

The Political and Academic Fields and the Discourse on Special Education

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ABSTRACT – The Political and Academic Fields and the Discourse on Special Education. The objective of this study was to analyze and discuss permanence and ruptures in the identity of special education and the close relationship between the academic field and educational policies. The contributions of Pierre Bourdieu were used, specifically the concepts of language and field and as a methodology for the analysis of the narratives produced in publications of the Brazilian Journal of Special Education. It was concluded that the relationship between these fields reflects the constant search of a set of researchers to more carefully specify the field of special education and the temporal coexistence of similar, distinct and antagonistic perspectives, configuring the field with a multifaceted identity, reflecting the contradictory movement of society and social policies.

Keywords: Special Education. Education Policy. Special Educational Needs. Knowledge Production. Target Audience of Special Education.

RESUMO – Os Campos Político e Acadêmico e o Discurso Sobre Educação Especial. Objetivou-se analisar e discutir permanências e rupturas na identidade da educação especial e a estreita relação entre o campo acadêmico e as políticas educacionais. Recorreu-se às contribuições de Pierre Bourdieu, especificamente os conceitos de linguagem e campo e como metodologia à análise das narrativas produzidas em publicações da Revista Brasileira de Educação Especial. Concluiu-se que a relação entre esses campos reflete a busca incessante de um conjunto de pesquisadores para precisar com maior cuidado o campo da educação especial e a coexistência temporal de perspectivas afins, distintas e antagônicas, configurando ao campo uma identidade multifacetada, refletindo o movimento contraditório da sociedade e das políticas sociais.

Palavras-chave: Educação Especial. Política Educacional. Necessidades Educacionais Especiais. Público-Alvo da Educação Especial. Produção de Conhecimento.

Introduction

This article is the result of a doctoral thesis in Education which aimed to present, analyze and discuss the ordinary terms and/or concepts in special education understood as a knowledge field characterized by symbolic struggles, in the Bourdieusian sense, which, such as any other field, influences and is influenced by the other fields which compose the social space.

According to Bourdieu (1991), a field is neither imposed nor built through empirical objectives, rather, it is defined as a *locus* situated in the social space in objectively and subjectively established relations in reference to other fields. A field has certain constituted regularities in and by the field itself, caused by the dynamics of specific forces confronted with each other.

These power relations must not be understood as mere communication relations - rather, they must be interpreted as power relations, dependent on the material and symbolic power possessed by the agent or institution and its position in a given space in the field.

In this sense, a discourse can become hegemonic given the conditions of its production and the places objectively occupied by agents and/or institutions in certain social fields. Thus, language becomes essential to approach the production that intends certain legitimacy.

In this perspective, language is an instrument of action and power. The linguistic exchanges within the communication relations, which imply knowledge and recognition, are also relations of symbolic power, updating the force structure between the agents and the field. (Bourdieu, 1991).

According to Williams (2009), language is practical consciousness that impregnates and is impregnated by the social activities contained in active societies, which are transformed and transform experiences.

Language, in this way, is constituted through social and material existence between real individuals in acts of communication.

The analysis of the field of special education as a *locus* - situated in a given social space founded by objectively and subjectively established relations - demands to consider the constant struggles, which aim to conserve, resist, transform the field, given that the symbolic power residing there is directly related not only to the cultural and social field, but to the political and economic fields, offering them their symbolic services, influencing at the same time they are influenced, providing a dynamic that expresses the close connection both to the social structure and to the representation of this reality.

In order to approach the subject referring to the field of special education specifically in the characterization and classification of its population and the discourses produced within it, it is necessary to address the use of the terms composing it. Thus, it is important to highlight that the terms and/or concepts commonly used in this field has

not always meant the same. Some are used in distinct ways - sometimes to oppose an idea that seems to be outdated, sometimes as synonyms. Thus, the statement by Bourdieu et. al. concerning operating and systematic concepts is highlighted. For them, concepts thought in isolation cannot systematically resist the systematic logic of ideology (Bourdieu; Chamboredon; Passeron, 2010).

They also state that the so-called operative concepts are opposed to those named systematic, these are only understood in their interrelation since the constitution of operationally defined terms and their univocal and constant use cannot capture reality as purpose-built relationship systems (Bourdieu; Chamboredon; Passeron, 2010).

In order to carry out the proposed discussion, an analysis of the texts published in *Revista Brasileira de Educação Especial (RBEE)*, whose first publication dates from 1992, was carried out. The choice is justified as the journal is: the most recognized specialized vehicle in the field of Special Education; it gathers contributions from the most recognized researchers; and has published papers since the 1990s, which allowed the analysis of the historical movement of conceptualization of the special education population and its constitution.

In this sense, the articles published by *Revista Brasileira de Educação Especial* are understood as an expression of the academic-scientific context, constituting as cultural practices that exercise an important influence on the active social process (Williams, 2009), but which, on the other hand, also suffer such influences, as cultural practices are not only the result or reflection of a certain base, but rather an active aspect of social organization, in which produced senses and meanings are made up of social conflicts and not in an autonomous and neutral way (Williams, 1979).

