


Inclusion of people with hearing impairment in the school environment

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this work is to address the inclusion of people with hearing impairment (PCDA) in the school environment, dimensioning its legal and practical aspects, from the perspective of the Theory of Social Representations. Based on this theory, it is possible to conclude that the changes that occurred in the Brazilian legislation, with the purpose of including them in schools on equal terms with other students, constitute changes that occur in the legal sphere, without altering the stability of the nucleus of formation of the social representations referred to, shared in the interactive and communicational processes of daily life and over time, which continue to be based on incapacity, inability and disqualification to occupy collective spaces. This is a qualitative research, of bibliographic and documentary nature. In the development of the study, the school is pointed out as a dynamic, plural space that welcomes differences. Then, these subjects and the school inclusion movement are characterized, as well as the representations that permeate this process, concluding that, despite the change in legal status, they continue to be represented in the same way, from the perspective of disability, in the school environment.

Keywords: Social Representations, School Environment, Inclusion.

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INTRODUCTION

The school inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools is a right guaranteed by the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB), the Brazilian Law of Inclusion, the Statute of Persons with Disabilities, and the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, which establish Special Education as a duty of the State. Thus, the reception of individuals with hearing impairment in the school environment is carried out as a form of social inclusion to provide them with physical, cognitive and affective development. However, the processes of inclusion and social exclusion of people with disabilities in the regular school system are complex and transcend merely legal aspects or simple physical adaptations to provide accessibility.

The interactive and communicational processes constituted in the school environment are fundamental for social life, because, on this relational basis, the mobilization of signifiers, senses and meanings enables individuals to interpret and reinterpret ideas, images and attitudes, based on the recognition of similarities and differences, which can strengthen or weaken bonds of sociability, influencing the construction of individual and collective identities (JODELET, 2009), whose reflections can also be projected in the classification, hierarchization and identity deterioration of individuals, through stigmatizing relationships (GOFFMAN, 1980).

Despite legislative advances, the creation of the National Institute for the Education of the Deaf (INES) and social inclusion campaigns, deafness still causes strangeness and is perceived as a disease, while people with hearing impairment (PCDA)⁵ are often represented as "strangers", "different" or "incapable", whose individual and social experience varies according to the capacity and development of family strategies to promote their autonomy. These representations of the deaf person, socially shared in the interactive and communicational processes constituted in the various social spaces, including the school environment, produce various forms of physical and symbolic violence, reinforce attitudinal barriers, even reaching cases of segregation in special schools, because inclusive legislation, by itself, does not transform social, cultural and institutional structures. On a daily basis, the sharing of derogatory expressions of the Brazilian Sign Language (LIBRAS) is evidenced in the physical or virtual environment, through mime and gestures that cannot be understood as a "simple joke", but as a form of violence that has social and individual dimensions.

The relationship between mimics and derogatory gestures is not immediate; it involves processes of subjectivation, intersubjectivation and transsubjectivation (JODELET, 2009), embodied in the social representation of the PCDA. Thus, cognition, language and communication are integrated into social relations to categorize individuals, confirm and maintain collective identities capable of organizing daily practices and legitimizing, among certain groups, mockery, laughter or

⁵ In this study, the term person with hearing impairment, recognized by law, and the terms deaf, deaf person, person with deafness, based on social representations, are used.



other discriminatory behaviors, based on the hierarchy of individuals, between deaf and non-deaf. In this dynamic of school inclusion or exclusion, really including a person with disabilities is not as simple as listing it in legal provisions, as it is essential to first create relational bases that make inclusion comfortable and satisfactory. This is because the school is a living, dynamic field that contributes to human development, beyond the formal content. It is in this space that subjects learn to relate to others, to respect diversity, to establish communications, and learn the meaning of socialization with respect to differences. Thus, the school, more than a physical place for learning, must be constituted as a plural, welcoming, humanized environment, in which subjectivities, ideas, symbols that express the experience of the agents that compose it transit (SUDARIO, MORENO, 2022).

