Special and inclusive education and the role of the teacher in preventing and combating bullying

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ABSTRACT

Education is a concept that is modified according to the educational objectives, which are related to the formative needs imposed by society. In this sense, the initial perception of education was related to the idealization of the physical and intellectual characteristics of the students, resulting in a homogenized perception of what the ideal student would be. Thus, the idea that people with disabilities would be incapable of learning prevailed for centuries, thus culminating in the exclusion of students with disabilities in the school environment. Nevertheless, the rise of Christianity brought a humanized perception of people with disabilities, resulting in the creation of institutions that treated the education of people with disabilities in a segregationist way. Subsequently, the Federal Constitution of 1988 spread the idea of education as a right for all, and it was up to the state to provide the conditions for the access and permanence of students with disabilities in regular education. Considering the acceptance of difference as a primary factor for effective inclusion, this article seeks to investigate the role of the teacher in the process of preventing and combating bullying in the classroom, as well as to reflect on the influence of teachers' beliefs on the subject in identifying and intervening in favor of preventing and combating bullying.

Keywords: Special and inclusive education, Acceptance of difference, Preventing and combating bullying.

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INTRODUCTION

In human society, difference is a characteristic that has always been present, especially because all individuals have distinct physical, intellectual, and emotional aspects. However, throughout the history of humanity, there has been a social construction that idealizes certain physical and intellectual characteristics of individuals, resulting in a socially accepted standard.

Under this aspect, a perception emerges that has repercussions on a social construction that stereotypes social minorities, with repercussions on the inequality of opportunities for individuals who are not included in socially privileged groups. In this way, a way of dealing with the different emerges that is not consistent with the acceptance of diversity.

In this way, among other forms of prejudice, a perception emerged that considered, over time, the person with disabilities as an individual incapacitated for school learning and preparation for work. Therefore, at the beginning of schooled education, there was no concern with the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular education, and there was no adequacy of the school space and the necessary teacher training to work with this target audience.

Although the current understanding involves the formation of all individuals for integral development, the promotion of citizenship and equal opportunities, the acceptance of difference still does not coincide with the perception of most students who do not have disabilities. Thus, it is common for students without disabilities to bully students with disabilities, resulting in demotivation, school dropout and, consequently, the exclusion of these students.

From this perspective, the general objective of this article is to reflect on the educational possibilities that involve strategies to combat and prevent bullying in the context of basic education. Thus, the following specific objectives were established: to revisit the concept of special education from the perspective of inclusive education as well as to identify the role of the teacher as an agent that provides an educational environment conducive to the inclusion of students with disabilities.

We also consider that the existence of pertinence and thematic relevance is due to the fact that there are few studies that address aspects related to the role of regular education teachers in the context of inclusive education in terms of conflict mediation and the prevention and combat of bullying, as well as the educational possibilities pertinent to these objectives.

Added to this, the research problem investigated is related to the following questions: "How did the historical path that enabled the development of the perception of special education from the perspective of inclusive education take place?"; "In what way does the regular school teacher interfere in the awareness of the need to respect differences in basic education?"; "What are the educational possibilities for the promotion of prevention and combat of bullying in the school environment?".

In addition, this article is a bibliographic, descriptive, exploratory research based on a qualitative approach and data analysis from an interpretative perspective.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE BRAZILIAN SOCIAL CONTEXT: A BRIEF HISTORY OF BRAZILIAN EDUCATIONAL LEGISLATION

Inclusive education in the Brazilian social context is related to the international context, being influenced by the historical path that resulted in the paradigm shift and the consequent acceptance of people with disabilities. We can also understand that the implementation of education for people with disabilities is related to the socially constituted perception of these individuals.

In this way, the idea that related disability to the divine curse developed, culminating in attitudes of rejection towards people with disabilities. Moses (2020). Regarding the relationship between people with disabilities and primitive society, Pereira (2017) reports that individuals needed to go in search of their own food and people with disabilities were considered a burden for group members because they would be physically dependent on other individuals, even needing to be supported by them.

In this aspect, Moises (2019 *apud* Moises, 2020) reports that in the period of indigenous society, people with disabilities were abandoned, thus being unable not only to have access to education, but also to continue their existence. In ancient Greece, children with disabilities were abandoned or thrown off cliffs, while in Rome, parents killed their children who were born with some physical deformity. (Pereira, 2017)

According to Pereira (2017), society's perception of people with disabilities began to change with the emergence of the ancient Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity, which formulated a discourse on the need to love others, including individuals with disabilities.

