


**INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN BRAZIL: REFLECTIONS ON THE INCLUSION OF  
YOUTH AND ADULTS IN THE REGULAR EDUCATION SYSTEM**

**EDUCAÇÃO INCLUSIVA NO BRASIL: REFLEXÕES SOBRE A INSERÇÃO DE  
JOVENS E ADULTOS NO SISTEMA REGULAR DE ENSINO**

**EDUCACIÓN INCLUSIVA EN BRASIL: REFLEXIONES SOBRE LA INSERCIÓN  
DE JÓVENES Y ADULTOS EN EL SISTEMA REGULAR DE ENSEÑANZA**

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**ABSTRACT**

This article presents a reflection on the practice of inclusive education within the Brazilian regular school system, focusing on the integration of children, youth, and adults with disabilities. The study, qualitative and reflective in nature, is based on legal frameworks, theoretical references, and public policies that support the right to education for all. It examines the role of schools, families, and local governments in implementing inclusive pedagogical practices, highlighting challenges related to access, permanence, and meaningful learning. The findings indicate that, despite advances brought by policies such as the National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education (2008) and the Brazilian Law for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (2015), structural, pedagogical, and attitudinal barriers remain. The study concludes that building a truly inclusive school requires continuous teacher training, democratic management, and collaboration among schools, families, and communities, aiming for equitable and socially relevant education for all.

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**Keywords:** Inclusive Education. Educational Practice. School for All. Public Policies. Educational Equity.

## RESUMO

O presente artigo propõe uma reflexão sobre a prática da educação inclusiva no contexto do ensino regular brasileiro, com foco na inserção de crianças, jovens e adultos com deficiência. A pesquisa, de natureza qualitativa e caráter reflexivo, fundamenta-se em documentos legais, referenciais teóricos e políticas públicas que sustentam o direito à educação para todos. Analisa-se o papel da escola, da família e do poder público municipal na efetivação de práticas pedagógicas inclusivas, evidenciando os desafios de acesso, permanência e aprendizagem significativa. Os resultados indicam que, apesar dos avanços promovidos por políticas como a Política Nacional de Educação Especial na Perspectiva da Educação Inclusiva (2008) e a Lei Brasileira de Inclusão (2015), persistem barreiras estruturais, pedagógicas e atitudinais. Conclui-se que a construção de uma escola verdadeiramente inclusiva exige formação docente continuada, gestão democrática e a colaboração entre escola, família e comunidade, visando a uma educação equitativa e de qualidade social para todos.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação Inclusiva. Prática Educativa. Escola para Todos. Políticas Públicas. Equidade Educacional.

## RESUMEN

El presente artículo propone una reflexión sobre la práctica de la educación inclusiva en el contexto de la enseñanza regular brasileña, con enfoque en la inserción de niños, jóvenes y adultos con discapacidad. La investigación, de naturaleza cualitativa y carácter reflexivo, se fundamenta en documentos legales, marcos teóricos y políticas públicas que respaldan el derecho a la educación para todos. Se analiza el papel de la escuela, la familia y el poder público municipal en la implementación de prácticas pedagógicas inclusivas, evidenciando los desafíos de acceso, permanencia y aprendizaje significativo. Los resultados indican que, a pesar de los avances promovidos por políticas como la Política Nacional de Educación Especial en la Perspectiva de la Educación Inclusiva (2008) y la Ley Brasileña de Inclusión (2015), persisten barreras estructurales, pedagógicas y actitudinales. Se concluye que la construcción de una escuela verdaderamente inclusiva exige formación docente continua, gestión democrática y la colaboración entre escuela, familia y comunidad, con el objetivo de garantizar una educación equitativa y de calidad social para todos.

**Palabras clave:** Educación Inclusiva. Práctica Educativa. Escuela para Todos. Políticas Públicas. Equidad Educativa.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, inclusive education has consolidated itself as one of the main challenges and commitments of Brazilian educational policies. Although legal advances guarantee the right to education for all people, regardless of their physical, sensory, cognitive or social conditions, universal access still does not necessarily translate into permanence, participation and quality learning. The distance between what is established in the legislation and what is materialized in the school routine highlights the need for new studies, analyses and proposals that contribute to strengthening education as a fundamental human right and as an instrument of social justice.

