

A avaliação do processo de inclusão do público-alvo da educação especial

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RESUMO

Este artigo aborda o processo de inclusão do público-alvo da educação especial, focando em dois pontos principais: a trajetória histórica e a avaliação da qualidade desse processo. Inicialmente, o artigo apresenta uma contextualização histórica da educação especial no Brasil, destacando os marcos que a consolidaram na perspectiva inclusiva. Em seguida, por meio de uma revisão sistemática de literatura, apresenta os componentes fundamentais para a construção de uma avaliação da qualidade do processo de inclusão na educação especial. Os resultados apontam que a consistência das políticas educacionais, a participação comunitária nas decisões, a provisão orçamentária para a promoção da inclusão, o acesso a redes de ensino inclusivas, a formação e capacitação do professor, as adaptações no ambiente escolar, a efetiva gestão escolar e a promoção de uma cultura inclusiva são os componentes mais relevantes para a condução de uma avaliação da qualidade da inclusão do público-alvo da educação especial.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Avaliação. Educação Especial. Educação Inclusiva. Políticas Educacionais.

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The assessment of the inclusion process in special education

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ABSTRACT

This article addresses the inclusion process in special education, focusing on two main aspects: the historical trajectory and the quality assessment of this process. Initially, the article provides a historical contextualization of special education in Brazil, highlighting the milestones that have consolidated it from an inclusive perspective aligned with international policies. Subsequently, through a systematic literature review, it presents the fundamental components for constructing a quality assessment of the inclusion process in special education. The results indicate that the consistency of educational policies, community participation in decision-making, budget allocation for promoting inclusion, access to inclusive educational networks, teacher training and professional development, adaptations in the school environment, effective school management, and the promotion of an inclusive culture are the most relevant components for conducting a quality assessment of the inclusion of the target audience in special education.

KEYWORDS: Assessment. Special Education. Inclusive Education. Educational Policies.

La evaluación del proceso de inclusión en la educación especial

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RESUMEN

Este artículo aborda el proceso de inclusión en la educación especial, centrándose en su trayectoria histórica y la evaluación de su calidad. Primero, se ofrece una contextualización histórica de la educación especial en Brasil, resaltando los hitos que han contribuido a consolidarla desde una perspectiva inclusiva. Luego, mediante una revisión sistemática de la literatura, se presentan los componentes fundamentales que deben considerarse en la evaluación de la calidad de la inclusión en la educación especial. Los resultados indican que la consistencia de las políticas educativas, la participación comunitaria, la asignación presupuestaria para promover la inclusión, el acceso a redes educativas inclusivas, la formación y capacidad docente, las adaptaciones en el entorno escolar, el desarrollo efectivo de la gestión escolar y la promoción de una cultura inclusiva son los componentes más relevantes para llevar a cabo una evaluación de la calidad de la inclusión en la educación especial.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Evaluación. Educación Especial. Educación Inclusiva. Políticas Educativas.

Introduction

Inclusion pertains to the right of individuals to equal access and the appreciation of differences. To include means ensuring space for the expression of difference, which is not seen as inequality, but as a strong affirmation of the principle that all individuals are equal in the realm of human rights, dignity, and opportunities (Silva; Garcez, 2019).

When considering the target audience of special education, a group formed by individuals with disabilities, global developmental disorders, and those with high abilities/giftedness (Brazil, 2009), the educational inclusion process, grounded in the principles previously presented, has been discussed for at least three decades in Brazil. Special education in Brazil has consolidated itself by adhering to inclusion principles, strongly supported by international documents, such as the Salamanca Statement of 1994, the Guatemala Convention of 1999, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2009, gaining particular prominence after the promulgation of the Brazilian Inclusion Law (Brazil, 2015).

In the field of Special Education, there have been significant advancements toward promoting educational inclusion in recent years, driven both by legislation that ensures access to regular education and guarantees quality teaching, as well as by the growth of scientific productions in the field, as evidenced by Nascimento et al. (2018) and Pletsch and Leite (2017). Despite these advances, the specific discussion on the process of evaluating the quality of the inclusion process for the target audience of special education in Brazil remains limited. When discussing the quality of inclusion, it refers to aspects that promote an equitable, accessible, and welcoming educational environment, ensuring the participation and development of all students while respecting their diverse needs. With this in mind, the issue addressed by this paper relates to the evaluation of the quality of the inclusion process for the target audience of special education in Brazil.

In line with this approach, this article aims to: 1) present a historical contextualization of special education, focusing on events in Brazil that led to the inclusive perspective; 2) present aspects identified by authors from different parts of the world as essential for the realization of an evaluation of the quality of the inclusion process for the target audience of special education in schools and educational systems. Specifically, to achieve the second objective, a systematic literature review was conducted in the major international databases (Scopus, Web of Science, Scielo, and Ebsco). The systematic review aims to provide a preliminary overview of the implementation process of inclusive policies and the evaluation of the inclusion process for students who are the target audience of Special Education.

Historical Context of Special Education in Brazil

Special education in Brazil began in the 19th century, as explained by Mantoan (2002), when services aimed at assisting individuals with disabilities were introduced, inspired by North American and European experiences. Until then, services for this group were not integrated into public education policies, and reports described medical treatments aimed at normalizing individuals with disabilities, with the expectation that disabilities would be cured. It was only nearly a century later that special education became part of the Brazilian educational system (Mazzotta, 1995; Mantoan, 2006).