Based on these assumptions, this article aims to analyze the social representations of the deaf and their right to school inclusion. This is a qualitative research, of bibliographic and documentary nature. The qualitative method is applied to the study of history, relationships, representations, beliefs, perceptions and opinions, produced and socially reproduced, in interactive and communicational processes about a given social context (MINAYO, 2010). According to the author, through the qualitative method, it is possible to understand the social processes, still little known, referring to particular groups, such as the PCDA. In the course of this study, the social representations of the deaf will also be addressed, concluding that, despite the change in legal *status*, they continue to be represented as disabled, incapable in social spaces, including the school environment.

DEAF SUBJECTS: CULTURE AND SUBJECTIVITIES

The deaf person is an individual with a personal and social history, inscribed in a well-defined social and cultural context. In this way, the social representations elaborated about it and the way it is incorporated into interactive and communicational processes are expressed as a socially elaborated tendency, related to the social group to which it belongs. These representations guide individual and collective actions in a context of production of meanings in which the interface of socially shared discursive content takes place, with the interactive and affective processes that influence the definition and conformation of collective identities (Moscovici, 2015), in social spaces, including the school.

Thus, the deaf are considered a population that includes diverse identities, organized communities and their own cultural elements, in addition to the language used for communication between peers. However, the majority of those who listen, that is, the listeners, perceive these subjects from the perspective of hearing impairment, which incapacitates them to lead a life according to established social standards. This means that the social representations of the deaf are



elaborated in a context crossed by the intertextuality of the social constructions that feed common sense and the constituent discourses of interindividual and intergroup relations established within the city. It should also be noted that the meanings referring to the deaf, socially shared, originate both in more remote cultural productions and conformed in the social imaginary, such as the ideative image that transforms him into an incapable individual, unfit for public interaction and action, and in local and current productions, such as the meanings produced legally. Therefore, the context in which the social representations of the deaf are produced transcends the new legislation of social inclusion, as it incorporates not only new meanings, but also historically constructed meanings.

Since ancient times, the deaf have been excluded from the public life of the cities, given the different way of communication, based on sign language. Such a form of expression causes strangeness in the majority of the hearing population. The difficulties pointed out express the numerous barriers that exist in the collective environment that prevent people from this segment from exercising basic rights and tasks independently. These limitations make their interests and expectations in achieving life projects unfeasible.

In the last three decades, the special protection system has been created with the purpose of promoting a change in the *legal status* of people with disabilities and including them socially (BRASIL, 1988; BRAZIL, 2001; BRAZIL, 2009; BRAZIL, 2015). In this context, special legislation was created aimed particularly at the deaf. However, when considering the individual-society relationship, based on interactional and communicative processes, it is questioned whether the core of formation of social representations (Moscovici, 2015) of the deaf was re-signified with the introduction of the new legal support.

Deafness causes strangeness and is represented as a disease that needs to be cured. In the daily lives of these people, games and speeches shared socially, whether in the physical or virtual environment, are common, which depreciate the particularities and the Brazilian sign language, perceived as mime, gestures and not as an officially recognized language (BRASIL, 2002; 2005). Such normative determinations intend to promote adequate communication between the deaf and the hearing, ensuring the participation of the former in the public sphere. The north of this legal framework is the valorization of deaf particularities, highlighted by sign language. However, although instituted more than fifteen years ago, it still needs to be widely incorporated in the most distinct social spaces, in order to ensure the participation of the deaf in the plural environment.

Knowing the world of the deaf is a significant posture for changing the scenario of exclusion. In this sense, deaf culture is the identities, habits and experiences of deaf people who are not necessarily inserted in the same space or region, but who mutually identify each other by their origin (STROBEL, 2018). Furthermore, in a different way, in the hearing culture, signs are spoken, which makes it difficult to understand the deaf culture and the necessarily visual artifacts (PERLIN, 2010).



An example is the social awakening to the learning of Libras. Deaf cultural artifacts manifest the meanings, symbols, experiences and narratives that form the knowledge of this group. In addition, visual resources are essential for these people to succeed in their usual activities, in the exercise of their rights and in the realization of independent life, since they fix their senses in the visual impressions constituted around them. Thus, the absence of these stimuli, such as signals, adapted telephones and luminous devices, prevents full access to individual and social environments (STROBEL, 2018).

