

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND THE MATERIALIZATION OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY IN THE UNITED STATES IN THE VOICE OF A SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

A GESTÃO ESCOLAR E A MATERIALIZAÇÃO DA POLÍTICA DE EDUCAÇÃO ESPECIAL NOS ESTADOS UNIDOS NA VOZ DE UMA DIRETORA DE ESCOLA

LA GESTIÓN ESCOLAR Y LA MATERIALIZACIÓN DE LA POLÍTICA DE EDUCACIÓN ESPECIAL EN ESTADOS UNIDOS EN LA VOZ DE UN DIRECTOR DE ESCUELA

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ABSTRACT: This article aims to highlight aspects of the materialization of the Special Education policy in the United States and the interdependent relationships of education professionals. We used the interview as a methodological resource for the production of data, with a middle school principal in the state of Massachusetts (MA). This text is part of the results of a doctoral research that uses comparative study as methodology, with a focus on the United States and Brazil. The interview, carried out in February 2021, followed a script of 12 semi-structured questions that addressed issues related to Special Education. The results indicate the importance of school management observed in the relationship between management and the various parts that make up the modality such as the Special Education coordinator, specialist teachers, services provided to Special Education students and especially the decision-making power of parents.

KEYWORDS: Education. Management. Special Education.

RESUMO: O presente artigo tem como objetivo destacar aspectos da materialização da política de Educação Especial nos Estados Unidos e as relações de interdependência dos profissionais de educação. Utilizamos a entrevista como recurso metodológico para a produção dos dados, com uma diretora de escola de ensino fundamental II no Estado de Massachusetts (MA). Este texto se constitui parte dos resultados de uma pesquisa de doutorado que utiliza como metodologia o estudo comparado, com foco nos Estados Unidos e Brasil. A entrevista, realizada em fevereiro de 2021, seguiu um roteiro de 12 perguntas semiestruturadas que abordaram assuntos relacionados à Educação Especial. Os resultados indicam a importância da gestão escolar observada na relação entre a gestão e as diversas

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partes que formam a modalidade como o coordenador de Educação Especial, professores especialistas, serviços fornecidos aos estudantes da Educação Especial e especialmente o poder de decisão dos pais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Educação. Gestão. Educação Especial.

RESUMEN: *Este artículo tiene como objetivo resaltar aspectos de la materialización de la política de Educación Especial en Estados Unidos y las relaciones de interdependencia de los profesionales de la educación. Usamos la entrevista como recurso metodológico para la producción de datos, con un director de escuela primaria II en el estado de Massachusetts (MA). Este texto es parte de los resultados de una investigación de doctorado que utiliza el estudio comparativo como metodología, con foco en Estados Unidos y Brasil. La entrevista, realizada en febrero de 2021, siguió un guion de 12 preguntas semiestructuradas que abordaron temas relacionados con la Educación Especial. Los resultados indican la importancia de la gestión escolar observada en la relación entre la gestión y las distintas partes que componen la modalidad como el coordinador de Educación Especial, los docentes especialistas, los servicios brindados a los estudiantes de Educación Especial y especialmente el poder de decisión de los padres.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: Educación. Gestión. Educación Especial.

Introduction

This paper aims to highlight aspects of the materialization of the Special Education policy in the United States and the interdependent relationships of education professionals and school management. It presents part of the results of a doctoral thesis developed in the Graduate Program in Education at the Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES) and the University of Connecticut (UCONN)⁴.

In this sense, the option for the comparative study between Brazil and the United States considers factors that are correlated and justify the choice of the research field, i.e., factors that show common characteristics between the states and factors that present dissonant characteristics. Brazil and the United States, although they have the federative form of State in common, have a different way of legislating and the (de)centralization of the power of decision of their federated entities. In some areas of public power, such as education, in the United States, the federated entities have a more comprehensive decision-making power if compared to the decentralized form in practice in Brazil.