With the enactment of the Federal Constitution of 1988, the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (1996) and subsequent policies, such as the National Policy on Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education (2008) and the Brazilian Law of Inclusion (2015), Brazil officially assumed the commitment to overcome segregating models and to build educational systems guided by the principle of equal opportunities. However, the implementation of these policies has revealed persistent barriers: lack of specific teacher training, absence of architectural and communicational accessibility, scarcity of adapted pedagogical resources, and weaknesses in the articulation between school, family, and public management.

Inclusive education is not limited to student enrollment, but implies reviewing pedagogical conceptions, reorganizing evaluation practices, rethinking school management models, and promoting cultural changes that value diversity as an educational foundation. Thus, more than an institutional arrangement, it is an ethical, political and epistemological displacement that recognizes the person with disabilities as a subject of rights and not as an object of assistance.

In this scenario, the inclusion of children, young people and adults who have historically been excluded or marginalized from the educational system emerges as an urgent agenda. The presence of students who are the target audience of special education in regular schools does not only represent an administrative change, but also a break with a school logic that, historically, has naturalized inequalities, failures and dropouts. The most recent research reinforces that the effectiveness of inclusive education depends not only on legal reforms, but also on transformations in pedagogical practices, school culture, and the participation of families and communities.

Thus, this article proposes a critical reflection on the factors that influence the effectiveness of inclusive education in Brazilian regular education, analyzing, in an articulated way, the role of the school, the family and the municipality in the construction of a truly democratic school. By problematizing the advances, limits and contradictions of public policies, we seek to understand not only what has already been achieved, but also what still prevents the consolidation of the principle of a school for all.

Although there are legal frameworks that ensure the right to access and permanence, official data reveal that this process is gradual and still insufficient. In recent decades, there has been a significant increase in the enrollment of students with disabilities, but this growth is not evenly distributed among regions, education networks or educational segments. The numerical evolution signals advances, but also reveals structural inequalities that must be considered to guide future actions.

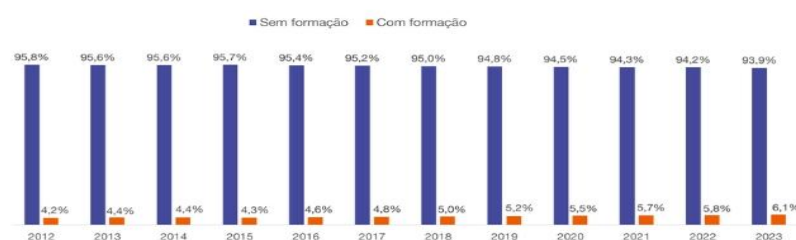
When we observe the statistical behavior of school inclusion in Brazil, we realize that the number of enrollments of students from the target audience of special education in regular classes has grown progressively, indicating the national adherence to the inclusion paradigm. However, this quantitative increase does not guarantee, by itself, an improvement in the quality of schooling, nor does it ensure that pedagogical practices are aligned with the principles of educational equity. This movement can be seen below:

**Figure 1**

*Evolution of enrollment of students from the target audience of special education in regular education – Brazil (2008–2024)*



### Professores regentes com formação continuada sobre educação especial - Brasil



Fonte: Painel de Indicadores da Educação Especial do IRM

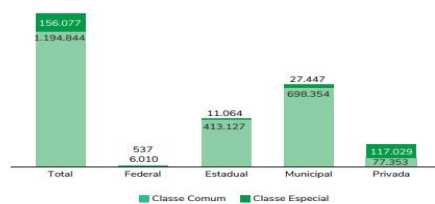


GRÁFICO 30  
NÚMERO DE MATRÍCULAS DE ALUNOS COM DEFICIÊNCIA, TRANSTORNOS GLOBAIS DO DESENVOLVIMENTO OU ALTAS HABILIDADES EM CLASSES COMUNS E EM CLASSES ESPECIAIS EXCLUSIVAS, SEGUNDO A DEPENDÊNCIA ADMINISTRATIVA – BRASIL – 2021  
Fonte: Elaborado por Deed/Inep com base nos dados do Censo Escolar da Educação Básica.

Source: INEP – School Census.

