

THEMATIC SECTION:
SPECIAL EDUCATION, PSYCHOANALYSIS
AND DEMOCRATIC EXPERIENCE



The Special in Education: meanings and uses

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ABSTRACT – The Special in Education: meanings and uses. Several international organizations have played a critical role arguing against the traditional use of the term *special* in education. Integrated education and, subsequently, inclusive education were valued, as well as student diversity. Italy is a specific case for its radical 1977's integration policy. France presents a *kaleidoscope* of institutions and professionals, inherited from the historical roots of Special Education. The 2005's law no longer mentions Special Education, and the 2013's law recognizes the inclusion of every child in school. Paradoxical uses of the *special* still remain in Italy and Brazil. Finally, we addressed the issue of the relationship between ethics and democratization.

Keywords: Special Education. Inclusive Education. France. Italy. Brazil.

RESUMO – O Especial na Educação: significados e usos. Diversas organizações internacionais desempenharam um papel crítico contra o uso tradicional do termo *especial* em educação. A educação integradora e, posteriormente, a Educação Inclusiva foram valorizadas, bem como a diversidade dos alunos. A Itália representa um caso específico por sua política de integração radical de 1977. A França apresenta um *caleidoscópio* de instituições e de profissionais, herdado das raízes históricas da Educação Especial. A lei de 2005 não faz mais referência à Educação Especial, e a lei de 2013 reconhece a inclusão escolar de toda criança. Usos paradoxais do *especial* ainda permanecem na Itália e no Brasil. Por fim, nós nos interrogamos sobre as relações entre a ética e a democratização.

Palavras-chave: Educação Especial. Educação Inclusiva. França. Itália. Brasil.

Introduction

To understand the uses and meanings of the term *special* as applied to education, we adopted two complementary approaches articulated with each other. The first approach is historical: it allows us to observe how the old forms of Special Education for the children who used to be called *abnormal* were progressively replaced by qualified policies and practices of *integration*, before being substituted by the current Inclusive Education guidelines, which encompasses all the diversity of children. The second approach is international and comparative: it focuses on the role played by supranational bodies and the variety of current uses of the term *inclusive*, according to the country, and also of *special* in its paradoxical aspects, such as present in Italy and Brazil. Some of our reflections will take as privileged object the French situation, which seems to us significant of both the institutional progress and the difficulties that remain. Finally, we will question the place that Inclusive Education can occupy within the democratic debate as an orientation focused on the promotion of the rights of all and that points towards an inclusive society.

International Milestones: from special education to inclusive education

In general, the qualifier *special* refers to a characteristic considered different from the common or the usual. It is in this sense that Woodill and Davidson (1989), following Wittgenstein and Foucault, analyze *Special Education* as a play of language and as a professional discourse on difference. For them, the word *special* is obfuscating because it can emphasize individuals considered to be *special* and therefore liable to be objects of stigmatizing and exclusionary educational initiatives; or it may highlight the education itself, but without referring to a specific target audience. In this sense, words and metaphors would be used by professionals, first of all, to establish their own by power arguing their knowledge, for example, about abnormality. The vocabulary of the *special* is therefore can also be seen as an essential factor in maintaining a culture of separation (Plaisance, 2008).

However, in the international context, especially since the 1990s, criticisms against Special Education have multiplied and focused on the notion of integration. The meeting of Salamanca, organized in 1994 by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), which brought together representatives of 92 countries (apparently without an official presence of Brazil), is considered the key moment in international developments. The official declaration states, for example, that the

The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, whenever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have. Inclusive schools must recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both differ-

ent styles and rates of learning [...] Inclusive schooling is the most effective means for building solidarity between children with special needs and their peers. Assignment of children to special schools – or special classes or sections within a school on a permanent basis – should be the exception (Unesco, 1994)¹.

However, the same statement cautiously suggests the desirable transformations of the *special*:

The situation with respect to Special Education varies enormously from one country to another. There are, for example, countries that have firmly established special school systems for those with specific disabilities. Such special schools can be a valuable resource for the development of inclusive schools [...] (Unesco, 1994).

