demographic Census (Brasil, 2010), it is possible to notice the use of "disability due to types of functional difficulties" instead of "type of disability" and "permanent difficulty in communicating, performing personal care, working or studying because of some limitation in mental functions" instead of "mental/intellectual" disability.

Although often used as synonyms, it is important to differentiate what is meant by "special education" and "inclusive education" in this research. Special education is a "[...] a modality of school education offered preferably in the regular school system, for students with disabilities, global developmental disorders and high abilities or giftedness" (Brasil, 2013b), therefore, it is a modality of school education that is transversal to all levels, stages and modalities of education with a specific audience. In relation to "inclusive education", there is redundancy in the use of this expression in contemporary times, since the nature of education processes is to be inclusive in order to "take into

account" the diversity existing in learning spaces from a perspective of equity. It is usually – and mistakenly – used in a restrictive way when one wants to talk about education for the public of "special education". In this research, the use of the expression "special/inclusive education" refers to the first concept (special education), since the person with intellectual disabilities – who has already been enrolled or is enrolled in formal education spaces – is the public of this modality of education and; the second concept (inclusive education) because of inherent characteristics of the diversity that inhabits human beings.

In relation to the "world of work", Figaro (2008) defines it as

the set of factors that encompasses and places in relation to the human activity of work, the environment in which the activity takes place, the prescriptions and norms that regulate such relations, the products arising from them, the discourses that are exchanged in this process, the techniques and technologies that facilitate and provide the basis for the development of human activity, the cultures, identities, subjectivities and communication relations constituted in this dialectical and dynamic process of activity (Figaro, 2008, p. 92).

If the world of work is the *locus* of complexities and subjectivities, this is due to its centrality in the human being and the relationships with its workforce – which "[...] consists, purely and simply, in their living individuality" (Marx, 1996, p. 99). For the author, the value of man's labor power is given from the calculation of (re)production time, and this force is externalized by the labor process, understood as "[...] activity oriented to an end to produce use values, appropriation of the natural to satisfy human needs, universal condition of metabolism between man and Nature, eternal natural condition of human life [...]" (*ibid.*, p. 303). In essence, to paraphrase Marx (1996), the worker produces goods and services, modifying nature in his favor, through his labor power and sells it in exchange for a wage, in a constant process within the dynamics of capitalism (and which will be reflected in class tensions and struggles). Resuming Figaro's (2008) thought, the world of work "[...] it comes into existence from the relationships that are born motivated by the human activity of work, and simultaneously shape and regulate such activities. It is a microcosm of society, which, although it has specificity, is capable of revealing it" (Figaro, 2008, p. 92). The perspective of the subjectivity and dialectics of the world of work is what interests this research, especially because, for Ciavatta (2009), this world is the context of application of the Marxian concept of work as an educational principle, in a dimension that goes beyond a merely pedagogical conception to that which is truly educational.

This research is also intertwined with autonomy which, according to Lepri (2016; 2020), is related to the purpose of one's own life and the process of a person becoming an adult, because, for the author, "[...] self-determination and autonomy are characteristics of the adult condition that are acquired through progressive life experiences in contexts in which one can experience the usefulness of one's own action" (Lepri, 2016, p. 12). In the

case of people with intellectual disabilities, this process of self-determination and autonomy presupposes their recognition as a person and their process of interaction with people and contexts that overcomes social representations that associate them with an "eternal child" (Lepri, 2020), as infantilization presupposes a move away from perspectives of self-determination and autonomy necessary for people with intellectual disabilities to have full participation in society.

Being in the world requires self-determination and autonomy, therefore, the contributions of Piaget (2013) – when he discusses the concepts of anomie, heteronomy and autonomy when addressing the child's moral judgment – are important to understand if the person with adult intellectual disability has gone through these three stages of moral development and how this helps their life experience in relation to autonomy in other dimensions or in other contexts. Another important discussion about autonomy is brought up by Freire (1996). The author's discussion is from the perspective of the educator who must have a political, ethical and loving commitment in his pedagogical practice that enables the construction of the autonomy of his students from the critical-reflective thinking developed through dialogicity.

STRUCTURING THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodologically, this research is qualitative in relation to its approach (Minayo, 2007), dialectical in relation to the method of approach (Marconi; Lakatos, 2007) and, in relation to procedures, it is a case study (Yin, 2001). The research has 6 (six) participants, whose inclusion criteria are: 1) being a person with intellectual disabilities; 2) be 18 years of age or older; 3) having attended or is attending a formal education institution (school or college/university) in the city of Salvador-Bahia – it is not intended to bring references to important milestones, such as the completion of specific levels or stages of Brazilian education; 4) be included in the world of work, therefore, have an employment relationship or have already experienced the process of inclusion in the world of work with an employment relationship for at least 6 (six) months and; 5) have the place where he exercises or exercised a paid activity in the city of Salvador-Bahia. It is worth noting that any other characteristics of the participants are not relevant to the inclusion/exclusion criteria of this research, namely: color/race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religiosity, etc. Another relevant piece of information is that this research does not have a *defined locus*.

Three devices will be used to obtain information for the research: a) application of a sociodemographic questionnaire and; b) application of a questionnaire to assess autonomy,

prepared following the ICF (WHO, 2008) and; c) semi-structured interview. The analysis of the information obtained in this research is based on the Method of Interpretation of Meanings (Gomes, 2007). According to the author, this method is "[...] An attempt to advance further in interpretation, moving beyond the contents of texts towards their contexts and revealing the most comprehensive logics and explanations present in a given culture about a given theme (*ibid.*, p. 105), therefore, we are interested in what is "beyond" the discourse, what the author establishes as "confrontation" in a perspective of comprehension *versus* criticism, proper to hermeneutics and dialectics. The author states that "Minayo (2002; 2006), making a dense reflection on the dialogue between hermeneutics (comprehension) and dialectics (criticism), brings us principles that can serve as a guideline for the operationalization of the *method of interpretation of meanings*" (Gomes, 2007, p. 100, emphasis added). Still for the author, these principles are: "[...] (a) to seek the internal logic of the facts, reports and observations; (b) situate the facts, reports and observations in the context of the actors; (c) to produce an account of the facts in which its actors recognize themselves in it (*ibid.*).

PERSPECTIVES ON RESULTS

This research is in progress, therefore, it is expected in its conclusion that it will be possible to verify the effective contributions of special/inclusive education and the world of work that favor the construction of the autonomy of people with intellectual disabilities. These two inclusion processes are guaranteed by a vast normative order in favor of people with disabilities (in this research, the focus is on people with intellectual disabilities due to their direct alignment with the researcher's professional practice as a teacher in a public institution that offers specialized educational services to students with disabilities), however, despite the current legislation, Inclusion does not always happen organically, often the social movement of people with disabilities is the one that promotes the necessary tensions to comply with laws, decrees and ordinances in favor of these people.

Theoretical-conceptual approximations show that the school and the world of work are social contexts that favor educational and formative paths, whose developments meet the self-determination and autonomy of the person with intellectual disabilities, corroborating their emancipatory processes, therefore, it is intended, in the second half of 2025, the effective approximation with the field of research for the collection of information, so that it is possible to confront the theory about the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in the school and in the world of work and verify whether these two social environments contribute to the construction of autonomy.



FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Education and work, in addition to rights that must be guaranteed, can represent important social contexts for the process of inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities, both as spaces for socialization and learning. , in positive values can/should be reinforced, especially in relation to respect for diversity and the recognition of otherness, in addition to being spaces for the possibility of building the autonomy of people with intellectual disabilities.

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