Deaf art, theater and literature represent the construction and appreciation of deaf identities. Literature explores narratives and drawings, painting, illustrations, as well as facial and body expressions, materializing the feelings, ideas and representations of people with deafness in relation to the reality in which they live. Notably, accessibility resources or material artifacts ensure that these subjects can carry out their daily activities. Among the most used elements are the *internet* and the interpreter. (STROBEL, 2018). Furthermore, deaf communities are not only made up of deaf subjects, but of all those who participate and share interests about the deaf people in a given location, such as hearing people, teachers and members of society.

One of the current measures for the inclusion of these subjects is the adoption of bilingual education, through sign language, as a first language and the use of Portuguese in writing. In this way, it intends the incorporation of deaf identities in the process of collective participation. In a continuous act, bilingualism to ensure the performance and psychosocial development of deaf students in special and regular schools. It aims to make the learning of both languages accessible, respecting plural identities (GUARINELLO, 2007). In this context, the focus is on teaching through the consideration of sign language, in all school contents, including the writing of the Portuguese language. These mechanisms are combined with the emphasis of the two cultures, strengthening the social and affective progress of these children, since the experience within the deaf community allows a better entry into the hearing social environment (QUADROS, 1997).

However, the history of the schooling of the deaf (JANUZZI, 2012; MARTINS, 2015; SACKS, 2010; STROBEL, 2008) demonstrates the dominance of popular beliefs that these subjects, in order to live in society, should adapt to the reality of that environment, whether in special schools, rehabilitation services, medical treatments, or in the idea of learning through speech. The change only came to happen, from the sixties onwards, with the movement of integration of these people into society and later to the current model, inclusion, in which all individuals must coexist and learn in the same territory.



THE INCLUSION OF DEAF PEOPLE IN SCHOOL

Inclusion is an international movement of the nineties that has as its main objective the insertion of historically excluded groups in society, contemplating individual and social spaces. Advocated by the main foreign and national protection agencies, it is a non-negotiable measure in which no person can be prevented from exercising rights and freedom independently, due to their particular, economic or political conditions. In the case of the deaf, what we have is a sensory impediment that distinguishes them from the majority of the population considered to be hearing, that is, who communicates through the oral-auditory canal.

Prior to the mobilization for the inclusion of deaf people, what we had was the incorporation of people into the community in an inappropriate way; the different conditions of each subject were not considered, nor the need to change spaces, structures and behaviors (SASSAKI, 1997; MANTOAN, 2015). The deaf, for example, in order to have access to education, attended special schools, that is, exclusive for people with sensory and educational needs, such as the deaf and blind. In this sense, integration considered that it was up to the differentiated groups to adapt to the existing environments, even if this devalued their identities and cultures.

Traditionally, the school has guided its objectives in order to train students for the world of work, through technical learning, categorized, in which the best are rewarded, perceived as superior to the others. In this type of teaching, there is no room for differences, new knowledge, active methodologies and diverse groups, as is the case today. However, the international agenda in favor of education seeks to change this thinking and the behaviors of school agents. Inclusion in school aims to change this scenario, through the permanence of each and every subject in this territory, that is, in heterogeneous spaces and no longer in separate classrooms, as occurred in special classes, which were the majority at the time of the integration process. This term, used in the plural environment that is the school, goes far beyond theory, as it enables the development of skills and creativity, the establishment of interpersonal and affective relationships, as well as communication and the formation of identities.

In this way, inclusion intends to break with exclusionary teaching models (MANTOAN, 2015), but it needs to be designed to welcome differences and go beyond theoretical teaching. For this reason, it is not the duty of these students to adapt, as occurred in integration, but rather of the schools, together with civil society and competent bodies, to raise the necessary resources for the quality training of their employees and the improvement of physical spaces aimed at changing the architectural barriers that exist in the environments.

