

THEMATIC SECTION:
SPECIAL EDUCATION, PSYCHOANALYSIS
AND DEMOCRATIC EXPERIENCE

Educação
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Special Education Policy: on ambivalence, tension and indeterminacy

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ABSTRACT – Special Education Policy: on ambivalence, tension and indeterminacy. The article proposes to resume the theoretical discussion that influenced the *Brazilian National Policy on Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education*, with the aim of reflecting on its effects after a decade of its implementation. We revisit issues that constitute the debate in the area, taking as its central axis the analysis of its conceptual basis – the adjective *special* and the idea of *inclusion* – considering it under the aegis of Modernity. In addition, we highlight a dilemmatic structure that supports fundamental issues in Special Education, as well as warn about the strength of a certain ambivalence and tension that policies and speeches engendering Special Education intend to overcome.

Keywords: Special Education. Inclusion. Educational Policy. Modernity. Value Tensions.

RESUMO – Política de Educação Especial: sobre ambivalência, tensão e indeterminação. O artigo propõe retomar a discussão teórica que influenciou a *Política Nacional de Educação Especial na Perspectiva da Educação Inclusiva*, com o objetivo de refletir sobre seus efeitos após uma década da publicação. Revisitamos questionamentos que constituem o debate nessa área, tomando por eixo central a análise de sua base conceitual – a adjetivação *especial* e a ideia de *inclusão* – considerando-a sob o registro da modernidade. Além disso, destacamos uma estrutura dilemática a sustentar questões fundamentais em Educação Especial, bem como advertir sobre a força de certa ambivalência e tensão que as políticas e os discursos que engendram a Educação Especial pretendem superar.

Palavras-chave: Educação Especial. Inclusão. Política Educacional. Modernidade. Conflito de Valores.

Introduction

Issues regarding the best way to reconcile education and disability are under discussion since the Enlightenment. Who should receive Special Education and who should teach it? How to identify these students and their educational needs? How and where to teach? If a certain difficulty of reaching a consensus on these issues and their conceptual basis marks the history of Special Education, contemporary paradoxes highlight the challenge they represent (Richardson and Powell, 2011). This supports the thesis, argued by some theorists, that the most important issues in the field are equally contemporary and recurrent: “Never completely resolved, they should be revisited with each generation” (Kauffman et al., 2011).

This proposition depicts contemporaneity and recurrence; the insolubility of an issue in coexistence with the permanent duty of reflecting on it. With its load of ambivalence and tension, what may it seek to express? How to accept the incessant character of such issues while trying to contribute in a propositional way to the debate in this context? How to think about this type of school education in our country based on such a statement, after a decade of publication of the Brazilian National Policy on Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education – PNEEPEI (Brasil, 2008)?

Drawing on this set of problems and with the aim of contributing to the reflection on the effects of PNEEPEI after 10 years of its implementation, we consider it fruitful to interpret the effects of this policy by means of the evaluation of the pertinence, nowadays of the issues that originated it. In principle, those issues pointed to the existence of a misunderstanding, an obstacle or a difficulty. In short, something to be clarified, confronted or overcome by it.

We propose to resume the theoretical discussion that has decisively influenced the current Special Education policy, so as to reflect about its effects in the light of the expectations it generated. Therefore this paper centers around retrieving issues that alluded to the emergence of a critical thought and positioning on this theme and would possibly justify the call to an inclusive perspective as a possibility of re-signifying practices – pedagogical, political and social – capable of segregating and stigmatizing the students of Special Education.

Therefore we seek to revisit questionings that constitute the debate in this area, taking as its central axis the analysis of their conceptual basis – such as, for example, the adjective of *special*, mainly through its correlate *special educational needs*, and the idea of *inclusion* – considering it under the aegis of Modernity. The reference to Modernity has a dual function: acting as a background to illuminate what we consider to be a dilemmatic structure that supports fundamental issues in Special Education; and warning about a certain ambivalence and tension that policies and speeches engendering Special Education can intend, perhaps in a naive manner, to overcome.

