

**SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY IN THE MUNICIPAL SCHOOL NETWORK OF
BELO HORIZONTE-MG**

***POLÍTICA DE EDUCAÇÃO ESPECIAL NA REDE MUNICIPAL DE ENSINO DE
BELO HORIZONTE-MG***

***POLÍTICA DE EDUCACIÓN ESPECIAL EN LA RED MUNICIPAL DE ENSEÑANZA
DE BELO HORIZONTE-MG***

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ABSTRACT: In this paper we seek to analyze the Special Education policy of the municipality of Belo Horizonte-MG to understand the organization of this type of education in its network and the articulation with national policies. To do so, we used the analysis of national and municipal documentation that we consider representative of the Special Education policy, and the analysis of data from the School Census (2018). We can see that historically Special Education is characterized by disputes between public and private. Both nationally and at the municipal level, there has been a tendency to target private-assistance institutions, thus enabling public funding for the private network. The school census data showed that most students in Special Education were enrolled in municipal schools and 84% did not attend SEA; besides the significant number of students with intellectual disabilities enrolled (45.4%) and the existence of segregated spaces. Despite the obstacles that public school presents, we believe that this is the space where students have access to systematized knowledge and, therefore, this is the space where Special Education students should be.

KEYWORDS: Special education. Special education policy. Belo Horizonte. School census.

RESUMO: *Nesse artigo buscamos analisar a política de Educação Especial do município de Belo Horizonte-MG para compreendermos a organização dessa modalidade de ensino em sua rede e a articulação com as políticas nacionais. Para tanto, utilizamos da análise de documentação nacional e municipal que consideramos representativas da política de Educação Especial, e a análise dos dados do Censo Escolar (2018). Podemos constatar que historicamente a Educação Especial é caracterizada pelas disputas entre o público e o privado. Tanto no âmbito nacional como municipal houve uma tendência de direcionamento às instituições privado-assistenciais, possibilitando assim o financiamento público para rede*

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privada. Os dados do censo escolar demonstraram que a maior parte dos estudantes da Educação Especial estava matriculada nas escolas da rede municipal e 84% não frequentavam o AEE; além do número expressivo de matrículas de alunos com deficiência intelectual (45,4%) e a existência de espaços segregados. Apesar dos entraves que a escola pública apresenta, consideramos ser nesse espaço que os estudantes têm acesso ao conhecimento sistematizado e, sendo assim, é nesse espaço onde os estudantes da Educação Especial devem estar.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Educação especial. Política de educação especial. Belo Horizonte. Censo escolar.

RESUMEN: En este artículo buscaremos analizar la política de Educación Especial del municipio de Belo Horizonte-MG para comprender la organización de esa modalidad de enseñanza en su red y la articulación con las políticas nacionales. Para ello, utilizamos del análisis de documentación nacional y municipal que consideramos representativas de la política de Educación Especial, y el análisis de los datos del Censo Escolar (2018). Podremos constatar que históricamente la Educación Especial se caracteriza por las disputas entre el público y el privado. Tanto en el ámbito nacional como municipal hubo una tendencia de direccionamiento a las instituciones privado-asistenciales, posibilitando así el financiamiento público para la red privada. Los datos del censo escolar demostraron que la mayor parte de los estudiantes de la Educación estuvo matriculadas en las escuelas de la red municipal y 84% no frecuentaban el AEE; además del número expresivo de matrículas de alumnos con discapacidad intelectual (45,4%) y la existencia de espacios segregados. A pesar de los problemas que presenta la escuela pública, consideramos que es en ese espacio que los estudiantes tienen acceso al conocimiento sistematizado y, así, es en ese espacio en el que los estudiantes de la Educación Especial deben estar.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Educación escolar. Política de educación especial. Belo Horizonte. Censo escolar.

Introduction

In this article, we intend to analyze the Special Education policy in the city of Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, based on official documents and enrollment data from the 2018 School Census microdata. that in a preliminary way, some of the political referrals present in the official documents for Special Education in the country.

