

THE NATIONAL POLICY OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE: THE PROBLEMATICS OF THE SUPPORT SCHOOL INCLUSION PROFESSIONAL AS ONE OF ITS EFFECTS^{1, 2}

A POLÍTICA NACIONAL DE EDUCAÇÃO ESPECIAL NA PERSPECTIVA DA EDUCAÇÃO INCLUSIVA: A PROBLEMATICA DO PROFISSIONAL DE APOIO À INCLUSÃO ESCOLAR COMO UM DE SEUS EFEITOS

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ABSTRACT: The support school inclusion professional is the theme of this paper. Its objective is to resume and analyze the characterization of this professional based on government guidelines and legal documents issued shortly after the publication of the National Policy of Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education, in order to understand what is expected of this agent and his/her education in the context of inclusive Special Education outlined by the above policy. Therefore, regarding the methodological development, a qualitative approach was adopted, according to the technical procedures of the bibliographic and documentary research. It was found that the support school inclusion professional, whose designation is not univocal, has specific roles of care and monitoring of target students of Special Education, considering the legislation and official guidelines, but curricular and didactic-pedagogical issues are not within their competence. From a legal and normative point of view, there is a silence regarding the training required for the performance of the position, performed by university students or even people with High School level education. Such circumstances disqualify specialized education and the role of the Special Education teacher in the promotion of collaborative teaching, in the name of alternatives considered more economical for public schools.

KEYWORDS: Special Education. Inclusive Education. Common class service. Support for the person with disability.

RESUMO: O profissional de apoio à inclusão escolar é a temática deste artigo. Seu objetivo é retomar e analisar a caracterização desse profissional com base nas orientações governamentais e nos documentos legais emanados logo após a publicação da Política Nacional de Educação Especial na Perspectiva da Educação Inclusiva, a fim de compreender o que se espera desse agente e de sua formação no contexto da Educação Especial inclusiva delineado pela citada política. Para tanto, em relação ao desenvolvimento metodológico, adotou-se abordagem qualitativa, conforme os procedimentos técnicos da pesquisa bibliográfica e documental. Pôde-se constatar que o profissional de apoio à inclusão escolar, cuja designação não é unívoca, tem funções específicas de cuidado e de monitoria dos alunos público-alvo da Educação Especial, considerada a legislação e diretrizes oficiais, não sendo de sua competência questões curriculares e didático-pedagógicas. Do ponto de vista legal e normativo, há um silenciamento quanto à formação exigida para desempenho do cargo, exercido por estudantes universitários ou mesmo por pessoas com nível médio de escolaridade. Tais circunstâncias desqualificam a formação especializada e o papel do professor da Educação Especial na promoção do ensino colaborativo, em nome de alternativas consideradas mais econômicas para as redes públicas de ensino.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Educação Especial. Educação Inclusiva. Atendimento em classe comum. Apoio à pessoa com deficiência.

1 INTRODUCTION

The National Special Education Policy from the Perspective of Inclusive Education (*Política Nacional de Educação Especial na Perspectiva da Educação Inclusiva [PNEEPEI], 2008*) was released in Brazil in 2008 and, since then it has impacted on the organization and

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functioning of specialized services for students with disabilities, global developmental disorders and giftedness, considered the target population of Special Education (here abbreviated as TPSE). Basically, *PNEEPEI* transformed Special Education into a Specialized Educational Service (SES), offered, in theory, to the TPSE in extra hour classes, in the space-time of the Multifunctional Resource Rooms (MRR), by specialized teachers. However, the same policy has not ruled out other forms of support for TPSE students, which could be incorporated into the context of the common classroom and other school spaces where necessary. Therefore, it was recommended that:

It is up to the educational systems, when organizing special education from the perspective of inclusive education, to provide the occupation of instructor, translator/interpreter of Brazilian Sign Language and guide-interpreter, as well as *monitor or caregiver to students in need of support in hygiene activities, feeding, mobility, among others, that require constant help in the school routine.* (*PNEEPEI*, 2008, p. 17, emphasis added).