More specifically, this solemn declaration defines a framework for action aimed at education and *special educational needs*, adopting this new vocabulary (special educational needs) from the English language and that differs from that of disability. It promotes schools that practice integrative education, directed to the diversity of students, but still conserves a place for special structures (institutions or classes), provided they are designed as resource centers, using their teams' skills to provide pedagogical support to regular schools. This line of thought is critical of the *special*, while acknowledging its provisional utility in the face of the challenges of promoting a school for all.

Starting in the 2000s, UNESCO adopted a very different vocabulary. The notion of inclusion has come to the fore, and the target audience started to be characterized by its diversity, not limited to pupils in a *handicap* situation or those with *special needs*. Thus, the *Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education* (Unesco, 2009) refer to all *learners* and not to a specific set of students:

Inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners and can thus be understood as a key strategy to achieve Education for All (EFA) [...] Inclusion is thus seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children [...] (Unesco, 2009).

Regarding the role of the educator in an inclusive education context, UNESCO's policy guidelines clearly stipulate that special needs education must shift towards the broader paradigm of Inclusive Education, since it is about adopting a holistic vision of education for all learners (Unesco, 2013). UNESCO's 2015 declaration in Incheon (Republic of Korea) takes a further step by articulating inclusion, equality and quality in learning and adopting the following wording: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all".

Therefore, it was the term diversity that became central in the implementation of a school for all. In this expansion of the relevant public

there is a political ambition that makes the promotion of diversity a basis for social and even economic development.

These international guidelines have been widely disseminated by UNESCO and other organizations with a global reach such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), or with a European reach such as the European Agency for Development Special Needs in Education. However, the application of these guidelines varies greatly according to the country, because they are immersed in the historical, cultural and institutional contexts proper to each one (Benoit; Plaisance, 2009; Rahme, 2013). The ministries of education and officials in each country have either voluntarily complied with these principles in favor of Inclusive Education or, on the contrary, adopted very cautious attitudes towards their possible outcomes, taking into account the resistance of some professionals and oppositions from the traditional institutions assisting people with various needs. Even in cases of official adoption of an inclusive educational policy, national approaches would still differ profoundly. According to Ebersold, Plaisance and Zander (2016, p. 28), “[...] what characterizes and differentiates national approaches between them are the conceptions, representations and reasoning around which school systems are organized.” Some countries adopt an *essentialist* approach to *special educational needs*, focusing mainly on the student’s difficulties and placing them at the margins of the school standard. Specific support measures are then implemented, including special classes, for example, for students considered to be the most deficient². Other countries adopt a *universalist* approach which considers first and foremost the capabilities of school systems to be accessible to all and thus expand the target school audience. The main challenge, then, is to approach “[...] the educational need not from the student, but from the environment and the educational interaction that surrounds the child” (Ebersold, Plaisance; Zander, 2016, p. 34). In this case, we are dealing with educational systems considered mostly as living environments, where educational objectives are not limited to school learning, but aim at total education of the child³. In general, “[...] the opening of educational systems to difference, beyond the creation of devices or the mobilization of techniques or procedures depends on the expectations of the school system in terms of access, success and social integration” (Ebersold; Plaisance; Zander, 2016, p. 30).

Italy: the radical integration⁴

In the international context, Italy occupies a specific position, which deserves to be highlighted, as it offers a broad vision of institutional and professional changes. It was in the post-Second World War social context that official decisions were taken to ensure children in a *handicap* situation the same rights granted to others. This context was marked progressively by specific demands of groups of parents of children in a *handicap* situation, or associations such as that of the *mutilated and disabled civilians* (a national association dating from 1956) (Canevaro; De Anna, 2010).

From the end of the 1960s onwards, and especially in the 1970s, changes in the school system have occurred due to the more active participation of the parents in the educational process, or through the articulation of the school with external services such as social and health services. There was also a movement towards greater attention to students' individualities and their educational paths, thus involving a renewed pedagogical reflection. Such developments occurred in close connection with the vast protest movements of the time, especially with student movements and, in the psychiatric field, with the advent of a radical critique of closed asylums (we can recall here Franco Basaglia arguing that the pathologies observed in patients in such institutions were largely caused by the confinement itself).

