

**RECKONING WITH UNPREDICTABILITY AND FREEDOM IN THE
CONSTRUCTION OF AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL**

***A CONSIDERAÇÃO DA IMPREVISIBILIDADE E DA LIBERDADE NA
CONSTRUÇÃO DE UMA ESCOLA INCLUSIVA***

***LA CONSIDERACIÓN DE LA IMPREVISIBILIDAD Y DE LA LIBERTAD EN LA
CONSTRUCCIÓN DE UNA ESCUELA INCLUSIVA***

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ABSTRACT: The legal and conceptual bases of school inclusion are not always discussed in a way to instigate a rupture with concepts and pedagogical practices towards integration. By analyzing my own work as a professor and researcher, I found in unpredictability and freedom the pillars on which, in my perception, education can be built to welcome all, indistinctly. In this essay, my aim is to share, through narration, my thoughts on inclusion in the current Brazilian scenario. I hope that my experience expressed here invites the teachers to rethink what real teaching commitment with the inclusion is and, with that, we ought to prevent any setback attempts to what Brazil has already achieved in this sense.

KEYWORDS: School inclusion. Teaching. Difference. National social education policy.

RESUMO: *As bases conceituais e legais da inclusão escolar nem sempre são problematizadas de modo a provocar uma ruptura com concepções e práticas pedagógicas voltadas à integração. Ao analisar o meu próprio trabalho de professor e pesquisador, encontrei na imprevisibilidade e na liberdade os pilares sobre os quais, a meu ver, a educação também pode ser edificada para acolher a todos, indistintamente. Neste ensaio, meu propósito é compartilhar, por meio da narratividade, o que penso sobre a inclusão no atual cenário brasileiro. Espero que as minhas experiências contribuam para que os professores repensem o que é um verdadeiro compromisso pedagógico com a inclusão e que, com isso, não admitamos toda e qualquer tentativa de retrocesso diante daquilo que o Brasil já conquistou nesse sentido.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Inclusão escolar. Ensino. Diferença. Política nacional de educação especial.*

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RESUMEN: *Las bases conceptuales y legales de la inclusión escolar ni siempre se problematizan de manera que provoque una ruptura con las concepciones y prácticas pedagógicas relacionadas a la integración. Al analizar mi propio trabajo como docente e investigador, encontré en la imprevisibilidad y en la libertad los pilares sobre los que, en mi opinión, la educación también puede ser construida para recibir a todos, sin distinción. En este ensayo, mi propósito es ofrecer, a través de la narratividad, lo que pienso sobre la inclusión en el escenario brasileño actual. Espero que mis experiencias ayuden a los docentes a repensar lo que es un verdadero compromiso pedagógico con la inclusión y que, con eso, no admitamos todos y cada uno de los intentos de regreso delante de aquello que el Brasil ya conquistó en ese sentido.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Inclusión escolar. Enseñanza. Diferencia. Política nacional de educación especial.*

Introduction

For some time now I have been studying how school inclusion is discussed and implemented by researchers, teachers, and others involved in the field. What has affected me, as a teacher and researcher, is related to how the conceptual bases and legal foundations of inclusion are revisited and updated, and how these movements have had an impact on daily school life, especially on teaching.

My studies and research have led me to confirm what I have always suspected, since I was a student in elementary school: the school, in meeting the selective demands of the educational systems, ends up disregarding the student as he is, because it is based on preconceived standards. Such idealizations distance the pedagogical goals from the school reality and turn schools into hostile places to those who refute the idealized student model, be it by the way they behave, develop academically, interpret facts or express their ideas.

The disregard for the uniqueness of each student, that is, for his or her difference, together with the lack of commitment of school managements and educational systems to inclusion, has resulted in frequent attempts to dismantle inclusive education. In view of this worrying scenario, through narrative, I will share some considerations about the current Brazilian political-educational scenario.