In this context, the first institutions emerged that proposed to shelter people with disabilities and indigents as a way of welcoming the less fortunate through the practice of charity. (Pereira, 2017). Ferreira, Lins, Silva and Santos (2019) also mention that at that time, the idea arose that people with disabilities would have a soul and, therefore, should be treated well, with repercussions in the construction of asylum institutions and orphanages that mutually offered health care and education to people with disabilities.

There was, however, an education system that favored the segregation of individuals with disabilities, who were treated and educated in specific spaces without contact with people without disabilities. For this reason, Kassar (2011) reports that in Brazil, inclusive education began with the construction of a teaching system that separated students with and without disabilities, configuring itself as an educational system parallel to regular education.

From this perspective, Osório et al. (2008) reports that special education was initially configured as an educational system that replaced regular education and was based on different perceptions and terminologies that resulted in the creation of specialized institutions for the education of people with disabilities.

Thus, the concept of normality as opposed to abnormality was established as a criterion, which was identified based on diagnoses that, by identifying the characteristics of people with disabilities, delimited the most appropriate educational practices for the development of students. (Osório et al., 2008).

Regarding the institutions that served people with disabilities at that time, Osório et al. (2008) mention the Institute of Blind Boys, created in 1854, the Institute of the Deaf and Dumb, created in 1859, and the Association of Parents and Friends of the Exceptional (APAE), founded in 1945.

From the point of view of the legislation itself, the "[...] The Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education, Law No. 4.024/61, [...] points out the right of the "exceptional" to education, preferably within the general education system", thus initiating a period of recognition of the need for inclusion of people with disabilities in the regular teaching environment. (Osório et al., 2008, p. 6).

Subsequently, Law No. 5,692/71 establishes some changes regarding the education of people with disabilities, stipulating the need for adequate treatment for students who have disabilities, regardless of whether they are of physical or intellectual origin. (Osório et al., 2008). However, these affirmative actions do not favor the organization of an education that actually meets the needs of students with disabilities and, therefore, stimulates the increase in enrollment of these students in special schools.

In 1973, the National Center for Special Education (CENESP) was created, which continued actions for the integration of people with disabilities in the educational environment. (Osório et al., 2008). According to the same author (2008), at that time, education revolved around welfare policies and the granting of access to the regular education system for gifted students, without, however, guaranteeing an education that prioritizes their educational needs.

In this aspect, the enactment of a truly inclusive educational legislation arises from the 1988 Constitution, which understands education as an extensive right to all people. It also argues that it should provide conditions for the full development of the individual, preparing him for citizen participation and entry into the labor market. (Osório et al., 2008, p.).

Concomitantly, the 1988 Constituent Assembly ensures equal access and permanence in the school environment, with the State being responsible for guaranteeing Specialized Educational Service (AEE) in order to complement regular education, helping students to develop their potential according to the educational needs arising from disability. (Osório et al., 2008).

Thus, the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA), Law 8.069/90, was enacted, with one of its objectives to reinforce the idea that children with disabilities should be enrolled in regular education, with parents being responsible for this enrollment. (Osório et al., 2008). In addition, the inclusion of inclusive education in Brazil gained notoriety due to the World Declaration on Education for All, published in 1990 and the Salamanca Declaration in 1994. (Osório et al., 2008). The latter document, in turn, emphasizes the idea that education should meet the educational needs of all students, including those inherent in students with disabilities.

In this regard, the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education, Law No. 9,394/96, emphasizes the right to guarantee access and permanence of students with disabilities in regular education. To this end, the LDB (1996 *apud* Osório et al., 2008) emphasizes the need for education systems to have curricula, teaching methods and pedagogical resources that favor the development of learning for students with disabilities in accordance with their educational needs.

In this sense, the Special Education Policy in the Perspective of Inclusive Education is based on the idea that school education aims to provide opportunities for the exercise of citizenship and insertion in the labor market, regardless of whether the student has a physical or intellectual disability or not. To this end, the National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education aims to guarantee access to education based on methodologies and pedagogical resources that favor the participation of students with disabilities in the classroom and effective learning. (Osório et al., 2008).

