

Debates and disputes in the Brazilian national policy on Special Education^{1*}

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Abstract

During the discussions related to the Brazilian Federal Constitution, in the 1980s, there were several disputes of interest among different sectors of society towards the establishment of public policies in Brazil. Special education policies have been defined under such circumstances, that is, under the pressures from social segments. Regarding that dynamic, the paper seeks to emphasize the role played by different actors (specialized agencies, Ministry of Education technicians, groups of people with disabilities and their families, the Federal Prosecution Service, special education researchers) in the proposition and implementation of the national policy on special education in Brazil. The period considered in the study was between 2001 and 2018. The relevant information was collected in newspapers, online news, commentators' blogs, webpages representing the government, and specialized agencies from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The period was characterized by disputes, with the evident action by historical partnerships designed for the formulation of guidelines for special education, and by the strengthening of another group, composed of parents, researchers, technicians and political consultants, who explicitly started challenging the specialized institutions' historical performance. Such disputes led to the establishment of a polarity that has not favored the development of propositions or projects tailored to the specific needs of Special Education students, with regards to the attention to resources and to educational specificities, as well as to the public financing for actions in that area.

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Introduction

In Brazil, both the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s were marked by the mobilization against the civil-military dictatorship (1964-1985), which gathered together representative organisms from the organized civil society. The general movement included managers and teachers linked to the different education systems, who defended the establishment of social rights, in the process of re-democratization of Brazilian society, and who formed associations, later transformed into unions, thus reaching teachers at the different levels of education and specialists from the various educational qualifications nationwide (SAVIANI, 2013). According to the author, the decade witnessed the biggest educators' mobilization, probably only comparable to the actions in the 1920s, which culminated in the preparation and dissemination of the document *The educational reconstruction in Brazil: for the people and the government*, in 1932 (MANIFESTO..., 2006).

In the 1980s, the mobilization in the educational area was evident during the Constitution-making process (1987-1988), with the participation of the *Forum of Education in the National Constituent Assembly in Defense of Public and Free Education*, consisting of 15 entities and private education representatives, who polarized the discussion on public education *versus* private education (SAVIANI, 2013).

The 1988 *Federal Constitution* protects life, freedom, safety and property of all people. It guarantees the educational rights of the students, the school, and the family. It thus defines education as a legal, individual and collective asset, although the constitutional determinations are not always complied with (VIEIRA, 2001). According to Article Six of the *Constitution*, education is a social right⁴. Cury (2007) declares that education is both a social right and a duty: the citizen's right and the duty of the State (2007). The Declaration and the realization of the right to education are indispensable, in the case of Brazil, a country "with a strong elitist tradition", where the elites have "traditionally reserved the access to the social asset only to the privileged segments of society" (CURY, 2007, p. 484).

As a result of the process of widespread popular participation, the 1988 *Federal Constitution* also ensures the Democratic Rule-of-Law State, "which explicitly and concretely recognizes the sovereignty of the law and the representative regime". It recognizes and includes, at the same time, the popular power "as a source of power and legality and considers it as a component of the broader decision-making processes of public deliberation and democratization of the State itself." For example, Article Fourteen of the *Constitution* recognizes the referendum, the plebiscite and the popular initiative "as representative and complementary forms of the representative democratic process" (CURY, 2013, p. 196).

The context involves the nationwide education policies formulated or reformulated, which result from mobilizations, tensions, social forces correlation, and different projects

4- The 1988 *Federal Constitution* determines: "Education, health, nutrition, labor, housing, transportation, leisure, safety, social security, protection to motherhood and childhood, assistance to the destitute are social rights, in accordance with this Constitution" (BRASIL, 1988).

of society. They are therefore components of the working-class actions to gain access to social rights, including public education and school quality standard. As Vieira points out (2001, p. 13),

[...] it is true that citizenship rights are historically born in society, among workers, among the miserable, among the dispossessed. They have claimed their rights and have conquered some of them over the last two centuries.

Thus, the achievement of citizenship rights by children, adolescents, young people and adults is the responsibility of the Brazilian State, by means of the specific competencies of the federated entities, in a federative regime (BRASIL, 1988).