Among these services listed in the excerpt, I want to problematize as one of the most controversial legacies of this policy the appearance and performance of the *monitor* or *caregiver* of TPSE students in need of support in the activities of hygiene, feeding and mobility. This is because, around the monitor, later designated by various names, certain (mis)understandings, expectations and roles are projected over the last ten years of the *PNEEPEI* in force, without any regulation for the work of this professional, to the point of, in many circumstances, being confused with a support teacher and even being referred to as such in school speeches. In Lopes's (2018) synthesis, who opts for the nomenclature Support Professional for School Inclusion, which I also refer to throughout this text:

Still without a well-defined role and attributions, without a specific professional profile and unknown working conditions, the figure of these Support Professionals for School Inclusion, relatively recent in schooling policies, has become increasingly frequent and conflicted in school contexts. [...] this character can be an important support to make the process of school inclusion of students who require this type of support feasible, but which can also be used as a mechanism for cheapening and simplifying the support system. (p. 9).

Thus, the objective I propose is to resume, confront and analyze the characterization of this professional based on governmental guidelines and legal documents issued shortly after *PNEEPEI*, in order to understand what is expected of this agent and his/her training in the context of Inclusive Special Education. In doing so, I also hope to highlight the ambiguities and contradictions that permeate his/her recent performance, here understood as one of the effects of *PNEEPEI* that are still under discussion. It is in this sense that this paper, resulting from an unprecedented study, presents provocations to subsidize the advance of knowledge in relation to the way, in the technical-normative and legal plan, it has been organized (or not) and about who plays, in Brazil, school support for TPSE students in the common class, "considering the novelty of the theme and the still scarce scientific production" (Lopes, 2018, p. 9), in order to understand the "need to define guidelines that regulate the variety of profiles, attributions, working conditions and modes of action" (Lopes, 2018, p. 9) that have marked the performance of this new character in school routines. Especially when there is talk, in the field of Special Education, of possible reformulations of the *PNEEPEI*, promoting this debate

is a crucial and urgent task, which is why I now socialize my reflections on the theme, while also stressing it in relation to collaborative teaching.

2 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This research was carried out using a qualitative approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006), according to the technical procedures of bibliographic and documentary research, outlined in Gil (1991). Thus, in November 2019, I found, through online searches, Master's thesis and scientific papers that dealt with the support school inclusion professional. Such searches were carried out in an exploratory way, through the search engines enabled by the Google website, so that they had a preliminary character and did not occur by a parameterized or bibliometric route. In these terms, the focus was not to establish a literature review, not intending to exhaust the subject, but rather to find sufficient evidence to address the researched question based on the main occurrences provided by the well-known online search engine.

Through the descriptor, in Portuguese, *profissionais de apoio à inclusão escolar PDF* (support school inclusion professionals PDF), two Master's thesis relevant to the research were immediately listed among the top ten standard results, considered the most relevant by the searcher (Burchert, 2018; Lopes, 2018). From the reading of these works, in full, I could be directed to the Master's thesis of Martins (2011), since both cited it. As they were recent, after the *PNEEPEI*, specific on the theme and related to the context of public education networks, I chose to define them as a starting point for the advancement of my reflections, complemented by results of socialized research in papers also indicated by the Master's thesis mentioned previously or that were known to me, as I have already addressed the subject in previous texts (Bezerra, 2012; Souza, Bezerra, Bezerra, Costa, & Nozu, 2012; Vicente & Bezerra, 2017). In addition, I selected and compiled legal documents of national scope and official publications from the Ministry of Education, with the criterion that they should be published exclusively from 2008 and that would address, in their content, any propositions on the theme of the support school inclusion professional. Then, the following documents were delimited, located between the years 2008 and 2015, since there were not, after that period relevant to the study.

Document	Description	Year of publication
National Special Education Policy from the Perspective of Inclusive Education	Base document on the political-operational guidelines of <i>PNEEPEI</i> in Brazil.	2008
<u>Resolution no. 4, of October 1</u>	Institutes Operational Guidelines for Specialized Educational Service in Basic Education, Special Education modality.	2009
Technical Note no. 19	Support professionals for students with disabilities and global developmental disorders enrolled in common public schools.	2010
Law no. 12,764, of December 27	Institutes the National Policy for the Protection of the Rights of the Person with Autism Spectrum Disorder.	2012
Technical Note no. 24	Orientation to Educational Systems for the implementation of Law no. 12,764/2012.	2013

Decree no. 8,368, of December 2	Regulates Law no. 12,764, of December 27, 2012, which institutes the National Policy for the Protection of the Rights of the Person with Autism Spectrum Disorder.	2014
Law no. 13,146, of July 6	Institutes the Brazilian Law for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (Statute for Persons with Disabilities).	2015

Table 1. Selected documents.

Source: Elaborated by the author based on the Ministry of Education - Legislation Portal (Federal Government).