This global context of protest and political will to change facilitated the emergence of the first official guidelines for the integration of children in a *handicap* situation into the normal school environment (Falcucci Commission 1975). The culmination was the law of 1977 (known under number 517 in the Italian legislation), which actually established the Italian policy of integration that we can qualify as *radical*. It is a law concerning all school education and not only the education of persons in a *handicap* situation (as opposed to French legislation). It modifies student evaluation procedures, introduces the notion of *curriculum* and of an *educational and didactic program* and, especially with regard to children in a *handicap* situation, it suppresses what was called *differentiated* classes. At the same time, it imposes the allocation of additional resources to common schools and provides for the allocation of specialized teachers. From then on, the main issue became the practical implementation of this revolutionary law, which was then also called the "*earthquake law*." A number of provisions have been added to it, such as the definition of the stages of the integration process (Presidential Decree of 1994) and the specific training of supplementary teachers, initially called *specialists for integrative issues*, and subsequently of *support teachers*, as is still the case today. These are teachers with a university training and who are numerous throughout the Italian territory (in 2017, there was approximately an average of one support teacher for 1.67 *handicapé* student).

Under these conditions, it is clear that the Italian past of special institutions has been completely transformed in favor of common schooling, supported by collaborative work between support teachers and teachers of ordinary classes. It should also be noted that the work done by the support teacher is not limited to *handicapped* children, but is considered as a provision of supplementary human resources to common classes. This is an essential point, since it implies a sharing of practices among teachers and necessarily establishes an articulation between the *normal* of the class and of the *curricular* teacher and the *special* of the support teacher.

This Italian policy has been maintained over the years, despite political difficulties, as if it were anchored not only in the sensibilities (of teachers and parents) but also in the effective practices of person-

alized educational projects for the students involved (following guidelines established by presidential decree). It was even strengthened by referencing international guidelines: *handicap* definitions by the World Health Organization (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, 2001) and affirmation of rights by the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006).

Italy's great originality in the world context was to have established Inclusive Education *avant la lettre*, that is, even before the current widespread use of the expression (De Anna, 2009). The current focus of the notion of Inclusive Education in Italy is not aimed at eliminating gains from school integration, but mainly at supplementing them through the promotion of new collaborations, for instance with projects that relate to the local environment and with the adherence of all to the acceptance of diversity – see, for example, the specific examples in De Anna and Plaisance (2014), published in English.

France: gradually overcoming the *special*

As we mentioned above, the French situation is characterized neither by the radical position of Italy nor by policies that keep the *special* as a necessary option among other possible choices, at least for those children whose difficulties are most serious. The country presents a *ka-leidoscope* of institutions and professionals, largely inherited from the historical roots of Special Education and its evolution towards other educational modalities.

As in many European countries, children with sensory disabilities, deaf and blind, were the first to benefit from differentiated pedagogical attention and even from specific assistance structures. In the French case, the Abbé de l'Épée (1712-1789) undertook the education of deaf children, initially in his own home and later in a school that he opened in 1791, later transformed into an institute for deaf youngsters⁵. Valentin Haüy (1745-1822) founded a school in Paris for blind children in 1784, which in turn became an institute for blind youngsters.

It was in the nineteenth century that the issue of the education of the so-called delayed children was raised. Two options were opposed at the time: that which *a priori* refuses any possibility that they could learn and, on the contrary, the one that trust their learning capacities when appropriate educational actions are taken. This educational option counted, at that moment, with the direct engagement of doctors. Two celebrated figures deserve to be mentioned here: Jean Marc Itard (1791-1838) and Désiré Magloire Bourneville (1840-1909). Jean-Marc Itard, a physician at the Institute for deaf mutes, took a young boy living in a forest in southern France and taught him following Condillac's sensualist philosophy. The famous case of Victor, the *savage child*, of about twelve years old, became the subject of the film by François Truffaut (1970), in which he himself played the role of Jean Marc Itard. He postulated the young child could be cured, as expressed in his memoirs of 1801 and 1806, in contrast to other physicians of his day, such as Pinel, who con-

