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aprendizagem

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## Special Education: Perspectives on Policies, Teaching, and Learning

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**Abstract:** Since the 1990s, the social and educational rights of people with disabilities and other atypical developmental conditions have received significant attention in Brazilian public policies and financial investments. From this perspective, this dossier presents results of research carried out in different Brazilian states, in which we can identify the impacts of these rights in policies guidelines, curriculums and schooling processes historically aimed at these subjects, as well as research methodologies and resources required to secure those rights. They also indicate problems and tensions involved in teacher training due to the demands created by school inclusion policy. In this respect, the studies presented here reveal the multiplicity of factors that

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involve the preparation and implementation of inclusive policies in a country with great social inequalities, but, above all, show the importance and the need for this type of proposals in order to guarantee the acknowledgement of the diversity present in Brazilian society and schools.

**Keywords:** Special Education; inclusive education; teaching-learning processes.

### **Educación Especial: políticas y procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje**

**Resumen:** Desde la década de 1990, los derechos sociales y educativas de las personas con discapacidad y otras condiciones atípicas de desarrollo han recibido mucha atención en las políticas y las inversiones financieras por parte del Estado brasileño. En esta perspectiva, este dossier presenta los resultados de pesquisas realizadas en diferentes estados del país en el que se identifican los impactos de estos derechos en las directrices de política, currículos y procesos de escolarización históricamente destinados a estos sujetos, metodologías de investigación y los recursos necesarios para garantizar tales derechos. Asimismo, indican los problemas y tensiones que implican la formación de profesores ante las demandas impuestas por la política de inclusión escolar. En este sentido, los estudios presentados aquí revelan la multiplicidad de factores que intervienen en el desarrollo y la implementación de políticas inclusivas en un país con inmensas desigualdades sociales, pero sobre todo muestran la importancia y la necesidad de este tipo de propuestas para garantizar el reconocimiento de la diversidad presente en la sociedad y las escuelas brasileñas.

**Palavras clave:** Educação Especial; inclusão escolar; procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje.

### **Educação Especial: perspectivas sobre políticas e processos de ensino-aprendizagem**

**Resumo:** Desde os anos 1990, os direitos sociais e educacionais de pessoas com deficiências e outras condições atípicas do desenvolvimento têm recebido atenção significativa nas políticas e nos investimentos financeiros por parte do Estado brasileiro. Nessa perspectiva, este dossiê apresenta resultados de pesquisas desenvolvidas em diferentes estados do país, nos quais podemos identificar os impactos desses direitos em diretrizes políticas, currículos e processos de escolarização historicamente destinados para estes sujeitos, metodologias de pesquisa e recursos demandados para garantir tais direitos. Também indicam problemas e tensões que envolvem a formação de professores diante das demandas colocadas pela política de inclusão escolar. A este respeito, os estudos aqui apresentados revelam a multiplicidade de fatores que envolvem a elaboração e a implementação de políticas inclusivas em um país com enormes desigualdades sociais, mas, sobretudo, mostram a importância e a necessidade de propostas dessa natureza para garantir o reconhecimento da diversidade presente na sociedade e nas escolas brasileiras.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação Especial; inclusão escolar; processos de ensino-aprendizagem.

## **Introduction**

In contemporary societies the implementation of public policies to guarantee social and education rights for persons with disabilities and other atypical developmental conditions has advanced enormously, especially following the expansion of the so-called inclusive education policies based on the principles of diversity and human rights.

Given those changes it is important to understand how governments have linked general directives for inclusive education with educational policies and programs, and how those linkages have affected the lives of those involved, in particular those with disabilities. Understanding the paths opened by public policies contributes to improving the comprehension of curricular practices and proposals, an essential aspect for the analysis of the model or system of support offered for the

education of the target public of Special Education, who in Brazil consist of persons with disabilities, global development disturbances, and those who are gifted or have special abilities.

In other words, in the Brazilian case this analysis helps to understand the role assumed by Special Education as a form of teaching that is linked with all the other levels of Education, from Infant to University Education. It also helps to understand the area as a field of scientific investigation. It should be mentioned that in Brazil the institutionalization of Special Education is recent, dating from the 1970s. Since then the country has undergone numerous social, political, economic, and academic changes. The expansion of scientific production in the area of Special Education is parallel to that of Education itself, which occurred principally after the creation and expansion of post-graduate studies in the country, the consolidation of the National Association of Post-Graduation and Research in Education (*Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Educação - Anped*)<sup>1</sup> and also the Association of Special Education Researchers (*Associação de Pesquisadores em Educação Especial - ABPEE*).<sup>2</sup>

Parallel to this, the rights of the poorer classes to school access expanded. In the case of the target public of Special Education, this process was strengthened still further in the 2000s by the proposal of school inclusion and the expansion of the number of students registered in public education to the detriment of those registered in segregated philanthropic-private institutions (special schools). Recent indicators from the school census carried out by the Anísio Teixeira National Institute of Educational Study and Research (*Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira - INEP*) showed that between 2008 - 2011, the number of special education students registered in public schools rose from 54% to 74% (BRASIL, 2011).

