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DISABILITY, DIVERSITY, AND DIFFERENCE: IDIOSYNCRASIES AND CONCEPTUAL DIFFERENCES

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ABSTRACT: Since 1980, the United Nations (UN) has played a leading role in disseminating international guidelines against violence, discrimination, and deprivation of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Considering this, the Brazilian political and legal framework for inclusion has expanded considerably in recent decades, bringing transversal regulations in favor of specific identity groups, such as people with disabilities, women, and ethnic-racial collectives. Although they are part of the emerging agenda, when confronted by the complex framework of barriers and social exclusions, official inclusion and diversity discourses present idiosyncrasies and contradictions that can even camouflage political intentions, often disconnected from the struggles of the collectives focused by inclusion policies. In this context, this article aims to characterize conceptual differences between disability, diversity, and human differences. We conclude that the definitions and objects of analysis sometimes align with the critical perceptions of the discourse, while at other times reproduce the normative view of subjects-body-minds, camouflaging, often subtly, the asymmetric social construction of human differences in official rhetoric about inclusion and diversity.

Keywords: Disability, Diversity, Human Difference, Inclusion Policy.

DEFICIÊNCIA, DIVERSIDADE E DIFERENÇA: IDIOSSINCRASIAS E DIVERGÊNCIAS CONCEITUAIS

RESUMO: Desde 1980, a Organização das Nações Unidas (ONU) assume um papel preponderante na difusão de diretrizes contra exclusão, violência, discriminação e privação de direitos humanos e liberdades fundamentais. Diante disso, o marco político e legal brasileiro para a inclusão expandiu-se consideravelmente nas últimas décadas, trazendo regulamentações transversais em favor de grupos identitários específicos como pessoas com deficiências, mulheres e coletivos etnicorraciais. Assim, há o consenso público de que a inclusão é um princípio regulador das políticas nacionais. Embora sejam partes da pauta emergente, diante do complexo quadro de barreiras e exclusões sociais, os discursos oficiais em defesa da inclusão e diversidade apresentam idiossincrasias e contradições que, inclusive, camuflam intencionalidades políticas, muitas vezes, desconectadas das lutas dos coletivos que são focos das políticas de inclusão. Problematizando este contexto, o presente artigo tem como objetivo caracterizar diferenças conceituais entre deficiência, diversidade e diferença humana. Conclui-se que as definições, objetos de

análise, ora alinham-se às perceptivas críticas do discurso, ora reproduzem a visão normativa de sujeitos-corpos-mentes, camuflando, de forma muitas vezes sutil, na retórica oficial sobre inclusão e diversidade, a construção social assimétrica das diferenças humanas.

Palavras-chave: Deficiência, Diversidade, Diferença Humana, Política de Inclusão.

DISCAPACIDAD, DIVERSIDAD Y DIFERENCIA: IDIOSINCRASIAS Y DIVERGENCIAS CONCEPTUALES

RESUMEN: Desde 1980, la Organización de las Naciones Unidas (ONU) ha desempeñado un papel central en la difusión de directrices contra la violencia, la discriminación y la privación de derechos humanos y libertades fundamentales. Frente a eso, el marco político y legal brasileño para la inclusión se ha ampliado considerablemente en las últimas décadas, y ha traído regulaciones transversales a favor de grupos identitários específicos como las personas con discapacidad, las mujeres y los colectivos étnico-raciales. Así, hay el consenso público de que la inclusión es un principio regulador de las políticas nacionales. Aunque sean partes de la pauta emergente frente a la compleja situación de barreras y exclusiones sociales, los discursos oficiales en defensa de la inclusión y de la diversidad presentan idiosincrasias y contradicciones que, incluso, camuflan intenciones políticas, muchas veces desconectadas de las luchas de los colectivos que son focos de las políticas de inclusión. En este contexto, este artículo tiene como objetivo caracterizar diferencias conceptuales entre discapacidad, diversidad y diferencia humana. Se concluye que las definiciones, objetos de análisis, a veces se alinean con las percepciones críticas del discurso, a veces reproducen la mirada normativa de sujetos-cuerpos-mentes, camuflando, de manera sutil, en la retórica oficial sobre inclusión y diversidad, la construcción social asimétrica de las diferencias humanas.