It also proposes to professionals the knowledge of new knowledge and practices that provide opportunities for learning and overcoming discriminatory practices against these students. Schools, educators and all those who work in this area are called upon to favor a welcoming, accessible and



inclusive environment for students who have limitations, whether in terms of learning, behavior or severe disabilities. The act of educating, especially in elementary school, has to add values, moving away from the mere reproduction of content (FÁVERO, 2013). Education consists of human and social formation for life.

An inclusive education of excellence demands the commitment of the entire school territory, both through attitudes beneficial to deaf students and investments in accessible places that provide maximum apprehension of the knowledge and development of the student subject, respected, above all, the particularities, in the development of curricula and other activities. Thus, the demand for more resources and consequently the capture of these means, reverberates in the improvement of the enclosures and especially in the commitment of the professionals to include the students not only in a formal way, but aiming at the emancipation of these subjects.

In the case of the deaf, society understands that the language barrier compromises access to education in regular schools. Thus, deaf people, teachers, those responsible for these subjects, as well as assistance entities and the community, in general, are resistant to school inclusion. One of the main fundamentals is necessarily related to the limitations in communication between the individuals who make up this territory, since most of them use verbal communication to socialize and the deaf use the signs of their own language.

The communication barrier constitutes a significant challenge to the exercise of rights by deaf subjects, especially social participation, since most people are hearing and do not know Brazilian sign language. Even after years of the creation of the aforementioned standards, the need to increasingly disseminate and stimulate the teaching of Libras, in the most distinct means (physical and virtual), in order to modify this scenario of exclusion, especially when it comes to occupying places and acting in the most diverse services and participatory processes that cities offer to their citizens, as the inclusive, participatory and welcoming school.

Thus, sign language is fundamental in the construction of identities, culture and in the elaboration of deaf experiences. These artifacts help in the knowledge and recognition of the history of the deaf, as they are narrated by the deaf themselves. They are means that enable new perceptions, especially of the listeners, about this group, its forms of organization and experience in deaf communities (STROBEL, 2018). As soon as inclusion is disseminated, the fundamental intention is to modify the dominant representations about deafness and the deaf subject, their forms of organization and experience in deaf communities, to bring these people to plural environments and in which they can live in these spaces effectively, without discrimination and barriers.



THE SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF DEAF SUBJECTS IN THE SCHOOL TERRITORY: THE CHALLENGES OF INCLUSION

Here is a melancholic fragment of the externalization of feelings of a person with deafness and that leads to great reflections: "[...] a boy wanting to hear and thinking how distressing it is that we want to hear and not have that noise... He is in this situation. Everyone talking to him: 'Hi! Hello!'. And he couldn't hear. (SILVEIRA AND OLIVEIRA, 2013). This excerpt from an interview conducted with a regular school teacher highlights how the inclusion of the deaf in school, respecting the unique characteristics and special educational needs of each one, is a challenge for the agents who move in the school environment, since they share ideas, beliefs, habits and meanings that project images, according to which the deaf subjects are incapable of being and remaining in that place, as evidenced by the studies developed by Machado and Albuquerque (2010); Paganotti, (2017); Silveira and Oliveira (2013); Vasconcellos; Santos, Almeida, (2011).

Thus, every legal framework built to promote educational inclusion is frustrated in its real effectiveness, given the maintenance of the stability of the nucleus of formation of socially elaborated and shared representations about deaf subjects. In addition, the lack of resources, support from the school administrative sectors and adequate training in universities generate feelings of insecurity, anguish, fear, failure in teachers to deal with differences (ALMEIDA AND NAIFF, 2012; MACHADO AND ALBUQUERQUE, 2010; OLIVEIRA, 2017; PEREIRA, 2016).

The inclusion norms aim to overcome attitudinal barriers (RAIOL, 2008), including those of a physical, communicational, behavioral and accessibility nature. The attitudinal barrier is one of the greatest challenges to the inclusion of the deaf in the social environment. It is not by chance that this group and their families prefer special schools to regular education institutions (GONÇALVES, 2016; MOREIRA AND TAVARES, 2009), indicating that these, among others, are the obstacles that prevent the realization of the rights of the deaf to social participation, reinforcing their representation as disabled, incapable, incapable of learning and productive work and the exercise of rights in daily life, being isolated, apart from the "normal" world.