## 2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education is an international movement that was consolidated from the defense of the school as a space of rights, diversity and social justice. The concept breaks with segregating educational models and replaces the logic of adapting the student to school with the idea of reorganizing the school to serve all students. This paradigm shifts the focus from individual disability to the social, pedagogical, and institutional barriers that limit participation, learning, and human development.

Unlike the integration model, in which the student needed to adapt to the pre-existing school system, inclusion is based on the principle that it is the school that must be transformed, recognizing that diversity is constitutive of the educational process. Thus,

inclusion is not only a policy of serving the target audience of special education, but a conception of social quality of education based on equity, accessibility and participation.

## 2.1 FROM INTEGRATION TO INCLUSION: PARADIGM SHIFT

The contemporary debate distinguishes two historical models of schooling:

**Table 1**

| Model       | Logic                | Place of schooling                | Responsibility                |
|-------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Integration | "The student adapts" | Special school/special class      | Student and family            |
| Inclusion   | "The school adapts"  | Regular school, regular classroom | Educational system as a whole |

Educational inclusion represents, therefore, an epistemological change: the student is no longer seen as a problem to be corrected and is now recognized as a subject of rights, whose difference should not be normalized, but welcomed as part of the human condition.

## 2.2 INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTS THAT UNDERPIN INCLUSION

Inclusive education is based on a set of international frameworks that defend the universalization of the right to education:

- **Salamanca Declaration (1994)** — a global framework for school inclusion
- **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006)** — incorporated in Brazil with constitutional status
- **2030 Agenda and SDG 4 (UN)** – ensure inclusive and equitable education
- **UNESCO Reports (2008–2024)** – inclusion as an indicator of education quality

These documents state that inclusive education is not an optional goal, but a legal duty of States.

## 2.3 LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN BRAZIL

Brazil has one of the most advanced legal frameworks in Latin America with regard to the right to education for people with disabilities. Among the main regulatory frameworks, the following stand out:

**Table 2**

| Year | Document   | Contribution                                     |
|------|--|--|
| 1988 | Federal Constitution   | Education as a right for all                     |
| 1996 | LDB No. 9,394  | Specialized educational service (SES)            |
| 2008 | National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education | Schooling in regular education                   |
| 2015 | Brazilian Law of Inclusion (Statute of Persons with Disabilities)                | Education as an unconditional right              |
| 2017 | BNCC   | Socio-emotional skills and the right to learning |

These provisions reinforce that enrollment in regular schools is a priority, and the offer of special classes or institutions can only occur on an exceptional basis, never as a substitute.

## 2.4 INCLUSION AS A PRINCIPLE OF EDUCATIONAL JUSTICE

Inclusive education goes beyond the technical-pedagogical field: it is an ethical, political and social principle. It is not limited to guaranteeing access, but also involves permanence, participation and meaningful learning. In this sense, talking about inclusion implies recognizing that educational inequalities are not natural, but historically constructed, and, therefore, can, and should, be transformed.

Thus, the theoretical framework of inclusion is articulated with:

- Critical theories of education
- Studies on social justice and equity
- Conception of school as a territory of citizenship
- Sociocultural approach to human development
- Idea of curriculum as a social and dialogical construction

## 3 METHODOLOGY

The present study is characterized as a qualitative research, with a theoretical-reflective approach, articulated with documentary procedures and descriptive statistical analysis of secondary data. This methodological choice allows us to examine inclusive education in Brazil both from a conceptual and political-legal perspective and from educational indicators that show advances, setbacks and inequalities in the schooling process of students from the target audience of special education.

### 3.1 NATURE AND TYPE OF RESEARCH

This is a qualitative study, developed in the form of an analytical essay, focusing on the critical interpretation of documents, legislation, public policies and statistical data. The qualitative approach allows us to understand inclusive education as a social, historical and political phenomenon, whose analysis goes beyond numerical explanations and requires reflection on values, practices, disputes and conceptions of education and society.