Modernity Could Not Be About Exclusion

Thinking about the effects of PNEEPEI a decade after its publication requires the consideration of the following reminder: “[...] the problems addressed by Special Education are modern problems; the needs it identifies are modern needs” (Armstrong, 2003, p.88). That is, the combination of the words *special* and *education* under a single term goes back to Enlightenment thought, but has gained more momentum and justification since the creation of the welfare state after the Second World War, when “[...] human rights discourses were placed in the most prominent place of social space” (Birman, 2009, p. 71).

In other words, what was not a major problem until the Modern Age – the issue of inclusion and the role of education in the process of building and maintaining a certain idea of man – began to demand a response and give rise to a conflict that is still present in our days: “Modernity was not, and logically could not be, about exclusion” (Armstrong, 2003, p.10). It was therefore by this time that the very essence of Enlightenment is emphasized: the belief that man is by nature morally neutral and can be molded by education; “[...] or, at worst, profoundly disabled, but capable of radical and indefinite improvement by rational education and favorable circumstances [...]” (Berlin, 2002, p. 293).

As a consequence, we have had a movement that left indelible marks in what we in the last decades came to call, by convention, Special Education. As Joel Birman points out, a well-known sign that constituted Modernity in the West during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was “... the crucial passage from the salvation problem to that of healing”, as well as the process of “medicalization of the social field as a whole”, with the enunciation, at the strategic center of this process, of the categories “normal”, “abnormal” and “pathological”. These categories began to guide social and educational discourses and practices, incorporating this model into a theoretical and moral register, “[...] so that the field of values became closely intertwined with that of concepts” (Birman, 2009, p. 24-26). Therefore, clinical definitions of various types and degrees of disability and abnormality have become the prerogative of physicians, helping the medical-psychological diagnosis to assume a central position in the determination of pedagogical practices, therefore limiting, above all, the ways of knowing in Special Education (Vasques, 2015).

The centrality and usefulness of these clinical definitions are not difficult to understand. Diagnosis and routine use of labels such as *special educational needs*, *learning difficulties*, and the correlates that preceded them, are not only examples of social responses to difference perceived in comparison to the norm, but they play an important role in the processes of maintaining boundaries and social order. They also reveal the supremacy and strength of *medical values* (Edwards, 2009), which aim to alleviate suffering by establishing, through a hegemonic consensus that is reassuring for the majority, what it means to be a normal human being. In other words:

Disability is also a normative concept that reflects the ideas concerning what kind of beings humans ought to be, both mentally and physically, and how society ought to be constructed in order to treat its members equally. The term *disability* implies that individuals considered as disabled lack essential human abilities or possibilities to qualify as persons (in a morally significant sense) or to live a good life (Vehmas, 2004, p. 213).

Therefore, making use of diagnoses and labels – particularly in the field of Special Educational – is more than deciding about normality and pathology; it is probably marking the disability and deciding about the other in a possibly inescapable way, bringing to the surface the problem of the validity of educational action with a fundamentally ethical bias.

This situation raises a series of questionings in the academic area, leading to a conceptual and theoretical revision that may favor the creation of a new Brazilian Special Education policy. Returning to the framework that inspired the policy, roughly speaking, it can be stated that the questionings were related to the criticism of a traditional perspective in Special Education, which was individually oriented, positivist, with roots in psychology and aimed at developing better educational methods for diagnosis groups. Thus, be it questioning in what sense was justified a special way of understanding and producing education for certain people (Skliar, 1997); or arguing about the primacy of the clinical-therapeutic model and the technician biomedical or behaviorist psychologizing approaches (Ferre, 2001); or even in the critique of the ambiguous concept of *special needs*, accused of legitimizing the exclusion of people from the regular system of education and the consequent creation of a special subsystem (Tomlinson, 1982); what we really had was an appeal to the blurring of the discriminatory boundary established between education and Special Education, which was then considered as more than a right to education.