The approval of the *Federal Constitution* ended a decade of great mobilization and achievements in the educational area. Thus, “if the 1980s were classified, from the economic point of view, as the ‘lost decade’, in the field of education these years were characterized as a decade of important gains” (SAVIANI, 2013, p. 216).

After the approval of the *Federal Constitution*, the 1990s were marked by the implementation of neoliberal measures (ANDERSON, 1995), when relevant social losses were seen, contrary to the designations of the 1988 *Federal Constitution* (SAVIANI, 2013). The deployment of such measures, in a period of neoliberalism advancement in such countries as England, the United States, Australia and Chile, whose premise is to retreat the role of the State, especially in relation to social policies (ANDERSON, 1995; CURY, 2013; HARVEY, 2012), ended up by neutralizing many of the achievements inserted in the constitutional text, with the country’s adherence to the economic and political guidelines of the neoliberal thinking (SAVIANI, 2013). However, as the social rights were determined in the Constitution, the infra-constitutional laws that followed have preserved fundamental axes such as gratuity in all public schooling, tax linking, and subjective public rights, among others (CURY, 2013).

During that period of capitalism, despite the advancements in terms of the disputes for democracy, there was an emptying of social policies, understood as universal rights. The disputes and historical achievements of the 1980s gave way to the naturalization of the possible. On the one hand, “the partnership between the public and the private ends up as a public ‘policy’ with great implications for the federative relations in terms of achieving the right to education” (PERONI, 2013, p. 29). On the other hand, access to public education was expanded by the *Constitutional Amendment No 59*, of 11th November 2009, which extended the compulsory schooling and the State’s constitutional duty regarding education, by establishing, in Article 208, the compulsory and free basic education for people between four and 17 years old, including its free offer for all those people who did not have access in the proper age, as well as the assistance by means of supplementary programs of school teaching material, transportation, food and health care (BRASIL, 2009). The measure led to the extension of the subjective right to request the effectuation of the educational right.

Such considerations lead to the analysis of how social inclusion began to be assumed by Brazilian governments. Since the first Multiannual Plan (PPA) *Brazil in Action* (1996-

1999), under the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, social policies have been presented with the declared intention of combating poverty and promoting social justice. The commitment to the universalization of compulsory education have gained centrality, together with the idea of an association between schooling and poverty reduction.

The adoption of the premise remained in the agendas of president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2006 and 2007-2010). In the first term, social inclusion was presented in the PPA (2004-2007) as a *Long-term development strategy* (BRASIL, 2004, p. 17). In the second term, the PPA 2008-2011, entitled *Development with social inclusion and quality education* defined three main axes: economic growth, social agenda and quality education (BRASIL, 2007, p. 1), with the intention of accelerating economic growth, promoting social inclusion and reducing regional inequalities. The plan *More Brazil, More development, More equality, More participation* (BRASIL, 2011), when Dilma Rousseff was the president of the country (2012-2015), intended to continue the actions towards reducing poverty and increasing social participation.

The different governments shared some features, one of which was the formalization of the set of human rights, by means of the National Human Rights Plans (PNDH). The document reaffirmed the commitments to social and civil guarantees, especially to people in situations of inequality and social exclusion, in a territorially unequal country, from an economic, political, social, and cultural point of view.

Another feature was the permeability between State and mercantile and non-mercantile private organizations in the implementation of actions in the social area. Such permeability had different nuances. During President Fernando Henrique Cardoso's two terms, the State played the role of a development booster, by transferring its responsibility to the public non-state sector in the implementation of social policies, as a publicization strategy (BRASIL, 1995). During the governments of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff, the State was defended as the protagonist of the broadening of citizenship. That role, however, included actions of complementarity of the mercantile and non-mercantile organizations, which explains the public-private dimension in the Brazilian governmental actions (OLIVEIRA; SENNA, 2015). As non-mercantile organizations, the private institutions specialized in special education had their place assured in the propositions of education policies, either in the management organization during Fernando Henrique Cardoso's terms, or in the view of the State as a protagonist, according to Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's and Dilma Rousseff's government plans.