All the material was treated through thematic analysis, because, through its “theoretical freedom, the thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, set of data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 3), allowing “to identify, analyze and report patterns (themes)” (p. 5) from these qualitative data mobilized and interpreted by the researcher. Thus, the theme cut out as a unit of analysis, that is, the support school inclusion professional, was mapped in these legal and government documents from its semantic occurrences, namely: “monitor or caregiver”; “other professionals”; “support professional”; “specialized companion”; and “school support professional”. The results of this work are presented in the subsequent item, in a descriptive-analytical and interpretative narrative about these terms, their senses and meanings within the scope of the documentary changes and official guidelines that circumscribe the announced problem, in constant dialogue with other related research.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

PNEEPEI, published in 2008, but heir to global discussions articulated since the 1990s, in favor of the school for all movement (Bezerra, 2012), forged the referral of TPSE students to schools and common classes, especially those with disability and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This situation brought a need to reorganize the school space, which needed to incorporate this population. As the focus of *PNEEPEI* was the extra-class SES in SRM (Mendes, 2017, 2019), a gap was opened in relation to the support to be given to the TPSE in the common class, which would also mean guaranteeing some support to teachers for the development of an inclusive pedagogical practice. As Martins (2011) analyzes,

The most recent regulations aimed at Special Education demand a strong imposition that the SES in education networks happens in the multifunctional resources rooms. Such an emphasis weakens the work of Special Education in the regular class, which lost the possibility of specialized pedagogical support and started to assume the format of monitoring and care. (p. 146).

In this sense, using a support school inclusion professional seemed to be the most viable, economical and legitimate alternative in times of Inclusive Education. According to Martins (2011): “Although the support professional is not emphasized in the representative documentation of national policy, many municipal and state education networks use their presence as a strategy to implement the Special Education policy in an inclusive perspective” (p. 35). I understand that, at first, it was believed that the hiring of these professionals would make common class teachers more predisposed to promote school inclusion, as claimed by the

PNEEPEI, since, in addition to the supposed support of SES in the extra-class, they would have an “assistant” for the more “physical” and “manual” demands of this process, in the shift of regular classes.

For this reason, although this policy only mentions these professionals in a laconic way, it ended up inducing its dissemination in public education networks, which sought to adapt to the new demands of the school routine, through the increasing enrollment of TPSE students. However, there was a problem there, to the extent that, to Serra (2017): “The support comes in an improvised way, creating discomfort in schools. In this scenario, the mediator appears” (p. 28). According to Nunes, Araújo, Schirmer and Walter (2013):

In Brazil, the need and urgency to provide qualified educational assistance to students with disabilities inside the regular classroom, as advocated in the canons of inclusive education, have brought this educational agent to the forefront. Since 2000, the presence of a mediator has become frequent in private schools and, subsequently, in public schools, whose job is to accompany children who need assistance in the classroom, usually under the guidance of specialized professionals. (p. 67).

In view of this reality, the publication of Resolution no. 4, of October 2, 2009, by which the Operational Guidelines for Specialized Educational Service in Basic Education, Special Education modality, were legally instituted, validated, what was indicated only as a guideline in the *PNEEPEI* text. This Resolution has therefore become one of the documents that, without further specification, legitimized the existence of “other professionals” - non-teachers and non-formal education professionals - as part of the apparatus created to, in theory, guarantee the effectiveness of the school inclusion model that was forged by national guidelines. Despite having their roles limited to the triad feeding, hygiene and mobility, the support school inclusion professional was, however, articulated to the organization of the SES service, that is, a specialized pedagogical mediation work, which, as can be seen, has impacted on the interpretations about the identity and limits of this professional’s performance. According to the Resolution,

Art. 10. The pedagogical project of the *regular school must institutionalize the offer of SES providing* in its organization: I - multifunctional resources room: physical space, furniture, teaching materials, pedagogical and accessibility resources and specific equipment; II - enrollment in the SES of students enrolled in regular education at the school itself or at another school; III - student attendance schedule; IV - SES plan: identification of students’ specific educational needs, definition of necessary resources and activities to be developed; V - *teachers for the exercise of the SES teaching*; VI - *other education professionals*: translator and interpreter of Brazilian Sign Language, guide-interpreter and others who work in support, mainly in the activities of feeding, hygiene and mobility [...]. (Resolution no. 4, 2009, p. 2, emphasis added).