Between the late 19th century and the mid-20th century, private initiatives began a movement to offer education to individuals with disabilities in separate environments from regular schools (Miranda, 2008). Emphasis was placed on specialized medical treatment alongside educational actions, following models based on "[...] welfare, a segregative view, and the segmentation of disabilities" (Mantoan, 2002, p. 2). According to Freitas and Garcia (2019), this was a movement of pathologization, coinciding with the rise of the pharmaceutical industry over education, which ended up shaping the acceptance or rejection of individuals seen as different by schools.

Starting in the 1950s, educational services for individuals with disabilities were taken over by the Federal Government. In 1957, national campaigns aimed at educating individuals with special educational needs were created (Januzzi, 1992; Mantoan, 2002; Miranda, 2008).

In the 1960s, the expansion of rehabilitation centers and specialized institutions for individuals with disabilities was the largest seen in the country (Miranda, 2008). This occurred due to the enactment of the first LDB (Law No. 4,024/1961), which aimed at constructing a democratic and accessible national education for all. The law guaranteed the right to education for students with disabilities; however, it stipulated that when the education of students with disabilities was not integrated into the general system, it should be provided by a special system, "becoming a subsystem on the margins," as highlighted by Mantoan (2002, p. 4). By treating Special Education as a separate subsystem, social and educational exclusion of these students is reinforced, which aligns with the ideas of invisibility and marginalization of groups discussed by Martins (1997). By being removed from central educational policies, these students are not only excluded from school life, but their opportunities for social participation are also reduced, limiting their full inclusion in society.

Following the civil-military government system, the 1970s continued the movement of social integration for individuals with disabilities, aiming to integrate them into school environments to the limit of their capacity (Miranda, 2004); individuals considered unfit for integration were referred to

The assessment of the inclusion process in special education special schools, with the expectation that, through special education, they would become competent enough to keep up with school life (Miranda, 2004).

In 1971, the second LDB (Law No. 5,692/1971) came into effect, "aiming to use education as a means of contributing to its national industrialization objectives" (De Carvalho et al., 2015, p. 2). In 1973, special education entered public policy planning with the creation of the National Center for Special Education (CENESP), with the aim of expanding and improving services for individuals with disabilities, then still referred to as "exceptional" (Mazzotta, 1995). However, even driven by human rights discourse, the provision of education for individuals with disabilities was not inclusive; it was focused on integration. Although it represented the incorporation of less exclusionary practices, integrating individuals with disabilities into regular education required them to adapt to the school rather than offering them the appropriate conditions for access. As Mantoan (2002) and Capellini and Mendes (2006) explain, these services were more aimed at addressing students who struggled with failure in regular education, rather than ensuring access for students with disabilities, who, in many cases, remained outside of school.

In the 1980s, the Declaration of Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNESCO, 1975) gained strength as it resonated worldwide, calling for it to be a reference for the protection of the rights of these individuals. Meanwhile, Brazil was the scene of many social struggles driven by marginalized populations. At this time, the way in which individuals with disabilities were included in society began to be questioned more emphatically: the discussion centered on what adaptations society needed to make, not only to receive but to allow the participation of everyone with quality (De Carvalho et al., 2015).

Also in the 1980s, CENESP promoted the change in terminology from "exceptional" students to "students with special educational needs," and it became the Secretariat for Special Education (SEESP), gaining the status of being under the Ministry of Education (MEC).

Special education in Brazil began to be viewed from the perspective of inclusion in regular education, finally, thanks to the Federal Constitution of 1988 (Brazil, 1988). Strongly inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a public policy was implemented for the universalization of access to education in Brazil. Until then, individuals with special educational needs received some form of attention, but it did not constitute inclusive education. "[...] individuals with disabilities were victims of abandonment and neglect" (Silva, 2010, p. 9). The truth is that special education had limited political importance within the broader scope of Brazilian education.

Thus, the 1988 Constitution is a milestone that brings education as a right for all, ensuring the full development of the individual, the exercise of citizenship, and qualification for work. According to Camila de Carvalho et al. (2015), the return of democracy allowed for more development in the education sector, and the 1988 Constitution is a result of this development. It is characterized by political, administrative, and educational decentralization, which seeks to simultaneously increase citizens' access to education and improve its quality.

As can be seen, in a short period of time, Brazil made significant political advancements: a time marked by the end of the military dictatorship and the promulgation of the current Constitution, with Brazilians organizing, protesting, and making their voices heard. Important political-social discourses gained strength, and discussions about education flourished within this context, seeking, within the educational project being established, a demarcation for special education. What was sought was a restructured educational system to meet the needs of students (Silva, 2010).

Following this format, the 1990s entered with a focus on the right to access for students with special educational needs: the creation of Law No. 8,069/1990, the Statute of the Child and Adolescent. This is an instrument that, regarding Special Education, guarantees specialized educational services, preferably within the regular education system. Brazil also participated in the World Conference on Education for All in Thailand, where inclusion was discussed and "where the seeds of the Inclusive Education policy were planted" (Capellini; Mendes, 1995, p. 9).