Since the implementation of educational services for students with disabilities, public institutions have coexisted and the State has encouraged private initiatives (BUENO, 2011; JANNUZZI, 2012; KASSAR, 2013). During the beginning of the 21st century, disputes remain intensified around the services to be offered to Special Education students, considered those with disabilities, pervasive developmental disorders and high abilities/giftedness (BRASIL, 2013).

With the National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education in 2008 (BRASIL, 2008) and the intense dissemination of Special Education in regular schools, groups opposed to this concept pressed for the possibility of maintaining specialized services and financing for institutions private-assistance. In 2011, the government of Dilma Rousseff (Workers' Party - PT) approved Decree no. 7611, of 17 November 2011, which regulates the Specialized Educational Service (SEA) in regular schools. The Decree in question allows the realization of the SEA in private-assistance institutions, thus resuming its financing (BRASIL, 2011).

With the legal-media-parliamentary coup that supported the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff and made president her vice, Michel Temer (Brazilian Democratic Movement - MDB), the neoliberal vision for education intensified in educational policies, and with Special Education it was no different. Since 2018, the Ministry of Education (MEC) started a movement to change the 2008 policy. During the first year of President Jair Messias Bolsonaro's government (no party), this perspective of education gained strength, especially by institutions segregated by type of disability. On 30 September 2020, Federal Decree no. 10,502 (BRASIL, 2020), which instituted the “new” National Policy for Special Education, called Equitable, Inclusive and with Lifelong Learning. This current policy presents the resumption of the possibility of segregated teaching spaces such as schools and special classes for Special Education students.

Such indicators demonstrate how Special Education is and has always been strongly marked by disputes between those who defend access to regular school and those who defend the possibility of people attending exclusively specialized institutions. These disputes and directions show the concept of Special Education nationally, but they also have a relationship with state and municipal networks.

Thus, understanding how education networks are organizing themselves to serve Special Education students at school is essential for us to understand how this policy is being addressed and what possibilities of resistance and confrontations can be indicated, and, in the counter-current, defend the appropriation of knowledge historically produced by humanity. We seek to show that the school project we fight for Special Education students goes beyond access, but resistance to this model of school for capital, seeking to guarantee the right to quality socially referenced education for all students.

Given this panorama, the objective of this study is to analyze in the city of Belo Horizonte - MG the policies and data from the most recent school census (2018) on Special

Education in order to understand how this city organizes this type of education in its network and how to articulates with national policies.

Special Education Policies in the Municipality of Belo Horizonte

The educational service to people with disabilities in the city of Belo Horizonte began in the 1920s with the creation of the São Rafael Institute (1926), aimed at serving people with visual impairments, an initiative of the state government of Minas Gerais (COELHO, 2003).

The specific actions of the municipal education network in Belo Horizonte for the care of people with disabilities began in 1982, with the creation of agreements with private and philanthropic organizations. Agreements were signed with institutions that served students enrolled in the municipal education system and, in contrast, the Municipality Belo Horizonte (PBH, Portuguese initials) provided teachers to work in these spaces. It is identified that the Special Education modality was performed outsourced, the PBH used the existing structures of private and/or philanthropic institutions to provide assistance to children with disabilities (COELHO, 2003). This feature highlights the strong public-private partnership in education in the municipality.

In 1984, Law no. 3,908, which authorized the creation of resource rooms for specific assistance due to disabilities, specially equipped in schools in the municipal regular education network to complement the education of students with visual, hearing and physical disabilities. The resource rooms were characterized as follows:

By resource rooms, we mean appropriate facilities for the development of pedagogical activities, guided by a teacher, which cannot be carried out in regular classrooms, as they work to overcome specific difficulties arising from the sensory and physical limitations of students (BELO HORIZONTE, 1984).