The special education policies designed by the federal government were embodied while different social actors came on the scene (specialized institutions, Ministry of Education technicians, groups of people with disabilities and their families, the Federal Prosecution Service, special education researchers, press commentators, among others). At times, the pressure from specialized organizations was more audible; at times, the movement in favor of the full participation of people with disabilities in non-specialized institutions was strengthened.

Taking that scenario into consideration, the objective of the paper is to emphasize the participation of different actors in the proposition of the directions of the national special education policy from 2001 to 2018, as well as its implementation. The periodization is justified by the fact that in 2001, the first initiative of intervention in the guidelines of

special education in Brazil was taken by the Federal Prosecution Service, as will be seen in this study. The organ participated in the construction of the document *Special education policy from the perspective of inclusive education* (BRASIL, 2008), published in 2008. In 2018, there was an explicit movement of review of the policy assumed in 2008 by the federal government.

The procedures for the study consisted of collecting information in the media (newspapers and Web), commentators' blogs, email-based discussions by researchers belonging to the GT 15 (Special Education) of the National Association of Post-Graduation and Research in Education (ANPEd) and Web pages representing public authorities, scientific associations in the field of education, associations of people with disabilities, and specialized private institutions, acting in the form of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

The materials, collected over the years, were analyzed in the articulation with the moment they were generated. Textual production, a human construction in a dialectical relationship with materiality, is dated and historical; it carries features of the legal, social, cultural, and economic organization, as well as the positions of the subjects in society (GRAMSCI, 1987). By looking at the text in the dialogue with history, the study aimed to identify the actors' perspective. In such dialogue, two categories were articulated in different ways during the conflicts regarding Special Education: the allocation of the public resource and the place where care is provided. The latter category may be identified as attention to specificity (sometimes, but not always, referred to as segregation) and generality (also sometimes referred to as inclusion).

Different perspectives in Brazilian special education

In 2001, during Fernando Henrique Cardoso's second term, the Minister of Education Paulo Renato Costa Souza received some documents from the Office of the Prosecutor General on inclusive education. The documents included a copy of a recommendation from the Prosecutor General addressed to the National Council of Education, written after an analysis of the Legal Opinion CNE/CEB 17/2001 and the Resolution CNE/CEB 02/2001 (*National guidelines for special education in basic education*). In the words of the Prosecutor General,

[...] such documents [...] despite being correct in their initial considerations [...] by defining the policies related to specialized service in the regular education network, do not respect the principles of equality and non-discrimination, by admitting adapted curricula in schools and special rooms and, consequently, certain people with disabilities may stay on the margin of regular education, which does not meet the constitutional determinations. (BRASIL, 2002).

The incident revealed a movement that was being strengthened, from a certain viewpoint. To the common eyes, however, it was not noticed. The analysis of the *National guidelines for special education in basic education*, presented by the Office of the Prosecutor General, drew attention to the fact that many children and adults with disabilities were not being schooled, so the State was not complying with its commitment to the universalization of compulsory education.

Some researchers (BUENO, 1991; D'antino, 1998) declare that the beforementioned deprivation to schooling was already known, because many specialized institutions, especially the ones linked to the care of people with intellectual and/or multiple disabilities, are defined by assistance conceptions and do not guarantee adequate schooling. The institutions referred to here are the private care organizations, specialized in special education. They emerged and were strengthened during the 20th century. Until the beginning of the 21st century, they were the major protagonists of special education in Brazil and maintained the highest concentration of enrolments of students with disabilities (KASSAR; REBELO, 2018). There are two aspects mainly involved. Firstly, although they describe themselves as special education institutions, many are basically focused on rehabilitation. The second aspect refers to the fact that such institutions receive public resources (LAPLANE; CAIADO; KASSAR, 2016).

During the discussions related to the terms of the *Federal Constitution*, there were disputes of interest among different sectors of society regarding the definition of public policies in Brazil. A movement emerged, not necessarily articulated, of dissatisfaction with the *status quo* of Brazilian special education, with the beginning and expansion of critical researches in the field of special education (LEMOS, 1981; JANNUZZI, 1985; MAZZOTTA, 1989) and the strengthening of the perception of education as a social right including people with disabilities (FERREIRA, 1989; BUENO, 1991).