This article aims to analyze and discuss from the selected texts, changes, permanence and ruptures in the identity of special education through its population's distinct characterizations, and the close relationship between the academic-scientific field and educational policies marked by transformations at certain historical times.

The texts were selected considering the following criteria: they correspond to the period from 1992 to 2015; address broad discussions on Special Education; are written in Brazilian-Portuguese; contain the descriptors in the text: SEN (special education/educational needs); SN (special needs)¹.

In order to proceed with the analysis, we observed, from the set of texts, the ones indicating differences and similarities in the characterization of the population they covered. Texts that only cited the terms SEN or NE, or that referred to them as a synonym for disability, but did not establish further discussion, were excluded.

Full reading of the selected texts was used, organizing them through periodization that sought to establish a relation between different moments of the implementation of educational policies based on

criticisms of segregated teaching and academic production disseminated by RBEE, as the terms special education/educational needs and special needs were the most used for the critical analysis of the previous terminology (exceptionality² and disability).

This system resulted in the selection of the following texts:

1. CARDOSO, Maria Cecília de Freitas. *Integração Educacional e Comunitária*. v. 1, 1992.
2. TOREZAN, Ana Maria. *Classes especiais: manter, ampliar ou extinguir? Ideias para debate*. v. 3, 1995.
3. MINTO, César Augusto. *Educação Especial: da LDB aos Planos Nacionais de Educação – do MEC e proposta da sociedade brasileira*. v. 6, 2000.
4. OMOTE, Sadao. *Estigma no tempo da Inclusão*. v. 10, n. 3, 2004.
5. GARCIA, Rosalba Maria Cardoso. *Políticas para a educação especial e as formas organizativas do trabalho pedagógico*. v. 12, n. 3, 2006.
6. MENDES, Enicéia Gonçalves; LOURENÇO, Gerusa Ferreira. *Viés de gênero na notificação de alunos com necessidades educacionais especiais*. v. 15, n. 3, 2009.
7. OMOTE, Sadao. *Caminhando com Dibs: uma trajetória de construção de conceitos em educação especial*. v. 16, n. 3, 2010.
8. BARDY, Livia Raposo. et al. *Objetos de aprendizagem como recurso pedagógico em contextos inclusivos: subsídios para a formação de professores a distância*. v. 19, n. 2, 2013.
9. CALHEIROS, David dos Santos; FUMES, Neiza de Lourdes Frederico. *A educação especial em Maceió/Alagoas e a implementação da política do atendimento educacional especializado*. v. 20, n. 2, 2014.
10. HAAS, Clarissa; GONÇALVES, Taísa Grasiela Gomes Liduenha. *Em tempos de democratização do direito à educação: como tem se delimitado as políticas de acesso à EJA aos estudantes com deficiência no Rio Grande do Sul?* v. 21, n. 4, 2015.

Results and Discussion

The first consideration about the terms special education/educational needs or simply special needs is that, although leading authors, including Bueno (2008, 2011), consider that the Salamanca Declaration (UNESCO, 1994) was a milestone introducing a worldwide political perspective, that is, the perspective of including students with special educational needs in general classes, these terms were already used in RBEE publications, which seems to reveal that, if there is certain relativization in relation to the influences from the political field to the education field, it is also possible to verify the interdependence relation between these fields. In other words, just as the implementation of policies influences knowledge production in the field of special education, this same production also influences the paths taken by special education policies.

If we expand this globally, we verify that, according to Jimenéz (1990, p. 16), in a paper published in Spain, the term special education/ educational needs was used for the first time in a political report produced in Great Britain:

In the Warnock report (1978), the term special educational need appears for the first time. This report would later inspire the new Education Act of 1981 in Great Britain [...] The concept of special educational need, as the new Law focuses, is key. A boy or a girl is considered to need special education if they have learning difficulties that require special educational measures (Our translation).

Likewise, this statement is repeated 16 years after the publication of the previous text in Portugal, in Teresa Maria Rodrigues Izquierdo's master's degree dissertation, defended at the University of Aveiro, whose specific theme was exactly this report:

The Warnock Report introduces for the first time 'the concept of Special Educational Needs, encompassing not only students with disabilities, but all those who, throughout their school career, may have specific learning difficulties' (Warnock Report, 1978, p. 36 apud Izquierdo, 2006, p. 59, our translation).

The Warnock Report was prepared by a committee formed in 1973 and aimed at reviewing special education services in England, Scotland and Wales for children and young people with "disabilities of body or mind" (Warnock Report, 1978, p. 1), considering the medical aspects of their needs and the attention in preparing them for the labor market. This commission, chaired by Mrs. Hellen Mary Warnock, was assigned by the British government to prepare a report on Special Education, to examine the effective resources for this purpose, as well as to formulate important recommendations.

From the report, we observe that the essential content proposed in 1978 already announced the perspective proposed in Salamanca in 1994:

[...] We wish to see a more positive approach, and we have adopted the concept of SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEED, seen not in terms of a particular disability which a child may be judged to have, but in relation to everything about him, his abilities as well as his disabilities - indeed, all the factors which have a bearing on his educational progress [...] (Warnock Report, 1978, p. 37).