### 3.2 SOURCES OF DATA AND MATERIALS CONSULTED

The study used three main groups of sources:

1. **Normative and legal documents** that regulate inclusive education in Brazil (1988 Constitution, 1996 LDB, 2008 National Policy on Special Education, 2015 Brazilian Inclusion Law, 2017 BNCC, etc.).
2. **National and international scientific production** published in journals in the area of Education, Public Policies and Special Education.
3. **Statistical data in the public domain** made available by official bodies such as:
  - INEP – School Census (2008–2024)
  - MEC – Secretariat of Continuing and Inclusive Education
  - IBGE – Surveys on education and disability
  - UNESCO and UN (Global Reports on Educational Inclusion)

These sources allow the crossing of theoretical foundations with concrete educational indicators, ensuring analytical consistency.

### 3.3 DATA COLLECTION, ORGANIZATION AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The investigation followed the following steps:

1. **Documentary survey** of legislation, educational plans, guidelines and official reports.
2. **Selection and reading of theoretical works and studies published between 2000 and 2024**, related to inclusive education and the right to education.
3. **Extraction, tabulation and organization of official statistical data**, used later in the construction of the Figures presented throughout the article.
4. **Interpretative analysis of a critical-reflective nature**, articulating theoretical foundations, public policies and numerical evidence.
5. **Argumentative writing of the results in thematic sections**, articulating school, family and public power.



The Figures used in the article do not have an illustrative function, but an analytical one, that is, they reinforce the arguments discussed in the text and serve as empirical evidence of the Brazilian educational reality.

### 3.4 METHODOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION

The adoption of a hybrid, theoretical method, through quantitative indicators, is also not restricted to philosophical reflections detached from the educational reality. Thus, the combination of conceptual analysis and official data allows us to understand both the principles that guide inclusion and their materialization in Brazilian schools.