⁴ The research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Connecticut (Uconn) in the United States under number X20-0189, and is part of doctoral research with the title “*School Management and Special Education: a Comparative Study of Policies and Practices in Brazil and The United States*”, e autorizada pelo Office of Equity, Diversity and Community Development Framingham Public Schools in Massachusetts.

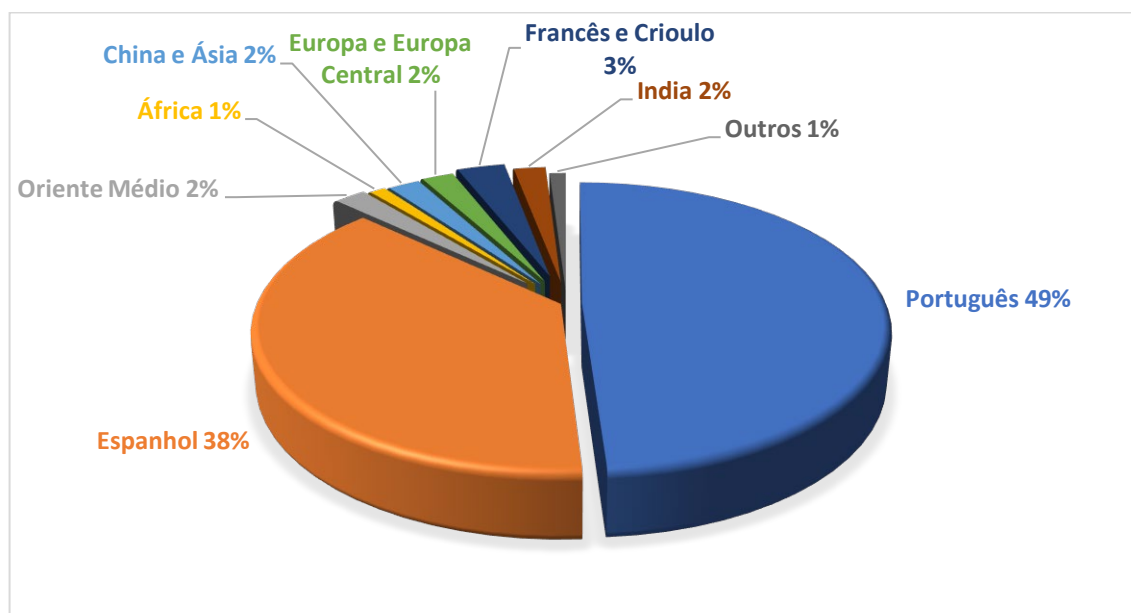
From this perspective, interviews were used as a research instrument to understand the materialization of the Special Education policy in the United States and its influences on the social relations that make up this environment, especially related to the position of school principal and school management.

The interview is a widely used resource in research in education that requires care and can be considered as a method, research instrument or technique (MANZINI, 2012). Conducted in February 2021, this interview presented important data about the current Special Education policy of the United States and the dynamics between professionals and school management to materialize it in a public school in the city of Framingham in Massachusetts. We assume an investigative perspective anchored in international comparative studies in Special Education that understands comparative education as an interdisciplinary field, grounded in dynamic and methodologically open knowledge (SOBRINHO *et al.*, 2015). Lourenço Filho and Monarcha (2004, p. 17, our translation) give due importance to the method by stating that "comparing is a fundamental resource in the activities of knowing".

The interviewee is the principal of a middle school in the state of Massachusetts (MA) and has been in the position for two years. She has a background and experience as an English teacher and also works in the administrative sector of the Department of Education in the district where she works. The region where the school is located houses many immigrants and/or children of immigrants, including Brazilians, a fact that influences social relations, such as the availability of school documents always in three languages (English, Spanish and Portuguese) and that was one of the motivators of the research in this locality. Figure 01, available on the district's Department of Education website and presented in the Bilingual Education program manual, shows a chart that identifies the incidence of foreign languages used in Framingham Public Schools. Portuguese is in first place, surpassing Spanish.