These questions, in turn, evolved in a second moment into a criticism of the persistent medical-psychological rhetoric with its emphasis on individual deficits. However, not only, for advocating the adoption of a social and contextual perspective in education, but also for the presumed qualification of this perspective through the adherence to a discourse of inclusion that gained greater promotion and strength throughout the world since the first half of the 1990's, including Special Education in the general debate on equality and democracy, mainly under the rules of this debate. By that moment on, it was to "[...] definitively, to advance to an education for everyone, with everyone and for each one" (Guijarro, 2005, p.10).

However, there was already a warning about different assumptions and practices found under the banner of inclusion, which would guarantee an apparent consensus as it accommodated at least three divergent positions. The first expresses a questioning about certain confusion made by most official speeches in the use of words such as *dif-*

ference, diversity and equality, in addition to alerting to the fear that the different would only be equalized with the others, as part of a process of Enlightenment inclusion (Veiga-Neto, 2005). The second criticizes the transformation of the debate on Special Education into a radical struggle, due to the imposition of a unique and non-consensual conception of education based on the principle of *total inclusion* (Mendes, 2006). And the third identifies a field defined as superficial, as well as asks to what extent a debate about inclusion had hitherto contributed to the inclusion of education of people considered as different in education (Baptista, 2004). What was at stake can be interpreted, mainly, as a reiterated call for a necessary critical thinking on the subject.

The questionings were expressed, prompting a review not wanted by all people. However, that review was necessary to critically examine the purpose of education and the meaning of being educated under this modality named *special*.

One School, Two Educations

Modernity has constructed a specific form of referring to the educational fact as it anchored itself to school; for its part, school occupied itself with the mission of modernizing man. One reason for this is that “[...] modernity’s promise of constructing a man capable of, by constituting himself and the world, achieving autonomy, liberty and justice, generated the articulation of political actions aiming at the realization of these values” (Hermann 1996: 46). The modern school – participant of a universal system of education – emerges as a mediation necessary to the fulfillment of certain promises.

In this sense, it should be pointed out that the issue of equality as we call it, that is, under a universal aspect, did not fit into the logic of the school of Classical Antiquity, where the difference between men was a difference in nature, making unnecessary “[...] the subtle social technology that makes of school a mechanism for incorporating the other” through the promise of equality (Maximiliano, Masschelein, Simons, 2017, p.179). In other words, if equality was a requirement to participate in the school of Classical Antiquity, in Modernity School it becomes the very purpose of participation.

It is in this line of reasoning that we can consider, even though not exclusively, the modern invention of Special Education, and, later, the criticism of its integrationist emphasis and the adherence to an educational approach in line with inclusion ideology. With this approach, the emphasis shifted from the discussion of special needs to the agenda of rights, which required a reinterpretation of Special Education itself, as proposed in PNEEPEI. The referred policy adopts an “[...] educational paradigm based on the conception of human rights, combines equality and difference as inseparable values” (Brazil, 2008). It therefore hopes to overcome the integration logic, as well as the clinical-therapeutic model in the Special Educational approach and in the very notion of

special policies. School thus seems to resume its central role in overcoming the logic of exclusion.

According to this policy, in the perspective of inclusion, “[...] Special Education becomes the pedagogical proposal of the school, defining as its target audience students with disabilities, global developmental disorders and high skills/giftedness” (Brazil, 2008). In addition, there is a proposal of articulation between these two forms of education, aimed at meeting the special needs of students. The Specialized Educational Service (Brazil, 2008) is conducted in *opposite shift* of the common or common classes of regular education. It can then be said that there are two educations – one for the ordinary pupils another for the special pupils, as well two different types of teachers, the regular ones and the specialists – although there is only one school.