In 1994, the Ministry of Education launched Ordinance No. 1,793, which recommended the inclusion of courses addressing the ethical, political, and educational aspects of normalization and integration of people with disabilities in teacher training and pedagogy programs. From then on, special education became part of the teacher training curricula in Brazil: the movement started in higher education, preparing professionals to serve students with special educational needs within the context of regular education, but the discourse was still focused on normalization and integration. In the same year, the National Policy on Special Education (Brazil, 1994) was published, which aimed to direct the path of school inclusion for target students. However, the policy ended up presenting a framework based on homogeneous standards of social participation, defining that, in order to attend regular classrooms in mainstream education, special education target students would need to have the ability to keep up and develop curricular activities at the same pace as regular students. This was called Instructional Integration (Brasil, 1994).

It is important to clarify that to integrate is the same as to incorporate, to bring an element into a set, but this is not what the policy guaranteed for the target audience of special education, or at least

The assessment of the inclusion process in special education for a large portion of it; the policy created a gap between students who did not meet the criteria for instructional integration and regular education, and kept the education of these students under the responsibility of special education: when students could not be placed in regular classrooms, they were referred to special schools.

However, thanks to the 1996 LDB, which came to show Brazilians which directions to take in education and how it should be established, definitions of special education were introduced. It is in Chapter V of the LDB that special education is discussed, presented as "[...] the type of school education, preferably offered in the regular education system, for students with special needs" (Brazil, 1996, n.p.). Thus, special education was configured as the educational modality that develops specific work to serve students with special educational needs in schools, taking into account the peculiarities specific to the care of this audience. Undoubtedly, the reference point for special education in this law lies in the services provided to target students: by establishing that, preferably, they should be served in regular education, the law encouraged the enrollment of these students in schools, which from then on had to adapt to welcome diversity.

At the end of the 1990s, Decree No. 3,298 (Brazil, 1999) was ratified, regulating the law that established the National Policy for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities. It was this document that established Special Education as a transversal educational modality at all levels of education and mandatory in public educational institutions, preferably within the regular network. The authors Pletsch and Souza (2021, p. 1292) draw attention to the fact that this decree was based on the medical model of disability, which raised issues regarding "normality based on the assumption of organic incapacity in the definition of disability," as shown in Article 3: "disability – any loss or abnormality of a psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function that generates incapacity to perform an activity, within the standard considered normal for human beings."

In the first edition of the PNE (Brazil, 2001), in 2001, supported by the World Declaration on Education for All (1990), 28 objectives and goals for special education were presented. This document included professional training and the adaptation of school spaces, resources, and equipment, describing a model of school that embraces diversity and community participation.

However, some time later, it became evident that the monitoring of the goals and objectives of the PNE was not carried out as planned, according to Portaria CNE/CP No. 10 (Brazil, 2009), due to internal and external problems. Some of these problems are highlighted: the excessive number of objectives and goals in the PNE and the lack of mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the development of the PNE.

Nevertheless, in 2001, the National Guidelines for Special Education in Basic Education (Brazil, 2001) were established, which assumed Special Education as a modality of education that offers specific educational resources and services, in a transversal manner, provided complementarily, supplementary, or substitutively. It was this document that officially introduced the term inclusive education to Brazil, although it allowed for special education to be offered in a substitutive modality to regular education. The term used by the Guidelines for the target audience of special education in Brazil was “students with special educational needs” (Brazil, 2001, p. 2), following the term presented by the Salamanca Declaration (UNESCO, 1994). The Salamanca Declaration, adopted in 1994 during the World Conference on Special Educational Needs in Salamanca, Spain, is a key document for promoting inclusive education, with the main objectives being the educational inclusion of all students, ensuring equal opportunities and access to quality education, promoting diversity in schools, and addressing the needs of all. Regarding the term ‘students with special educational needs,’ Pletsch and Souza (2021) warn that the use of this term encompassed not only students with disabilities, global developmental disorders, and high abilities/giftedness but also included students with other types of learning difficulties.

There is significant concern regarding this, which is positioned as follows: every time a student does not fit the ideal model of a student for regular education, they may be segregated, joining the students in the special education group in the substitutive modality to regular education.

With the beginning of the Lula Government, which lasted from 2003 to 2011, the motto of social inclusion extended to all segments of society, and the issue of people with disabilities became a government priority. During this period, Brazil ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and later its Optional Protocol to the UN in 2009. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to which Brazil was a signatory, was adopted by the UN in 2006, and it established the obligation for states to ensure an inclusive education system at all educational levels, guaranteeing people with disabilities access to inclusive education in all modalities.

Following the principle of social inclusion, in 2008, the Ministry of Education, in partnership with SEESP, presented the National Policy on Special Education from the perspective of Inclusive Education, “aiming to establish public policies that promote quality education for all students” (Brazil, 2008, p. 5). The policy directed Special Education to provide specialized educational services, extracurricular and in counter-shift programs, in multifunctional resource rooms, led by specialist teachers.