According to Santos and Baptista (2014) and Mendes and Matos (2014), the significant increase in the numbers registered in public education is linked to changes in federal directives, especially following the implementation of the National Special Education Policy in the Perspective of Inclusive Education (BRASIL, 2008) and the Operational Directive for Specialized Education Services in Basic Education, Special Education Mode (BRASIL, 2009), as well as the National Plan of Rights for Disabled persons, or the Living without Limits Program (BRASIL, 2013). All these documents comply with the indications of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, known as the United Nations Declaration (BRASIL, 2008), which was the subject of a constitutional amendment in Brazil in 2008.

Nevertheless, despite the legal advances and the significant increase in registration numbers in public school, research has revealed that the quality of teaching and learning processes and the specialized support model offered to these individuals still suffers from various types of problems and limitations. The perspectives, tensions, contradictions, and challenges faced by the three levels of government in Brazil are widely discussed and problematized in the articles that form this dossier. The research presented here help us to understand the current political proposal in force though without forgetting to raise empirically based questions in a critical manner in a country with enormous social, educational, and regional disparities.

It is with this purpose that the eight articles that form this dossier discuss a set of themes investigated in different regions of Brazil. They were selected based on the analysis of 36 texts submitted for the proposed dossier. Assessing all these papers took six months and involved approximately fifty external peer reviewers. This enterprise allowed us gain a wide-ranging and up-to-date panorama of scientific production in the area of Special Education and its dialogue with the different fields of Education, showing the principal themes, theoretical currents and methodologies in recent years in the area. The texts selected for this publication focus, to a great extent, on the

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<sup>1</sup> Created in 1976.

<sup>2</sup> Created in 1993.

analysis of inclusion policies and programs implemented under the administration of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, who took office in 2003, and expanded under the administration of Dilma Rousseff. Also looked at are the impact of public policies on the education of people with disabilities and global disturbances, in particular those aimed at fostering learning.

Discussing how inclusion in teaching networks has been created, as well as its contradictions and obstacles, is the aim of the article entitled “Implantação de programas de educação inclusiva em um município brasileiro: garantia de efetivação do processo ensino-aprendizagem?” (Implementation of inclusive education programs in a Brazilian municipality: a guarantee of the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process?) by Rebelo and Kassar (Universidade do Mato Grosso do Sul - Campus Universitário de Corumbá/MS), who analyze different inclusive education programs, focusing on the experience of a municipality in the Mid-West region of Brazil. The results presented point to an increase in the registration of students with disabilities in common basic education schools, though they also reveal the fragilities still present in the schooling offered. In addition, they show the continuity of segregation spaces of education in philanthropic-private institutions.

More concerned with methodological reflection and fieldwork in Special Education research, the article “Influência das representações sociais do pesquisador na análise de dados de entrevistas: um estudo no campo da educação especial” (The influence of social representations of researchers on the data analysis of interviews: a study in the field of special education), by Manzini (Universidade Estadual Paulista – Unesp de Marília/SP) and Glat (Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro – Rio de Janeiro/RJ), investigates how social representations influence researchers. The conclusions call attention to the need to improve the methodological and theoretical education of young researchers.

The third article, entitled “Currículo e conhecimento escolar na contemporaneidade: desafios para a escolarização de sujeitos com deficiência” (Curriculum and school knowledge in contemporaneity : challenges for the education of disabled persons), by Lunardi-Mendes (Universidade do Estado de Santa Catarina - Florianópolis/SC) and Silva (Universidade Federal do Mato Grosso do Sul - Campo Grande/MS), discusses the relationship between curriculum and schooling processes of persons with disabilities. Looking at various research projects, the authors raise questions that, in my view, deserve to be investigated in relation to curricular practices related to the development of knowledge in inclusive school contexts.

The fourth article, written by Pletsch (Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro – Campus de Nova Iguaçu/RJ) and entitled “A escolarização de pessoas com deficiência intelectual no Brasil: da institucionalização às políticas de inclusão (1973-2013),” (The education of persons with intellectual disabilities in Brazil: the institutionalization of inclusion policies (1973-2013)), analyzes the education of persons with intellectual disabilities in Brazil during the last forty years. Based on official documents and ethnographic data, the text presents a panorama of how Special Education has been constituted in the country, with an emphasis on federal directives and programs and the political conflicts over the definition of the locus of the education of persons with intellectual disabilities. The article also shows the fragility of the public system in providing conditions for the identification and encouragement of educational practices (with pedagogical support when necessary) to improve the learning and development of these students. In addition, the paper presents some elements for discussing school curricula and the learning of students with intellectual disabilities based on Vigotski’s historical and cultural perspective.