However, as we turn to the strength of the concepts that shape the policy and try to understand in a minimal way what they involve, it is primarily important to observe – even if this is a truism – that there is a *specialized educational service* only because there are students considered to have special educational needs. This, by itself, would need to be taken very seriously, since:

It is impossible to define something as a ‘special need’ in educational practice without some criteria of what kinds of learning outcomes (knowledge and ability) are desirable, important or, perhaps, even necessary. Ultimately, making the distinction between ordinary and special needs is not a matter of empirical fact. Rather, it is a matter of making normative value judgement of what is good and valuable for pupils, and people in general (Vehmas, 2010, p. 91).

Despite this consideration, although it is argued that the term *special educational needs* has been introduced bearing in mind a retreat from categories of deficit, it can be understood that one of the reasons for its failure is related precisely to an unquestioned acceptance of the concept of special need, which seems to presuppose the existence of infallible evaluation processes that will correctly diagnose and define the students’ needs. In other words, it is a concept that does not deviate from an interpretive horizon still dominated by medical-scientific discourse.

It is in this wake that we may confirm the strength of medical values and understand possible failures in attempting to break with the logic of deficiency in education – as was undertaken through the *Warnock Report* in 1978 – as well as sustaining the fact that the concept of *special need* is used in practice as a kind of semi-technical or specialized term, giving the impression that everyone knows what it is about (Vehmas, 2010, 88-89). Although *special educational needs* – a concept established by that report – refers to resources and support to address differences related to learning, there still remains the idea that a special need is undesirable condition, with a focus on disability. And as a result, a supercategory emerged with a series of labels that, in their official use,

came to be synonymous with students' difficulties, overlapping with the possible support to be offered to them.

This led to a questionable expansion of Special Education, strongly motivating the sociological criticisms that arose against it. However, although correct in some respects, these criticisms can also be considered as excessive, reinforcing the dilemmatic structure through which Special Education is presented. Examining the Warnock Report it becomes clear that its central aim is to point out what support is needed so that each child can make progress in his/her learning rather than highlight his/her disability. In addition, the dilemma between identifying educational needs of some students and the negative effects of the possible labeling and stigmatization was already well-known by the Committee itself:

It will be argued that the practical effect of our proposal will be only to replace one label by another. We believe, however, that the term we have proposed, which will be used for descriptive purposes and not for any purpose of categorisation, is preferable to the existing label because it gives more indication of the nature of the child's difficulties, and is less likely to stigmatise the child. (Warnock Report, Section 3.26).

Another point to be highlighted in face of sociological criticism and its consequences to the Brazilian policy is the understanding that it would be better for children with special educational needs to be educated in regular schools is not a novelty brought about by Inclusive Education. In fact, this understanding had been present since the school integration movement in Brazil, although an uncritical view of the school was also implicit, and *integration* could then be thought of as a pragmatic and politically neutral form of service provision (Mendes, 2006, p. 395).

Thus, even if Inclusive Education carries a strong ideological load that seems able to trace new paths for Special Education and to foment a critical debate on the theme, it can be argued that the distinction between inclusion and integration does not justify the separation of the two concepts and the perception of integration in a negative way (Norwich, 2008). Indeed, the very interchangeability between the concepts of integration and inclusion may be highlighted, as found in key texts on Special Education, such as the Declaration of Salamanca, 1994, as well as its translation according to the educational terminology of each country. This may confuse, but also to make things clearer, because the very history of Special Education can be understood as a *reaction pro-inclusion*, which enabled that "[...] at the beginning of the 21st century, inclusion to appear as a central concern and as one of the purposes of national education for people with disabilities" (Lopes, Fabris, 2013, pp. 85-87).

In short, if we do not take into account the idea that *needs* may be necessary and contingent, while it is extremely difficult to assess the

moral weight of the various goals that define such needs; if we want to interpret the Special Education policy ignoring a certain notion of continuity and connection between the ideas of integration and inclusion; if we do not understand that the concept of inclusion is strongly linked to an ideology of social justice, with all the abstract and multidimensional load it entails, which makes Special Education to be explained mainly in political terms if we do not consider inclusion as an imperative and as part of the complex game we play under the *inclusion/exclusion* paradox (Veiga-Neto, 2001); we will just be watering the *seeds of confusion* at times planted by Special Education policies (Warnock, 2010).