Following these guidelines, public schools hired these “other” support school inclusion professionals, who, depending on the place and conditions of employability, were given different names, such as: caregiver, monitor, mediator, trainee mediator, teaching assistant, school life assistant, attendant, specialized companion, among others, as studies on the subject have revealed. However, there was no uniformity regarding the training required, the duties and career of this professional, who, in several locations, was and still is hired as a trainee in

undergraduate teaching courses, especially in the Pedagogy course (Burchert, 2018; Cunha, Glat, Silva, & Siqueira, 2012; Estef, 2013; Glat & Pletsch, 2011; Lopes, 2018; Martins, 2011; Serra, 2017; Souza et al., 2012; Stelmachuk & Mazzotta, 2012; Vicente & Bezerra, 2017), subject to the internship law (Law no. 11,788, 2008). This circumstance, moreover, makes the use of the word “professional” uncomfortable, as we would be, strictly speaking, talking about a student in training, who, in many cases, without support, is put to play the role of a teacher already trained and specialist in the matter.

And, even more worryingly, this contract is often not even signed directly with the public-school system, but with some intermediate institution, specialized in recruiting trainees, as evidenced, for example, by Burchert (2018), Lopes (2018) and Vicente and Bezerra (2017). Therefore, this subject is in an ambiguous position in the school context, as they do not know whether to respond to the education system where they provide services or to the contracting institution. It is an educational agent, but, at the same time, an outsourcer who lives the precariousness of this condition. In addition, as a trainee, they can only stay for up to two years in this role (Law no. 11,788, 2008), which creates a discontinuity in the work developed and makes the turnover of these agents constant, negatively impacting the school inclusion process of the TPSE itself. Such considerations find resonance in the analysis of Marin and Braun (2013), when problematizing the employment of such subjects to carry out an alleged practice of school mediation

that occurs in both private and public education and consists of hiring a service provider, the “mediator”, often a trainee or university student in training, who remains in the classroom to monitor the actions and accompany the student with special needs (Arruda, 2013; Cunha, 2013; Estef, 2013). It is not up to them to participate in planning or school meetings; there is no involvement with what is decided, as they are not there as a school professional, but as an assistant who, at best, follows the instructions of the class teacher. (Marin & Braun, 2013, p. 53).

It is worth mentioning that there are public education networks whose support school inclusion professionals are hired by a specific selection process or are already being put into effect by public sector recruitment examinations. This latter form, however, is not dominant nor is it the expected trend, especially in times of reduced spending, as announced in the country. Lopes’ research (2018) showed that, with regard to the work regime, for example, “some [municipalities] work with the temporary contract, others have already started the recruitment examination process, even though there is no job regulation” (p. 22). It is precisely this lack of regulation (Lopes, 2018) that has created several misunderstandings and led to the fact that this professional, incorporated into the school routine, even without academic training, paradoxically ends up assuming didactic-pedagogical attributions that would be exclusive to teachers, such as teaching differentiation, curricular adjustments and/or preparation of different pedagogical activities and materials for TPSE (Burchert, 2018; Cunha et al., 2012; Martins, 2011; Souza et al., 2012; Vicente & Bezerra, 2017).

This practice - now commonplace - represents a contradiction and precariousness of Special Education and teaching itself (Martins, 2011), at the same time that it has generated and fed back practices of exclusion in school that is intended to be inclusive (Bezerra, 2017). To Bezerra (2012, p. 194): “In these conditions, specialized mediation, in charge of the *assistant*,

can be confused with mere support in activities of daily living, or else it may occur as a result of immediacy and improvisation, given the absence of specific training for the performance of the job”. Instead of guaranteeing the right to school education to the TPSE and meeting their specific learning and development needs, what is observed is the mere accommodation of the difference in the school, with the trainee/support professional becoming a private tutor and exclusive to the TPSE student, with the role of supervising and controlling him/her so as not to disturb the classroom, which continues to be seen from the perspective of homogeneity. Thus, in the sense of Souza et al. (2012):

The work that assistants do, however, is still poorly understood and, not always, constitutes a thoroughly inclusive practice, since the conducting teacher usually throws to the monitor all the responsibility on the student(s) with disabilities, exempting themselves from their education and even ignoring them. In this context, it is not uncommon for there to be two practices, that is, that of the monitor and that of the conducting teacher. (p. 643-644).