Palabras clave: Discapacidad, Diversidad, Diferencia humana, Política de inclusión.

INTRODUCTION

This article aims to characterize conceptual differences between disability, diversity, and human differences. Such terms began to be incorporated into international agendas in the 1980s with the publication of a series of documents by the UN. Following the discussion on disability, diversity, and difference, social inclusion emerges as a cross-cutting theme in international goals to establish an agreement with States Parties to invest in actions against all forms of discrimination and social exclusion, including the elimination of barriers in the education process of children and young people with disabilities and other vulnerabilities (UN, 1990; 1994; 2006; 2015).

More recently, the UN 2030 Agenda recognizes social inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals-SDGs (UN, 2015-2030). Specifically, the principle of inclusion makes up SDG 10 for the reduction of inequality at the local level and in the international context:

> Goal 10. Reducing Inequalities: [...] by 2030, empower and promote **social, economic, and political inclusion for *all***, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, economic or another status. Ensuring equal opportunities and reducing inequalities of outcomes, including through the elimination of discriminatory laws, policies and practices and the promotion of appropriate legislation, policies and actions in this regard (UN, 2015, art. 10).

This UN goal, by 2030, reinforces the need for countries to invest in a broad inclusion project, focusing on equality, especially in favor of vulnerable groups such as children with disabilities, ethnic-racial groups, and immigrants (UN, 2015). In the field of education, the UN Agenda calls for investment in improving educational institutions so that they are "child-friendly, disability, and gender-sensitive, and that provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for *all*" (UN, 2015, art. 4). *All* is openness so that *others*, on the margins, are unified in the same category to achieve a common purpose, in this case, access to education.

The UN passage "inclusive and effective for *all*" is a crucial point for reflection on the meaning of diversity in the international discourse on inclusion. In international guidelines, inclusion is an optimistic concept that makes sense when related to human diversity (UN, 2015; UNESCO, 2002; 2009). In this logic, a society only becomes inclusive when it is tolerant and values human diversity, with inclusion and respect for diversity being the interdependent purposes of nations and, in particular, of school institutions.

In the text of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 2002, Art. 1), the concept of cultural diversity is understood as the "common heritage of humanity" and is characterized as the "originality and plurality of identities of groups that make up humanity". In this sense, the United Nations bodies have a horizontal perception of human relations, present, for example, in the definition of *all* and *humanity* (UN, 2015-2030; UNESCO, 2002). The point of tension in this rhetoric lies in the idea that the originality of people starts from the assumption of the plural essentialism of identities, that is, what is *naturally original* or proper to different identities makes the *whole* of diversity become a fixed datum, not natural and equated, and therefore questioned in its social construction (WOODWARD, 2000).

However, who is circumscribed in the notion of *all*? The word *all*, in the rhetoric about diversity, often leads to the discursive simplism that *we are all human*. This logic operates, for example, in the commonplace contention that human conscience is sufficient in opposition to the Day of Black Consciousness or, equally, that the constitutional right to education for all is sufficient to guarantee the access and permanence of specific groups, without the need to create affirmative policies. The discursive homogenizing of diversity ends up reducing the inclusion of the other in the same normative systems and, with that, erases the political meanings of cultural differences (SKILIAR; SOUZA, 2000).

The notion of human diversity in international guidelines for inclusion is more than an official text, as it is a counterpoint to understanding the subjectivity of cultural arrangements and human boundaries - even though the latter is not mentioned directly in the category *all*. According to Lopes (2004), the diversity narrative is a constituent of the regulatory order of human relations that excludes to include and includes excluding. In other words, more than naturalizing human diversity as a reference

for inclusion policies, it is necessary to think of it as part of the social order of organization and functioning of human relations in the face of the materialization of inclusion/exclusion, since

> [...] Inclusion and exclusion are articulated within the same epistemological, political, cultural, and ideological matrix. All space determined by a given order is delimited and governed by the norm. This standard classifies, compares, evaluates, includes, and excludes. The whole law keeps those we call excluded out of its control, as it is not up to it to think about the excluded, but it is up to predict the included (LOPES, 2004, p. 11).