Regarding the service offered, the legislation specified that it could be collective or individual and should be performed before or after the shift attended by the student in the regular classroom. It is noteworthy that nothing has been guaranteed, in this legislation, for students with intellectual disabilities and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), for example.

After the Federal Constitution of 1988 came into force, new guidelines were drawn up for Brazilian education, mainly for the education of people with disabilities. It was established that education should preferably take place in the regular school system, with the security of a Specialized Educational Service model (BRASIL, 1988, Art. 205 and 208).

Following this trend, in the government of Mayor Pimenta da Veiga/Eduardo Azeredo (Brazilian Social Democracy Party - PSDB, 1989-1992), Law no. 5602 of 1989 was created, which “Provides for enrollments of physically handicapped people in municipal public schools”, to facilitate access for this public. That same year, the first Special Education school of the municipal education network was created, which consisted of serving people with disabilities and shared the building with other regular schools.

According to Coelho (2003), at this time, the education of people with disabilities in the municipal education system was based on the “Free Traffic Project”, which guided the creation of Special Schools in PBH and provided for:

The Free Transit Project provided for the Special Education Center to have pedagogical support consistent with the public to be served, establish a dynamic and participatory relationship with the school community, implement a pedagogical practice in which the student was subject to the learning process and effectively opened space for the "free transit of students with disabilities in municipal schools in Belo Horizonte" (SMED, 1989) (COELHO, 2003, p. 88, our translation).

With the implementation of this project, other initiatives were created to consolidate Special Education in the municipality: one of them was the creation of two more municipal schools of Special Education, as they were called, to serve people with disabilities.

In the period from 1993 to 1996, specifically in the government of Patrus Ananias (Workers' Party), to compose the Special Education policy, three legislations aimed at students with disabilities were enacted. The first, Law no. 6,590 of 1994, provides for the implementation of Special Education in municipal public schools. According to this legislation, the municipality should adopt a Special Education System in municipal schools of the public network, aiming at the integration and adequate care of students with physical (understood in this law as visual, hearing or psychomotor impairment) and mental disabilities, and with high abilities/giftedness (BELO HORIZONTE, 1994a).

The second law enacted was Law no. 670.1 of 1994, which aimed to guarantee school places for students with disabilities. Article 1 guaranteed places for students with disabilities in regular and special schools in the city of Belo Horizonte. However, in a single paragraph, it was ensured that students would be assisted in the municipal network or in partner private schools (BELO HORIZONTE, 1994b). The third legislation created was Law no. 6,726, also from 1994, which made it mandatory to build ramps with handrails in municipal public schools, that is, an attempt to make schools accessible to serve students with physical disabilities (BELO HORIZONTE, 1994c).

However, what happened in practice, during the government of Mayor Patrus Ananias, according to Coelho (2003), was the expansion of assistance to students with disabilities in the specialized network, with public investment in private-assistance institutions, indicating privatization processes of public education.

In the mid-1990s, international movements directed the conception of education towards an “inclusive” proposal. In the government of Mayor Célio de Castro (Brazilian Socialist Party - PSB, 1997-2000), the intention was to direct the actions of Special Education towards the field of inclusive education. There were some indications of an attempt to break with the policy of agreements, contracts with special private schools and investing in services in the public sector. However, due to pressures made by private assistance organizations and by family members, agreements and contracts were maintained. In this aspect, two problems were highlighted: “first, education segregated in schools that cater specifically to the public with disabilities and, the second, concerns the cost of private establishments by the Government” (COELHO, 2003, p. 107, our translation).

Discussions about the proposal for inclusive education intensified from the year 2002, during the Fernando Pimentel government (Worker's Party, 2002-2008). Opinion no. 060/2004, issued by the Belo Horizonte Municipal Education Council (CME, Portuguese initials), a deliberative, normative and consultative body, had the attribution of drawing up guidelines for inclusive education. In December 2002, the Special Commission was created for the elaboration of the Opinion on Special Education for the municipal education network.