In an attempt to resolve the doubt around this problem, the Ministry of Education, through the Special Education Secretariat, even issued, in 2010, the Technical Note no. 19 on the subject, a document that, even without force of law, had the purpose of presenting the official interpretation of the roles of the support school inclusion professional. The issuance of this note, by itself, reveals that the issue was not a pacified issue in the whole country, to the point that it deserved a pronouncement by the Ministry of Education and Special Education Secretariat. In the note mentioned, the governmental perspective reaffirmed that:

Among the special education services that the educational systems must provide are support professionals, such as those needed to *promote accessibility and to meet the specific needs of students in terms of accessibility to communications and attention to personal feeding, hygiene and mobility*. In organizing and offering these services, the following aspects should be considered: [...]

- Professionals who support mobility, hygiene, and feeding activities provide individualized assistance to students who do not carry out these activities independently. This support occurs according to the specificities presented by the student, related to his/her condition of functionality and not to the condition of disability.
- The demand for a support professional is justified when the specific needs of the target population of special education are not met in the general context of care provided to other students.
- [...]
- *It is not the responsibility of the support professional to develop different educational activities for the target population of special education, nor to take responsibility for the teaching of this student.*

[...]. (Technical Note no. 19, 2010, p. 144-145, emphasis added).

Although long, the transcription is essential to realize the official position, rejecting the possibility of involving the support professional in the tasks of teaching TPSE students. Nevertheless, the technical note, although it intended to make this reservation unanimous, ended up, again, silencing as to the training and professional identity of these individuals, which kept the contradictions and confusion surrounding their role and their qualifications in relation to the job occupation. Subsequently, due to pressure from family groups and sectors of organized civil society, the approval of Law no. 12,764 (2012), the Law for the Protection

of the Person with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, introduced the term “specialized companion”, which, invariably, reflected in the understanding that had been built on what was, until then, named as a support professional. As provided by law, Art. 3, sole paragraph:

The rights of the person with autism spectrum disorder are:

[...]

Single paragraph. In cases of *proven need*, *the person with autism spectrum disorder* included in the regular classes of regular education, [...], *will have the right to a specialized companion*. (Law no. 12,764, 2012, emphasis added).

With great social repercussion and media coverage, this law popularized the appeal around the specialized companion, understood as a victory for the groups and family members involved with the cause of ASD. The term, however, aggravated the confusion already (re) produced in the school space. This is because families and judicial bodies began to pressure schools and educational systems for the immediate fulfillment of the provisions, in a phenomenon of the judicialization of inclusive education (Serra, 2017). To problematize that, one cannot lose sight of the fact that previous documents adopted the term monitor, caregiver or support professional, as already mentioned. Now, would this specialized companion correspond to the support professional, as already described, or would they be an undergraduate teacher in Special Education, that is, a teacher specialized in that segment? Or could it be a professional who, even without a college degree, had training in the area? Would the specialized term not suggest some minimum and specific training for this companion, differentiating them, at first, from the mere support professional/monitor described in previous texts? If so, what kind of training would they be entitled to be “specialized”?

Again, to mitigate the ambiguities raised, the Ministry of Education, through the Secretariat for Continuing Education, Literacy, Diversity and Inclusion (known by the acronym SECADI), issued, in 2013, another technical note. When we analyzed it, however, we found that the specialized companion, in the official conception, would be equivalent to the same support professional previously specified, with the highlight that he would also be in charge of organizing the accessibility of students with ASD to communication, a measure that, in fact, was foreseen in the 2010 guidelines (Technical Note no. 19, 2010). Thus, Technical Note no. 24, 2013, provided guidance to educational systems for the implementation of Law no. 12,764, 2012, stating that:

In art. 3, sole paragraph, *the referred law guarantees students with autism spectrum disorder the right to a companion, as long as their need is proven*. This service must be understood in light of the concept of reasonable adaptation [...].

The service of the support professional, as a measure to be adopted by the educational systems in the educational context, should be made available whenever the individual need of the student is identified, aiming at accessibility to communications and attention to the personal care of feeding, hygiene and mobility. Among the aspects to be observed in the provision of this educational service, it is highlighted that this support: – *Is intended for students who do not carry out the eating, hygiene, communication or mobility activities* with autonomy and independence, enabling their personal and social development; – It is justified when the student’s specific need is not met in the general context of care provided to other students; – *It is not a substitute for schooling or specialized educational service*, but it is linked to the activities of the common class, the multifunctional resource room and other school activities [...]. (Technical Note no. 24, 2013, emphasis added).