The pressure for the schooling of students with disabilities was strengthened with international commitments and agreements, with targets established during the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, 1990), and the New Delhi Declaration on Education, in 1993. The pressure led the largest network of specialized institutions in special private care education in Brazil (APAE-FENAPAE) to elaborate and disseminate the document *APAE (Association for Parents and Friends of the Disabled) educator: the school we want* – a guideline for educational actions (APAE, 2001), as a response to the need for the schooling of its persons (MELETTI, 2006).

In addition to the agreements aiming at the universalization of compulsory and free education in Brazil, another international document was used as a reference for the establishment of education policies and public programs and actions: the *Declaración de Salamanca y marco de acción para las necesidades educativas especiales*, resulting from the *Conferencia Mundial Sobre Necesidades Educativas Especiales: Acceso y Calidad*, in 1994. However, despite the fact that the document recommended the enrolment of all students (including the ones with more severe disabilities) in common/regular schools, the *National policy on special education* (BRASIL, 1994), the *National Education Guidelines and Framework Law* (BRASIL, 1996), and the *National guidelines for special education in basic education* (BRASIL, 2001) continued to prescribe the existence of special schools, which somehow maintained the comfortable situation of specialized institutions.

At the beginning of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's first term (2003-2006), the government announced a change in the context, by proposing an inclusive education system as a national education policy (BRASIL, 2005), according to which the place of education for all children was the common/regular school; the special education was presented as a complement or supplement to compulsory schooling.

Government's and civil society's actions in special education

With those guidelines, Brazilian inclusive education has been consolidating within an inclusive education system in which concepts neither share universal meanings nor are materialized in uniform practices (CAIADO; JESUS; BAPTISTA, 2018). In such consolidation, the special education policy has been organized in terms of polarities, characterized by pressure groups. The first polarity refers to the place of education for people with disabilities. On the one hand, some people believe that people with disabilities should be schooled in common schools (MANTOAN; CAVALCANTE; GRABOIS, 2011); on the other hand, some defend that the specificity of the individual's condition requires specialized care in exclusive classes and in specialized public or private institutions (BARBOSA, 2011).

The controversy regarding the place holds and omits the second polarity: the use of public resources. The subsidies to private entities, since the installation of the first specialized institutions in special education, between 1930 and 1950, led to the belief in the thesis according to which granting public resources to assistance institutions is a legitimate action (ARNS, 2004). The concept is reinforced by the call to partnerships with the civil society, in documents guiding the policy of special education in inclusive education, and appears in the ideas disseminated by multilateral organizations, which induces education policies in several countries, as the entities are seen as supporters and partners of inclusion who fulfill their role as the organized civil society (UNESCO, 1999).

These institutions have presented themselves as spokespersons for people with disabilities or for a community, with different positions: the National Federation for Education and Integration of the Deaf - FENEIS, the Brazilian Federation of Down Syndrome Associations, the National Federation of APAEs, and the National Federation of Pestalozzi Associations, among others.

Concerning the movement around such polemic themes, from 2003 to 2013 the Federal Prosecution Service interfered again in the government decisions, actions and programs (MANTOAN; FÁVERO, 2003; BRASIL; MPF, 2004; AMPID; MAIO; COSTA FILHO, 2013). As the arguments presented show, non-discrimination means that everybody is in the same school and in the same classroom, by adopting the *Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities*, approved in Brazil as Decree No. 3.956, of 2001. From this perspective, specific actions directed to certain groups could be understood as discriminatory acts and disrespect for children's rights. This position increased the tension between the different actors who, in 2011, took a clear (and different) stand regarding the adequate place for the schooling of those persons. On the one hand, the movement *Inclusion Now!* and the *Inclusion Network - Human Rights in Brazil* handed a manifesto called the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities - Comply with them!* to the Minister of Education Fernando Haddad, when Dilma Rousseff was the president of the country (KASSAR, 2011). The document defended the need for non-exclusion of students with disabilities from the general education system, according to the *International Convention on the Rights of*

Persons with Disabilities and its *Optional Protocol* of 2007, approved in Brazil as Decree No. 6.949 of 2009, adopting the same the position as the Federal Prosecution Service. On the other hand, a group of deaf students promoted a public act in Brasília against the closure of special schools for the deaf (PROTEST..., 2011).