Certainly, special education would replace students' access to regular education. In Mantoan's words (2015, p. 24), "[...] the policy reaffirmed the complementary nature of Special Education and innovated by introducing and defining Specialized Educational Support," which is a service provided by special education that "identifies, develops, and organizes pedagogical and accessibility resources that eliminate barriers to the full participation of students, considering their specific needs" (Brazil, 2008, p. 16). In this policy, the guidance was for education systems to transform into inclusive systems, in alignment with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Therefore, special education is a modality of teaching focused on providing specialized educational services. Other actions to serve the target audience of special education in regular education come from inclusive education. According to Booth and Ainscow (2002), an inclusive school promotes social relations among students and greater involvement in educational processes. Thus, in the school context, both structural and attitudinal aspects are modified and redefined, so that the school becomes democratic, with equal relationships and the rights of all guaranteed equitably.

In the 2010s, a new edition of the PNE was launched (Brazil, 2014), which is the current edition in force. The new plan, mainly supplemented by the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Brazil, 2008), is related to the universalization of Specialized Educational Support for students with disabilities, global developmental disorders, and high abilities/giftedness.

In line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in 2015, Law No. 13,146 was promulgated, known as the "Brazilian Law on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities." This law represents a significant advancement in ensuring the educational and social rights of individuals with disabilities, as it aims to "ensure and promote, on equal terms, the exercise of rights and fundamental freedoms by persons with disabilities, aiming at their social inclusion and citizenship" (Brasil, 2015, p. 1).

In this restructuring marked by abrupt political changes in Brazil, Law No. 13,409/2016 was instituted, amending Law No. 12,711/2012, to provide for the allocation of seats for people with disabilities in technical courses, both at the secondary and higher education levels, in federal educational institutions. Although it may have represented an advancement in public policies for access for individuals with disabilities, increasing the number of students with disabilities enrolled, this measure highlights a scenario of exclusion to which these students are subjected, as it is a limited measure, considering the percentages in comparison to the total population (Cabral *et al.*, 2012).

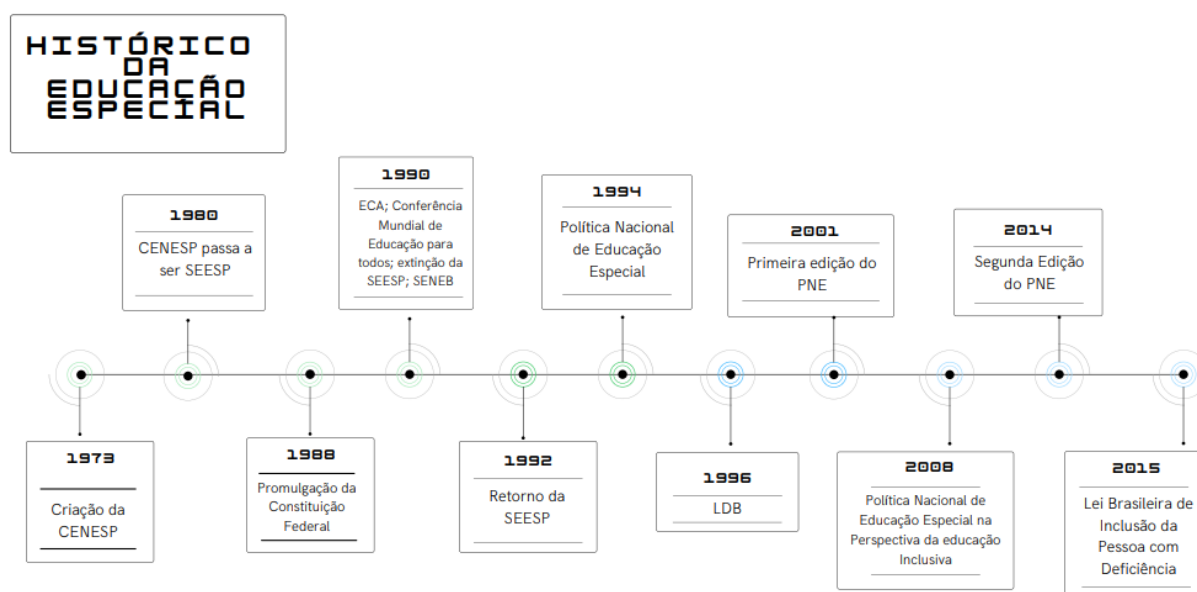
In 2021, during the second year of the Bolsonaro government, Decree No. 10,502 of 2020 was introduced, which established the National Policy on Special Education: Equitable, Inclusive, and

with Lifelong Learning. This policy proposes the return of specialized schools as an alternative to inclusive schools, allowing the segregation of students with disabilities from regular education. Although the validity of a presidential decree is immediate, this one specifically had its effectiveness suspended by a preliminary injunction from the Federal Supreme Court, after several entities and political parties questioned the constitutionality of the decree. This decree was revoked in 2023, in the first year of the Lula government, through Decree No. 11,370.

Special Education is based on inclusion, through a process of social achievements aimed at ensuring the integration of people with disabilities, global developmental disorders, and high abilities or giftedness, not only in the educational context but also in the community context. Subverting this concept is a setback in the protection of the rights of these individuals. Working with heterogeneous classes, which welcome all students, is to recognize the value of human interactions and diversity.

Figure 1 shows a summarized historical timeline of the development of Special Education in Brazil.