It was expressed in the opinion prepared by the committee (Opinion No. 060/04) that special schools in the way they operated should be understood as transitory, as they understood that while there are students enrolled in schools with exclusive service, it is not about inclusion, that is, the commission made it clear that school services for students with disabilities should take place in regular schools, indicated the importance of the formation of education professionals and investing public resources to adapt physical spaces, and showed the need to create teams and services for the Specialized Educational Service (BELO HORIZONTE, 2004).

In 2005, during the government of Mayor Fernando Pimentel (PT), Law no. 9,078, which established the Policy on Persons with Disabilities for the Municipality of Belo Horizonte. In Art. 50, it was ensured: “[...] in the Municipal Education System, the school inclusion of children, young people and adults at all levels and modalities of education, guaranteeing them access, permanence and quality education”. This legislation presents advances because it ensures that the education of people with disabilities must take place in

the regular education system, but it cannot break with public-private contracts. In Art. 51 it was established:

Specialized educational assistance will be given, as a priority, within the public network and in a complementary way through cooperation agreements or contracts, according to the relevant legislation and in accordance with the provisions of the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education - LDB (BELO HORIZONTE, 2005, our translation).

It appears that Specialized Educational Service for students with disabilities can take place in a complementary way through agreements or contracts signed with institutions outside the municipality.

With the disclosure of the National Policy for Special Education in the Inclusive Education Perspective of 2008, the municipality, in adherence to the inclusive education proposal, created the SMED Ordinance n. 112, which “Sets rules for the organization and functioning of Specialized Educational Assistance – SEA in the Municipal Education Network of Belo Horizonte – RME/BH”. According to the ordinance, the SEA is established as an educational service offered to students with disabilities, developmental disorders or high abilities, enrolled in Early childhood education (4 to 5 years) and in Elementary School, constituting a complementary or supplementary character, not substitutive to schooling, and must be offered in a different shift from that corresponding to regular schooling (BELO HORIZONTE, 2009).

In 2014, during the government of Mayor Marcio Lacerda (Brazilian Socialist Party, 2009-2016), Law no. 10,788, of December 2014 was approved, which “Establishes guidelines for the educational inclusion of students with disabilities; pervasive developmental disorders and high abilities/giftedness, and other measures”. Article 1 establishes guidelines for Special Education students; we highlight the following:

- I - institution of Special Education from an inclusive perspective, in Early Childhood Education and Elementary Education of Basic Education, preferably in regular schools, without prejudice to special schools or special classes continuing to provide the most adequate education to students with disabilities who cannot be adequately assisted in common classes or regular schools;
- II - guarantee the permanence, accessibility and school development of students with disabilities, pervasive developmental disorders, high abilities/giftedness and/or learning difficulties;
- III - continued and specialized qualification of teachers;
- IV - priority in offering places to students with disabilities in school units close to the student's residence (BELO HORIZONTE, 2014, our translation).

Although this law expresses in its title that it establishes guidelines for educational inclusion, it is verified in item I the possibility that the education of students with disabilities takes place in segregated educational spaces, such as schools or special classes, with the justification of being more appropriate for some students. It is further established that:

Art. 3 - The government is authorized to create agreements, to enter into contracts or any partnership permitted by Federal Law No. 8666, of 21 June 1993, as well as to maintain existing ones, expanding them, if necessary, with private schools and other private establishments, to provide, complement or assist the services provided for in this law (BELO HORIZONTE, 2014, our translation).

It is noticed that the Special Education policy in the city of Belo Horizonte is in conformity with the LDBEN/1996 when it considers that the education of Special Education students should preferably take place in regular education. However, it is evident that there are two points that deserve tension: the first refers to the possibility of these students' education taking place in segregated spaces, such as schools and special classes; the second is the investment of public resources in private institutions, which prioritizes public-private partnerships in education financing.