Regarding the movement of the different interests, Garcia (2017) analyzes the dispute between specialized institutions and defenders of the common room as legitimate to all students:

The forces in defense of the inclusive proposal of the last period, from 2008 onwards, found litigation against historically dominant forces, linked to the private assistance sector and with a captive participation in the formulation of policies. Each one of the segments resorted to the weapons available: on the one hand, the 'tradition', the tacit knowledge about the experiences lived with and by persons with disabilities, the efficiency in the management of institutions and movements for the rights of persons with disabilities. On the other hand, the 'innovation', the use of technology resources, the efficiency in the management of teaching networks, by proposing a unified, multifunctional, non-universalized 'service', which gained the connotation of recognition of the students' formal right of access to basic education school. (GARCIA, 2017, p. 39-40, emphasis by the author).

As already mentioned, the dispute regarding the place omits the issue of granting public resources. This aspect attracted a lot of attention during the electoral campaign for the Brazilian presidency in 2014. In a debate before the second round, the candidate Aécio Neves, of the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB), confronted the candidate for re-election, Dilma Rousseff, of the Workers' Party (PT), by saying that the financial grants to APAE were delayed and that if he was elected president, his government would support these institutions. She then answered, "If you add up the history of all PSDB governments" in the past, the total would not be equal to what her government "had granted to the APAEs for four years"⁵. That is, even in the organization of the inclusive education system, with the apparent loss of a protagonist position in special education, the private care institutions have never stopped receiving public funds.

In the continuity of the conflicts, different positions were expressed in the media. A journalist aligned with the movement *Inclusion Now!* published the following criticisms regarding the role of private philanthropic institutions within the government:

From a meritorious institution from decades ago, when commanded by the historical Dona Jô Clemente, under the leadership of the National Federation of APAEs and the former Senator Flávio Arns, the APAEs' network became a two-sided electoral machine. The legitimate face is composed of volunteers, parents committed to seek the best for their children. The deleterious face is the political organization controlled by the National Federation of APAEs, placing the interests of leaders above the assisted people's, maneuvering disability as a mere instrument for access to public funds and for political promotion, by resorting to a festival of unparallel misinformation

5 - Folha de SÃO PAULO. Eleições 2014. *Debate da Globo com Dilma Rousseff (PT) e Aécio Neves (PSDB)*. Available in: <<http://aovivo.folha.uol.com.br/2014/10/24/3702-8-aovivo.shtml>>. Access on: 15 May 2016.

and becoming, nowadays, the main obstacle to inclusive education. The second registration was a manna which, in the last four years, carried to APAE's safes over 2 billion reais. It was like giving the lion fresh meat. [...]. After securing the resources of the second registration, the APAEs' lobby decided to advance also on the first registration, fully distorting the objectives of inclusive education. The Constitution vetoed, as well as the law voted in 2007 and the conclusions of the PNE (National Education Plan). Led by Flávio Arns, with the help of Gleise Hoffmann, the APAEs used the vote of the PNE in the Senate to criticize inclusive education, relying on the support of senators with no commitment to human rights and the universalization of inclusive education⁶.

During that period, a blog linked to a newspaper of national circulation published that lawyer Rosângela Wolf Moro, the wife of a judge who participated in a major operation in the country regarding the use of public resources, accepted the invitation made by the *Portuguese Language Institute* (POLI) – a UN representative at events in Latin America – “to speak in the United Nations Organization about the generous mission of the Associations for Parents and Friends of the Disabled (APAEs)”⁷. According to the blog, “Rosângela Moro does not lose the critical sense and poses an alert”. ‘Public resources, needless to say, are insufficient. The overwhelming majority of directors are volunteers’”

It is interesting to note that the use of public funds is recurrent in the media but, at the same time, is not so evident in the attempts by education protagonists who have focused on the adequate place for the education of students with disabilities.