sidered, on the contrary, his *delay* as a birth and definitive trait (Malson, 1964; Banks-Leite; Galvão; Dainez, 2017). The second doctor to mention is Bourneville, chief physician of the mental asylum of Bicêtre (in the south of Paris) from 1879. Continuing the educational approach of Jean Itard, in a hospital context, Bourneville tries to improve the situation of the children then known as *idiots*, assisted in this hospital environment in principle dedicated to the mental *alienated* (Gateaux-Mennecier, 1989). He argued the need to separate children from adults and proposed a special section with new buildings dedicated to them. Bourneville developed a new conception: the medical-pedagogical treatment (an expression he coined), adapted to different cases and allowing a gradation between care and education. Therefore, the institution could also comprise a school environment, which Bourneville conceived of as an asylum-school. Its projects also focused on external public schools, inaugurating a future problematic issue, as it announces the constitution of a special sector within the Public Instruction. Thus, he proposed for the first time the creation of special classes in the public primary schools of Paris, which could accommodate certain children coming from asylums. A kind of integration *avant la lettre*? However, this was not to be, due to multiple resistances. Bourneville also conducted the first psychological tests on children in schools, some of them seen as *delayed* and some as *undisciplined*. In short, he combined, on the one hand, the concern to improve the situation of children in asylums by providing them with schooling and, on the other hand, the project to identify deviant children within the schools themselves (Gardou; Plaisance, 2014).

Alfred Binet and Théodore Simon, in their 1907 book on abnormal children, decided to no longer consider the case of children in asylums, which they reserved exclusively for medical care, but to devote themselves only to the *delayed in schools* (Jatoba Ferreira, 2016). Their celebrated Binet-Simon intelligence scale provided a specific framework for psychological testing in schools and opened up the possibility of creating special classes for children identified as *delayed*. Their formula is as follows:

Abnormal and delayed children are children that ordinary schools and hospitals do not want; schools consider them too different from the standard, the hospital does not consider them sufficiently ill. It is necessary to attempt to create for them special schools and classes (Binet; Simon, 1907, p. 10).

The notion of *improvement class* is also derived from their analyzes of *perfectible abnormals*, more precisely about the *feeble minded* acceptable in this type of class within the primary school, since they are likely to apprehend elements of the school program and may subsequently provide for themselves doing manual labor. After such discussions, these *improvement classes* were officially recognized by the 1909 Act.

However, these classes will only actually be implemented much later. The period of their spectacular expansion dates only from the 1960s with the policy aimed at the *ill-adapted child*. And it is this development of the *special* in the 60s, both in the scope of the National Education system and in the associative sector (with the medical-pedagogical institutes created by associations), which raises questions about its validity. The argument that the enrollment of certain students in the *special* system would enable them to return to the normal or near-normal circuit later is questioned by the observation of network effects, which keep the students in the initial stage. In general, the students' difficulties in the common school environment, the evidence of the connection between difficulties and social origins, as well as the debates about the pertinence of the notion of feeble-mindedness, lead to strong criticism of the school institution. Improvement classes receive more and more students identified as having school difficulties and for whom the diagnosis of *mild intellectual disability* is strongly contested. The work of the Research Center for Specialized Education and School Adaptation (CRESAS), which began in the late 1960s, radically criticized the unchecked expansion of the *special* anchored in a pathological view of the students' difficulties. In other words, the widespread attribution of pathological characteristics would be a mistake that masks both the social origin of school difficulties and the role played by the school institution itself in the failure of certain students (Cresas, 1974; 1980).

However, the *special* is full of contradictions because, during this same period, innovative initiatives began to appear, largely due to the fact that teachers benefit in these pedagogical contexts of greater freedom of action. Certain innovations directly concern improvement classes. Some classes put into practice the pedagogy inspired by Célestin Freinet and instituted printing activities that allowed distance correspondence and transmitted to the students the meaning and practice of writing. Others experimented with a pedagogy known as *institutional*, which takes into account the contributions of psychosociology and institutional psychotherapy, establishing group-centered activities in cooperative classrooms. Thus, the violent denunciation of the school as an authoritarian environment could be accompanied by proposals of other practices in which children not only have the right to express themselves, but also acquire the means to do so (Vasquez; Oury, 1967).