To better understand how Special Education is configured in this specific municipality, we chose to analyze the enrollment data from the 2018 School Census, the most recent at the time of the study, as an indication for the analysis of referrals on the Special Education policy in Belo Horizonte -MG.

The school census and its consequences in municipal educational policies

According to Law No. 12,796 (BRASIL, 2013), the school census of basic education must be annual, covering students of school age and young people and adults who are not graduating in all Brazilian municipalities. The collection and analysis of school census data (school, enrollment, teachers and classes) enable a wide range of indicators, such as the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB, Portuguese initials) and guide the transfer of federal government resources. In the words of Rezende and Jannuzzi (2008, p. 122, our translation):

The use of indicator systems, although far from being sufficient for the effectiveness of public policies, enhances the chance of success, as it allows, in theory, the evaluation of technically well-supported results and comprehensive and empirically referred social diagnoses.

Within the scope of inclusion policies, Special Education presents itself as a field of knowledge and development of studies and research on various topics, including educational indicators. Therefore, the school census is identified as “[...] a fundamental tool for educational actors to understand the educational situation of the country, the federative units, municipalities and the Federal District, as well as schools and, with this, monitor the effectiveness of public policies” (our translation)⁴.

In this way, from the school census of basic education it is possible to measure data on Special Education; In this work, we will analyze the enrollments of Special Education students in the city of Belo Horizonte-MG in the year 2018. We seek to interpret the enrollment bank of the microdata from the Basic Education school census according to the variables⁵: 1. code of the city of Belo Horizonte; 2. types of special educational needs⁶: blindness, low vision, deafness, hearing impairment, deafblindness, physical disability, intellectual disability, multiple disability, Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, Rett's Syndrome, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder (CDD) and high abilities/ giftedness; 3. Teaching steps; 4. Specialized Educational Service; 5. Entity Code.

The municipality of Belo Horizonte has an estimated population, according to 2010 data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), of 2,375,151 inhabitants, and has an HDI of 0.810, which is considered to be very high. It currently has 1,370 public and private schools. Regarding the municipal education network, the object of this study, it has 322 schools that offer the following stages of education: daycare, pre-school, early and late years of elementary school, and youth and adult education (BRASIL, 2018).

According to data from the 2018 school census, the city of Belo Horizonte had 590,305 enrollments, of which 4,837 (0.8%) were in federal dependence, 196,416 (33.3%) state, 220,584 (37.4%) municipal and 168, 468 (28.5%) private. In turn, enrollments of Special Education students in the city of Belo Horizonte are concentrated in the municipal sphere (55.8%), followed by state (32.4%), private (11.5%) and federal (0.3) %).

In this direction, it was identified that enrollments of Special Education students correspond to 3.7% in the municipal network in 2018. The distribution of these enrollments in