It is also worth noting that the movement called *Inclusion Now!* published in the internet, at the end of Dilma Rousseff's term, a text called “School inclusion: the revolution of 2003 to 2016 that we will fight to defend”. The text, published on 12th May 2016, was written in 2015 by the Director of Special Education Policies⁸. At the end of the page, there are two links to download a text by MEC on the last days of Rousseff's term (in word and pdf): *The Consolidation of School Inclusion in Brazil 2003 to 2016*, which brings a set of documents (technical notes, legal opinions, decrees and resolutions), “to subsidize the discussions, actions and social control of public policies aimed at the school inclusion of people with disabilities, global developmental disorders and high abilities/giftedness” (MEC, 2016, p. 5).

Proposition of changes in the national policy on special education from the perspective of inclusive education

After President Dilma Rousseff's impeachment, in 2016, there were changes in the Secretariat for Continuing Education, Literacy, Diversity and Inclusion (SECADI/MEC) and the Directorate of Special Education Policies. In the following year, the SECADI/MEC informed they would select specialist consultants to subsidize the studies of documents related to Brazilian special education (UNESCO, 2017a, 2017b). The Public Notice No. 1/2017 was aimed at hiring “specialized consultancy to subsidize the Basic Education Chamber, of the National Council of Education (CEB/CNE), in the process of reviewing

6- Available in: <<https://jornalggn.com.br/noticia/sobre-o-jogo-da-confenem-com-as-apaes-e-quem-e-flavio-arns>>. Access: 30 May 2018.

7- Available em: <<http://politica.estadao.com.br/blogs/fausto-macedo/o-que-rosangela-moro-vai-dizer-na-onu/>>. Access: 10 June 2018.

8- See: <<https://inclusaoja.com.br/2016/05/12/inclusao-escolar-a-revolucao-de-2003-a-2016-que-vamos-lutar-para-defender/>>.

and updating the *National Curriculum Guidelines for Special Education*, based on current state and national norms on Special Education” (UNESCO, 2017a, p. 1). The Public Notice Nº. 13/2017 was aimed at hiring:

[...] expert advice for the development of subsidiary studies for the process of updating the National Policy on Special Education, by considering the pedagogical and political benchmarks and the pedagogical practices developed by the systems of education. (UNESCO, 2017b, p. 1).

The dissemination of such public notices and the subsequent hiring of consultants indicated the clear intention of reviewing the policy of the inclusive education system, in the way that had been built up to Dilma Rousseff's impeachment.

The proposition of updating the 2008 policy was eventually presented at a meeting on 16th April 2018. The Director of Special Education Policies explained that the version of the policy would be reviewed in a public consultation: “We intend to analyze and effectuate the proposition similarly to the BNCC, that is, with the participation of society, systems and teaching organizations, both transparently and democratically”⁹. The meeting was attended by: representatives of the Ministry of Education, the National Council of Education, the National Council of Secretaries of Education (Consed), the National Council for Persons with Disabilities (Conade), the Brazilian Council for Giftedness (Combrasd) and the Council of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (Corde), the National Union of Municipal Education Managers (Undime), the Benjamin Constant Institute (IBC), the National Institute of Education of the Deaf (INES), the Federation of Associations of People with Down Syndrome (Febasd), the National Federation of APAEs, the National Federation of Pestalozzi Associations and the National Organization for the Blind of Brazil (ONCB), among others. The slides of the material discussed at the meeting quickly began to be shared on social networks. Among the data and arguments presented, several relevant issues related to research conducted in universities were identified (BRASIL, 2018b).

So the criticism drawn by researchers, according to whom Special Education had been restricted to Specialized Educational Assistance in multifunctional resource classrooms (MENDES; TANNÚS-VALADÃO; MILANESI, 2016, among others), started being used as an argument for changes in the document *National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education* (BRASIL, 2008). The first meetings mobilized responses from different groups across the country. One of them was the movement *Inclusion Now!*, on 13th May 2018.