Figure 1 – Summary of the main historical milestones in the development of special education in Brazil.



Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

As can be seen, public policies for special education have advanced, moving from a historically obscure moment to now showing society that there will be no place for everyone until social barriers are fully overcome.

Schools are fundamental parts of an inclusive society, where people have their rights guaranteed. It is from school that the construction of a social model of disability can be achieved,

The assessment of the inclusion process in special education where content promoting inclusive attitudes and behaviors is incorporated into the formal school curriculum (Guedes, 2014). Society needs to be inclusive, and the school, following the same principle, must be for everyone and for all.

Starting from the concept of educational inclusion for the target audience of special education, schools provide an environment that is for everyone and for all, for the expression of difference and the affirmation of the principle of equality, human rights, dignity, and opportunities, as presented by Silva and Garcez (2019) at the beginning of this work. In this context, there is a need to evaluate how schools and education systems handle the inclusion of the target audience of Special Education. To do so, it is necessary to identify which aspects are considered relevant in the literature to monitor the inclusion process of this group. The next section presents the systematic literature search and the discussion of related works.

The quality of the inclusion process for the target audience of special education according to academic research

This section presents the methodological procedures followed for the systematic search in the literature and the discussion of works that address indicators and important aspects for evaluating the quality of inclusion for the target audience of special education.

Literature Search

The systematic literature search was conducted in the databases Scopus, Web of Science, Scielo, and Ebsco, using the following search sentence: ((index OR indicator) AND (“special education” OR “special educational needs” OR “inclusive education”) AND (evaluation)). As a criterion for document exclusion, books, non-academic research, and proceedings from the obtained results were excluded. It is important to note that the searches were conducted on October 30, 2023.

Excluding duplicates, a total of 514 articles were obtained. Upon analyzing the title, abstract, and keywords, some articles did not align with the research topic; additionally, 4 articles were not available through Capes access. As a result, 64 articles were selected for full reading. After reading, 22 articles were found to align with the research topic, and these composed the bibliographic portfolio, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 – Articles resulting from the systematic review.

Author and year	Title
Ametepee e Anastasiou (2015)	Special and Inclusive Education in Ghana: Status and Progress, Challenges and Implications
Alekhhina et al. (2020)	The Expert Assessment of Inclusive Process Parameters in Education
Aleksandrovich e Gennadievna (2016)	Monitoring the Effectiveness of Inclusive Practices
Al-Manabri et al. (2013)	Supporting Teachers in Inclusive Practices: Collaboration Between Special and Mainstream Schools in Kuwait
Alnahdi (2019)	Rasch Validation of the Arabic Version of the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) Scale
Covelli e Lucia (2020)	The Quality of Inclusive Education in Italy: The View of Teachers in Training for Inclusive Education of Pupils with Special Educational Needs
Santos et al. (2014)	Index for Inclusion as a Research Tool: A Critical Analysis
Duchnowski et al. (2004)	A Systematic Examination of School Improvement Activities That Include Special Education
Echeita et al. (2023)	Developing Learning and Participation in Schools: Using the Index for Inclusion in Spain - Lessons Learned and Common Challenges
Elbaum (2014)	Challenges in Interpreting Accountability Results for Schools' Facilitation of Parent Involvement Under IDEA
Elkins (1985)	Evaluating Special Education Programs in Australia: A Partnership Between Government and Voluntary Organizations
Engelbrecht et al. (2006)	Promoting the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Primary Schools in South Africa
Fernández-Archilla et al. (2020)	Validation of the Index for Inclusion Questionnaire for Compulsory Secondary Education Students
Havel e Kratochvilova (2014)	Maximum Expectation from Pupils - One of the Characteristic Features of Inclusion
Heung (2006)	Can the Introduction of an Inclusion Index Move a System Forward?
Koster et al. (2011)	Assessing Social Participation of Students with Special Needs in Inclusive Education: Validation of the Social Participation Questionnaire
Loreman et al. (2014)	Measuring Indicators of Inclusive Education: A Systematic Review of the Literature
Márquez et al. (2021)	Evaluation of Inclusion in Higher Education Through Indicators
Ruppar et al. (2017)	Perceptions About Expert Teaching for Students with Severe Disabilities Among Teachers Identified as Experts
Sharma et al. (2018)	How Do We Measure the Implementation of Inclusive Education in the Pacific Islands? A Process for Developing and Validating Disability-Inclusive Indicators
Vaughan (2002)	An Index for Inclusion
Yazicioglu e Dodur (2023)	Exploring Parental Experiences in Inclusive Education for Children with Intellectual Disabilities

Source: Prepared by the authors(2023).

Analysis of the Selected Works Aimed at Evaluating the Quality of Inclusion for the Target Audience of Special Education

Some authors highlight as an important quality indicator the extent to which each country's educational policies consider and guarantee the right to education for all target audiences of special

The assessment of the inclusion process in special education education (Ametepee; Anastasiou, 2015; Meletti, 2014; Sharma et al., 2018). Governments must take on the responsibility of ensuring the right to education for all individuals. The clarity of legislation and its allowance for the access of the target audience of special education in inclusive educational institutions is an indicator of quality in this regard. In addition to ensuring access to education, educational policies play a key role in examining organizational and operational measures that influence actions to improve the learning and participation of all students (Booth; Ainscow, 2011; Echeita et al., 2023).