With this, it is the naturalized belonging of the subject/group of the dominant culture in the social space that creates the reference point for the exclusion of human characteristics not or little accepted in the social structure. In this case, the subjectivity that shapes the place of inclusion – or even that which is already included – is, inevitably, what forms the boundary of non-belonging. In Foucault's analysis (1979), the inclusion of diversity can be thought of through the prism of power in which no one is properly the holder of power, but this is legitimized by a direction, creating oppositions, that is, the duality of who is the included and excluded: it is not known for sure who has power, but it is known who does not. For Sawaia (2001), the exclusion is a complex and multifaceted process, with material, political, relational, and subjective dimensions; however, the exclusion is not an opposition to inclusion, but a part of it, thus constituting a:

> [...] a subtle and dialectical process, as it only exists in inclusion as a constitutive part of it. It is not a thing or a state, it is a process that involves the whole individual and his relationships with others. It has no single form and is not a failure in the system, and must be fought as something that disturbs the social order, on the contrary, it is a product of the system's functioning (SAWAIA, 2001, p. 9).

In the words of Sawaia (2001), the exclusion is part of the system, not being an external reaction, but one of the faces of a certain social order. Therefore, the claim for inclusion of diversity necessarily indicates that there is an established normative order. Specifically, the dichotomy "inclusion versus exclusion" is the frame of reference for reflecting on the experience of disability. In this case, the overvaluation of non-disability attributes contributes to the notion of disability related to people with disabilities and, consequently, to the exclusion of this group. With this, it is the process of the legitimacy of non-disability (SILVA, 2019) that establishes accepted standards of body normativity (MELLO; FERNANDES, 2017) and this, necessarily, designates the other face of inclusion: the subjective criteria for the exclusion of what has a disability.

Anticipating this, Hughes (1999) assumes that it is necessary to destabilize the dominant culture (read non-disability culture), as it is not neutral and is related to "a mythology of normality, of truth, of beauty and perfection" (HUGHES, 1999, p.164). Pinto (2014) adds that it is essential to understand how culture has been building assumptions that are assumed to be natural in the form of law, but that maintains the distinction between people with and without disabilities (they and us).

Thus, if, on the one hand, diversity is understood as a positive approach to horizontal and calming dialogue in the official discourse in defense of the *inclusion of all* (UN, 1990; 1994; 2006; 2015; UNESCO, 2002; 2008); on the other hand, this same concept is analyzed, in critical theory, as a category that camouflages the process, the clash between cultures and the asymmetries between human differences (SKILIAR; SOUZA, 2000; WOODWARD, 2000; SILVA, 2019). Regarding this last aspect, the field of Disability Studies constitutes a critical aspect for contesting the structures of inequalities inherent to the relations between human differences, specifically, when dealing with social markers of disability and non-disability - far beyond parameters set in biological diversity (SILVA, 2019).

According to Tom Shakespeare (1996), social theory highlights the dualism between biology and society to challenge the biological determinism of interpretations about the body-mind. In Disability Studies, disability is not taken as a fixed category of human diversity in which biological and natural aspects are the main references – just like the diversity between different species of animals or plants is categorized. Instead, disability is understood in the "social world; in life […]. Disability is a sociocultural and personal phenomenon embodied physiologically or psychologically" (GOODLEY, 2017, p. 1). This perception of disability contextualizes the social experience and highlights other marks of identities

associated with cultural, economic, geographic, gender, race/ethnicity, and nationality dimensions (BISH, 2015). It is precisely to reflect on this broad debate that this article aims to characterize conceptual variations between disability, diversity, and human difference in the following sections.