The arguments intended to show that, like any social field, knowledge production in special education has an intimate relation with the political field, sometimes suffering its influence, and sometimes influencing it, although the consolidation of certain perspectives does not occur immediately, but are constituted over time, implying positions of power, competitive struggles regarding the points of view that wish to be made hegemonic. And it is precisely in this movement, apparently

linear, but endowed with contradictions, ambiguities and disputes, that knowledge is constituted and gains space both in discourses and practices.

The World Conference on Special Needs Education, considered a world landmark for changing the perspective of the schooling processes of students with disabilities, contributed, according to Bueno (2008), in the political sphere, to the ambiguity of the term, as its introduction includes numerous students in the scope of these needs, but when it details the principles and proposals for action, it turns exclusively to students with disabilities.

Thus, the analysis of the corpus established three periods of analysis, considering that new political propositions - implemented from criticisms produced by the academic-scientific field about the schooling processes of this group of students (especially regarding segregated teaching) - exerted significant influence on the content of academic productions which, in some way, established relations between the designation of this group of students and the political field.

The first period comprises the 1990s, when a debate regarding the denomination of the group of students the field of special education covers was evidenced.

In the following period, which corresponds to the early 2000s, a predominance of texts criticizing the use of this designation is verified.

And a third period started in 2008, with emphasis on the incorporation of the term special educational needs and the inclusion of a new term in the field, the target audience of special education.

Thus, by analyzing the legal provisions accompanying the debate around special education, together with scientific-academic production, we sought to establish the relation between the narratives of the texts and the historical moment in which they were produced.

1990s: between Integration and Inclusion

The first selected paper was by Cardoso (1992)³, when the author uses the terms special needs and special educational needs, she refers to disabilities or development problems, as shown below:

When we talk about educational and community integration, we start from several assumptions. First of all, we see integration as a possibility for people with special needs due to disabilities or problems in their development to live and coexist with other people in their community. [...] it is fair that the student with special needs⁴ go to the same school as his siblings and neighbors [...] The principle of integration does not deny the fulfillment of the special educational needs the student may have [...] (Cardoso, 1992, p. 89, our translation).

The first observation to consider refers to the indistinction made by the author, between special needs and special educational needs,

which seems to reflect the stage reached by both political formulations and academic production, prior to the ratification of the second term by the Salamanca Declaration. This is in line with the fact that the Federal Constitution refers to special education service for students with disabilities (Brazil, 1988, art. 108, item III), while the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law, promulgated four years after the publication of that paper, when referring to the same type of service, refers to “students with special needs”. (Brazil, 1996, art. 4, item III).

Likewise, her characterization of the target audience was restricted to disabilities and other development problems. By not detailing what the “other development problems” would be, this characterization favors the expansion of the range to a huge group of students, basically due to an elitist education policy, in addition to distinguishing from other productions, such as by Ferreira (1992)⁵, published in the same year, who included gifted students in the field of special education.

In 1995, Torezan and Caiado⁶ published an article in RBEE, in which they criticize the way students are referred to special classes, criticism directed fundamentally at the evaluation processes intended to classify and direct these students to the so-called special classes.

Based on the analysis of the ways students are labeled through evaluations and how it influences policies and actions aimed at special education, they point out criticism even to the term special needs, as indicated below:

However, even if more effective and efficient ways are identified to promote the integration of students in general education, we cannot assume that all children with actual special needs (do they exist or not?), may be immediately integrated into general education, considering the current state of Brazilian education. (Torezan; Caiado, 1995, p. 32, our translation).

In fact, by doubting that all children whose characterization recommends their inclusion in special education, the criticism they establish turns to the issue of the abolition of special classes, based on the educational policies implemented at the time.

Thus, the central question of the article - whether special classes should be maintained or not - leads the authors to consider two aspects they consider central to the answer: - On the one hand, the finding that an expressive set of students was directed to these classes without having accurate diagnosis, and therefore these classes decisively contributed to the ratification of the exclusion of students who did not fit regular education, and contributing to the maintenance of school selectivity. On the other hand, they questioned the abolition of these classes, based on the disability level of part of this group:

What does it mean to discard this type of public service? Would all children be ‘integrated’ into regular education? But, if so, another question is: what is the extent of individual differences that can be ‘accommodated’ in

the general class, considering its current configuration? Where would the injured and 'syndromic' children be, who are also entitled to free public education? Would they also attend regular classes? Under what conditions? (Torezan; Caiado, 1995, p. 34, our translation).

It is noteworthy that this article was written exactly in the year following the publication of the National Policy on Special Education (Brasil. MEC, 1994) by the federal government, which characterized the students who should compose special education: "people with disabilities (mental, visual, auditory, physical, multiple), people with typical behaviors (behavior problems), and people with high skills (gifted)". (Brazil. MEC, 1994, p. 13).

That is, for the authors, the fundamental core of the problem would not be in the characterization the document made about the universe of this group of students, for example, questioning what the real meaning of the category "people with typical behaviors" is, characterized as people with "problems of conduct", which would allow the insertion of any student who does not fit the regular school, but in the accuracy or not of the evaluation processes that should be improved.

In the same way, the questioning about the adequacy of the extinction of the special classes was based on statistical data which, at that moment, revealed the hegemony of specialized schools regarding the number of offered services⁷.