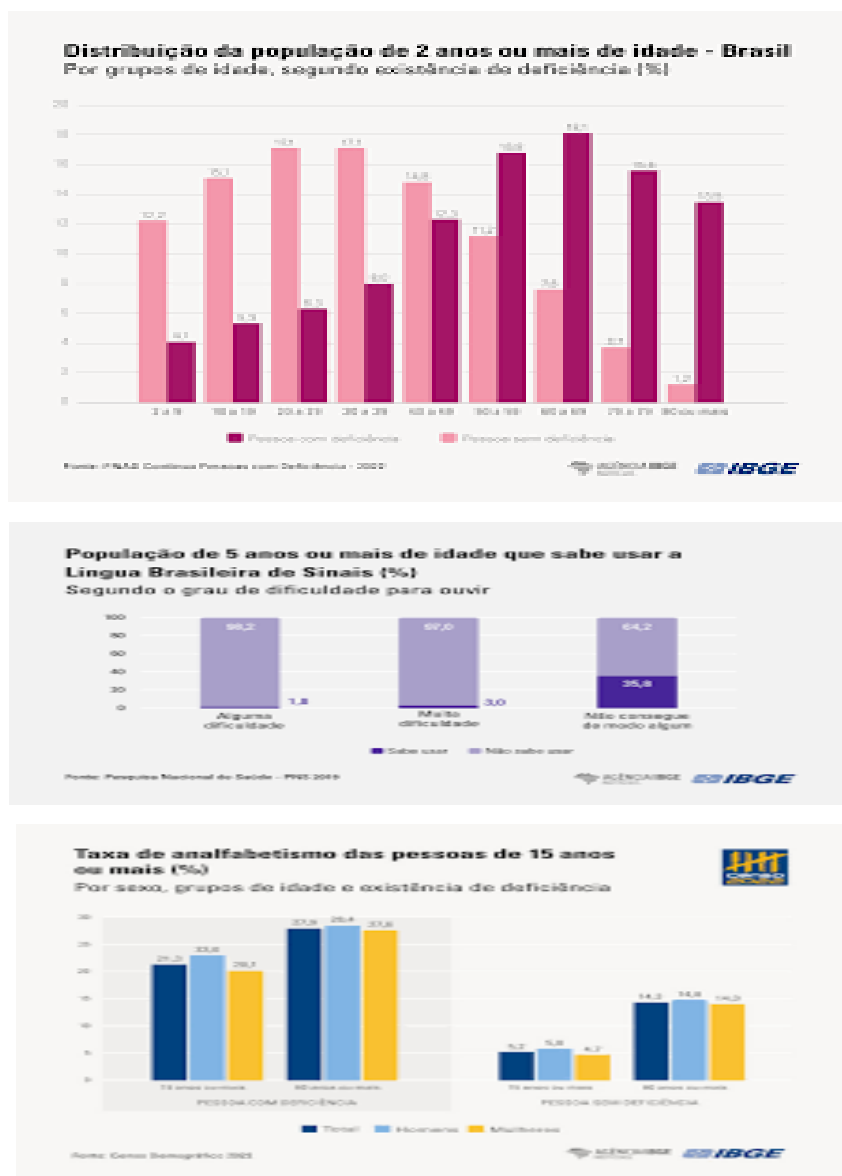
### 3.5 STUDY LIMITATIONS

This study does not involve primary data collection, such as interviews, questionnaires, or participant observation, which limits the investigation to the analysis of documents and data in the public domain. In addition, the available statistical data depend on periodic updates from official agencies, which can generate a time lag in some indicators. Such limitations, however, do not compromise the rigor of the analysis, since the objective of the article is not to describe a specific local reality, but to problematize policies and practices on a national scale.

Documentary and statistical, it is justified by the complexity of the object of study. Inclusive education cannot be analyzed only

**Figure 2**

*Title: Distribution of enrollments of students targeted by special education according to type of disability – Brazil (most recent year available)*



Data source: Brazilian Institute of GeoFigurey and Statistics (IBGE) – PNS 2019.

## 6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results presented below were organized into three main axes of analysis, according to statistical data collected in official databases (INEP, IBGE, MEC) and articulated with the theoretical review and inclusive education policies. The Figures constructed allow us to visualize not only the historical evolution of inclusion, but also the structural limits that still prevent the full implementation of the principle of "education for all" in the regular education system.

## 6.1 EVOLUTION OF ENROLLMENT OF YOUTH AND ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES IN BASIC EDUCATION

The first Figure shows the growth in the number of students from the target audience of Special Education enrolled in regular classes in the regular network. Although the data reveal a percentage increase over the last few years, it is observed that the progression does not occur in a linear way, being affected by structural variables, such as financing policies, the supply of Specialized Educational Service (SES) and teacher training.

The numbers confirm that inclusion has been advancing in the normative sphere, but still faces practical barriers in everyday school life, reinforcing the argument that simple enrollment does not represent effective inclusion, but only formal access.

## 6.2 SCHOOL DROPOUT AND PERMANENCE RATES IN INCLUSIVE EJA

The second Figure reveals a critical point of inclusive educational policy in Brazil: the school dropout of young people and adults with disabilities who enter Youth and Adult Education (EJA). Although the legislation guarantees the right to permanence with learning, the data show a mismatch between the entry and completion of schooling, indicating gaps in pedagogical monitoring, school infrastructure, curricular adaptation, and dialogue between school, family, and public services.

The analysis shows that dropout does not result from the disability itself, but from pedagogical, methodological and social barriers, as already highlighted in the theoretical framework. Thus, school inclusion remains conditional on the creation of intersectoral support networks, and not only on enrollment compliance.

## 6.3 DISTRIBUTION OF ENROLLMENTS BY TYPE OF DISABILITY

The third Figure shows the composition of enrollments by four predominant categories: visual, hearing, motor and intellectual disabilities. The greater concentration recorded in the field of intellectual disability reinforces the need for teacher training in differentiated pedagogical practices, in the use of assistive technologies and in adapted literacy and literacy methods.

In addition, the lower representation of students with hearing impairment in regular classes shows that the inclusion of these subjects still depends heavily on the presence of Libras interpreters, linguistic accessibility resources and institutional policies for communication in two languages — something still restricted to a few municipalities.