DEFINITION OF DISABILITY IN THE POLITICAL-LEGAL FRAMEWORK

This section aims to conceptualize disability in national and international guidelines. The criterion for choosing the documents delimited here was the clipping of the period after the Salamanca Declaration (UN, 1994), in which, due to the influence of this Declaration, there was a wide adoption of guidelines in favor of educational inclusion in Brazil, specifically, focusing on the group of people with disabilities. In this framework, inclusive education is based on Chapter V of the Law of Directives and Bases for National Education (LDB- *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional*) number 9394/1996; the Inter-American Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, promulgated by Brazilian Decree number 3956/2001; in the Accessibility Decree number 5296/2004; the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006); in the National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education (MEC, 2008); in the World Report on Disability (WHO, 2001) and, more recently, in the Statute of Persons with Disabilities, governed by Law number 13146/2015.

The delimited documents contemplate different approaches to disability that, at times, approach the medical model and, at others, the social model (OLIVER, 1983). However, some definitions try to balance both models, as appears in the World Report on Disability (WHO, 2010). At this point, Carol Thomas (2008) highlights that, although the contributions of the social model of disability are undeniable, this model cannot annul what she calls "impairment effects", that is, the empirical aspects of the experience of disability that do not boil down to the oppressions inherent to social barriers. In this way, it is noted that the concept of disability is not consensual, with divergent approaches, as well as approximate ones.

Despite this, the social model of disability has great recognition by representatives of the international movement of people with disabilities (UN, 2006). This model is established in opposition to the medical model. The main criticism of the medical model of disability lies in the fact that this approach focuses on the problem in the person and, therefore, understands the disability in isolation (OLIVER, 1983), not considering barriers, discrimination, and social impediments, which are real disabling in the disability experience (PINTO, 2014).

In the medical model, the segregation, exclusion, and oppression that historically affect people with disabilities end up being justified by the individual and biological condition of this group, not being, therefore, questioned as social and cultural production. On the other hand, the social model rejects the perspective of blaming the disabled individual due to their physical-cognitive condition and the justification of the social profile of this group due to the discrimination of their mind-bodies. This model transfers the responsibility for removing barriers to society:

> [...] The difficulties and marginalization experienced by so many people with disabilities are no longer explained based on their disabilities or biological pathologies, but by the inability of society to respond adequately to their diverse needs and characteristics. In other words, like social class, gender, or ethnicity, the experience of disability is reinterpreted as being more because of the inability of society to respond adequately to its diverse needs and characteristics (PINTO, 2014, p. 12).

As stated by Pinto (2014), disability is a social issue, not a strictly biological characteristic. It is important to highlight that, in the scope of Human Rights – although the identity differences between people with disabilities are recognized (UN, 2006) – the concept of disability, as a unitary category, represents the demarcation of the history of social struggle and (self-reliance) affirmation of the rights, fundamental freedoms and collective contributions of this group in the path of humanity (SILVA, 2014). The (self)affirmation of the disability identity represents a process of collective recognition and social visibility (FERREIRA, 2004; SOARES, 2010).

Emphasizing the recognition of the rights of people with disabilities, the LDB (BRASIL, 1996) determines that the State must guarantee the enrollment of people with disabilities in the regular education system, as well as to facilitate the provision of Specialized Educational Assistance (SEA) - transversal service to all levels and teaching modalities (BRASIL, 1996, art. 4°). The criteria for defining the profile of public students for inclusion, in Brazilian legal determinations, are in line with international guidelines, such as the Guatemala Convention (OAS, 1999). This Convention reaffirms the human rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities and, above all, is committed to eliminating and preventing all forms of discrimination on the grounds of disability. The first article of this document defines disability as an individual condition influenced by external factors, being, therefore, a "physical, mental or sensory restriction, of a permanent or transitory nature, that limits the ability to perform one or more essential activities of daily living, caused or aggravated by the economic and social environment" (OAS, 1999, art. 1).