What matters in this article is precisely the fact that the authors, instigated by a new political perspective that, by privileging the insertion of students directed to segregated processes (special classes and schools), express a search for a more adequate identification of those children who had "actual special needs". (Torezan; Caiado, 1995, p. 32).

Early 2000s: the Inclusive perspective

In 2000, Cesar Augusto Minto⁸ published an article in which he criticized both the way the disabled person or the disability are addressed in legal documents, in this case in LDB 9394/96, as well as the use of the terms special educational needs and special needs, which, for the author, are distinct terms:

[...] Observe a substantive part of art. 58 [...] for students with special needs'. This wording seems to imply an appraisal of the disabled person or the disability and, therefore, presupposes the need for special 'education' care, which may not correspond to reality. In this case the wording 'disabled person', although politically incorrect, would be less hypocritical and more functional for those who are entitled to differentiated service. Furthermore, it is about the difference between 'special education service' (underlying the text) and 'special needs'. Prejudice appears right there, as 'special education service' refers to a right of the different and 'special needs' suggests the

demand for care for 'non-normal people [...]' (Minto, 2000, p. 9, our translation).

The author argues against the use of the term special needs as a synonym for special educational needs, since special needs may not necessarily require special educational care, positioning in favor of the expression disabled, which, according to him, would define more precisely the population that would demand special education services.

Thus, it seems to accurately express the political moment of the time, marked by the Salamanca Declaration (1994) and the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (LDBEN) of 1996, the first one is ambiguous as to the characterization of special educational needs, indicated above, and the LDBEN, which uses the term special needs⁹.

Still under the influence of the Salamanca Declaration, the LDBEN and resulting normative documents, Sadao Omote¹⁰ published an article criticizing the formulation of a new term, according to the author, based on the Declaration:

Names that designate specific disabilities have been banned and generic terms such as *special needs* or, more specifically, *special educational needs* have been coined. Specialized services have become the target of criticism, holding responsibility for the segregation suffered by its users, and a form of care able of educating everyone in diversity; taking advantage of diversity is sought (Omote, 2004, p. 288, our translation).

And the author continues:

In this redirection of the Special Education discourse, *difference* and *diversity*, and at the same time a little disguised and ambiguously *equality*, became some of the central concepts. This frame of reference under construction seems to assume that the wide range of variations that people can present in their attributes, capabilities and behaviors is situated on a *continuum* with a strange scale that differentiates people quantitatively and qualitatively, but at the same time, impose continuity and, at the limit, a vague glimpse of undifferentiation (Omote, 2004, p. 288, our translation).

For the author, the issue is the ambiguity and imprecision of fundamental concepts for the definition of the special education field, with the low-qualified extension of the new terms (regardless of whether special needs or special educational needs), as well as a generic *continuum* away from the normal pattern, without a more precise characterization that the old term (disability) carried.

To conclude the analysis of this topic, Rosalba Maria Cardoso Garcia's¹¹ article, published in RBEE, in 2006, when the author develops

[...] reflections on the propositions about organizational forms of pedagogical work in special educational policies and refer to documentary analysis, through which seeks

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to apprehend the meanings of political discourses and the concepts that support them (Garcia, 2006, p. 299, our translation).

Her criticism regarding the conception of students in special education is fundamentally based on the clinical character that sustains it:

[...] the conception of special needs present in the collected documentation is not enough to overcome a clinical approach, in addition to obscuring the inequalities present in the current learning processes and placing, once again, the responsibility of success or failure on students individually as it contributes to the diffusion of an image of a 'democratic' and 'politically correct' school (Garcia, 2006, p. 305, our translation).

Thus, the author understands that the conception related to special needs - which would be justified by characterizing the population covered by special education, in addition to a clinical view (correctly centered on the individual diagnosis of these subjects) - ends up doing what it precisely intended to deny, that is, it continues to express the exclusion policy that historically pervaded education and, specifically, special education.

The author further states that:

The reference is placed in the individual conditions of the student to contact the curriculum. Therefore, special needs are being understood not as alternative and creative strategies that can be proposed to the teaching and learning processes, but as the set of conditions the student presents (Garcia, 2006, p. 306, our translation).

Therefore, according to the author, it seems that the new term has failed in transforming the perspective of the subject served by special education, which, in this case, has broadened its focus of care, that is, from the focus on diagnosis it started to focus on individual differences and, therefore:

[...] proposing new levels of diagnosis and prognosis, based on the relation between 'individual differences' and 'curriculum', not overcoming an understanding supported on 'deviant behavior' and the need to 'adjust' the students to society, thus maintaining, its approaches with a functionalist view (Garcia, 2006, p. 309, our translation).

This was controversial in the political and academic fields, and caused a split between supporters of the total inclusion of all students served by special education and those who supported the provisions of the current legislation, (such as of LDBEN) that this inclusion should take place preferably in the regular school system and indicated the need for a gradual process of social and school inclusion, resulted from the promulgation of the National Policy on Special Education from the perspective of inclusive education. (Brazil, 2008).