Social representations are a form of practical knowledge, built on a set of ideas, images and worldviews, which individuals build in their daily lives, in order to understand and organize their relationships and the surrounding social reality. This means, then, that it is produced in the simplest activities of psychological and social elaboration of reality, articulated with the dynamics of interactive and cognitive processes that enable communication between individuals, groups and the environment (MOSCOVICI, 1978, 2015). Thus, they constitute one of the pillars on which an evaluative system is built that sustains the specific configuration of social relations that involve cognitive and affective relations between subjects in a social context.



The objectification of the meanings built around the social representations of the deaf is still anchored in expressions, whose derogatory meaning is embodied in words such as "inapt" and "incapable". It should be noted, then, that the social representations of the deaf permeate the linguistic sphere, responsible for naming, representing and gauging the meaning of reality, constructed from the individual-society relationship. This means that these meanings, expressed through the language of common sense or legal sense, are constructed through the formation of individual and social concepts, which are reflected in the conformation of the subject's identity, defining his role and social position (DUBAR, 2009).

By way of illustration, in antiquity the belief in human perfection prevailed, especially in the physical aspect. It was believed that deafness hindered integral development and action in the community. Because of this, many lived on the streets and were subject to forced labor and begging (SACKS, 2012). Thus, they were represented as incapable, useless to work and unfit for social life considered "normal" (FRANÇA, 2014). These beliefs persist to the present day in the school territory, as evidenced in the speech of a Portuguese teacher when describing a deaf student inside a regular class: "I am basing myself here on the case of the classroom, the students smiling, listening, screaming, the teacher talking... And the deaf student is in his isolation, calm because he is not hearing anything, (SILVEIRA E OLIVEIRA, 2017, p.7).

For Moscovici (2015), the elaboration of social representations permeates language and presupposes the articulation of two cognitive processes related to each other and constituted by social and cultural factors developed in everyday interactive and communicational processes, which are anchoring and objectification. These processes are closely associated with cultural conditions, normative criteria, as well as social experiences, enabling the formation of a figurative nucleus (structuring schematization), which constitutes a conceptual structure, capable of providing a logically objectified image of the represented object.

In this sense, social representations operate as an interpretative set of reality that organizes individual relationships in a given social context, determining individual and collective behavioral patterns. In this way, the meanings attributed to the expression "deaf" constitute the objectification of a given reality, constructed and socially shared, evidencing the dynamics of social representations, closely related to language. The Theory of Social Representations makes it possible to approach socially constructed knowledge in its dynamics and diversity, considering its different forms of elaboration. It is configured as a way that aims to understand and explain the construction of knowledge established by the group, such as that of the deaf, through a spontaneous theory, embodied in common sense.

Based on the Theory of Social Representations (MOSCOVICI, 1978, 2015), it is possible to conclude that the changes that occurred in Brazilian legislation, with the purpose of including the



deaf in schools on equal terms with other students, constitute modifications only in the legal sphere, which does not alter the stability of the nucleus of formation of the social representations of the deaf, based on incapacity, inability and disqualification to occupy collective spaces. This means that, despite all the legal advances and the creation of a special legal protection system, the deaf continue to be excluded, represented as abnormal, useless, weak, incapable or special, since the formally constituted changes are not enough to alter the cognitive elements stabilized in the training nucleus, shared in the interactive and communicational processes of daily life and over time. Such representations define deaf people as individuals incapable of acting in public life. Deafness is perceived, then, as a disability, a disqualification to achieve rights and spaces.