At the beginning of the present century, with the publication of accessibility laws - Law number 10.048/2000 gives priority to service to the people that it specifies and Law number 10.098/2000 establishes general norms and basic criteria for the promotion of accessibility - Brazil advances on inclusion by determining structural changes, focusing on the construction of accessible environments for the demands of people with disabilities and other collectives called people with reduced mobility, the latter being any individual "who does not fit the concept of a person with a disability", but who have, for whatever reason, difficulty moving, permanently or temporarily, generating an effective reduction in mobility, flexibility, motor coordination, and perception" (BRASIL, 2004, art. 5). The advance in legislation lies in the fact that before it was the person with a disability who had to adapt to society or this group was excluded from the social experience. However, with the publication of accessibility laws (BRASIL, 2000; 2004), it is the social structure must be modified to include people with disabilities and reduced mobility.

Decree number 5296/2004 provides detailed definitions of the meaning of disability, characterizing this group as those people who have limitations or incapacity to perform an activity and fall into the following categories:

> [...] **Physical disability**: complete or partial alteration of one or more segments of the human body, causing impairment of physical function, presenting in the form of paraplegia, paraparesis, monoplegia, monoparesis, tetraplegia, tetraparesis, triplegia, triparesia, hemiplegia, hemiparesis, ostomy, amputation or absence of a limb, cerebral palsy, dwarfism, limbs with congenital or acquired deformity, except for aesthetic deformities and those that do not produce difficulties in performing functions. **Hearing impairment**: bilateral, partial, or total loss of forty-one decibels (dB) or more, measured by audiogram at frequencies of 500Hz, 1,000Hz, 2,000Hz, and 3,000Hz. **Visual impairment**: blindness, in which visual acuity is equal to or less than 0.05 in the best eye, with the best optical correction; low vision, which means visual acuity between 0.3 and 0.05 in the best eye, with the best optical correction; cases in which the sum of the visual field measurement in both eyes is equal to or less than 60o; or the simultaneous occurrence of any of the foregoing conditions. **Mental disability**: Significantly lower than average intellectual functioning, with onset before the age of eighteen and limitations associated with two or more areas of adaptive skills, such as 1. Communication; 2. Personal care; 3. Social skills; 4. Use of community resources; 5. Health and safety; 6. Academic skills; 7. Leisure; and 8. Work. **Multiple disabilities:** association of two or more disabilities (BRASIL, Decree number 5296/2004, art. 5).

Although there is a change in focus, with the publication of accessibility legislation, which passes from the adjustment/exclusion/segregation of the disabled person (visibility of the individual condition of the disability) to the transformation of the environment in an accessible way (visibility of external barriers), the detailing of disability categories previously extracted from the Accessibility Decree (BRASIL, 2004) refers to the medical model. In the aforementioned decree, there is a physical, cognitive, behavioral, and communicational framework for the patterns of body, visual, auditory, and intellectual perception (FERREIRA, 2004). This model is useful for conceptualization in the biological field, however, it has a strong influence on the naturalization of limiting and essentialist stereotypes about people with disabilities, especially those people defined by the category of mental disability, particularly because the text of the decree states that such people are characterized "by significantly lower than

average intellectual functioning" (Decree n° 5296/2004, art. 5), with the idea of an average subject being the supposed standard of normality.

I opposition to the direct and subtle forms of discrimination against people with disabilities that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006, p. 1) recognizes the concept of disability as an "evolving" definition since this condition is part of human diversity and results "from the interaction between people with disabilities and the barriers due to attitudes and the environment that prevent their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (UN, 2006, 2006, p. p. 22). The Convention bases its content on human rights and therefore adds important principles for the definition of disability such as attitudinal barriers, social participation, and equality of opportunity (UN, 2006).