Narrativity is the way in which I construct an understanding about a certain subject. Writing, in turn, enables me to organize this subjective construction. Writing, for me, is a "minority work of thinking about life" (LOPES, 2016, p. 4).

Here are some results from my doctoral research ², developed between the years 2016 and 2019. I bring this study as a form of contestation to the ideas advocated by the Ministry of Education (MEC), through Decree 10,502, of September 30, 2020 (BRASIL, 2020a), which advocates the return of special classes and schools for some students and sought to institute the National Policy for Special Education (PNEE, in the Portuguese acronym) of 2020 -an educational setback.

I hope that my experiences narrated and updated here will contribute so that teachers, managers and family members will not admit and will not be intimidated by any attempt to retrocede the countless advances that Brazil has already achieved in relation to school inclusion.

Notes on the inclusive perspective of Brazilian school education

More than a decade has passed since the publication of the National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education - PNEEPEI (BRAZIL, 2008). It is possible to state that inclusion is still a challenging project to be faced by most Brazilian schools. This can be explained by several reasons, such as misinterpretations of laws focused on Education that often bring dubious statements, enabling misinterpretations; educational policies based on integrationist ideals; laws and decrees that disrespect the Federal Constitution of 1988; teacher training based on the medical interpretation of disability and the understanding that the act of teaching is nothing more than a transmission of content and teacher training that conceives the act of learning as the mere acquisition and reproduction of what was transmitted, as Lanuti and Mantoan (2018) criticize.

The idea, still widely disseminated in the educational field, that the evaluation of the quality of education involves the standardization of learning, has generated attempts to segregate those students who, for whatever reason, do not have the skills and competencies valued by the school.

The maximum expression of this idea was translated by the MEC (Ministry of Education and Culture) with the publication of Decree 10.502, which intended to "update" the 2008 Policy. Such controversial "update", in fact, consists of a project of dismantling the PNEEPEI and, consequently, the inclusive perspective of Brazilian education. Currently

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suspended by the Federal Superior Court (STF), this Decree provides for the segregation of those students who, supposedly, "do not benefit in their development, when included in inclusive regular schools" (BRAZIL, 2020a, art. 2, VI).

Moreover, the proposal contained in the PNEE of 2020 (BRAZIL, 2020b) disregarded the very organization of the Brazilian educational system. Law 9.394, which established the Guidelines and Bases of National Education (BRAZIL, 1996), determined in Article 4 that the State's duty to provide public school education will be made effective through the "guarantee of free compulsory basic education from four to seventeen years of age, organized as follows: pre-school, elementary school and high school" (BRAZIL, 1996). It happens that special schools, as advocated by the PNEE, are not organized in stages and do not extend to the higher level.

Special Education, as a complementary modality to schooling, according to the LDB, does not constitute a subsystem, nor a parallel education system to the common one and, therefore, special schools cannot replace regular institutions. As we know, segregation is a violation of the right that each student has to fully develop and have access to higher levels of education *according to his or her capacity*, according to the Federal Constitution (BRAZIL, 1988, our emphasis).

All the challenges that inclusion presents us with should drive us to change the conceptual basis of the school, not to remove from it those who are unfairly disfavored. The failure to face the (welcome) instigations and imperfections that human difference brings has caused an old and outdated doubt to be rescued and brought back to the educational debate: who can and who cannot be in ordinary school?

By associating students considered with disabilities to the inability to learn, the PNEE (BRAZIL, 2020b) rescued outdated ideas, typical of the PNEE of 1994. An example of these ideas was the definition of who could be in the common school: "those who have conditions to follow and develop the curricular activities at the same pace as the so-called normal students" (BRAZIL, 1994, p. 19).