From 2008: the influence of the National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education

In 2008, the National Policy on Special Education from the perspective of Inclusive Education was approved, with the following basic premise:

By recognizing that the difficulties faced by the education systems reveal the need to confront discriminatory practices and create alternatives to overcome them, inclusive education plays central role in the debate about contemporary society and the role of the school in overcoming the logic of exclusion (Brazil, 2008, p. 5, our translation).

Regarding the characterization of the population it encompasses, the document states that

The National Policy on Special Education from the perspective of Inclusive Education aims to ensure the school inclusion of students with disabilities, global developmental disorders and high skills/giftedness [...] (Brazil, 2008, p. 14, our translation).

The first text selected for the analysis of this topic was by Mendes and Lourenço (2009)¹², whose objective was to analyze the relations between referrals for special education and the gender issue. To this end, they establish a categorization of the content of referral forms prepared by the students' teachers for special education services.

From this information, they created the following categories:

- a) *Health problems (HP)* - reference to the presence of organic risk factors known in the child's life history, or to the need for specialized medical and psychological care, or to symptoms of illness;
- b) *Disabilities (D)* - reference to typical characteristics of disabilities, or to receiving specialized support services in the rehabilitation area, or to the use of assistive technology resources. The subcategories found in this case were: PD (physical disability), HD (hearing disability), VI (visual impairment), MD (cognitive/mental disability), MuD (multiple disabilities);
- c) *Behavior problems (BP)* - reference to internalizing or externalizing behavior, socialization or conduct problems. The subcategory Internalizing Behavior Problems (IBP) refers to emotional problems such as dysphoria, withdrawal, fear and anxiety. The subcategory Externalizing Behavior Problems (EBP) refers to socialization and comprises conduct problems, behaviors marked by hyperactivity, impulsivity, opposition, aggression, deviant behavior and anti-social manifestations;
- d) *Language problems (L)* - references to problems of understanding and expression through spoken language;
- e) *Learning difficulties (LD)* - references to difficulties in performing academic activities (reading, writing and curriculum content);

- f) *Socio-family factors (SF)* - references to problems in housing conditions, or the student's family. The subcategory Protective Factors (PF) makes positive references about educational practices and family conditions. The subcategory Negative Factors (NF) refers to the presence of family and social factors that negatively affect the student, or reports of cases of substance abuse, unemployment, domestic violence, poverty, orphanhood, disabilities or chronic illnesses of family members;
- g) *Talents/high skills and potentialities (TH)* - references to abilities and skills with domain above the average for the age, in the intellectual, perception (visual, auditory, etc.), artistic, creativity, memory, potentialities or student's strengths;
- h) *Others* - any report that does not fall into the previous categories (Mendes; Lourenço, 2009, p. 422 and 423, our translation).

As they do not establish any critical analysis of the content of these forms, and from them they created the categories above, the acceptance of this categorization as a scope of special education is implicit.

In other words, with the exception of item "f - Socio-family factors" (which differs mostly because it includes social relationships that would involve all other categories), all the others were classified within the scope of special education.

Despite adding that the

[...] referral of students to special education services is strongly centered on the person of the general education teacher, who makes the decisions based more on personal and professional opinions than on objective factors (Mendes; Lourenço, 2009, p. 425, our translation).

They restrict themselves to creating categories that include, within the scope of special education, a set of "problems" that give special education a highly criticized scope by most researchers in the area.

The most interesting is that, despite expanding the scope – even in relation to the National Policy itself - authors who refer to this article do not make any reference to this expansion, as verified by Google Scholar references¹³.

One article that seemed quite expressive was by Omote (2010), one of the authors of articles analyzed in the previous period.

In this new article, this author questions the inclusion policy established by the National Policy of 2008, as he advocates that services aimed at this audience can be offered in segregated spaces, opposing the discourse that inclusion requires that all students with a special educational need are schooled with other students at all times in regular schools. It should also be noted that the author points out that special needs may be due to some type of disability, but also to other deviant behavior:

In fact, it may be heuristically more productive to think in terms of quality services rather than inclusion. The understanding about inclusion seems to be very impregnated by ideas such as the importance of the disabled student being together with non-disabled peers and doing activities together, in the same space-time context, occasionally with the necessary adaptations. Even in this spirit, it may not be heresy to admit the idea that certain special needs can be better met in special separate programs, in segregated services (which not necessarily need to be segregative), in which the user can count on resources materials and humans qualified for that purpose. To deny this opportunity, in the name of inclusion, is nonsense, certainly a way to explicitly practice exclusion, even though the disabled student may remain together with their non-disabled peers. The focus on quality service can favor a better assessment of the service alternatives and the indication of the one that best meets the specific special needs of each person with disabilities or other deviant behaviors (Omote, 2010, p. 336, our translation).

In short, Omote's perspective is always based on those students with marked disabilities (especially those who directly interfere with cognitive processes), whose insertion in regular education may, for him, reinforce these students' difficulties.

From 2013 on, a new term appears in the field to designate students covered by special education. If until then the term special educational needs had been used more and more - as a result, of course, of its adoption by educational policies - from 2013 on, there seems to be a trend to change the terminology for the target audience of special education and no longer special educational needs¹⁴.