In the text of the Convention (UN, 2006), persons with disabilities are those with "physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers, obstruct their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with other people" (UN, 2006, art. 1). In this way, the condition of disability is characterized in the person's relationship with the environment and with others. This interaction may or may not favor the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Almost two years after the publication of the UN Convention (2006), the Ministry of Education launched the National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education (PNEEpEI- *Política Nacional de Educação Especial na Perspectiva da Educação Inclusiva*) to ensure the school inclusion of students with disabilities, global developmental disorders, and high skills/giftedness, guiding education systems to guarantee access to regular education, as well as participation and learning (BRASIL, 2008). With the implementation of this policy, the schools received from the MEC and the Municipal and State Departments a series of guidelines on the provision of SEA and the opening of Multifunctional Resource Rooms in the regular education system. The Inclusion Policy (BRASIL, 2008) presents definitions of the target audience of the SEA, adding parameters for disabilities, global developmental disorders, and high abilities and giftedness:

> [...] **students with disabilities** are considered to be those who have long-term impairments of a physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory nature, which in interaction with various barriers may have restricted their full and effective participation in school and society. **Students with pervasive developmental disorders** are those who present qualitative changes in reciprocal social interactions and communication, and a restricted, stereotyped, and repetitive repertoire of interests and activities. This group includes students with autism, autism spectrum syndromes, and childhood psychosis. **Students with high abilities/giftedness** demonstrate high potential in any of the following areas, isolated or combined: intellectual, academic, leadership, psychomotricity, and arts, in addition to showing great creativity, involvement in learning, and performing tasks in areas of interest (BRASIL, 2008, p. 11).

The PNEEpEI definition of disability (BRASIL, 2008) takes up the text of the UN Convention (2006) by recognizing the bodily and cognitive characteristics of disability in the context of interaction with social barriers. In addition, the text of this policy incorporates other groups as the focus of the inclusion policy, such as students with high abilities and giftedness, who do not necessarily belong to the disability category.

Within the framework of international guidelines, the World Report on Disability (WHO, 2011), a document prepared under the coordination of the World Health Organization (WHO), has become a national reference for categorizing disabilities in the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF). The ICF was developed by professionals from different areas, including academics, doctors, and technicians with disabilities. The concept of disability starts from the junction of the medical model and the social model. The WHO (2011) recognizes barriers in environments, contexts, and relationships as aggravating factors in the interaction experience of people with disabilities.

In this reference, the idea of disability is constructed from three main factors: "a) alterations in bodily structures/functions, for example, paralysis or blindness; b) difficulties in performing activities, for example walking or eating and c) restrictions on participation in activities, for example facing discrimination in employment or transport" (WHO, 2011, p. 5).

The following scheme shows how the concept of disability is defined by the WHO (2011):

Figure 1. Representation of Disability in ICF (WHO, 2011)
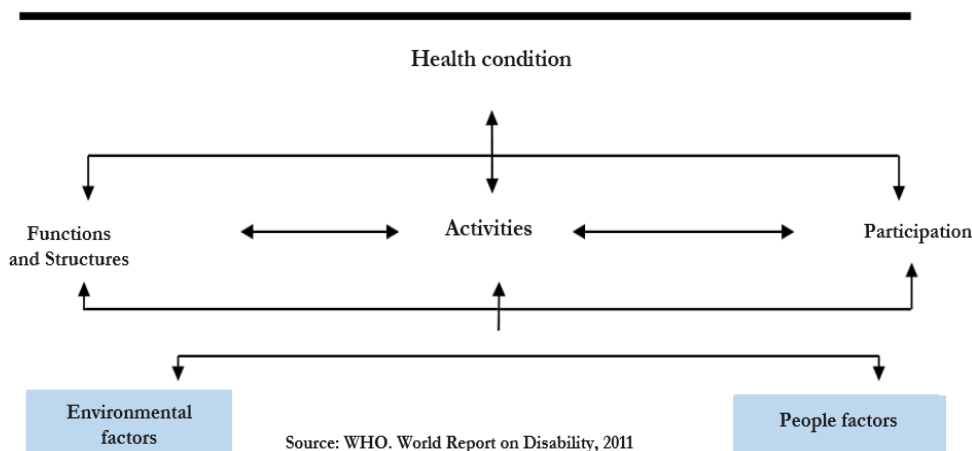
It calls our attention that the "activity" is at the center of the representation and not the disability or cognitive-body condition. The scheme demonstrates that to measure the performance of the activity, the body functions and the conditions of participation are jointly examined. This measurement process involves aspects of health, environmental factors (barriers), and personal factors (family, income, access to assistive technology, among others). The variations of data collected are the basis for classifying the disability, making an interdisciplinary and contextual analysis of the disability experience indispensable.