The words do not disguise the intention: It is curious to note, both in the texts of the slides and in the words of the people who today coordinate and participate in the work of ‘updating’ the PNEEPEI [National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education], the adoption of the terms that the advocates of school inclusion use and have always used in the efforts for a school for all. It is even ironic to see people who have historically risen up against

⁹- Available in: <<http://portal.mec.gov.br/ultimas-noticias/202-264937351/62961-politica-de-educacao-especial-devera-passar-por-atualizacao>>. Access: 17 Oct. 2018.

the inexorable advancement of school inclusion policies using sentences such as ‘we defend an inclusive education system’, ‘we should ensure not only access to school, but permanence, learning and quality’ or ‘the school must fight discrimination’. Behind the use of the terms in the field of inclusion is an attempt to make the throwback they want to impose more palatable, with no dialogues, without considering the actors who are in fact involved with school inclusion in all Brazilian schools. (LEPED. UNICAMP, 2018, p. 11).

The excerpt shows the existence of terms from the field of inclusion, which would express the view according to which the common/regular school is the locus of education of all students. These terms would be appropriated and used with meanings different than the originally adopted. Among such expressions is the one disseminated by documents written by the federal government since 2003, considered as the means and the main end of inclusion: the formation of an inclusive education system.

The leaders of federal institutions of higher education were also mobilized, by means of the Circular Letter N^o. 1/18, from the Dean of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN), the Carta de Natal (29th May 2018), defending the “disputes for the democratization of public Higher Education and quality for all, in the light of an inclusive culture and the recognition of the differences in the search for a fairer and more solidary society” (CARTA DE NATAL, 2018, p. 5).

The Network for School Inclusion, from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), also took a stand, on June 2018, by alerting that the public consultation “aiming at improvements in special education policies” in that post-impeachment political context was “a politically ambiguous action, the hostage of different agencies”¹⁰.

During that same period, the Federal Prosecution Service disseminated a list of recommendations to the Ministry of Education: to abstain from producing changes in the *National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education*; to allocate public resources for the expansion and improvement of inclusive education in the regular education network, at all levels; and, before the submission of amendments to the PNEEPEI, to listen to “students with disabilities, in their various aspects: gender, race, sexual orientation, class, geographic region and level of education” (BRASIL; MPF, 2018, p. 5).

Researchers also reinforced positions of disagreement with the review of the Policy in those terms and conditions, by means of the Note from the National Association of Post-graduation and Research in Education (ANPEd), in July of the same year¹¹.

The circulation of information and demonstrations continued in the social networks. In October, an e-mail (LISTA..., 2018) was sent to researchers of ANPEd’s GT 15 (Special Education) to inform about a document from the Ministry of Education¹². The document was the draft of the *National Policy on Special Education: Equitable, Inclusive and Lifelong* (under discussion), dated 14th September 2018 (MINUTA..., 2018). In November 2018, the government opened a public consultation on the changes in the Policy, amongst controversies.

10- See <<https://www.ufrgs.br/incluir/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Carta-RedeInclusao.pdf>>.

11- See <<http://www.anped.org.br/news/nota-anped-sobre-possivel-revisao-da-politica-nacional-de-educacao-especial>>.

12- Available in: <<https://pnee2018.blogspot.com/2018/10/novo-e-nao-publicado-oficialmente.html>>. Access: 18 Nov. 2018.

The document made available for public consultation (BRASIL, 2018a) reaffirmed the maintenance of spaces considered segregated from 2003 to 2016 by SECADI (schools and special classes), and was justified by stating that it “complied with the provisions in Target 4, strategy 4.4 of the PNE and Article 58, § 2 of the LDB” (BRASIL, 2018a), which predicts the provision of services by special school and in special classes.