The inclusive school, the one that welcomes everyone unconditionally, has still been defined by many as something unreachable. This is due, in large part, to the fact that education is organized and developed based on ideals that do not correspond to reality. In addition, in-service teacher education is almost always reduced to training for the mere applicability of prescriptive curricula, focused on good performance in large-scale standardized tests. Based on these ideals and goals, several actions are developed in schools,

such as the definition of competencies to be achieved by all students and the expectation of homogeneous results in assessments, which are supposed to reflect the knowledge acquired. Through this distinctive rationality, the development of students is arbitrarily defined and compared. As a result of these comparisons, some are excluded.

In fact, school inclusion poses us, all the time, many questions! The impossibility of answering them immediately is an opening to a world that has not yet blossomed, like a space reserved for the dream that is not yet realized, but can be. A utopia that seduces us, as Schérer defined (2009).

Notes on unpredictability at school

Although it is developed in a standardized institution, with a predominantly bureaucratic organizational profile, school education actually takes place in the encounter of people, unique by nature, and who have unpredictable ways of dealing with what affects them. Therefore, even though the educational act should be planned, it is impossible to completely predict how the meeting of everyone who participates in a class will take place.

Pedagogy, as a science, is based on the creation and development of mechanisms that help the teacher to control learning. From this perspective, there is the idea that learning is predictable and totally conditioned to teaching. This is why education systems still define school curricula based on skills and competencies that disregard human uniqueness and interpret the students' achievement as proof of the quality of the teaching work.

During my doctoral research, while investigating an in-service teacher training program (in which I also acted as a trainer), I initially tried to understand the barriers that prevented the 35 participating teachers from understanding what school inclusion is and, consequently, what the demands of the schools were.

In the two years of training in which I followed the planning and development of classes, I carefully observed the teaching activities developed and was able to discuss them with the teaching group. I found that the exclusion in the schools where those teachers worked had a fundamental issue: the idea that it would be possible to define which students would learn and which would not, as well as the need for differentiated/adapted teaching for them.

In order to better understand those teachers' conceptions about inclusion, I sought to understand how they related teaching and learning. A long time, attempts to classify the way some students learned and, therefore, justifying the exclusion of many of them.

We can find several studies that approach attempts to standardize students' learning processes. Perhaps these are the references that have been adopted in teacher training (to which I referred earlier) and that have strongly influenced teachers' conceptions.

Dunn, Dunn and Price (1982), for example, were dedicated to defining characteristic and dominant ways in which an individual “absorbs” information. More recent works on this subject, such as those developed by Fleming (2001), Leitão (2006) and Almeida (2010), bring the term “learning styles” to categorize the different ways of learning into visual, auditory and kinesthetic.

From the inclusive perspective, conditioning good teaching to the possibility of verifying and defining a style to which learning belongs diminishes the subject who learns in relation to the one who teaches. Such conditioning violates the principle of intellectual equality, defended by Rancière (2007). Every person is capable of learning and that does not mean that everyone learns in the same way (RANCIÈRE, 2007).

If teachers understood that all people learn, even beyond what they are taught, they would not feel the need to define and compare learning, but rather to assess whether the teaching offered led to equality or inequality. In this regard, Rancière (2007, p. 11) stated that:

It is not a question of method, in the sense of particular forms of learning, it is a question of a properly philosophical question: to know whether the very act of receiving the word of the master — the word of the other — is a testimony of equality or of inequality. It is a political question: whether the education system presupposes an inequality to be “reduced” or an equality to be verified.

If we ignore the principle of intellectual equality, we will continue to compare the development of students based on a preconceived profile that, hypothetically, holds the true knowledge that, therefore, would need to be reproduced; we will fall into the trap of comparing learning “paces” and, furthermore, propose differentiated teaching to each group of students who, supposedly, would present the same learning style - a practice that goes against an inclusive education.

Going back to the training I conducted with the teachers in my PhD research, we studied Deleuzian philosophy to analyze the way they organized their classes. We identified that the mistaken idea that it would be possible to predict how students learn and, from there, differentiate teaching for each group with similar performance was what prevented inclusion from happening. We found that because of this understanding, teachers modified the activities for some students: they reduced the statements, added or removed figures, made mathematical

problems easier, and simplified the activities and their objectives - which, according to Mantoan (2013), constitutes an adaptation that excludes some students.