Of these social relations and the Special Education policy in effect, we highlight some points of the interview such as the training of the school principal and the education professionals in the United States as teachers and assistants; the duties of the school principal; the challenges faced by managers to maintain and improve school dynamics; the relationship between regular classroom teachers and Special Education teachers; the number of students in Special Education and the dynamics of services provided; programs focused on Special Education and related services; relationships between the school and parents of Special Education students and the dynamics of professionals' work in the materialization of the Special Education policy and normative texts (legislation).

Figure 1 – Student Languages in Framingham Public Schools (USA) December 2020⁵



Source: Prepared by the authors (2022) based on data from the Multilingual Education Program of Framingham Public Schools⁶

The interview, according to Lüdke and André (1994, p. 34, our translation), "allows corrections, clarifications and adaptations that make it highly effective in obtaining the desired information. In this sense, we ratify the importance of the interview as being part of the process of perception/identification of the particularities of Special Education and materialization of the public policy in the school environment since, depending on its location and social context, other challenges/tensions may influence the work of education professionals. Our perceptions agree with those of Mondada (1997, p. 59, our translation), who states that the interview is "a communicative event in which the interlocutors, including the researcher, collectively construct a version of the world".

At the end of the 12 questions we pointed out the most relevant information that is part of the parameters of comparative analysis of the work done in the United States and Brazil, related to the Special Education policy of the two countries.

⁵ Português = Portuguese; Espanhol = Spanish; Oriente Médio = Middle East; África = Africa; China e Ásia = China and Asia; Europa e Europa Central = Europe and Central Europe; Francês e Crioulo = French and Creole; Índia = India; Outros = Others

⁶ Data from the Framingham Massachusetts Schools Multilingual Education Program Handbook (USA). Available: _____ at: _____
https://www.framingham.k12.ma.us/cms/lib/MA01907569/Centricity/Domain/67/Policy%20Handbook_%20Office%20of%20Multilingual%20Education-Jan%202021_PT.pdf. Access on : 12 Oct. 2021.

Interview with W.W.⁷ principal of a public school in the USA.

Comment on the education of the school principal in the United States. Is there a minimum qualification for the position or some complementary education (post-graduation, training, certificate) to act?

Yes, there are many different paths that professionals can follow to become a school principal or take on school administration, so I will talk about the typical ways, how this happens, and then I can talk about how atypical my experience was. Typically, principals become teachers first, they earn their undergraduate degree which may be an elementary school teacher or a specific undergraduate school subject. They may get a master's degree, and at this stage is usually when administrators decide whether to continue teaching through a master's degree in a specific discipline or a master's degree in leadership and administration, aimed at those who want the position of school principal, vice-principal or assistant. Therefore, education in leadership and administration is the most common degree for school principals. After a few years in the classroom, teachers can choose which path they want to follow. Professionals who choose leadership and administration may pursue a master's degree program and, as part of Massachusetts master's programs, also complete what is known as a PAL⁸ (*Performance Assessment for Leaders*). The PAL is proof that you are doing a certain number of practical hours and is submitted to the state for evaluation. The state then reviews these practical hours to grant you a permit to serve as a school principal.

My personal experience was completely different. I became a teacher at 21 and earned my master's degree in English in six years. I had no intention of moving into school administration, as I loved teaching. I planned to stay in high school for the rest of my career, but I was invited to move to the FMS school and then to work in the district's education department, specifically the language department, taking over as head of the department because the principal had left and there were no candidates for the position. The director of the education department contacted me and offered the position of director of the department temporarily for a year while they selected someone for this position. I worked for a year and

⁷The names of the interviewee and the school where she works have been changed to preserve the identity of those involved.