In addition, the aforementioned educational policy aims to provide guidance on the adequacy of transportation, furniture and the structure of the school institution itself as a way to make the school environment suitable not only for students without disabilities or those who have intellectual disabilities, but covering all students and, consequently, expanding the service to the educational needs of all students. (Osório et al., 2008).

In addition, teacher training is necessary for pedagogical adequacy for the inclusion of students with disabilities, which determines that training for both the teacher of the Specialized Educational Service (AEE) and for those who teach in regular education, also covering the entire school community. (Osório et al., 2008).

From this perspective, the Special Education Policy in the Perspective of Inclusive Education considers inclusion in a broad perspective, understanding teaching as a way that should provide adequate training to all students, regardless of whether they have disabilities or not. At the same time, inclusion depends on a set of factors, involving the structure of the school institution, teacher training and the awareness of all members of the school community.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER AND EDUCATIONAL POSSIBILITIES IN CONFLICT MEDIATION AND PREVENTION AGAINST BULLYING IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

The The Special Education Policy in the Perspective of Inclusive Education, a document sent to the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2008, can be understood as a tool to combat inequalities in opportunities, considering that it consists of defending the inclusion of people with disabilities in regular education.

In this regard, the aforementioned educational policy acts to guarantee the access and permanence of students with disabilities, so that they can enter higher education and the labor market, thus cooperating with inclusion not only in the educational sphere, but also in the social sphere. To this end, the Special Education Policy mentions some criteria for the adequacy of the school environment to students with disabilities, namely, teacher training and the school community as a whole, the use of pedagogical resources combined with a methodology appropriate to the educational needs of the student and the physical structure of the institution itself.

However, for inclusion to happen effectively, it is necessary that the entire community understands differences as something inherent to human beings, treating all students equally, regardless of whether they have disabilities or not. In this context, it is necessary for students without disabilities to become aware of the need for mutual respect, empathy and social interaction with students with disabilities in order to build an environment conducive to meaningful, collaborative and cooperative learning.

Under this aspect, Silva and Bazon (2017) consider that the teacher has a fundamental role in identifying situations involving the practice of bullying in the classroom, and this ability is related to the training they have on the concept of bullying, the characteristics inherent to this practice and the forms of intervention.

Regarding the knowledge that Brazilian teachers have about bullying, studies carried out by Silva et al. (2014 apud Silva and Bazon, *2017*) mention that when carrying out their studies, they identified that most of the teachers investigated have general and sometimes incomplete knowledge on the subject, being, therefore, insufficient to identify bullying. As a result, the teachers carried out specific intervention actions to combat the problem.

According to Silva et al. (2014 *apud* Silva and Bazon, 2017), teachers' knowledge about bullying interferes in the way they develop intervention proposals to prevent and combat bullying, becoming more comprehensive according to the theoretical knowledge of the teachers who prepare them. Silva et al. (2014 *apud* Silva and Bazon, 2017) also state that when teachers are unaware of ways to combat bullying, they act in order to propose educational strategies based on punishment. For Silva and Bazon (2014 *apud* Silva and Bazon, 2017), punishment does not solve the problem in

the long term, it only has a positive effect in the short term, but soon after, it intensifies the practice of bullying.

Hektner and Swenson (2012 *apud* Silva and Bazon, 2017) also point out that teachers tend to overestimate the skills they have to identify bullying situations, as well as to intervene effectively in preventing and combating them. In this way, teachers end up identifying a much lower number of bullying occurrences than actually happen, consequently resulting in low effectiveness of interventions to prevent and combat bullying. (Silva and Bazon, 2017).

In this regard, studies conducted by Smith and Shu (2000 *apud* Silva and Bazon, 2017) point out that reporting bullying to the teacher did not improve the attitudes of the aggressors. Sawyer and O'Brennan (2007 *apud* Silva and Bazon, 2017) identified from their studies that most teachers ignore bullying or adopt strategies that worsen aggression on the part of students. As a result, students who are bullied feel insecure, making it difficult for them to seek help in the school environment.

According to Kochenderfer-Ladd and Pelletier (2008 *apud* Silva and Bazon, 2017) they identified from their studies that teachers who ignore the practice of bullying consider it as a pate of social interactions between students and, therefore, they should solve the problem among themselves, defending themselves from the aggressors or ignoring them. Thus, from the perspective of Silva and Bazon (2017), the naturalization of the practice of bullying exempts teachers from the responsibility of preventing and combating this practice in the classroom. With this, the idea that violence between students is allowed or tolerated resonates. (Hektner and Swenson, 2012 *apud* Silva and Bazon, 2017). Thus, the idea that the victims are responsible for the aggressions suffered is emphasized, inserting them in a context of revictimization. (Silva et al., 2017 *apud* Silva and Bazon, 2017).