Thus, questions about the objectives of Special Education or its meaning are still difficult to answer. In addition, these questions give rise to others, such as: “What does the maintenance of the notion of *special* in the practice of Inclusive Education represent?” (Lopes, Fabris, 2013, p. 113) And how does this contribute to the establishment of “[...] great ambiguities in the Brazilian policy of schooling of children with special needs (Plaisance, 2015, p. 236), incurring the risk that it does not develop into a desirable opposition to stigmatization and to the delimitations imposed by the much-criticized medical diagnoses?

An illustrative example of this ambiguity and risk becomes evident when people become aware of the growth in the number of *Multifunctional Resource Rooms* available, that is, of the outstanding technical and financial support given to the public education systems as a guarantee for the specialized educational service in the first years after the publication of the current policy for Special Education. This could certainly have been seen as a breakthrough, but as it was not accompanied by technical and financial support to the regular teaching rooms and the training of their teachers, seems only to favor the protagonism of specialized assistance in a context intended to be inclusive, possibly giving the impression that only new names have been given to the unwanted special classes.

In this context emerges the following question: “What are the assumptions implied in the valuation of the resource room as a priority space of specialized support for students with disabilities?” (Baptista, 2011, p. 61). Or, further: “To what extent do the inclusive policies of Special Education deconstruct meanings that relate difference to inequality, abnormality, and ineducability?” (Vasques; Moschen; Gurski, 2013, p. 81). It would be possible to argue, which holds a certain irony, that Brazilian Special Education is given nowadays from the perspective of Inclusive Education, but certain diagnoses (*Asperger, Williams, Rett*, among others), as well as the strength of the manual that compiles and defines them, have not been attenuated in their normalizing and spatializing function. In enlightening words:

We need not question either the basic psychological motivation of inclusion, nor the basic concepts of which it makes use: nobody is against compassion or justice or fraternity; the difficulty is rather to identify a coherent theory which puts these feelings and concepts into some

rational and defensible shape. Briefly, we need to know what we are to mean by 'inclusion'; and that must involve a set of propositions that are neither banal or vacuous on the one hand, nor palpably absurd on the other hand. Without that, we have only a set of what might be called passionate intuitions, which we then translate uncritically into practice: something that easily happens to even the most well-motivated revolutionary or evolutionary movements, sometimes with disastrous results (Wilson, 2000, p. 297).

As can be seen, it is in the face of a lack of consensus and definition regarding a guiding concept of educational policy that supposedly makes a difference in education and schooling, that some questions need to be addressed: What is the validity, in terms of Inclusive Education, of our realization that we have progressed in the offer of support and increased the availability of resource rooms as a pedagogical device for the action of Special Education, but without the counterpart with respect to investment in the common space? If students with special educational needs spend part of their time outside regular classrooms under a specialized and spatializing care, how is this consistent with inclusion and what sets the limit to that consistency? What is the epistemological status of Special Education in the perspective of Inclusive Education and how does this status affect the discussions about curriculum and evaluation? Are these questions no longer urgent, just as seemed to be those that preceded PNEEPEI? And if they are not yet, would that be an effect of politics itself?

Deviation: ideological impurity and indeterminacy

In a text that seeks to recover the passage from Special Education to Inclusive Education, alluding to the reality of our country, Eric Plaisance establishes the central point of his criticism of our policy

In fact, it is defined as a *National Policy on Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education*. Consequently, we can argue about the pertinence of a coexistence of the special and the inclusive, which, however, are linked to opposing paradigms and lead to radically different policies. In addition, this official text defines children as its target audiences. However, the very notion of *special needs* suggests an attention to the educational particularities of the children, to their singularities and, therefore, opposes the delimitation of medical or psychiatric diagnoses. There is a great risk of re-categorizing children and moving towards a psychopathology of inclusion (Plaisance, 2015, p. 236).