When analyzing the productions of that period, an increasing number of papers refer to these people using this new designation. Many authors continue to use the expression special educational needs, but it seems that another term has become part of the field, as can be seen through the following excerpts:

SES (Special Education Service) is a service that runs through all teaching modalities and especially aims to identify the needs of students with disabilities (hearing, physical, intellectual and visual), global developmental disorders and high skills/giftedness, currently named Students Target Audience of Special Education (EPAEE) enrolled in regular education, and based on this identification, develop service plans to qualify access and effective participation of these students (Bardy; Hayashi; Seabra Jr., 2013, p. 274, our translation)¹⁵.

In this sense, if the same population previously designated as special educational needs (with disabilities [...] global developmental disorders, high skills/giftedness) is now named by a new term, what is the meaning of such a change?

In 2014, Calheiros and Fumes (2014, p. 254)¹⁶, although using the new designation such as Bardy et al. (2013), after four pages ended up using the term special educational needs.

It should also be noted that, both in Basic Education and in Higher Education, the presence of the target audience of Special Education was present in the regular education system in Maceió, even though the greatest concentration was in Basic Education. In particular, in Basic Education there were 3,680 enrollments, of these 265 were in early childhood education, 2,859 in elementary education, 81 in secondary education, 05 in vocational education and 470 in youth and adult education (Calheiros; Fumes, 2014, p. 254).

[...]

[...] in 1990, Maceió had 83 students duly enrolled with some type of special educational need (MACEIÓ, 2012b). In 2000, this number grew to 132 students, figure that does not significantly change the organizational scenario of the school system. This increase cannot be considered expressive, since, according to the 2000 Demographic Census, 14.5% of the Brazilian population, in this period, had some disability, the largest proportion being found in the Northeast region, with 16.8% of the population [...] (Calheiros; Fumes, 2014, p. 258).

That is, although in the body of the text they designate that Special Education Service - SES were offered to students “with disabilities, global developmental disorders and high skills/giftedness”, they add a footnote to this designation with the following content: “Students Target Audience of Special Education” (Calheiros; Fumes, 258, p. 250), with explicit reference to the source to which they referred, the National Policy on Special Education from the perspective of Inclusive Education of 2008.

Still in 2015, another published text refers to this population as the target audience of special education. In a footnote their authors indicate what they mean by that designation and how they will use it:

Target audience of Special Education are students with disabilities, global developmental disorders and high skills or giftedness (BRASIL, 2008a). Throughout the text, we will use the expressions ‘students with disabilities’ comprehensively, referring to all subjects who are target audience of Special Education, as this is the predominant characterization among the subjects. We will also use the expression Special Educational Needs (SEN) to refer to the categories of analysis of the statistical data of the School Census of Basic Education, as this is the nomenclature used by the Census, in reference to the target audience (Haas; Gonçalves, 2015, p. 444)¹⁷.

This excerpt shows the effort made by the authors to better specify the use of a new term in the field although it seems to carry the same characteristics as the old one.

It is relevant to note that all authors who inserted the new term in their discourse – to designate people with disabilities, global developmental disorder, high skills/giftedness - highlight that it started to be used from the document National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education (2008) as this document so defined it, however, in the original document, published in 2008, there is no mention of the expression target audience of special education¹⁸.

Final Considerations

To think about the discourse, its production and circulation, it is necessary to consider that such discourse is produced within a field in particular contexts and markets and that the properties of these markets carry linguistic products of a certain value. (Bourdieu, 1991). Recognizing the legitimacy of a discourse does not correspond to a deliberate creation of both meaning and value, but it responds to a process of acquiring, within the field, a disposition of sanctioning the linguistic market relating to the chances of profit in the field in question.

Thus, it is worth noting that the legitimacy of a discourse is closely related to linguistic markets that, according to Bourdieu (1991), impose themselves as a system of specific sanctions and censorship and contribute, not only to add symbolic value and, therefore, symbolic power to linguistic expressions, or rather, to a discourse, but also to give them meaning. This author points out that the knowledge and recognition of the intrinsic laws of the market and their sanctions determine the discourse strategies to be put in play, thus the discourses are always guided by a certain concern in fulfilling the requirements of a given market, as well as carrying the commitment between what to say and the censorship imposed by the field or market.

From the analysis of the texts and the comparison made from the documents, it can be verified that this use of new terms by the field researchers evidences, often the legitimacy constituted through the belief deposited both in the words and in those who pronounce them. Such a belief cannot be understood only as a production of the competence of words, but must be understood in the relation established between this one – the word – and the place legitimately occupied in the field of production related to other fields that constitute social reality.

As for changing special educational needs for target audience of special education, it is observed that the term target audience of special education services was initially used in Resolution No. 4/2009:

Art. 4 For the purposes of these Guidelines, the target audience of Special Education Services (SES) is considered:
I - Students with disabilities: those who have long-term physical, intellectual, mental or sensory impairments.
II - Students with global developmental disorders: those presenting alterations in neuropsychomotor development, impaired social relationships, communication or motor stereotypes. This definition includes students with

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classic autism, Asperger's syndrome, Rett's syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder (psychosis) and invasive disorders with no other specification.

III - Students with high skills/giftedness: those who have high potential and great involvement with the areas of human knowledge, isolated or combined: intellectual, leadership, psychomotor, arts and creativity (Brasil, 2009).