By understanding the human being as capable of changing with each situation he lives or faces, Deleuze (2006) weakened the certainty that learning can be defined, measured, compared, predicted. If a person is not able to control what affects him, how can one think, for example, that a differentiated curriculum will guarantee learning? How can one predict what adjustments would be needed in the content for a student to learn if it is he himself who performs an accommodation of what is offered to him in a class, as Lanuti (2019) argued?

Unpredictability, when it was taken as truth in the classroom, freed those teachers from the false belief that it would be possible to determine what, how, in what time, and in what way a student would learn. The classes gained, then, a new dynamic: free choice activities, interviews, seminars, field trips and research were proposed so that each student could decide which means would help him/her advance, according to his/her ability. As a result, the students and the teachers no longer saw any sense in offering and carrying out the adapted activities.

I think that starting from the idea that learning is a predisposition of the student and that not even he has absolute control of such a process is a way to ensure that all kinds of knowledge, diverse talents, aptitudes, and forms of expression are valued in the classroom.

Like Deleuze (2006, p. 159), I also believe that "one never knows in advance how someone will learn" and, in this sense, knowing that someone likes to see images, hear sounds, read, write, narrate his or her experiences, and even silence, does not make it possible to define a unique style.

Once again it is Deleuze (2003, p. 4) who tells us that "learning is essentially about signs. Everything that teaches us something emits signs, every act of learning is an interpretation of signs. Our learning, therefore, depends on the signs that affect us at a given moment.

Based on this author, I understand that learning happens when there is a personal encounter with a sign - a thought trigger. What a sign represents for one student may not represent for another, since it is precisely the contingency of the encounter that brings about the experience. Thus, there is no predictability in the emission and interpretation of signs and, therefore, there is no way to know, in advance, what affects someone. The only certainty, in this perspective, is that in contact with others we have more chances of being affected by something and, consequently, of learning.

In opposition to all this, the 2020 PNEE (BRAZIL, 2020b) defends the return of special schools and classes for some students. It starts precisely from the outdated idea that the learning of some students can be controlled "from the outside. For the creators of this regression, certain students should be served in segregated, specialized educational spaces, in which supposedly there would be sufficient resources for this to occur.

How can we know in advance what a student needs to learn without considering the unpredictability of the relationships that permeate such a process? Why not reformulate the way the pedagogical work of the regular school is organized so that it is able to receive all the students, with the necessary resources, materials, spaces, and services? What practices could a special school offer that would not be offered in a regular school? What content worked separately in a special school would be able to promote the development and learning of students?

Asymmetry, imbalance, strangeness, and discrepancy are characteristic of our relationships and evoke the unpredictability that, for me, is the most important thing in Education. Even if a school sets out to create means to control behavior, supervise the cognitive development of its students, deduce what classes will learn, making the educational act as predictable as possible, each person carries with them the imponderable.

The teaching and learning processes cannot be totally premeditated, which gives the teacher the opportunity to constantly review his work and question his role. Unpredictability does not annul the need for lesson planning, but helps us to question the previously defined curricula, which disregard the interests of teachers and students; the standardizing assessments, which seek to level knowledge; the grouping of students by levels of knowledge, among other generalizing practices.

Due to the unpredictability, we are called upon to teach considering the differentiation that each person makes of himself. That is why, according to Schöpke (2012), one person cannot be compared to another. It is necessary to know what students already know about a given subject; that there are several ways in which students can express themselves and that certain characteristics considered as disabilities do not determine someone's abilities.

When teachers carefully observe the questions students ask in a class, their findings, curiosities, and interests, they conceive learning as a free and creative process. They understand that there is no way to define beforehand what affects the other, that there is no one resource that will guarantee that he or she will learn. In this sense, the definition of who benefits or not from the common school completely loses its meaning.