How can we sustain a theoretical position supporting the proposal of placing Special Education and Inclusive Education in coexistence, even in the face of the involved risk and considering that these conceptions of education are many times antipodes in the educational debate?

In a probable answer, one could defend the very idea of avoiding the opposition by resorting to a kind of perspectivism, in which the interpretation of the policy and its effects would ultimately depend on the balance between these perspectives. But in this case the weight to be placed on either perspective would necessarily be related to the understanding of the strength of certain words, as well as of the use we make of them, the comprehension of their role in a larger process, which is the production of meanings in certain historical contexts. An understanding in the case of Special Education, not only of what may be at stake in relation to the concepts *special* and *inclusion*, but also of Modernity as a historical and subjective experience, a way of being in the world that gives shape to these concepts. And at this point, this kind of perspectivism seems to be facing a complicated knot, for when Special Education operates its criticism of Modernity – for example, denouncing scientific rationality and its medical discourse with the known normal/abnormal oppositions – it is, in a strong sense, opposing its own creation, because it derives from the recognition of deficiencies arising from the prevalence of this rationality. On the other hand, by adopting the perspective of inclusion as a counterpoint, it may find no better argument to counteract this creation: it will eventually make itself aware of the breadth of the meaning of inclusion that also a part of modernity's project, overflows the concept of *special*.

In fact, what is at stake is still the attempt to balance conflicting modern values. We are committed to values such as identity, difference, freedom and equality, among others. Our Special Education policy is based on a “[...] conception of human rights, which combines equality and difference as inseparable values” (Brazil, 2018). Inclusion, in turn, is generally understood as implying that differences among children should be valued and that difference is a natural condition for schooling. However, the idea of a natural condition is associated with the conception of human nature, which includes the possession of certain attributes, and the development of certain capacities. And it is precisely under a conception of human nature, modernly improved, that certain differences or disabilities seem difficult to admit.

What does our Special Education policy do then? It neither adopts new values in response to modern values, nor questions them assertively. It paradoxically brings them together. This does not mean that some of its propositions are exclusively ours, and only in this policy certain ambiguities and ambivalences are established. However, while putting things in a certain way, PNEEPEI can be seen not only as the radical expression of the modern *telos*, in its incessant approach and struggle against certain ideals, but also as responsible, when fighting against the limits imposed by contradiction, for operating, at last, a kind of salutary short circuit in modern logic.

According to Philippe Bénétou, the modern spirit is a composite hovering between two ideas or interpretations that are at work within modern history: The first is based on what humanity itself demands of man; and the second is based on what results of the autonomy of the

will. As a consequence of these ideas, two conceptions of equality intersect. On the one hand, we have a substantial equality, in which the quality of men belongs uniformly to all, as well as their dignity to be respected. On the other hand, “[...] men are equal not because they share anything substantial that makes them men, but on the contrary, by a lack of substance. Men themselves, in this respect, are their own indeterminacy and, therefore, their absolute freedom” (Bénéton, 2002, p. 159-160).

As a consequence of these conceptions, modern concepts that are significant to the educational discourse, such as identity, authenticity, emancipation and freedom, end up stressing the principle of equality claimed by Modernity itself and part of its discourse. In this context, PNEEPEI can be seen both as a criticism of Special Education and its historical social deficit and as a criticism, even if skewed, of the very modern project in which this educational modality has its roots. It can be considered as well as an indication of the limits of a certain perspective of inclusion, of a radical approach, which claims to be the North of many social movements, but does not seem to consider the very tension inherent in the concept of inclusion and its twofold relationship with the idea of exclusion, in which Special Education defies the very idea of inclusion.