It can be observed in this excerpt that the term refers to the target audience of Special Education Service and that after a certain moment it started to refer to Special Education.

The controversies the term special educational needs caused in academic production were based on the search for an increasingly qualified designation of this population, seeking to establish an increasingly precise distinction between certain personal characteristics of the student (disabilities, specific disorders, etc.) and another population, whose schooling problems could not be attributed to these characteristics, but to educational policies based on selectivity, and which created pedagogical practices that reproduced that selectivity.

The use of the new term, more and more widespread, seems to reflect its total acceptance by the field, corroborating the perspective pointed out by the National Policy (2008) that highlights "[...] the multifunctional resource room as a priority *locus* of the specific work of Special Education" (Baptista, 2011, p. 63, our translation) and to that extent, the Special Education Service offered in the Multifunctional Resource Rooms (almost) as a synonym for Special Education, since the expression Target Audience of Special Education Service (Resolution No. 4/2009) has become Target Audience of Special Education.

This dynamic is an expression of the contradictory movement of society and, consequently, of social policies. Thus, the interferences of the social and political plan mark the field of Special Education and vice versa, which does not mean that such interferences occur in linearly or smoothly.

From the analysis of the narratives produced in texts published in *Revista Brasileira de Educação Especial*, we conclude that the close relationship between the political and academic fields, reflects, on the one hand, the continuous search of a group of researchers in the sense of specifying with greater care is taken in the field of special education through the characterization of students and, on the other hand, the temporal coexistence of similar, distinct and even antagonistic perspectives, which configure a multifaceted and diverse identity in this knowledge field.

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Notes

- 1 The following descriptors in Brazilian-Portuguese are also analyzed in the doctoral thesis: Excp. (excepcionalidades, excepcional); defic. (deficiência, deficiente); Transt. (transtorno).

- 2 Concept developed by Helena Antipoff in the 1930s to replace the term retarded to denominate mentally disabled, physically disabled, sensory disabled and gifted people, as well as people with emotional problems and social maladjustments.
- 3 Maria Cecília de Freitas Cardoso (currently Maria Cecília de Freitas Cardoso-Buckley), PhD in Special Education, at the time of this article publication she was a professor at the Faculty of Education of Rio de Janeiro State University – UERJ. Currently, she is in the USA working as a psychopedagogue at Stanley British Primary School.
- 4 The term used in Brazilian-Portuguese is '*portador de necessidades especiais*'.
- 5 This text makes up the analysis of the term exceptionality, which is not the focus of this article.
- 6 *Ana Maria Torezan*, graduated in Psychology, PhD in Experimental Psychology at USP (1990). She was a professor at UFSCar since 1983, transferring to UNICAMP in 1989, when she published this article. She retired in 1998, but collaborating as a participating teacher. *Katia Regina Moreno Caiado* graduated in Pedagogy, PhD in Education, USP (2002). She is currently assistant professor at UFSCar. She was a professor at PUCCAMP from 1989 to 2009 (Data Complemented by Lattes Curriculum: [http://buscatextual.cnpq.br/ buscatextual/busca.do](http://buscatextual.cnpq.br/buscatextual/busca.do)).
- 7 In this article, based on official statistical data, the authors showed that, of the 31,903 special education students in São Paulo state, 19,841 (64%) were enrolled in special schools, 8,813 (28%) in special classes and only 2,439 (8%) in general classes.
- 8 *Cesar Augusto Minto* graduated in Biological Sciences, PhD in Education (School Administration) at USP (1996). He was a professor at UFSCar, from 1989 to 1999, transferred that year to the Faculty of Education at USP. It is noteworthy that this article was the result of work commissioned by the WG-15 - Special Education, presented, in the previous year, at the 22nd Annual Meeting of the National Association for Research in Special Education - ANPED. (Data complemented by Lattes Curriculum: <http://buscatextual.cnpq.br/ buscatextual/busca.do>).
- 9 It is reiterated that the Federal Constitution of 1988 refers to the population of special education as people with disabilities (Brasil, 1988).
- 10 *Sadao Omote* graduated in Psychology, PhD in Psychology (Experimental Psychology) at USP (1984), PhD in Special Education at UNESP (1992). In 1999 he became Full Professor through a public call. Retired in 2005, he was hired under the CLT regime in the same year as an Associate Professor by the same university, teaching in Pedagogy, Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy courses and an advisor professor in the Graduate Program in Education, at UNESP. (Data complemented by the Lattes Curriculum: <http://buscatextual.cnpq.br/ buscatextual/busca.do>).
- 11 *Rosalba Maria Cardos Garcia* graduated in Physical Therapy, PhD in Education at Federal University of Santa Catarina - UFSC (2004). She is currently Associate Professor for the Department of Specialized Studies in Education and the Graduate Program in Education at UFSC, responsible for its Coordination in the period 2010-2013, as well as coordinating the WG-15 - Special Education of ANPED in the period 2009-2010. (Data from Lattes Curriculum: <http://buscatextual.cnpq.br/ buscatextual/busca.do>).