⁸ The Massachusetts Performance Assessment for Leaders, or PAL, evaluates school leadership candidates for initial career licensure. This system allows principal/assistant principal candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and leadership skills based on actual experiences within their schools as part of a preparation pathway and to meet licensure requirements. This assessment is comprised of four performance-based tasks that measure a candidate's practice as it aligns with professional standards of administrative leadership. Unlike standardized paper-based tests, the PAL includes performance assessment tasks that reflect the work of school leaders. The PAL is a licensing requirement for all principal and assistant principal candidates. Available: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/pal>. Access: 10 Feb. 2021.

while I was in the position, the director of the education department offered me a position in the central office as assistant high school principal. I accepted the offer, studied for the appropriate certification to serve as assistant principal and superintendent. So at one point, I pursued the appropriate certifications to serve as a principal in the district and accumulated experience working with all the elementary and middle schools in the district in the area of curriculum, social studies, English, and languages. By this time, I was already fulfilled with my work and achievements, until the FMS school principal resigned two weeks before school started. We quickly tried to find a new principal, knowing that this school has particularities and the students had special needs, and that it was a school that demanded a lot from the principal.

After a few days and many contacts trying to find a suitable professional for the position, we realized that there were no candidates who could take over the position. At that point, I had already taught for 20 years, had experience from working in the central office for a year, so the superintendent of the education department invited me to take over just to keep the school running while they found a suitable candidate for the position. The offer was for one year and that after that period I could choose to return to the central office or stay on, depending on how things turned out. During this period I became very quickly attached to the school, and developed close bonds with the children and the teachers. Then, last February (2020), the superintendent asked me if I wanted to stay or leave the school; go back to the central office or work as a principal for them. In the end, I chose to stay. Since taking office, I have earned my certification and license to act as a principal, and thus continue working at the school. Now, the plan is to stay here for at least the next few years.

What is required to be a school principal? Does the community/district have power over the choice of the school principal?

It depends on the situation. Usually it does. The community usually has many options to choose from. There is a process for choosing the school principal. Now, for example, we are looking for a principal for an elementary school and there is a committee for this. It consists of members of our union, parents, teachers, administrators, other principals from the district, and people from the central office, and that's how it usually happens. As I said, my path was atypical. What the superintendent did, before he appointed me for the next two years, was to talk to stakeholders. He was approached by families, teachers asked for me to stay, there was a lot of pressure for me to stay because families and teachers asked for it. When the choice was brought to me, I felt obliged to stay in the school and give consistency

to the work we had done. But the pandemic came and it has been an atypical year too, a difficult year..

Is there a time limit for the position of school principal? Is there a law that limits the length of time in office at a particular school?

Not in the office as a principal. Principals may stay at the school for 20 years, 25 years, and others will stay for a year or two. Our contracts are usually for three years. I had a one-year contract because I was filling in, and when I was asked to stay, they offered a three-year contract. It gives us a little bit of security because you feel that the district is supporting you and I won't have to make a decision every year to stay or leave, so I feel more secure. It makes people feel better.

How does the state evaluate a school principal's performance? How often is the evaluation done? What is the impact of this evaluation on the performance of the principal?

This is done by our supervisors. The evaluation is always done by the district supervisors and my supervisor is the assistant superintendent. He does my evaluations and I regularly have meetings with the superintendent who goes over my goals and evaluation results. My pay is related to this evaluation work. Depending on how my evaluation is, there is an influence on my salary, how much I get from year to year. There is also a school committee, which is basically the head superintendent, the superintendent and the assistants. I also report to the school committee. For example, last week I presented to the school committee our school improvement plan, and they evaluate our plan and decide whether we are doing the job we should do or not. Also, the state can, of course, audit the school if they want to. If they want to access and review all of our records and make inquiries, they can do that. There are also decisions based on accountability data and the results of large-scale assessments, absenteeism rates, suspension rates, all based on the data that comes from our school that are important for the state to decide whether or not this is a functioning school or a school that needs some intervention or assistance. In fact, in this school, one of the reasons they invited me to take over as principal is that it is a school that has been identified by the state as one that needs targeted assistance because of low performance on the evaluations. That is why it was so important for the community to have someone to help the school in the work they were doing to change these results. My role in the central office was linked to

working with underperforming schools. So that was one of the reasons why they invited me to take on the directorship, because I knew the plans and how to execute them.⁹.