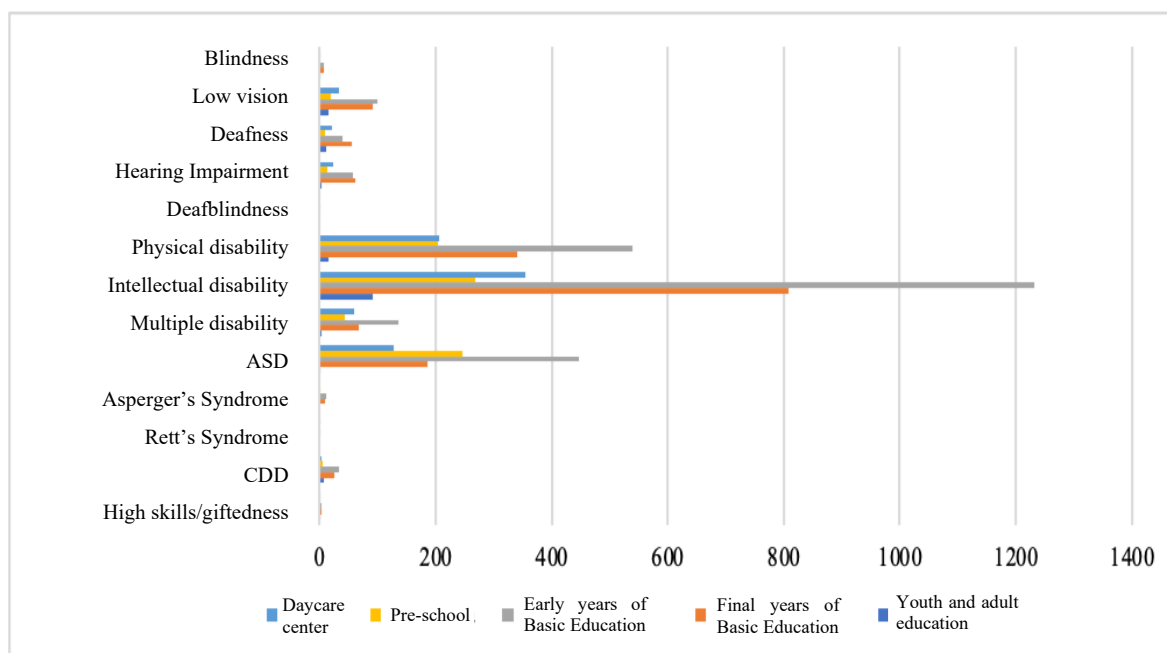
⁴ Available: <https://www.gov.br/inep/pt-br/areas-de-atuacao/pesquisas-estatisticas-e-indicadores/censo-escolar>. Access: 04 Dec. 2020.

⁵ According to Inep's instruction booklet (2018).

⁶ Correspond to the enrollment of Special Education students.

the municipal network of Belo Horizonte according to the stages of education (2018) is presented below.⁷

Figure 1 – Distribution of Special Education enrollments in the municipal network of Belo Horizonte according to the stages of education, types of disabilities, TGD and high abilities/giftedness (2018)



Source: Devised by the authors, based on the Basic Education Census - INEP (BRASIL, 2018)

It appears that enrollments of students with intellectual disabilities (45.4%) stand out, followed by physical disabilities (21.5%) and ASD (16.6%). Carneiro (2017, p. 91, our translation) problematizes intellectual disability, from the perspective of historical-cultural psychology, as a social production, and explains that “[...] such a condition is not given at birth, but it is built and consolidated as it offers less challenging environments and simplified practices, adapted to the initial condition presented by each of these subjects”. In this direction, Bridi and Souza (2017) problematize the processes of identification of students with intellectual disabilities in the school context, based, for example, on the accentuated difficulty in reading or writing.

The studies by Meletti and Bueno (2011) and Meletti and Ribeiro (2014) in the field of Special Education based on school censuses are similar to the findings of this study, also indicating the concentration of enrollments of students with intellectual disabilities nationwide. A fact that draws attention in the municipal network is the number of enrollments

⁷ In this Figure, the microdata offered in the school census were presented and the “missing” was identified – data that were not computed, for example, enrollments in Figure 3 that did not present the teaching stages.