Outside of the school system, in the sector we currently designate as *medical-social*, innovations were also developed to assist children who were rejected by the whole school system, be it common or special. The creation in 1969 by Maud Mannoni and Robert Lefort of the Bonneuil sur Marne Experimental School is emblematic of this innovative project for autistic, psychotic or severely neurotic children, in order to provide them with living places which were neither medicalized spaces nor traditional schools. The theory formulated by Maud Mannoni involved specific practical activities: to carry out actions *beyond what is established*, to implement a *burst institution*, attentive to singular cases. In practice, it was about offering children and adolescents, accompa-

nied by educators, the possibility of accessing workplaces outside this experimental school, for example, going to local artisans' houses or to farms farther away (Mannoni, 1973). According to the author, whose works refer to psychoanalysis:

[...] the notion of a burst institution [...] aims to take advantage of all the unusual that come up (this unusual that we are used, on the contrary, to repress). Instead of offering permanence, the institution's framework offers, based on a permanent basis, openings for what is outside, all sorts of gaps (for example, journeys outside the institution). What remains: a place of retreat, but the essentials of life take place outside - in a job or outside project. Through this oscillation from one place to another, a subject may emerge, wondering what he wants (Mannoni, 1973, p. 77).

We should note that the newly created institution was called a *school*, which means that the prospects for school achievement are not abandoned in any way, but are realized in a way that is in agreement with each subject (internal or external schooling or by correspondence).

The history of the *special* in France is therefore a multiple history, a blurred history. It reveals undeniable experimental advances in favor of the education of children that we have designated at different times as abnormal, retarded, invalid, and later, in a less pejorative way, as ill-adapted throughout the 1960s. But, paradoxically, it also reveals certain strongly denounced impasses: the risk of an expansion of the *special* according to medical-psychological criteria that stigmatize the children, the implementation of a culture of separation and, consequently, the maintenance of school structures that marginalizes children and adolescents who have more difficulties. Thus, over a long period, the notion of *ineducability* allowed the exclusion of many children from schooling. Until the late 1960s, the distinctions between *uneducable*, *semi-educable* and *educable* even received official and pseudo-scientific support. The *ineducable* ones, requiring only medical supervision, were the responsibility of the Ministry of Health. The *educables* were, in turn, the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and of the improvement classes, for example.

The law of guidance established *in favor of handicapped persons*, adopted on June 30, 1975, dismantles this conception. It affirms, for all *handicaps*, an *educational obligation*, thus establishing the fundamental principle of educability for all and opposing the exclusions to this right. However, the same law stipulates that this obligation can be applied both through normal education and through Special Education. The latter is defined as associating pedagogical, psychological, social, medical and paramedical actions, either in ordinary establishments, in institutions or through special services.

The law of February 11, 2005, currently in force, was enacted under the title *For the equality of rights and opportunities, the participation and the citizenship of handicapped persons*⁶. In this law, the reference to Special Education has disappeared in order to remove any mention of

institutions from the past and to promote new practices. And the enrollment of the child in the school closest to his home becomes the rule: it is the school *of reference*. Such a measure reflects an evolution of representations that is increasingly marked by growing demands for the right to schooling and, more generally, by the fight against discrimination (Chauvière, 2003). However, because of their *needs*, the child can be enrolled in another school, or even be trained in equipment that are currently called *adapted*, possibly located outside ordinary schools, for example in medical-pedagogical institutes attended mainly by intellectually disabled children.

Would France finally be on the path of Inclusive Education, having overcome Special Education and half measures of school integration? At this point, the important innovation, provided for in the law of July 2013 on the refoundation of the school of the Republic, is the reference to the notion of *school inclusion*. Prior to this law, only internal texts of the Ministry of National Education had introduced such innovations in vocabulary. Classes and equipment for children or for adolescents admittedly *handicapped* in ordinary schools were denominated *for school inclusion*. A fundamental question arises in this respect: are we dealing here only with rhetorical devices, with purely formal modifications, or with real changes of meaning?

We may consider that this import of English language terms (*inclusive education, special needs*) may lead to a radical change of orientation. Children, whoever they may be, will be considered as belonging to the school community, as full members, in the name of equal rights. While integration practices presupposed that some students could be integrated and others could not, the inclusive perspective (already practiced in Italy) reverses the problem by mobilizing the principle of the application of rights for all (Armstrong, 1998). The transformation of integration in inclusion would therefore be a transformation of the relationship between *handicapped* children and traditional schools. It would no longer be required of children to adapt to school standards, but instead the school systems and pedagogical practices should adapt to the diversity of pupils.