The Law for the Protection of the Person with ASD, in turn, was regulated in 2014, by decree that maintained the nomenclature “specialized companion”, but discriminating, this time, their role in the school space. These were written in accordance with what had been presented in the Technical Note of 2013 (Technical Note no. 24, 2013), with the addition of another assignment to the professional: support for social interaction (Decree no. 8,368, 2014). Evidently, the concern of these last documents in explaining the activities of social interaction and communication as part of the support to be organized in the school institution reveals the prominence that subjects with ASD gain in the context arising from the *PNEEPEI*, considering the organization of the entities representing this institution segment and their families, to the point of promoting a National Policy for the Protection of the Rights of the Person with ASD (Decree no. 8,368, 2014; Law no. 12,764, 2012). The following excerpt confirms the above, stating that:

If the need to support communication, social interaction, mobility, feeding and personal care activities is proven, the educational institution in which the person with autism spectrum disorder or another disability is enrolled will provide a specialized companion in the school context [...]. (Decree no. 8,368, 2014, art. 4, § 2, emphasis added).

At that point, it is necessary to pay attention to some gaps that arise from the aforementioned legislation. I have already argued that, when it mentions “specialized companion”, in 2012, the law does not clarify who this professional would be, does not specify their duties - so much so that the Ministry of Education needed to disclose a Technical Note about it - and conditions their presence in the school space to the proven need of the student with ASD (Law no. 12,764, 2012; Technical Note no. 24, 2013). It is necessary to ask, however, who would prove this need for the student? The family? The school? Again, there is no answer in any national legislation, opening a gap for states and municipalities to create their regulations and, what is worrying, validate the medical model of disability and human development. Under these conditions, the responsibility for indicating the need or not for a companion is being attributed, including by public education networks, to doctors, psychologists and other health professionals (Bezerra, 2017), often pressured or induced by family members regarding the elaboration reports or clinical diagnoses so that they can claim the presence of a specialized companion for their children/relatives.

Still in this direction, I remember that, when explaining the duties of this companion, in 2014, it is clear that, in theory, this would really be just a support professional, along the lines that had been envisaged since 2008, despite the fluctuations in nomenclature. Consequently, their role would not, strictly speaking, invade the competences of the teacher (common and/or specialized), having only observed that, from a triad, a list was made of five items to be observed by the specialized companion in the exercise of their duties (Decree no. 8,368, 2014). The dubious interpretations, however, have not been exhausted, because, although promulgated to regulate Law no. 12,764, of 2012, the aforementioned Decree again did not standardize (or purposely leave open) the possible criteria for training this professional. Consequently, the question remains: How could this subject support the processes of social interaction, communication, feeding, mobility and personal care to be developed with students with ASD or disability without any specialized pedagogical training?

Furthermore, these processes are also educational and are linked to the integral development of the human being. Especially at school, they could not be seen as spontaneous or translated unsystematically. What does specialized mean in this case? Would the word be used only in the sense of “exclusive” support for TPSE students, in flagrant opposition to the principles of an inclusive and collaborative school? Apparently, such vagueness is politically strategic and convenient to the Federal Government, allowing, in a country of our continental scope, municipal and state networks to organize themselves according to their possibilities, resources and intentions, because, in fact, it is in these instances that *PNEEPEI* takes place and is translated according to different understandings.

Thus, in different locations, many interpreted the term specialized companion as if it were a specialized teacher, despite governmental indications against this reading, depending on the analysis exposed. Then, a mistaken idea was created that every student with ASD and with disabilities would automatically be entitled to a support teacher in the common class, which, as we have seen, is not what the legislation says. Other places understood that the support could be a non-teaching professional, with or without specific training in the area of Special Education. In other words, the word “specialized” was and continues to be read in different ways and according to the conveniences or financial resources available.

Finally, still within the scope of these semantic disputes, the Brazilian Inclusion Law (Law no. 13,146, 2015) regulated the expression of *profissional de apoio escolar* (school support professional), which had also been used since the beginning of the *PNEEPEI*. In this way, the Brazilian Inclusion Law wanted to remove confusion and misuse of duties, by explaining that the work of this professional could not invade the field of performance of already demarcated professions, such as that of teachers and health professionals. This meant restricting the performance of the support professional solely to the tasks of a caregiver, once again recovering the initial propositions of *PNEEPEI* as already reported. Serra (2017, p. 31) analyzes that “The Brazilian Inclusion Law partially defines the rules on hiring mediators. The school’s responsibility is clear, but the training of the mediator, wage floor and hiring rules remain undefined [...]”. In the definition of the Brazilian Inclusion Law, the following is read:

school support professional: a person who performs activities of *feeding, hygiene and mobility of students with disabilities* and works in all school activities in which it is necessary, at all levels and modes of education, in public and private institutions, *excluding techniques or the procedures identified with legally established professions*. (Law no. 13,146, 2015, art. 3, XIII, emphasis added).