Equally based on a historical and cultural perspective, the article entitled “Políticas e práticas de educação inclusiva: condições e contradições no cotidiano de uma escola de ensino fundamental” (Inclusive education policies and practices: conditions and contradictions in the daily life of a fundamental school), by Souza, Dainez, Smolka, Scian, and Hulsholf (Universidade Estadual de Campinas – Campinas/SP), debates the contradictions which marked teaching work in a school

inclusion context, based on a collective research project carried out in a public fundamental education school in the municipal network of Campinas, SP, Brazil. One of the central aspects of the article refers to the discussion about the implementation of school inclusion policies and their impact on teaching processes and the learning of the target public of Special Education. The research also indicates the need for investment in the education of teaching staff and an improvement in current teaching conditions.

With the title “A Comunicação Alternativa para além das Tecnologias Assistivas” (Communication Alternatives beyond Assistive Technologies), Nunes and Walter (Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro – Rio de Janeiro/RJ) approach the concept and the role of technology in alternative communication and the schooling process of individuals with autism and cerebral palsy. The analysis focuses on the introduction of alternative communication in daily education and teacher training with the aim of favoring the linguistic, communicative, and social abilities of students whose communication is severely compromised in their interactions in the classroom.

Following this, the text by Nunes and Araújo (Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte – Natal/RN) entitled “Autismo: a educação infantil como cenário de intervenção” (Autism: infant education as a scenario of intervention) shows the importance of precocious intervention in the development of autistic children registered in Infant Education classes. For this, they describe the basics of these types of intervention and make a brief historical revision of this practice and its operationalization in common classes in Infant Education, particularly in crèches. Finally, they discuss the relevance of this approach in the national context of Infant Education, above all, in relation to the political directives of inclusive education.

Finally, the article “Interface entre a EJA e Educação Especial: o professor e a inclusão de jovens e adultos com deficiência intelectual”, (Interface between YAE and Special Education: the teacher and the inclusion of youths and adults with intellectual disabilities), by Freitas and Campos (Universidade Federal de São Carlos – São Carlos/SP), has the aim of understanding the teaching practices and conditions of work of teachers of Youth and Adult Education (YEA) with students with intellectual disabilities registered in this type of fundamental education, studying at night. The article presents recent data about the registration of these students in YEA, based on microdata from the Anísio Teixeira National Institute of Education Study and Research (Inep). Amongst other aspects, the data reveals that YEA opens possibilities for the education of students with intellectual disabilities in regular education. However, the research problematizes the organization and the curricular planning that need to be developed to make the learning of these students effective.

The fruit of different theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches, and distinct social universes, the texts collected here are particularly relevant for two reasons. First, they contribute to a better understanding of the social and political reality related to dimensions which involved the education of individuals with disabilities. Second, they offer a current panorama of the principal research paths and options adopted in the area and, at the same time, mark the themes that deserve greater investigative efforts, some of them with urgency, such as the teaching and learning process of this population.

We hope that the texts presented in this dossier can instigate new reflections, approaches, and themes, as well as revisit some ‘old’ themes, still so present in the Brazilian social reality, with new questions and perspectives. We also hope that the dossier contributes to the deepening of dialogue between Special Education, Education, and other areas of the Human Sciences.

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## Guest Editors

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**Geovana Mendonça Lunardi Mendes** is a Professor at the Graduate Program in Education and at the Pedagogy Department of the University of Santa Catarina State (PGE-UDESC). She is a researcher in the area of Special Education and Curriculum Studies. She holds a Postdoctoral from Universidad of San Andres Buenos Aires (Argentina) and from Ashland University (United States) in the area of Curriculum and New Technologies. She is the research coordinator of many projects and participates as a guest researcher in national and international initiatives. Her research and literary productions have been pointed towards the area of Curriculum and school practices, in particular the issues on changes, new technologies and innovations in school curricula, and also curricular practices regarding the inclusion of individuals with disabilities. She is currently the National Coordinator of the program "Education and Diversity" by CAPES-FIPSE International Cooperation, involving the Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Universidade do Estado de Santa Catarina (Brazil), Georgetown College (USA), Ashland University (USA), and Brigham Young University (USA). She is the coordinator of the research project Connected Classes: curriculum changes and collaborative learning in PROUCA schools in Santa Catarina, funded by CNPq and School Practices Observatory Project with funding by FAPESC. She is the coordinator of the Graduate Program in Education, MA, PhD, of FAED, UDESC and coordinates the Education Observatory: Tablets, Computers and Laptops, OBEDUC/CAPES. Among her current productions is the book entitled "Pedagogical Objects: An Inclusive Experience in Art Workshops" in partnership with two other authors and the production of the book "Disability and Schooling: New Analytical Perspectives," released in its second edition. She has authored numerous chapters and journal articles.

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