The *special* and its paradoxical uses in Italy and Brazil

Italy

Does talking about the *special* in education still make sense in Italy? It is no longer a question of returning to the old special institutions, whether classes or schools reserved for students in a *handicap* situation. However, references to the concept of special pedagogy still occur. It is necessary, then, to carefully differentiate the *institutional special*, which is no longer a reality in Italy (of course, hospital care is still provided when necessary), and the *pedagogical special* that is still in use. In the latter case, the objective is to meet specific educational needs, or even to try to reduce *handicapping* situations, by adjusting pedagogi-

cal actions to the students' characteristics. Special pedagogy is even considered as a specific discipline in universities (including university professorships). Under these conditions, the special pedagogy is part of the *normal*; the *special* feeds the normal and support the education of children with special educational needs in the school environment. It is not isolated within the school institution (Canevaro, Ianes, 2013)⁷.

Brazil

Brazil is the only country that has formalized the notion of inclusion as a general national orientation to guide specific actions, that is, according to the vocabulary of political sociology, as a *framework for public action*. There, inclusion initiatives are applied differently: to provide jobs for African-Brazilians combined with a policy of non-discrimination; to facilitate the access of the poor to public transport; to combat school dropout; for children in a *handicap* situation to access common schools, etc. Inclusion in this case means, therefore, both social inclusion and school inclusion. Under these conditions, at least at the level of practices, the concept of integration is considered to reflect outdated conceptions. It is the inclusion that becomes the keyword. Inclusive Education is therefore a fundamental policy option for the realization of the right to diversity and to a quality school for all. This implies important changes in school management, teacher training, educational methodologies and collaborative practices.

However, this clear political statement in favor of Inclusive Education is combined, paradoxically, with the maintenance of Special Education. At a first level, specialized public institutions (for the visually and hearing impaired) and private institutions for assisting children in a *handicap* situation managed by powerful associations, such as parents' associations, the Pestalozzi association, etc. remain in operation. At a second level, public school policies articulate the two notions of special and inclusive, more precisely in the following terms: National Policy on Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education (MEC, 2008). According to this orientation, Inclusive Education is the responsibility of common schools and its teachers and, on the other hand, Special Education refers to services such as: specialized assistance services, special resources classes, specialized teachers. It seems therefore to be a complex and perhaps contradictory linkage between *inclusive* common education and the *special* education, mainly through specialized educational assistance⁸.

Conclusions: *handicap* and education at the heart of debates on ethics and democratic challenges

The issue of *handicap* is closely related to social and educational policies. In reality, it is not so much the *handicap* itself as an *objective* reality, but the representations of the *handicap* that engendered new looks about the individual and her or his place in society. Modern dem-

ocratic societies have witnessed the beginning of debates on social integration, professional integration and, in current terms, on the inclusion of people in a *handicap situation*. This last expression is significant of these evolutions, since it evidences not only peoples' incapacities, but their interactions with personal characteristics and life conditions, the environmental factors, the facility for or, on the contrary, the obstacles to their acceptance. This can be clearly seen in the increasing importance attached to accessibility in the broad sense, not only to physical accessibility in living spaces (access ramps, elevators, etc.), but also to sensorial accessibility through a multiplicity of information channels (visual, auditory), to digital accessibility (internet for all), to political accessibility (voting rights with or without assistance), and, finally, to pedagogical accessibility, which should focus on the transformations of learning environments for all students (Plaisance, 2009; 2013; Mantoan, 2003; Carvalho, 2008).

Because of these new representations, many authors have placed the *handicap* issue within the debates on the ethic of responsibility, according to the beautiful expression of sociologist Max Weber (1963), and contemporary democratic challenges. In fact, people in a *handicap* situation raise the question of ethics as a fundamental contemporary problem, that is, in connection with essential values: openness to the other, inalienable dignity of every human being, recognition of the individual and respect for her or his existence, whatever are their particularities. It is also necessary to refer clearly to the notion of ethics: not in the superficial sense of a morality concerning the traditions of a given society, but in the sense that ethics establishes a relation to the other and to her or his humanity. Philosopher Paul Ricoeur's works are essential references here. His key expression for defining an ethical vision is: "To live well with and for the other in just institutions" (Ricoeur, 1990, p. 202). It is a subjective articulation between oneself, the relation with the other and the life in common. Another revealing notion in these works is that of *solicitude*, defined as "[...] the value dimension that makes each person irreplaceable in our affection and esteem" (Ricoeur, 1990, p. 226), especially when the other is sick, in a *handicap* situation or very old. We find ourselves, thus, in an authentic relationship of reciprocity.