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- 12 *Enicéia Gonçalves Mendes* graduated in Psychology, PhD in Psychology at Institute of Psychology - IP/USP (1995). Full Professor at UFSCar, professor at the Graduate Program in Special Education. President of the Brazilian Association of Researchers in Special Education – ABPEE between 2013 and 2016. (Data from Lattes Curriculum: <http://buscatextual.cnpq.br/buscatextual/busca.do>). *Gerusa Ferreira Lourenço* (at the time of publication, PhD student at UFSCar), graduated in Occupational Therapy. Currently, she is a level III associate professor at the Department of Occupational Therapy at UFSCar and at the Graduate Program in Special Education - PPGEEs/UFSCar. (Data from Lattes Curriculum: [http://buscatextual.cnpq.br/busca.do](http://buscatextual.cnpq.br/buscatextual/busca.do)).
- 13 Seven papers used the article as one of their references. Available at: Disponível em: https://scholar.google.com.br/scholar?cites=5579883237946940963&as_sdt=2005&scioldt=0,5&hl=pt-BR
- 14 A study was carried out to verify the recurrence of the term in the period after the analysis of this work (2016 - 2019). It was found that among the 29 (twenty-nine) texts that present reference to broad discussions regarding special education in their titles, 18 (eighteen) use the term target audience of special education when referring to students previously named with special educational needs. Such texts were not analyzed in this article.
- 15 *Livia Raposo Bardy* graduated in Pedagogy at São Paulo State University - UNESP, PhD in Education at UNESP, member of the Research Group: Enabling Environments for Inclusion (Data from Lattes Curriculum: <http://buscatextual.cnpq.br/buscatextual/busca.do>). *Maria Cristina Piumbato Innocentini Hayashi* Bachelor in Social Sciences UNESP/Araraquara (1979), PhD in Education at UFSCar (1995). Full Professor in Information Science (UFSCar). Coordinator of the Graduate Program in Science, Technology and Society/UFSCar (Feb. 2010 - May 2014) and deputy coordinator of the Graduate Program in Special Education/UFSCar (Sept. 2004 - Aug. 2008). (Data from Lattes Curriculum: <http://buscatextual.cnpq.br/buscatextual/busca.do>). *Manoel Osmar Seabra Jr.* graduated in Physical Education at UNESP/Bauru, PhD in Education at UNESP. Post Doctorate (2016) in The College at Brockport State University of New York. Professor at the Department of Physical Education at UNESP and at the Graduate Program in Education at the Faculty of Science and Technology, Presidente Prudente. (Data from Lattes Curriculum: <http://buscatextual.cnpq.br/buscatextual/busca.do>).
- 16 *David dos Santos Calheiros* graduated from the Federal University of Alagoas - UFAL, PhD (in progress) in Special Education at UFSCar. Physical Education professor and occupational therapist. Since 2016 he has been a professor at the State University of Health Sciences of Alagoas. At the time of the publication, he was a master's degree student at Graduate Program in Special Education at UFSCar. (Data from Lattes Curriculum: <http://buscatextual.cnpq.br/buscatextual/busca.do>). *Neiza de Lourdes Frederico Fumes* graduated in Physical Education, PhD in Sports Sciences and Physical Education at the University of Porto (2001). Associate professor at the Federal University of Alagoas - UFAL.
- 17 *Clarissa Haas* graduated in Pedagogy PhD in Education at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul - UFRGS. Since 2016 she has been a permanent professor in Pedagogy at the Federal Institute of Rio Grande do Sul in Caxias do Sul - RS, experience as a teacher and educational technician in the State Public Teaching Network of RS and in the city of Venâncio Aires-RS. She worked at Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education and Special Education Service. At the time of publication, she worked in the Special Education Service

at a public school in the state of Rio Grande do Sul; *Táisa Grasiela Gomes Lidenha Gonçalves* graduated in Pedagogy, PhD in Special Education at UFSCar (2014). Assistant professor at the Faculty of Education of the Federal University of Minas Gerais - UFMG. At the time of publication, she was a professor in the Master's Program in Methodology for the Teaching of Languages, at Universidade Norte do Paraná - UNOPAR. (Data from Lattes Curriculum: <http://buscatextual.cnpq.br/buscatextual/busca.do>).

18 We found evidence of changes in this document, as one of the versions available online refers to a resolution of the National Education Council/Basic Education Chamber - CNE/CEB, dated back 2009 and the incorporation of data related to the School Census referring to the year 2013. Period when the texts published in the RBEE started to use the new term and, since then the two terms are used concurrently. Searching for evidence of the use of the new term in official documents, we found that there are three versions of the aforementioned National Policy: one published in 2008 (Brasil, 2008) <<http://portal.mec.gov.br/seesp/arquivos/pdf/politica.pdf>>; and two others currently available on the search site, without any indication that changes have been made from the original text; <http://portal.mec.gov.br/index.php?option=com_docman&view=download&alias=16690-politica-nacional-de-educacao-especial-na-perspectiva-da-educacao-inclusiva-05122014&Itemid=30192>; <<http://portal.mec.gov.br/arquivos/pdf/politicaeducespecial.pdf>>; This finding led to a comparison between the documents, showing that, while in the original document, published in 2008, the term target audience of special education did not appear even once, in the two other versions this term appears.

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