How long have you been a school principal? Are there periodic refresher courses for the position? How do you keep up to date with educational issues?

This is only my second year. To follow up on educational issues we have the Board of Directors that holds monthly meetings with all the school administration in the district. There are also meetings with the superintendent every two weeks, some of which are specific to a particular school issue. Also, I have to keep my state license up to date and also my English license, because I want to make sure that if I need to go back to teaching, which I really love, I can follow the initial path.

How would you rate your training as a school principal about Special Education?

The reality is that I took Special Education classes only as an educator. I have a Special Education coordinator at school, who we call the assessment coordinator. She is the person I go to if I have questions about Special Education legislation, our students' needs, school adaptations, or any other related issues. I have learned a lot from being in the principal's position, asking questions, attending meetings and talking to parents. If I had followed a normal path and taken a master's program in leadership and administration in education, I probably would have chosen more specific courses on the subject or if I had taken supplemental programs, I probably would have taken classes as well. During my professional training, I didn't take the classes I should have on the subject, so it was a long period of learning until I was sure I know what's going on. Much of this knowledge was self-directed.

What is the importance of the school principal for Special Education? What are their attributions?

For me, in Special Education, my duty is to be informed to make sure we are following all the guidelines and laws to protect our students and their needs. I do not attend the IEP (Individualized Education Plans) meetings that are held by specialist teachers and with our assessment coordinator. The coordinator manages everything related to Special Education. What I do is make sure that we are following the policies correctly, make sure that it is working and the relationship of the modality to the school environment. So when it

⁹ This information about the performance of schools in the United States can be accessed at <https://www.greatschools.org/>.

comes to our statewide large-scale assessments, I make sure with the vice principals that we are following the policies related to that and making sure that students get the accommodations for which they are eligible, checking that students don't take the regular test but the adapted version, that we are meeting all the deadlines and following all the procedures as the policy dictates, making sure that they are met with fidelity. My job is also to liaise with parents when they have questions, and of course if there is something that I don't know, I check it so that we can have a dialogue and make sure that we are following all the procedures directed at the students. From my point of view, I have to make sure that we have a cohesive team, that the team members have the necessary licenses, that they get the assessments that should be applied. It's about managing those pieces because, as a principal, you can't be an expert in every area of the school. It's important to hire people who are accountable for what they need to perform and who are constantly willing to ask questions to make sure things are happening the right way and who have clarity about what should be being accomplished for our students. My biggest goal in all of this is to make sure that our students are getting all the accommodations they need and that staff are following IEPs (individualized education plans), and students with 504's are being served in all accommodations. Ultimately, if we don't do that, I will be held accountable.

How many teachers and special education assistants are on the school staff?

We have several programs that operate in the school. In the general education program, all the classes are in English, but we have students who are inclusion students, so these students can be ESL (English as a Second Language) students, Individual Special Education Plans (IEP) students, 504 (*section 504¹⁰*) and students in a separate program who take classes in a regular classroom. So, within our Special Education teams, 5 teams in total, there is a specialist teacher on that team and that teacher and an assistant work in some classes, like the math classes and the ELA (English Language Acquisition) classes. Thus, we counted five specialist teachers. Of the programs that work with students separately we have the ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) program with seven students and that has one specialist teacher. We have the intellectual disability program that has four specialist teachers such as a math teacher, ELA teacher, social studies, life skills teacher, and a science teacher. We also have the TBE program (Transitional Bilingual Education Programs) which has one specialist

10 Section 504 prohibits organizations and employers from excluding or denying individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to receive program benefits and services. It defines the rights of individuals with disabilities to participate in and access program benefits and services.

teacher. And then on top of that we have the teaching assistants who are a total of 12 teaching assistants and our assistants who are nine to serve the school. These assist nine students who have accommodations from 1-1¹¹.

What related services are available at the school (occupational therapy, psychologist, physical therapist, etc.)?

Currently we have occupational therapy, physical therapy, ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis), speech therapy, speech therapy, and a reading program called the Wilson Reading Program¹². In addition to these services, we provide visual support, because we have several students who need this visual and auditory support, so there is a regular program scheduled to work with adaptive programming for them.