Focusing specifically on *handicap*, we can consider that it reveals "[...] a figure of radical alterity" and constitutes a "[...] limit proof of the intertwining of identity and difference" (Gardou; Kerlan, 2002, p. 13). The *handicap* "[...] interrogates our ethical devices on their ability to found an authentic openness to otherness, having as reference the identity" (Gardou; Kerlan, 2002, p. 13). In these conditions, how to define an ethical position in relation to *handicap* and the people involved? Philosophical analyzes on ethics allow us to specify that the ethical position is a refusal to stereotypes that devalue and discriminate against the other. It is the "feeling of indignation", formulated also by Ricoeur, who guides this position as a rupture against discriminatory representations and practices. In addition, it is a position of struggle for the recognition of people in their diversity (Plaisance, 2010).

In the political arena, it is the issue of the social integration of people in a *handicap* situation, and therefore of their citizenship, that is on the agenda:

I will define at least integration as being a citizen, that is, [being able to] contribute to society and receive a certain number of goods and services, be they material, cultural, medical, etc. Integration occurs when each one is in a situation where he has the right to receive, but also where he is in a position to contribute (Stiker, 2000, p. 142).

People in a handicap situation shake up social policies, and it is democratization that is at stake: “[...] how can we build a coherent and just society with the many singularities that demand, each one of them, to be recognized?” (Stiker, 1999, p. 75). With the most recent vocabulary of inclusion, we can also elaborate very ambitious positions on society as a whole: “An inclusive society is a society without privileges, without exclusivity or exclusion. Without hierarchizations” (Gardou, 2012, p. 151). If the *handicap* was in the origin of these questions and still remains a kind of amplifying mirror, the perspective of an inclusive society surpasses it to find human diversity: “[...] to reunite the hierarchical social universes to forge a ‘us’. A common repertoire” (Gardou, 2012, p. 60).

The search for an inclusive society implies a profound transformation of institutions, practices and ways of thinking. In this society, education occupies a privileged place. Far from the old culture of separation present in Special Education and beyond the limits of school integration, Inclusive Education can mark a decisive stage in assisting all learners and, consequently, fully subscribe to the democratic aspiration.

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Notes

- 1 Section New Thinking in Special Needs Education, Declaration of Salamanca, items 7 and 8.
- 2 We can mention Belgium, the Czech Republic or certain regions (Länder) of Germany.
- 3 In particular, the Scandinavian countries can be mentioned.
- 4 The following text on Italy is freely inspired by the introduction we have written for a special issue of the *Nouvelle Revue de l'Adaptation et de la Scolarisation*, no. 62, 2013.
- 5 For more information on these historical aspects, see Gardou and Plaisance, 2014.
- 6 We reinforce here the maintenance of the official use of the expression handicapped persons. This same Law of 2005 proposes a definition of the term

handicap. On the one hand, the definition makes reference to the concept of diverse alterations (physical, sensorial, mental, etc.) affecting a person. On the other hand, it concerns the notions of limitation of activity and participation in life in society, which refers to the environment and, therefore, to the issue of accessibility. In these conditions, we can not assimilate the handicap as a deficiency that limits a person, and we can understand the employment, every day more comprehensive, of the French expression handicap situation, which alludes to the two aspects mentioned above. It is for this reason that it is preferable to keep the term handicap in certain translations. The corresponding expression in English would be disability, not deficiency.

- 7 This position is also that of Henri Jacques Stiker (2000, p. 118), who analyzes the French policies related to the handicap: “[...] despecializing the specialized sector to specialize the common sector”.
- 8 Critical analyzes of this double-sided policy were developed by Maria Eugenia Nabuco (2010) and Kelly Cristina Brandão da Silva (2016). See also Rinaldo Voltolini (2014).

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