In view of the above, I note that, while discussing the issue of school support professional/specialized companion, taken as the banner of struggle by family groups, entities and politicians, so that having or not having this agent at school assumes the centrality of the discussions about the schooling rights of the TPSE in the common class, with few questions about the identity and constitution of the professional in evidence, a fundamental issue has been obliterated. In other words, little emphasis is given to the struggle for an expanded understanding of SES, which will encompass “a set of diversified supports necessary to respond to the different demands of schooling of TPSE students in regular schools” (Mendes, 2017, p. 81) and promoting, as the core of inclusive public policy, collaborative education, which

consists of a partnership between Regular Education teachers and Special Education teachers, in which a common educator and a special educator share the responsibility for planning, instructing and evaluating teaching procedures for a heterogeneous group of students. (Ferreira, Mendes, Almeida, & Del Prette, 2007, p. 1).

This does not mean that the presence of professionals supporting school inclusion is also not a necessity for public schools. What I want to emphasize is that we cannot believe that these, still without a defined career and without precise regulations of their performance, which becomes the object of multiple interpretations, are put as the main support for the permanence of TPSE students in the common classes. My positioning can be justified when it is noted that these professionals, almost always with secondary education (with or without specific qualification for teaching) or university students, with or without some training in the area, represent a precariousness of educational attention to the public that needs more support, not only in demands for personal care and daily life, but, *a fortiori*, for pedagogical attention. Therefore, according to Bezerra (2012),

the hiring of interns or assistants, precisely to serve students who require intense and systematic support, due to syndromes, disabilities or other forms of differentiated development, far from representing the 'solution' of the challenges mentioned, demonstrates the materialization of 'precarious universal service' (Kassar; Arruda; Benatti, 2007, p. 29) offered to students with (and without) disabilities at school for everyone. (p. 193-194).

Furthermore, it is in view of this lack of definition in relation to the support professional/specialized companion, whose name ends up confusing laypeople, as if it were a specialized teacher, that governments have prioritized the hiring of educational agents with a secondary or training level, disseminating the idea that, with their presence, all the demands of the common class would be satisfied from the legal and pedagogical point of view, instead of investing in collaborative teaching itself. Moreover, there is a risk of a disinvestment in collaborative education where it was being constituted, given that, in the absence of legal specification, public education networks adhere to the cheaper alternative, that is, the non-teacher support professional. As Mendes (2017) warns,

The current emphasis on education is in the pursuit of excellence in schools, spending as little as possible, and both the increase in performance requirements and standards and the expenses, considered additional, to meet the needs of the target population of Special Education, complicate this scenario because they impact the financing of education and question the role of the school intended by the reformers. (p. 82).

Under these conditions, governments, at best, provide these agents with some course in the area and justify that the "specialized" requirement is being met, releasing specialized teachers from the work of the common class, which are restricted to the functions of the SES in MRR, a service that has not shown satisfactory results for the advancement of the school inclusion process (Mendes, 2017, 2019). After all, SES in MRR allows, at most, occasional interactions between common and specialized class teachers, distant in time and space, in contrast to a collaborative practice in which they "act together in the same class, when there is the presence of one or more students who demand differentiated attention" (Marin &

Maretti, 2014, p. 3). Thus, under the argument of economy and optimization of public funds, they insist on a model of school inclusion that gives little priority to the common classroom and, consequently, neglects the TPSE, who become the “new *excluded from within* our school system” (Bezerra, 2017, p. 494). Hence the understanding, regarding the case analyzed, that

this implies a new position in the education networks. It constitutes a process of intensifying the teaching work carried out in the context of a precarious/devalued position in relation to the work of the conducting teacher. It also explains the model of school inclusion disseminated by official documents by assuming a characteristic of little, if any, emphasis on pedagogical issues. It maintains the practice guided by diagnoses reinforced by the realization of courses that identify the student by the characteristics of the diagnosis of disability and not as a subject of rights. (Martins, 2011, p. 150).

There is, then, a mismatch between the objective intended by the *PNEEPEI*, namely, “to ensure the school inclusion of students with disabilities, global developmental disorders and giftedness, guiding the education systems to guarantee: access to regular teaching, with participation, learning” (PNEEPEI, 2008, p. 14), and the effects resulting from its operationalization in recent years. This trend is aggravated when the current policy is that of saving, freezing and cutting investments in public education systems, a circumstance that affects TPSE students doubly. These, after all, as well as their other classmates, already live “in a specific school, the Brazilian one, which has one of the worst performances on the planet, according to large-scale international standardized assessments” (Mendes, 2017, p. 76).