To analyze the implementation and effectiveness of these educational policies, Stephen Ball and Richard Bowe's Policy Cycle (Mainardes, 2006) offers an approach that considers the process as dynamic and continuous. This process consists of three interrelated contexts: the context of influence, where ideas and social demands begin to shape policies; the context of text production, in which policies are formally elaborated and written; and the context of practice, where policies are interpreted and implemented. Applying this perspective to the field of inclusive education makes it possible to examine not only how policies are created and formulated but also how they are implemented in the school context, directly influencing the effectiveness of school inclusion. De Carvalho and Do Nascimento (2018) used this approach to analyze the implementation of the National Policy on Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education in the Municipal Network of Santo André-SP. The authors explore how the guidelines established by educational policies are translated into the daily life of schools and identify gaps between what is prescribed in policy texts and what actually occurs in practice. The authors point out that the implementation of inclusive policies still faces significant obstacles, particularly regarding teacher training and the support provided to schools to adequately accommodate the target audience of Special Education.

In the research by Loreman et al. (2014), the discussion concerning educational policy focuses on analyzing whether inclusive education is articulated from the highest government level and whether it aligns with international standards. Furthermore, the authors argue that the school and all members of the school community must collaborate in the development of the policy, which should articulate an inclusion approach based on the elimination of barriers and discrimination, providing adequate resources to support inclusive education.

Law et al. (2016) emphasize the need to recognize to what extent the political system allows and encourages democratic discussion and community participation in political decisions, considering this aspect an important indicator of inclusion. According to Loreman et al. (2014) and Law et al. (2016), community participation is a crucial factor for the effective implementation of

public policies, but while some focus on how much the community participates in political decisions, others focus on how much participation is allowed by the policies.

For Engelbrecht et al. (2006), inadequate policies and legislation are obstacles to the realization of inclusive education. Covelli and Lucia (2020) discuss the lack of synergy between schools and local authorities as a weakness for the effective implementation of inclusive education. Thus, it can be said that not only ineffective policies but also the disarticulation between schools and authorities are obstacles to inclusive education.

The study conducted by Sharma et al. (2018) showed that it is possible to measure the quality of inclusive education by analyzing the indicator that verifies the percentage of the education budget spent on implementing the inclusive education plan for the target audience of special education at the local level, conducting a budget analysis of countries to provide an overview of the progress in implementing inclusive education.

Another important aspect raised by Loreman et al. (2014) and reaffirmed by Meletti (2014) is the analysis of access data for the target audience of special education to inclusive educational units. The authors consider the number of students from the target audience of special education enrolled in regular inclusive schools, as well as the attendance of these students – attendance rates – and the percentage of students from this group who receive specialized educational support.

A formação e o treinamento de professores e demais profissionais que atuam na escola também são reconhecidos como peça-chave para a melhoria da qualidade da educação especial que é ofertada, bem como a melhoria da educação inclusiva. Alekhina *et al.* (2020), que trouxeram dados sobre o processo inclusivo na Rússia a partir da análise de especialistas, destacaram a formação profissional para o trabalho inclusivo e o trabalho em equipe como os principais parâmetros para melhoria da qualidade da inclusão. Essa ideia é complementar a trazida por Engelbrecht *et al.* (2006): formar de maneira inadequada os professores, impacta negativamente na efetivação da educação inclusiva num sistema educacional.

Teacher training in Kuwait, for example, is seen as an essential component for the development of an inclusive educational system. A major obstacle observed is that, according to teachers, their training did not adequately prepare them to meet the wide range of disabilities and needs of students (Al-Manabri et al., 2013). Following this line, the research conducted by Covelli and Lucia (2020) indicated that Italian teachers have a negative view of continuing education for inclusive education, as they perceive that this type of training does not properly prepare them due to its lack of depth.

Alnahdi (2019) analyzed the self-efficacy perceived by teachers for inclusive education, with the teachers' stance being evident: they felt the need for more training to support students. Loreman et al. (2014) also relate professional training to the quality of inclusion. These authors observed in their research that many teachers did not recognize within themselves the necessary skills to implement inclusive education. Loreman et al. (2014) indicated that professional development and teacher training should reflect the provision of opportunities for staff to learn new pedagogical approaches aimed at inclusion. Indicators should evaluate teachers' competencies, attitudes, skills, and knowledge. For Sharma (2018), the teacher training curriculum should include a mandatory course on inclusive education for the target audience of special education students.

The role of the teacher in inclusive teaching and the competencies of teachers regarding pedagogical work are two issues that strongly impact the quality of inclusive education. According to Havel and Kratochvilova (2014), the teaching strategies used by teachers, employing inclusive teaching materials, defining appropriate tasks for students' learning, and using appropriate evaluation methods, are indicators of quality for inclusion. The study by Márquez et al. (2021) reinforces the importance of using inclusive teaching materials. Therefore, evaluating the extent to which teaching materials meet the learning needs of all students becomes a crucial aspect to consider.