In this context, Silva and Bazon (2017) consider that teachers' perception of bullying influences the way they interpret and act in the face of aggression that occurs among students. In this aspect, physical aggression is considered serious and, therefore, calls for immediate interventions by teachers. (Silva et al., 2013; Yoon; Sulkowski; Bauman, 2016 *apud* Silva and Bazon, 2017). Meanwhile, verbal or relational aggression is considered harmless, not resulting in non-intervention by teachers. (Silva and Bazon, 2017).

On the other hand, Silva et al. (2016 apud *Silva and Bazon, 2017, s.n*) consider that students who suffer from bullying are sometimes "[...] in an asymmetrical relationship with the aggressor who has more physical, psychological and/or social power" and therefore are unable to defend themselves.

From this perspective, tolerance to bullying generates negative consequences, and teachers should be aware and sensitive to the problem. (Silva and Bazon, 2017). To this end, it is essential that teachers understand physical, verbal and relational aggression as equally serious, as the latter are

more frequently performed by children and adolescents in the school environment. (Juvonen; Graham, 2014 *apud* Silva and Bazon, 2017).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

School education in the Brazilian context did not consider, at first, the physical, intellectual and socio-emotional characteristics of students, creating the idealization of a certain student profile. In this sense, the perception of students with disabilities as incapable of learning and of disability as a representative condition of abnormality predominated.

In this regard, Moses (2020) reports that disability was considered a divine curse and, therefore, people with disabilities were rejected by society for a long time. In the context of primitive society, children with disabilities were abandoned, because other members of the community considered that they would not be able to support themselves, becoming a burden. (Pereira, 2017).

Similarly, in Greek and Roman societies, children with some physical deformity were abandoned or thrown off a cliff. (Pereira, 2017) Only with the rise of Christianity was there a change in the perception of people with disabilities who came to be considered as divine creatures, a fact that had repercussions on a welfare way of treating people with disabilities. (Pereira, 2017)

During this period, the first institutions that welcomed people with disabilities emerged, with repercussions on health care and education in an integrated way in the process of segregation of people with disabilities. (Ferreira et al., 2019). Thus, the idea of inclusion became effective only in 1988 based on the idea set forth in the Federal Constitution, which understands education as a right of all, with the State being responsible for granting vacancies to students with disabilities and parents for enrolling them in regular education.

In addition, LDB No. 9,394 of 1996 provides for the need for school institutions to provide adequate conditions for the access and permanence of students with disabilities. Likewise, the National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education points out the need for schools to adapt curricula, methodologies, didactic resources and the physical structure itself, aiming at the access and permanence of students with disabilities.

However, there is a relevant aspect that influences the inclusion of people with disabilities in the school environment, which is the way the school community perceives and treats the different. In this sense, there needs to be an awareness, especially on the part of students without disabilities, about the need to perceive difference as something inherent to the human species, building a relationship of mutual respect and collaborative learning with students with disabilities.

In this sense, the teacher has a relevant role in identifying possible bullying practices as well as in developing intervention strategies to prevent and combat bullying in the classroom. Thus, awareness goes through the perception that teachers have about the concept of bullying and the

severity attributed to the aggressions they witness among students, thus interfering in the position of the problem. (Silva and Bazon, 2017).

From this perspective, it is necessary, from the perspective of Silva and Bazon (2017), that teachers consider physical, verbal and relational aggression, seeking ways to prevent and combat the practice in the school environment. For the authors (2017), teachers have beliefs that consider verbal or relational aggression as less serious, making them ignore the practice of bullying and, considering that the students themselves could resolve their conflicts without teacher mediation.

In this way, what happens reinforces the idea that blames the victim, removing at the same time the responsibility of the teacher to intervene in the bullying practices he witnesses. (Silva and Bazon, 2017). Instead, it is up to the teacher to seek the necessary training to understand the origin of the practice of bullying among students, seeking to intervene to make all students aware of the relevance of mutual respect and the development of attitudes of empathy and collaborative and cooperative learning.

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