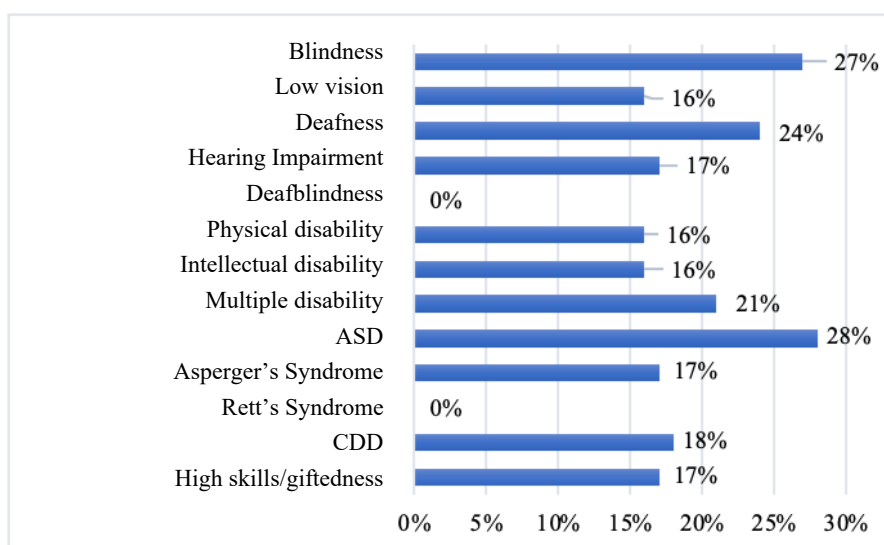
of students with ASD, given its expressive number. Although this is not the focus of our research, it stands out for considering that this data deserves to be deepened at another time.

Another observation that we can check with the data is that the early years of elementary school are the teaching stage that has the highest number of Special Education students (43%), followed by the final years of elementary school (27.3%), daycare (13.8%), pre-school (13.4%) and Youth and Adult Education (2.5%).

It is worth highlighting the referrals of enrollments from Special Education to Youth and Adult Education. Gonçalves, Bueno and Meletti (2013) indicate an expansion of these enrollments in Brazil in the period from 2007 to 2010, and present the construction of the so-called Special Youth and Adult Education in special institutions and classes.

Regarding the provision of Specialized Educational Service, it was identified that, on average, 16% of enrollments of students in education in the municipal network took the SEA, which is guaranteed by legislation (BRASIL, 1988; 1996; 2011; 2015), as illustrated figure 2.

Figure 2 – Enrollments of Special Education in the municipal network of Belo Horizonte, according to the Specialized Educational Service (2018)



Source: Devised by the authors, based on the Basic Education Census - INEP (BRASIL, 2018)

The data show us that most enrollments (84%) of Special Education students in the municipal network do not have the effective right to participate in the SEA.

We are faced with educational networks that, even with legislation that supposedly would guarantee the education of these people, present technical and pedagogical difficulties in everyday school life. It is illustrated by the research of Carneiro, Michels and Garcia (2012), who, when analyzing the SEA in the municipal school system of Florianópolis/SC,

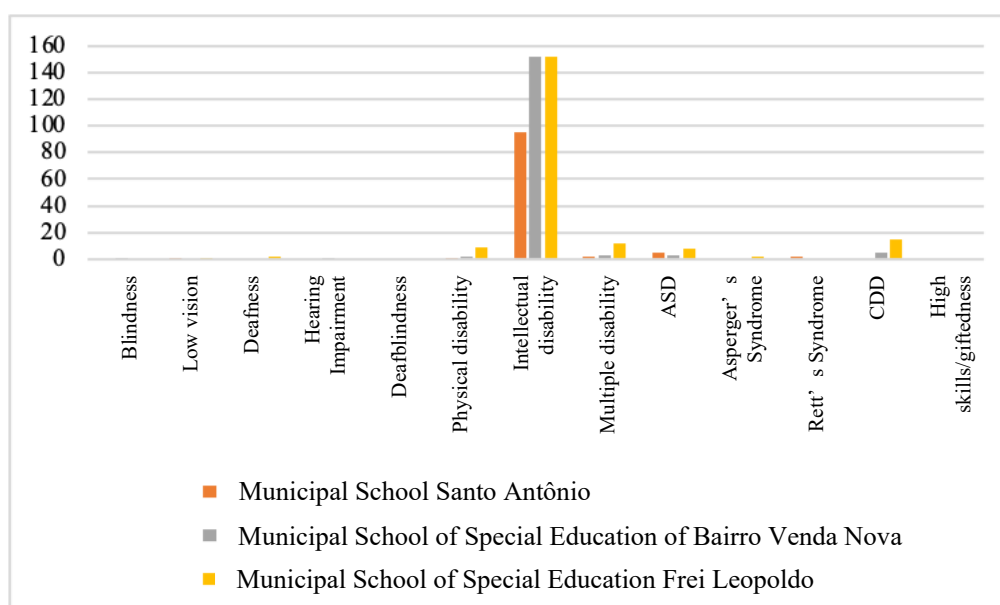
demonstrate the difficulties of dialogue between the regent teachers and the SEA teachers. These teachers had precarious work contracts, with work shifts divided into different schools.