On 16th November 2018, researchers, teachers and students gathered in São Carlos-SP, at the VIII Brazilian Conference on Special Education and the XI National Meeting of Special Education Researchers (XI ENPEE), in the Assembly of the Brazilian Association of Special Education Researchers (ABPEE), with the support of the National Association of Post-graduation and Research in Education (ANPEd) and the National Forum of Coordinators of the Centers of Accessibility in Higher Education, Professional and Technological Public Institutions (IPESPTec), decided to position themselves against changes in the Policy, at that moment and model, and disseminated a document criticizing the Public Consultation proposed for the ‘update’ of the current National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education (CARTA ABERTA..., 2018, p. 1).

It is worth noting that the dispute revealed another movement: the removal of the scientific associations from the instances of participation in decision-making events¹³, a clear and recurrent position since 2016, in which specific actors were either considered and/or disregarded, as in the reformulation episode during the National Forum of Education (BRASIL, 2017).

Further considerations

Looking at the movement of articulation of national propositions for special education, different moments may be identified, with distinctions, but not necessarily ruptures. The first one was clearly delineated until the end of Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s second term, when the coexistence of different places for the schooling of people with disabilities was accepted, even after the formal commitment of multilateral agreements in Brazil. A second moment began in 2003, when the idea of an inclusive education system was launched and disseminated. In the course of actions within the perspective, the place of schooling was migrated to the regular/common school establishment. A third movement occurred with the abrupt ending of Dilma Rousseff’s government. Even with the use of a discourse close to the one disseminated between 2003 and 2016, there was the strengthening of special education private groups. The transit between these positions happened under heated debates, with the use of different media resources.

In the trajectory taken by different positions, the attention to the two categories, the allocation of public resources and the place of assistance, underwent some modifications. More clearly, the National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education, built in the governments of Lula and Dilma Rousseff, fostered the enrollment in the common/regular classroom place and, for that matter, invested in the implementation

13- Available in <<http://www.anped.org.br/news/nota-de-repudio-portaria-n-577-de-27-de-abril-de-2017-do-mec>> and <<http://www.anped.org.br/news/entidades-fazem-renuncia-coletiva-do-fne-e-anunciam-no-senado-criacao-de-forum-e-conferencia>>. Access on: 17 Oct. 2018.

of specialized educational assistance in public schools. The position was compatible with the set of social programs that strengthened the school as the place of the child and adolescent – par excellence – as part of the policy of mitigation of poverty (BRASIL, 2004, 2007, 2014).

The adoption of the assistance model favoring the common/regular public school locus indicates the option of expanding public assistance to the detriment of the private, which in turn strengthens the channeling of public resources to public schools. However, the specialized assistance offered materialized in a unique way: the Multifunctional Resource Rooms, not necessarily competing with the specialized services offered by the private care sector (REBELO, 2016). Thus, during the period, the public resources continued to be directed to private care institutions, as Dilma Rousseff attested during the electoral campaign for her second term. The document of the National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education continued to provide for partnerships with the “community, confessional or philanthropic nonprofit institutions”, especially in the formation of specialized professionals and as “AEE centers” (BRASIL, 2008).

The hypothesis of maintaining the relationship indicated by Laplane, Caiado and Kassar (2016) is that, while the interdisciplinary set in the health field, available in most institutions, is in operation, there is no increase of the pressure on the Unified Healthcare System¹⁴, even if the service is maintained, to a large extent, with public resources.

The mobilization and the disputes of the different actors to guide the actions in Special Education Policy are expected in a democratic society. However, such actors often seem to remain on the superficiality of the issues: ‘for or against inclusion’; ‘for or against special schools’; ‘inclusive education or special education’. The focus on the surface of the debate does not contribute to the understanding of the complexity of the issues that involve the educational assistance to special education persons. Such issues include the right to public schooling, to public health, to leisure, to their own choices and decisions, and ultimately, to the completeness of life.

The recognition of the complexity also includes the perception that such issues are immersed in the debates and conflicts of policies involving all other citizens.

Ensuring attention to the specificities of Special Education persons, without losing track of the social rights of every citizen, is a challenge to be faced in the area of Special Education.

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¹⁴- See partnerships between municipalities and the APAEs, which allow for the institutions to enable themselves as Specialized Rehabilitation Centers (RECS), becoming part of the Network of Care for People with Disabilities, within the Unified Healthcare System.

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