And when it comes to the school environment, these representations focus on the choices and life projects of these subjects, which prevent them from advancing in the inclusion process, as it is understood that everyone should have the possibility of conquering rights, freedom and autonomy, in the most diverse fields, especially the social and professional. In this sense, it is essential to make society aware of who the aforementioned subjects are and what needs to be done to change the perceptions that affect their lives. It is necessary to go forward, strengthening and anchoring the peripheral representations, which portray the capacity of the deaf, their diverse way of life and the contribution of their experiences to the dynamics of a plural society which must cease to be guided only by sensory experiences and start to experience the diverse, dynamic and dialogical reality.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Although the legislation has advanced significantly in the sense of promoting changes in the social representations of people with disabilities, particularly the deaf, the studies carried out on the subject, the empirical observations and the informal dialogues carried out with teachers, principals and employees of public schools have shown that the substantive changes occur fundamentally in the legal sphere, without altering the nucleus of formation of the social representations shared in the space scholastic. This means that the training nucleus remains stable. The aforementioned nucleus is filled with elements, namely, myths and images taken from common sense by anchoring.

Therefore, inclusion is substantially realized at the formal level, thus establishing a mismatch between formal inclusion and the real exclusion of the deaf in the school space. Deaf people continue to be represented as incapable, in their modes of communication, from the perspective of disability. On a daily basis, Brazilian sign language becomes familiar through an image that represents it as something unusual, strange and abnormal. Instead, the whole of society, and particularly in the school environment, should adopt the Brazilian sign language as the same receptivity through which it uses the Portuguese language, without distinction, in daily practice, from the use of both languages.



The right to social inclusion of deaf individuals is guaranteed in the national and international guarantee systems. However, they continue to have their right to social participation restricted, due to the representations of disability shared in the collective environment, which perceive these subjects as incapable of exercising their rights and not deserving to be provided with services, especially when it comes to those considered public, notably education. This is because the modifications were implemented only in the abstract legal plane, lacking in effectiveness. Thus, despite all the legal advances and the creation of a special legal protection system, the deaf continue to be represented as incapable of being, acting in collective spaces, that is, of access and enjoyment of everything that cities can provide, such as education, health, work and leisure.

These representations are more resistant to change, because they are present in the nucleus of formation of representations, unlike those predominant in the legal system, subject to transformations, according to the conditions and environment in force. Normalization propagates that people with disabilities, including the deaf, because they do not have the same conditions (physical, sensory and psychic) as the rest of the population, need to adjust to the standards required to have access to goods and services. In the past, there was little or no scientific understanding about disability and, for this reason, the classifications were based on popular knowledge, which was widely disseminated among the peoples of that time until the present day.

The representations of deafness circulating in the public sphere are equivalent to the idea of the inability of the deaf to develop their life projects and exercise rights. Such mistaken perceptions limit the potentialities and possibilities of the aforementioned citizens, since the creation of specialized spaces favored segregation, thus society was not obliged to get to know this group better, which, as a result, continues to be invisible and kept away from the public life of the cities. Therefore, as well as the structural and architectural barriers, associated with the modification of places and services, human behaviors are obstacles to the guarantee of basic rights, freedoms and life plans of the deaf.

In this sense, the representations of deafness and the deaf subject can be transformed, through a long path of diffusion of differences and the promotion of human rights, in the social environment, especially with regard to the elimination of discriminatory and stigmatizing actions and attitudes to the detriment of this segment. Thus, it is not enough just to ensure accessibility rights in law, but, as a priority, to create a favorable environment for interaction between deaf and hearing people. In this logic, the expansion of the use of Brazilian sign language, through courses offered, both physical and virtual, and the attention to the use of visual elements in everyday life, such as the insertion of subtitles in the videos transmitted in the media and digital platforms, help the participation and autonomy of deaf subjects. Such needs favor the achievement of the right to social participation, as well as the construction of an inclusive city, within its limits located the school, where people with



deafness can be welcomed, with all the dignity that is inherent to them, because they are human beings.

Therefore, debating the representations of the inclusion of deaf subjects is essential, given that the scenario, especially international, moves towards overcoming attitudinal barriers, evidenced by human beliefs, actions and behaviors, which hinder the social participation of vulnerable groups, as well as their rights and freedoms, in addition to contributing to the fight against the real exclusion of deaf people, when, in fact, there is a fight for inclusion in the most diverse places, individual or collective, especially at school, as one of the first places of development of the human being in its cognitive and affective dimensions.



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