Thus, to stress a dilemma of difference in the very title of an educational policy, even more so in a context in which these dilemmas are central (Nilholm, 2006: 434), can be considered as a reaction of resistance of men to the Enlightenment project; as a response to the supposed crisis of Modernity and to the failure of the civilizing process that leads to the crisis of education and school, where we are then called to reverse the weight of the balance of interpretations that are in the bosom of modern history. From another point of view, we preserve the idea of school as a place of equality, but not anymore of a substantial equality as a civilizing promise hitherto unrealized. We shift equality to its other possibility of understanding: as indeterminacy and potential that constitutes each man; thus dissociated from the developmental promise and from “[...] the progressive temporality to which the modern age has submitted it” (Maximiliano; Masschelein; Simons, 2017, p. 186).

In this way we do not turn our backs on metadiagnoses that understand Modernity as an “[...] alternating movement between expectations of determinacy rationalization and impersonalization, followed by a countermovement of anomie, indeterminacy and ambiguity” (Dunker, 2015, p. 188). However, in a frame of mind in which indeterminacy should not be thought of as having a dichotomous logic, as the symmetrical lack of determination but as having its own ontological status which, even if negative, highlights the value of encounter and contingency (Dunker, 2015, p. 290).

Therefore, by admitting the ontological inconsistency of subjectivity and the difficulty of fulfilling some promises made by man, as well as by considering the importance of recognizing “[...] the produc-

tive and constitutive dimension of certain indeterminacy experiences” (Dunker, 2015, p.29), we can look beyond modern expectations and think about school as a whole and for all, as well as Special Education – not cynically, just considering the latter and its students – but from a perspective in which the strength and weight of political, cultural and scientific rationality can be temporarily suspended, strengthening “[...] the idea that in class something ‘can really happen’, that is, the force of all kinds of definitions and determinations could be nullified” (Kohan, Masschelein, Simons, 2017, p. 170).

Finally, it is even possible to support the thesis that PNEEPEI expresses itself in a clear ambiguity, falling into a kind of trap caused by the *words of Special Education* (Plaisance, 2015). However, we can read it – and this is the bet of this text – as an intricate provocation, as a manifestation of a certain *ideological impurity* (Norwich, 1996), inevitable in a dilemmatic structure constituted by conflicting values. Not, therefore, as an assertive policy that offers guidelines with the same characteristics, but which, by not denying a tension that is constitutive of Special Education – which explains, at least in part, the contemporaneity and recurrence of its questions – provokes us to reflect on what would be the solution to escape the trap if the fall had actually occurred.

Final Considerations

The thesis that functions as a *leitmotiv* for reflection in this text expresses something constitutive of Special Education. It points to the contemporaneity of its issues, while indicating the need for its permanent revision. However, in pointing to the recurring character of these issues, not only does it indicate that we have a long challenging path ahead, but also forces us to try to understand possible reasons for this. In this movement, it crosses past and present, making us revisit, even briefly, the questionings that preceded the current Special Education policy in Brazil, as well as a substantial part of what we can call a modern inheritance and that presents itself as the expression of a greater dilemma: of man fighting against man himself. Thus, the theoretical discussion proposed here was intended to show, as a possible way of understanding these reasons, the strength of the problems posed by Modernity, to which Special Education gives striking contours through movements of ambivalence and tension. These can be mistakenly seen not only as conceptual obstacles, but also as ideological walls for research and reflection in the field.

But if we accept the historical strength of these movements – especially if we do not deny the inheritance under which we forge ourselves – then we may look at them not as an obstacle but as a wall simply indicating that we cannot continue through where we were following. From this perspective, in which we interpreted the text of the Brazilian policy and criticized it, the indication that we cannot continue on a certain path does not imply thinking ambivalence and tension as objections to reflection, but rather considering as a persistent obstacle the

mode of reflection that seeks to eliminate these aspects of the debate in Special Education skewing from a critical thought for which this text can be thought of as a mode of exercise. The question, then, is either to wash or not to wash our hands; accepting or not accepting to play the game of ambivalence, tension and possibly of indeterminacy. This without forgetting the dilemmatic structure that points to the inescapability of the conflict, thus requiring that Special Education and ethics walk necessarily side by side.

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