Another study with a focus on the SEA, carried out by Oliveira and Pletsch (2014), encompassing four municipalities in the Baixada Fluminense-RJ, showed that there were legal advances, but the teaching networks face problems with the services offered by Special Education, as the effectiveness of the collaborative work between regular classroom and SEA teachers, and indicate the weaknesses regarding the development of cognitive skills necessary for the construction of scientific concepts.

Com relação aos espaços para Atendimento Educacional Especializado, somente 19% (60) das escolas municipais apresentam salas para o atendimento especial (BRASIL, 2018).

The municipal education network in Belo Horizonte has three Special Education schools that exclusively serve 430 enrollments of students with disabilities and TEA, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 3 – Enrollment of special education students in three special education schools in the municipal network of Belo Horizonte



Source: Devised by the authors, based on the Basic Education Census - INEP (BRASIL, 2018)

Enrollments in Special Education schools correspond to 5.3% of the municipal network of Belo Horizonte, with a predominance of enrollments of students with intellectual disabilities (84.1%), multiple disabilities (3.6%), ASD (3.4%) and physical disability (2.5%). However, it was not possible to identify, by microdata from the school census, the distribution of enrollments in these three Special Education schools according to the teaching stages.

Therefore, it is considered relevant to develop research in these spaces to understand their composition and the formative consequences for the people who attended.

Final considerations

Based on the discussions presented in this article, we can affirm that the Special Education policy in the city of Belo Horizonte-MG is in line with the national policy, especially by enabling segregated care in private-care spaces or in specialized schools throughout its history.

When the Special Education policy from an inclusive perspective gains prominence on the national scene from the beginning of the 21st century, Belo Horizonte also invests in inclusive proposals, however, it cannot break with the tradition of public-private partnerships and specialized schools under its management. We identified in this study that the municipal education network has three specialized schools that serve 430 students in segregated spaces, a situation that is opposed to the proposal of inclusive education that ensures that students who are the target audience of Special Education must be enrolled in regular schools.

The data analyzed based on microdata from the School Census for the year 2018 allow us to state that most Special Education students enrolled in this school system are identified with intellectual disabilities, however, these same data reveal that most enrolled students do not have access to Specialized Educational Services, and students with intellectual disabilities are among the least served. This is a point that deserves to be developed, since, although the official documents contain the proposal for Special Education in an inclusive perspective, most students who access regular schools are not entitled to the “flagship” service of this same policy.

Aware of this political, economic and social scenario, despite all the obstacles that public schools present, we believe that, in a contradictory way, students have potential access to systematized knowledge and, therefore, it is in this space where Special Education students must be, without losing sight of the educational project that we guide for all students. We defend the public, secular and free school as a right to socialize formal and systematized knowledge, proper to the school, enabling human emancipation and the struggle to build another hegemony that allows the overcoming of all inequalities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: Dean of Research - UFMG.

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How to reference this article

SÁ, M. A.; VAZ, K.; GONÇALVES, T. G. G. L. Special education policy in the municipal school network of Belo Horizonte-MG. **Revista Ibero-Americana de Estudos em Educação**, Araraquara, v. 16, n. esp. 2, p. 1343-1359, maio 2021. e-ISSN: 1982-5587. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21723/riaee.v16iesp2.15129>

Submitted: 15/12/2020

Required revisions: 28/01/2021

Approved: 03/03/2021

Published: 01/05/2021