In view of all this, the definition of "students who do not benefit from the common school", according to the PNEE (BRAZIL, 2020b), already mentioned above, is related to a perverse conceptual distortion about learning. Such definition contemplates the exclusionary school logic.

Notes on freedom at school

During the teacher training I conducted, I met another pedagogical coordinator at the school. We worked together. I guided the group of teachers from the early years of elementary school and he accompanied the teachers from the final years.

We talked a lot in the school hallways to plan our trainings and, even though I did not agree with most of what he said, his contradictory ideas seduced me by the exercise of reflection that they forced me to. He guided the teachers to plan their classes based on the idea of student protagonism. However, his way of putting this thought into practice revealed a pedagogical work that was not based on intellectual emancipation, since his intention was to train teachers capable of determining and evaluating a student's intelligence. Stealing the words of Rancière (2007), my co-worker's purpose was to form a "coarsening teacher," who understands learning as the immediate return of the teaching offered and who elects a single type of knowledge as the correct one. I also liked (and still like) to think about the protagonism of the student, because this implies the need to ensure that there is freedom at school. For me, freedom is what I consider most important in Education and, according to my understanding, this does not happen in most schools. I will explain why.

The education that takes place in schools is almost always subordinated to the problematic idea that there is a hierarchically superior type of knowledge that should be acquired by everyone. Although the pedagogical discourse is aimed at valuing the different paths that a student takes in order to learn, what is generally expected is that they all reach the same point of arrival, previously determined by the teacher, by the curriculum, and that they prove it! The students, then, are subjected to the approval of others, who are supposed to be able to judge whether the knowledge exposed by the student is sufficient and, therefore, acceptable.

We do not always reflect that, when we think it is possible to verify learning, we subvert the educational experience into an experiment, as Larrosa (2011,2015) denounced when he criticized the excess of pragmatism in school. Unfortunately, the school is still stuck on the idea of experience as something that is far from the immediate perceptions of students.

With this, students are expected to present what they think through a language considered adequate and, necessarily, consistent with a skill determined by the curriculum.

Going back to the doctoral research I did, I remember that a 5th grade teacher proposed a walking class in which the students would observe the numbers of the houses on the streets. Her goal was to problematize the observations of the class. When sharing the results of her experience in one of the collective formation moments, she reported that each one of her students brought different contents from the walk: increasing and decreasing numbers, even and odd numbers, the positional value of numbers, different functions of numbers (quantifying, codifying), among others.

The communication among students, the appreciation of different perceptions, and the articulation between the written and oral productions of the class, performed by the teacher, ensured that everyone enjoyed the class. The experience that each student built with the proposed activity was not reduced to a learning verification experiment, it did not serve to classify them in who "knew more" or who "knew less". It also helped the teacher to understand that she is not the only one who provides students with learning opportunities, and that everyone, without exceptions, learns, as long as there are no barriers that impose a handicap on a student.³.

The consideration of freedom as a right, as ensured by the Brazilian Federal Constitution (BRAZIL, 1988), causes a turnaround in all forms of planning, developing and evaluating education, because it calls us to value human uniqueness and to abandon previously established models, from which classifications of students are derived. Such exercise intimate us to a new pedagogical philosophy, structured in values that aim to ensure that no student is left out of school.

Education, from this philosophical perspective, starts from the impossibility of structuring the human production of knowledge in a linear way, and from the idea that we are not always able to express what we learn in the way the school wants. The legitimation of the student's individual learning experience is what makes the educational act inclusive, precisely because it considers intellectual freedom.