The role of the teaching staff and their inclusive practices stand out as one of the pillars of inclusive education for Fernández-Archilla et al. (2020). These authors believe that methodological and attitudinal changes are needed for teachers to successfully face the obstacles to inclusion, being attentive to student diversity. Ruppert et al. (2017) discuss in their research that educators working directly with special education leverage the knowledge they acquire from deeper relationships with their students to create intensively individualized teaching.

Havel and Kratochvilova (2014) discuss the communication methods established between teachers and students, emphasizing the importance of analyzing how well teachers know and can clearly express their pedagogical proposals, bringing concepts to students in an understandable language. The authors emphasize that motivation and belief in the student's performance help students achieve better results. Furthermore, the conditions created by teachers for their students in schools from an inclusion perspective and the way they assess these conditions are crucial data for evaluating the quality of inclusive education. For Covelli and Lucia (2020), who analyzed the quality of inclusive education processes and the social well-being of people with disabilities in Italy from the perspective of specialized teachers or those in the process of specializing in supporting students in inclusive education, the key point for inclusion lies in educational and didactic planning. Similarly,

Al-Manabri et al. (2013) discuss that the selection of appropriate strategies for conducting school activities with students would be an indicator of quality for inclusive education.

Another important point is recognizing and qualifying the assessment processes employed by teachers, which can benefit not only students with disabilities but also other children in the class who may have different educational levels or learning abilities (Al-Manabri et al., 2013). In other words, the inclusion strategies employed by teachers to support a particular student are strategies that can effectively benefit other students.

Some authors pointed out the careful attention to learning assessments as an indicator of quality for inclusive education. Loreman et al. (2014) indicate the importance of constructing learning assessments that respect the wide range of diversity in the classroom, multiple intelligences, and different learning styles, as inclusive attitudes by teachers. Classroom practices such as including students in planning and assessment are also part of this. Koster et al. (2011), in analyzing the social participation of students with disabilities in inclusive education, suggest that it is necessary to build an analysis of learning outcomes focused on the teacher's actions, so that one can observe how much teachers have developed knowledge and experience to help students gain problem-solving skills for everyday life. In the same vein, Law et al. (2016), who analyzed learning interactions focusing on the teacher's actions, identified collaborative work between teachers and the reflective practice of action-research as fundamental conditions for student learning in the context of inclusion.

Havel and Kratochvilova (2014) discuss that for education supported by inclusion, a stimulating and friendly school environment is required, primarily based on respect between school staff and students, as well as appropriate methodology for communication between teachers and students. Logically, an inflexible curriculum is a barrier to learning and student participation (Engelbrecht et al., 2006). Therefore, the school should be designed with principles of multiple representation, engagement, and expression, with its curricula elaborated to adapt to the diversity of its students. It is fundamentally important for the school to offer a welcoming social climate to students (Loreman et al., 2014). According to Loreman et al. (2014), this climate is developed based on the positive beliefs and attitudes of all members of the educational community, especially those at the school and classroom levels. Schools that are supported by inclusion must be able to see the best way to assist students individually, understanding what motivates them and what inhibits them, breaking established work patterns (Heung, 2006).

Regarding school management and organization, Heung (2006) discusses the importance of developing a school management committee that effectively works on special education and inclusion

The assessment of the inclusion process in special education policies. Achieving an inclusive school community depends on the school's ability to establish an inclusive school climate and the involvement and collaboration of all actors within the community (Engelbrecht et al., 2006).

Another issue to analyze is the lack of leadership and democratic structure, which is linked to difficulties in implementing inclusive practices in schools. Loreman et al. (2014) highlight that the more effective school leadership practices are, the more these leaders tend to have positive opinions about inclusive education.

In Vaughan's (2002) study, indicators for analyzing the inclusive culture of schools in the United Kingdom are introduced. The author discussed issues such as the accessibility of buildings, facilities, and school communication as key aspects for promoting an inclusive culture in schools. The inclusive culture is also referenced in the study by Echeita et al. (2023), conducted in the context of Spanish schools. The study of this dimension seeks to understand to what extent inclusive values are shared by all teachers, students, families, or other community members.

The participation of the community and, more specifically, of parents, is also seen as a key element in analyzing the quality of the inclusive culture of schools. In the work of Yazicioglu and Dodur (2023), the authors highlight parental involvement as a crucial factor in the effectiveness of school inclusion, as it helps eliminate obstacles and create a more welcoming environment. By integrating families as a central part of this educational process, it is possible to provide more robust support for the academic and social progress of children with special needs.

In this regard, Elbaum (2014) discusses parental participation in the education of their children, particularly those who are the target audience of special education, emphasizing the importance of the close relationship between family and school for student success. Another point is the analysis of parental and community involvement in the school: for this author, the lack of involvement of parents and the community is considered a barrier to inclusion. The results of her research also showed that parents would like to be more involved in their children's schools and, in turn, would like more communication from the school regarding the students' progress.

The participation of teachers is also considered an aspect of quality for the school's inclusive culture. According to Heung (2006), it is important to analyze the extent to which teachers participate in school decisions, promoting collegiality and collaboration with one another.