In your opinion, what are the challenges of Special Education for school management?

School management always has challenges. One of the most difficult challenges we have is related to personnel, in getting qualified professionals to our school for Special Education. Another challenge is financial difficulty because if a child doesn't use services for some specific reason, availability creates a cost. We want to do what is right for our students, but sometimes it is a difficult position we find ourselves in because of resource management. Even with teaching assistants and teaching assistants, it is hard to be sure that we have enough and that we are meeting the guidelines. It is an important factor that we find the right person for the student and that we match the right person with the right program. When we find a good special education educator, be it a teacher, an assistant or a helper, we really nurture and do everything we can to keep them from wanting to go elsewhere. There is a need for these professionals all over the country and they could easily find a job in any place they want. So it is important to cultivate those relationships and make them feel valued, and as valued as they are, we must let them know how important they are. Part of my job is to make sure that we match the right people with the right programs and then make sure that we are supporting these professionals and recognizing when they do a good job, while also providing them with appropriate professional development. Finding opportunities to advance their careers.

11 In Massachusetts, there are different dynamics of serving special education students such as 1:1 (one aide to one student) or 2:1 (one aide to two students). The form of service is determined by the special education team and must be listed on the student's IEP.

12 Available at: <https://www.wilsonlanguage.com/>. Access on: 02 July 2021.

What is the influence of parents in Special Education? How do parents participate in the education of their children with special needs?

I see parents as partners in Special Education. The successful relationship in a school with IEPs and 504 plans (section 504) is the collaborative nature and partnership between the parents and the school, ensuring that we have effective communication with each other. This is the ideal situation. The reality is that parents of students with special needs are very used to fighting for their children and advocating for their rights. And they study for that, that's their job. And they often have to spend a lot of time fighting for their children's rights, to get the services that their children need. I believe that it is our duty as educators to validate this, to understand them and then build a good relationship. From there, they will know that we have the same goals as they do, to provide their children with what they need to succeed in education. If the family feels that you are fighting against them or will not grant what they need, that you are trying to avoid what the children need because it might be cheaper or whatever the reason is, it can result in an unsuccessful relationship and start conflicts. This is part of the criteria when we decide to hire a professional, especially a special education teacher. We don't select only for qualifications, but also for communication skills with families, because it is an important factor.

Please name three positive and three negative points regarding your experience with Special Education.

Yes, I will start with the positives. In my experience, something positive is working with highly qualified Special Education professionals in our schools. I trust the work they do and this is important for my position, because I learn from them and their work dynamics all the time. Another highlight is that we have already been able to meet most of our students' needs, as many needed adaptations in remote work. There are so many of our students who are studying remotely, and this has allowed me to spend more time in contact with those who have the greatest needs and has cultivated a closer relationship with teachers, students, and their families. I enjoy spending time with the children. Another highlight that is really working is that we are working to solidify our processes, especially when it comes to our TBE (Transitional Bilingual Education Programs) students in Special Education as well. The language factor creates a steep learning curve in our district and we are trying to provide services that are appropriate to the needs of the students, identifying whether it is a language need or a Special Education need. We are working on identifying those needs and looking for

resources that we need for students who primarily speak Portuguese or Spanish in our school, because those are the two groups that we have in greater numbers. We are looking for tools that we need to identify the level and the achievement of the students, in Portuguese and Spanish. Otherwise, we won't have accurate data. This is something that, as well as the district and the school, we have been working hard on so that we can make sure that we are providing what our students need. We have noticed that our TBE program is growing, but Special Education students in that program are still few. The reality is different in our mainstream English language classrooms, where 10% of our students are Special Education, and in TBE only 1%. There must be more students who need accommodations than we are offering, but we are having trouble differentiating the language in Special Education.