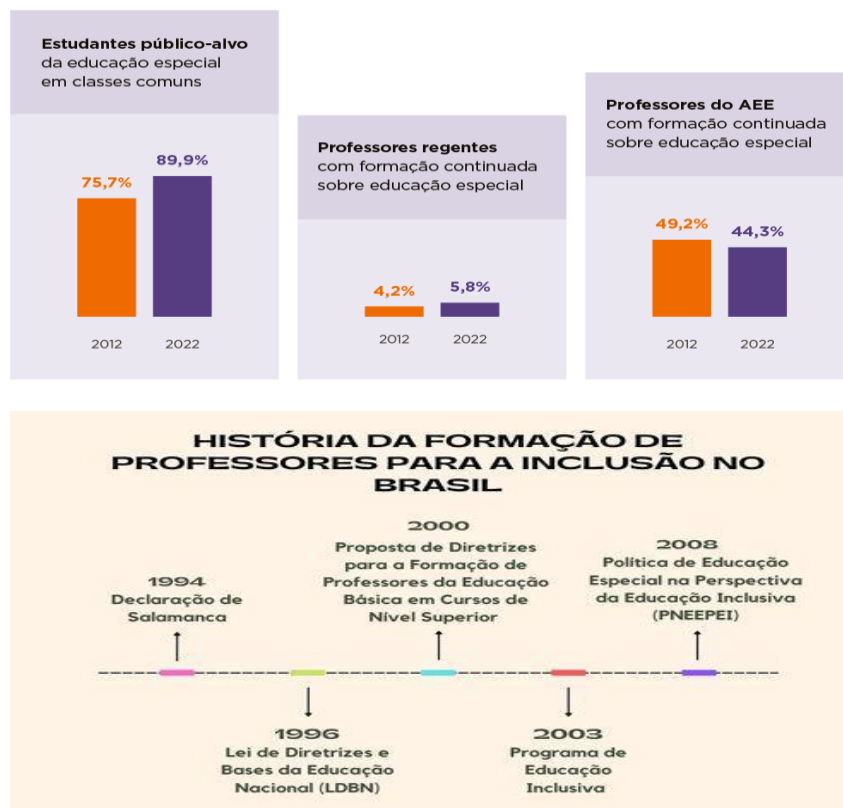
## Summary Discussion

The data presented confirm that inclusion in Brazil advances in a fragmented way: while policies affirm the universal right to access, the indicators of permanence and learning reveal structural inequalities. This distance between legislation and practice reinforces the central thesis of this article: there is no real inclusion without curricular transformation, continuous teacher training and active participation of the family and the school community.

The results also demonstrate that inclusion is not only a pedagogical challenge, but also a political, social and economic one. The school, in isolation, cannot handle the complexity of human diversity if the municipality, the family, the managers and the State do not act in an articulated way.

### Figure 3

*Suggested title: Percentage of basic education teachers with continuing education in special/inclusive education – Brazil (recent years)*



Data source: Reports from the Ministry of Education (MEC) and the Special Education Indicator Panel, which indicate that approximately 94% of the regent teachers do not have specific continuing education in special/inclusive education.

## 7 CONCLUSION

The analysis carried out throughout this article shows that the inclusion of young people and adults in the regular education system, although supported by a broad legal framework, is still partially and unequally materialized in the Brazilian school routine. The data reveal that the advance in the number of enrollments does not necessarily correspond to the guarantee of permanence, learning and full participation, which confirms the existence of a gap between the normative discourse and the pedagogical practice.

The presence of structural, pedagogical, communicational, and attitudinal barriers demonstrates that inclusion cannot be understood as a mere administrative act of enrollment, but as a continuous process of school reorganization, curriculum review, and teacher training based on human diversity as a pedagogical principle and not as an exception. The Figure referring to professional teacher training confirms this condition: most teachers do not have specific training to work with students from the target audience of special education, which has a direct impact on school dropout rates and low school performance.

It is concluded that the construction of an inclusive school depends on three interdependent pillars: the political commitment of the municipality, the pedagogical action of the school and the active participation of the family. Overcoming school exclusion requires sustainable public policies, adequate funding, permanent teacher training programs and intersectoral articulation with health, social assistance and culture. Without this basis, inclusion tends to be restricted to a legal ideal that has not been fulfilled.

This study contributes to reinforce that Inclusive Education is not a policy aimed only at people with disabilities, but an ethical, social and democratic project to guarantee the right to education as a common good. Thus, it is reaffirmed that **a school for all only exists when it is organized for each one**, and not when it imposes unique standards of learning and development.

### Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This work used exclusively secondary data and theoretical review, which means that it does not yet address the perception of the subjects involved (teachers, students and families). It is recommended, therefore, that future studies include field research, interviews and analysis of concrete pedagogical practices, in order to broaden the understanding of the mechanisms of permanence and school success of young people and adults, from an inclusive perspective.

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