The realization of an inclusive culture is also established, according to the evaluation by Covelli and Lucia (2020), where integrated networks of support services for students with disabilities are created. In this context, it is important to mention deaf students, who need support in sign language,

and hearing students who interact with deaf students and require sign language interpretation, as well as lessons to learn how to communicate with deaf students. Engelbrecht et al. (2006), in their study analyzing the implementation of inclusive education in schools in South Africa, demonstrated that striving to establish a culture of inclusive learning in schools brings improvements to school life not only for students with special needs but for the entire school community.

Sharma et al. (2018) discuss inclusive awareness: regarding this focus, they consider the indicator of the number of community awareness programs focused on children with disabilities who do not attend regular schools as an important way to assess the quality of inclusive education offered.

Alekshina et al. (2020) identified parameters that allow improvements in inclusion processes: greater individualization of education, more comprehensive support for all students, and well-coordinated work by the school's professional team. Additionally, the educational outcomes of children with disabilities are seen as quality indicators for an inclusive system.

Fernández-Archilla et al. (2020) discuss that all students, without exception, can develop fully within a common educational system. The more a system is capable of embracing all students, the more it can be considered inclusive. An inclusive system successfully implements concurrent practices: teaching knowledge, properly understanding practices, and implementing them throughout the educational system (Al-Manabri, 2013).

Another important point is the existence of mechanisms to promote the sharing of experiences between schools, districts, and regions in the process of implementing technology for learning and inclusive education (Law et al., 2016), as the evaluation of the quality of inclusive education is complex and cannot ignore the context of educational interventions (Covelli; Lucia, 2020).

As protagonists of education, the perspective of students is fundamental in determining inclusive education in an educational institution. The students' stance can serve as an indicator of the school culture. For Elbaum (2014), the silencing of students' voices can indicate a more conservative and authoritarian ethos in schools, where students would not be recognized as collaborative parts in their own learning process, which would harm the establishment of an inclusive educational culture.

Following this path, Havel and Kratochvilova (2014), who analyzed the maximum expectation of students, assert that there is an improvement in students' social development when there are inclusive education characteristics in the school environment: communication, cooperation, application of differentiation and individualization, maximum student expectations, and respect between education participants are characteristic traits of inclusive education. For Koster et al. (2011), who worked on issues concerning the social participation of students with disabilities, such students

The assessment of the inclusion process in special education may be more dependent on the teacher as the distance between them and their classmates increases. Therefore, another point that deserves attention is evaluating whether typical students emotionally accept students with disabilities. In this sense, Loreman et al. (2014) mention the Grimes Scale (2010), applied in Laos, a country in Southeast Asia, which provides social and emotional indicators, analyzing the relationship and acceptance among students, along with indicators evaluating support and parental involvement and indicators related to students' access and performance. The Grimes Scale is a tool used to assess behaviors and characteristics of children with special needs, assisting in diagnosis and educational planning. It is employed to identify behavior patterns and specific difficulties, helping to create personalized intervention plans and evaluate the effectiveness of educational and therapeutic strategies.

Diante do que os autores pesquisados apresentaram como os mais relevantes pontos para a proposição de uma avaliação da qualidade do processo de inclusão do público-alvo da educação especial, tem-se: consistência da legislação e das políticas educacionais, pensado no quanto os governos investem em políticas inclusivas e são capazes de garantir às pessoas com deficiência seus direitos; a produção de dados sobre o orçamento destinado à inclusão e ao acesso, para análise do indicador de investimento em educação inclusiva; a formação, o treinamento e a qualificação profissional com enfoque no papel do professor, nas suas competências e nas estratégias de ensino por ele adotadas; as adequações do ambiente escolar para a inclusão, com vistas ao acesso, ao clima inclusivo, à comunicação e sentimento de pertencimento para o público-alvo da educação especial; o desenvolvimento efetivo da gestão escolar, no sentido de estimular o envolvimento da comunidade escolar nas atividades de educação inclusiva; e a efetivação de uma cultura inclusão na comunidade escolar buscando melhoria na participação e acesso de todos.

Final considerations

The present study initially aimed to present the historical context of Special Education in Brazil. This historical contextualization made it possible to understand how special education, in a growing movement supported by international policies, has been constructed and shaped according to the inclusive perspective.

In the second phase, the present study presented a systematic literature review, which helped identify the key authors addressing the evaluation of special education in order to, based on these authors, identify aspects considered relevant in the evaluation of the inclusion process for the target audience of special education. Thus, although not all indicators of the quality of the inclusion process

for the target audience of special education are defined, the necessary breadth of the analysis is understood, as the political-educational context of inclusion in Brazil is clear.

The authors reviewed highlight as important aspects to evaluate the inclusion process for the target audience of special education, particularly issues such as: the consistency of educational policies; community participation in political decisions; data regarding the budget allocated to inclusion and the access of the target audience of special education to inclusive educational networks; teacher training, professional development, and qualification with a focus on the role of the teacher, their competencies, and the teaching strategies adopted; adaptations in the school environment for inclusion; the effective development of school management; and the establishment of an inclusive culture as the key and most relevant aspects for the quality of inclusion for students who are the target audience of special education.

Thus, thinking in terms of educational quality, structuring an evaluation regarding the quality of the inclusion process for the target audience of special education, considering the Brazilian educational context, and supported by the indicators presented in the works discussed here, could lead to the structuring of effective public policies to ensure educational quality for the target audience of special education.

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