This is the work that we are doing. An ongoing job of identifying and looking for screening tools that we can provide in Portuguese and Spanish. We are identifying interventions to use in those languages, making sure that we have a schedule where those supports can happen even in ESL (English as a Second Language) and other subjects in their native languages. So having enough time in the day for all these activities is difficult. So is making sure that they have everything they need. The lack of resources is a negative point. Another negative point, is really hiring, and the difficulty of finding qualified professionals in Special Education, especially those who have a second language. When we find one, we don't want to let go. Teachers who are fluent in Portuguese and Spanish, if they want to leave the school it's always complicated, because replacing them is very difficult. It is frustrating to think about not being sure that soon, to meet our Special Education needs for those who are not native English speakers, we will have a hard time finding professionals who can do this job. Another negative is that there are families that are difficult to work with and this is a reality in our schools, especially when they are demanding services that we know are not appropriate for the student.

Final remarks

This interview allowed us to identify important characteristics of the reality and the public policy of Special Education and its materialization in a school in the United States. Some practices call our attention for having a different dynamic from the Brazilian Special Education policy, which makes us recognize the need to also compare the normative texts, since they are the ones that, in the first instance, unveil the guidelines, implicit or not, in the

educational policies of a country, as well as their possibility of materialization. In general lines, we outline the following relevant points of the interview:

The principal addresses the training process for teachers and school principals, with a master's degree being the minimum training to request a certification (or license) to work in the state of Massachusetts and continuing education being a requirement for renewal of this license. In addition, it describes how public school teachers are hired in Massachusetts, which is through a contract and that this contract is subject to renewal. Vacancies are made available on the school or department of education website, and candidates go through a selection process. As for the position of school principal, there is no time limit, and the employment contract can be renewed at any given time.

The director dealt with issues such as the performance evaluation for school principals, the presentation of action plans for school improvement; the performance evaluation being linked to the principals' salary and the possibility of the state being able to conduct any kind of audit in the school environment. There are regular meetings between school principals and the superintendent of education of the district to deal with school issues and improvement projects. The superintendent and his assistants are responsible for evaluating the performance of school principals.

We noticed the existence of a professional responsible for the organization and functioning of Special Education in the school, the evaluation coordinator, responsible for the supervision of Special Education and its processes and documents. This coordinator is to whom the principal refers whenever there are questions about the modality and they work collaboratively. Moreover, we identified the principal's involvement with Special Education, being responsible for the relationship between parents and the school, between Special Education teachers and regular classroom teachers, and also with the compliance with deadlines and documents established by law. The tasks of monitoring students and parents are divided between the principal and the assistant principals.

The principal describes the existence of different programs for students in Special Education (autism, intellectual disability, etc.) and the number of Special Education professionals in the school such as teachers, assistants, and caregivers, and the availability of related services in the school environment for Special Education students such as occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech therapy, among others. These services are only available to Special Education students and have start and end dates indicated on the IEP.

The principal describes the difficulty in hiring qualified professionals for the Special Education positions and in investing for the qualification of the professionals in activity. It is difficult to find Special Education professionals who meet the requirements as bilingual teachers. Also the parent-school relationship is described considering that parents advocate for the rights of their children and reinforces the importance of the proximity of the school with the parents of Special Education students and efficient communication.

We asked the principal to select positive and negative points related to her work in Special Education. In the positive points, the principal selected the relationship with students and families; the work with the Special Education team and the Special Education programs. About the negative points, the principal talked about the lack of financial and personal resources, the difficulty to work with some families that demand services that are considered by the team, and the scarce time to do a good job.

Based on this interview, we sought to know the relevant aspects in the materialization of the Special Education policy in the United States and the interdependence of education professionals and school management, from the perspective of a public school principal. The results indicate the importance of school management observed in the relationship between management and the various parties that make up the modality such as the Special Education coordinator, specialist teachers, services provided to Special Education students, and especially the decision-making power of parents. These aspects propel us to further studies of comparative analysis with the Brazilian reality involving the legislations of the two countries. The interview is the method that makes explicit the tensions and conflicts present in the reality of schools, being one of the important resources for a comparative study.

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