For this reason, collaborative teaching cannot be seen as a “luxury” or an accessory term of an education policy that is intended to be inclusive, but as an indispensable means of democratizing access opportunities, with conditions such as achieving permanence successfully, at common school for all students, with and without specific learning needs. In this sense, it is necessary to take into account the perspective that “the work of support professionals must be analyzed from the perspective of the dismantling proposal of the school concealed on the discourse of ‘universalization of teaching’ and ‘school for all’” (Martins, 2011, p. 106). And, certainly, the assignment of monitoring and care roles to them, without the counterpart of the mediation of a teacher specialized in the common class, encircles the idea of collaborative planning and thinking about ways of appropriating school knowledge by TPSE, considering that these are not the duties of the school support professional. After all, the “specialized” aspect of their work is only concerned with the instrumental know-how of a caregiver, if we are guided by what can be seen from the analyzed documents and guidelines.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

With this paper, I problematized one of the side effects of the current *PNEEPEI*, namely: the support school inclusion professional/specialized companion. This character has specific duties, considering the legislation and official guidelines, which do not include curricular and didactic-pedagogical issues. However, as revealed by research, such a professional ends up being placed in the equivalent position of a specialized teacher, which can be read as precariousness of the teaching work conditions, as specialized training and the role of the Special Education teacher are disqualified, in the name of alternatives considered cheaper from

the economic point of view for public schools. This situation reveals that *PNEEPEI* emphasized extra-class SES, which paved the way for palliative solutions to be sought to enable the teaching of TPSE students in the common class.

Therefore, instead of thinking about a range of services and support for the constitution of an inclusive school, the focus has only been on these students, as if the “problem” was the individual, who should be identified for better to exercise vigilance and ensure isolation, even while remaining inside the classroom, with the whole class. As Cunha et al. (2012, p. 7) point out, “Faced with this reality, the trainee ends up playing the role of ‘caregiver’ or even ‘nanny’, watching and circumventing situations so that the child does not disturb or hinder the course of the class”. Under these conditions, intra-class support for the school inclusion process is compromised and the emergence of collaborative teaching is not viable, as the idea that TPSE students, through the presence of support school inclusion professionals, represented by trainees in training or even by agents with secondary education, possibly only with occasional training, are duly assisted, without requiring more investments for their learning and development.

Thus, strictly following the official regulations, which focus on the care and monitoring of TPSE students, there is a justification for not requiring pedagogical training, “which favors the minimization by the support professional for pedagogical duties, even when working in a space destined for excellence in teaching and learning” (Martins, 2011, p. 35). The ambiguities of the Brazilian legislation and the recommendations arising from the *PNEEPEI* on the subject contribute to maintaining this reality, as presented. However, it is not a question of denying the relevance of the support professional, whose empirical work needs to continue to be researched in new studies, but of making it clear that this cannot be understood by public schools as a more “economic” substitute for specialized teachers. Both are essential support for the inclusive common class, but with their respective duties, which complement each other in collaboration processes between the entire school community. In these terms, it is essential “that the creation of positions and resources does not fragment the proposal for attending special education students, but on the contrary, it realizes a possibility and a multidisciplinary network performance” (Burchert, 2018, p. 73).

It is essential, therefore, that the subsequent legislation be explicit as to the meaning of terms such as “specialized companion”, standardize the duties, wage floor and define minimum training to be required of these support school inclusion professionals in the direction of what is exposed by the Brazilian Inclusion Law. In addition, it is expected that new national guidelines, especially with the possible reformulation of the *PNEEPEI*, will enable the emergence of alternatives more consistent with the specific needs of this population, bringing them curriculum justice, that is, appropriation of school knowledge and learning through necessary support, beyond the mere care and their guarded presence in the common classes. For this, collaborative teaching must be taken as the main reference for the (re) organization of the inclusive school. And, if the concern is with the saving of resources, it is worth remembering that, through the performance of specialized teachers in classes in which there are TPSE students, the support professionals themselves, with guidance from the other teachers, can become itinerants through the school institution, without settling in a classroom, which will certainly reduce the burden of hiring these professionals and the impact of their

(oni)presence on the students who need them. Here are the possibilities that open up for (re) thinking about the actions and knowledge of school inclusion.

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