The right to education is non-transferable and inalienable, and, therefore, it belongs to the student, indisputably. According to our Constitution, health, dignity, life, and freedom

³ For the Social Model, disability is not a physical attribute of the person, an intellectual condition, but the interaction of this subject with a barrier of the environment that prevents him from developing according to his capacity. For Mantoan (2017, p. 41), "the constant and spontaneous use of expressions such as "disabled person", "bearer of disability", among many others of frequent use, comes from the heritage bequeathed to us by the Medical Model and all its ways of portraying some people, of identifying them to a ready, fixed, understandable, and accepted model by most". I advocate, therefore, the use of the expression "person with disability".

itself are rights that cannot be renounced (BRAZIL, 1988). To meet the constitutional precepts and ensure that no rights are violated, we have no choice but to reinvent the school, so that it is able to welcome all students. Public investments should focus on a good teacher training in this sense.

If the interpretation of the educational practice centered on the proof of the student's learning is the gap that education systems have found to classify and exclude some of them, we have to overcome this paradigm, as Biesta (2006) defended. Freedom in Education is related to what Rancière (2007) defined as emancipation, that is, the non-subordination of one intelligence to another, in this case, that of the student in relation to his teacher.

As long as the teaching and learning processes are related to transmission and acquisition, respectively, there will be no overcoming of the purely rational and, therefore, restrictive vision of Education, which prevents the experience of freedom.

The fact is that the PNEE of 2020 (BRAZIL, 2020b) also refers to freedom, but the meaning attributed to it in that document is not related to the emancipation of the student, with the ability that everyone has to learn and manage their own lives. Freedom, according to this Policy, concerns the family's ability to choose in which school (common or special) their daughter or son will study. How to defend this possibility if this choice removes from the student his or her unavailable right to education?

Final remarks

We live in a political, educational, identity crisis. What have we, teachers, students, and families done when our desires are annulled and our creativity is stifled? when we are subservient to the orders of an educational system designed to unfairly show that not all students are welcome in schools?

In this uncertain scenario, in which the routes already traced show signs of exhaustion, as Mantoan (2013) states, we need to reinvent other paths from the commitment to inclusion, because only it makes us give up cultivating models of students. To face the impossibility of controlling the other's learning, to accept once and for all that evaluation does not reveal a student's ability, to let ourselves be contaminated by the uncertainty inherent to human relations, is to establish the true commitment to inclusion.

To change conceptions and practices does not mean to annul the old, but to review and rebuild it. Allowing oneself to be contaminated by unpredictability and having freedom as the

basis of pedagogical action can make inclusion no longer be understood as an option, but as the only way to build a fair and democratic society.

The educational changes that school inclusion imposes are urgent and can no longer be related to the idea of a process that can be developed slowly, with only a few students. The unconditional acceptance of students in regular schools was the great advance brought by the National Policy of Special Education in the perspective of Inclusive Education - PNEEPEI (BRAZIL, 2008), and we cannot give that up. Exclusion cannot be justified as a stage that prepares the individual for later inclusion. If we continue to accept this, we will naturalize the fact that certain students should be excluded, legitimizing the integrationist ideals.

I don't usually end a text with a quote, but the words of Boaventura de Sousa Santos express very well what I think about the current Brazilian political-educational scenario. The current crisis in Education, in the conceptions about science, school, teaching and learning invites us to a new understanding of the matter: local histories instead of eternity, "instead of determinism, unpredictability; instead of mechanicism, interpenetration, spontaneity and self-organization; instead of order, disorder; instead of necessity, creativity" (SANTOS, 2010, p. 48).

To align our concepts and practices to inclusion, we have to look at the school without using a lens that hinders the observation of its details, that disguises the urgency of change and justifies any attempt at educational regression. It is necessary, then, to look at reality as if we were using a magnifying glass that enlarges and reveals everything in the school that should be problematized so that it becomes a space for everyone.

If we take a close look at what happens in a classroom, we will have plenty of arguments to refute any and all attempts at educational regression, such as all those I have exposed, when dealing with the PNEE of 2020. Those who lose with exclusion are everyone, prevented from living together and learning from the challenges that the difference of the other brings and the way it calls each person to an incessant reinvention of themselves.

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