It is worth noting that the WHO cites the ICF as a parameter to measure positive elements of the experience in the use of human functionalities, creating new benchmarks for "bodily functions, activities, participation, and environmental facilitation" (WHO, 2011, p. 5). The World Disability Report (WHO, 2011) recognizes the various opportunities behind the discourses on disability that bring them closer to the health area and, at the same time, to different areas of human life, including individual, family, and social factors. The same report alludes to the term "decreased capacity" as a result of personal conditions and health limitations, combined with external factors: "capacity decreases are specific decreases in bodily functions and structures, usually identified as symptoms or signs of problems with health". Disability arises from the interaction between health problems and contextual factors" (WHO, 2011, p. 5).

Finally, the Statute of Persons with Disabilities (BRASIL, 2015), in force in Brazil since 2015, reinforces the social model of disability by emphasizing the need to eliminate barriers and promote the full participation of people with disabilities on equal terms with others (BRASIL, 2015, art. 2). Article two, of the same law, emphasizes that the assessment of disability, when necessary, "will be performed by a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary team, considering: the impediments in the functions and structures of the body; socio-environmental, psychological and personal factors; the limitation in the performance of activities and the restriction of participation" (BRASIL, 2015, art. 2). This excerpt is in line with the WHO Disability Report (2011) by directing the biopsychosocial model as a parameter to measure disability. The conciliation between the medical model and the social model in the biopsychosocial model is an attempt to bring the sociological dimension of the disability experience without forgetting the aspects that are involved in the body or "injury" (impairment) (THOMAS, 2007). But is this conciliation between the models of disability enough to solve the problem of normality? To approach this debate, the following sections address the deficiency in the notions of human diversity and cultural differences, present in international rhetoric and critical theories.

THE RHETORIC OF DIVERSITY IN THE AGENDA ON INCLUSION

As presented in the introductory section of this article, the theme of human diversity is part of international guidelines (UN, 1948; 1990; 1994; OAS, 1999). From the global changes after World War II, the discourse on tolerance for diversity and respect for differences gains visibility, as it appears in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948):

> [...] All human beings are entitled to the rights and freedoms outlined in this Declaration without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, gender, language, religion, political or another opinion, national origin or social, fortune, birth, or any other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made based on the political, legal, or international status of the country or territory of which the person is born, whether that country or territory is independent, under guardianship, autonomous, or subject to any limitation of sovereignty (UN, 1948, art. 2°).

The guarantee of human rights and fundamental freedoms (UN, 1948) are at the base of the discussion on diversity. Collective claims for rights and inclusion reveal tensions between different groups, whether on ethnic, generational, gender, disability, or nationality grounds. The intensification between identity groups indicates the plural segmentation of social relations, previously characterized, in modern theory, only in two large groups: bourgeoisie and people. In the current context, there is a perception of a much more complex picture, of human multiplicities and sociocultural borders, in which differences are intersectional and touch on factors other than economic issues such as gender, disability, and skin color (HALL, 1997).

The expectation of the reduction of conflicts between different social groups is the basis for the celebration of human diversity in the search for a culture of world peace (UN, 1948). This positivity in the affirmation of diversity is systematically present in official discourses and, therefore, has become an object of analysis in critical theory. Such theorists dismantle the simplism behind the discourse of tolerance for diversity because this rhetoric camouflages the real project for excluded and discriminated groups in their inclusion in demands generated by the era of globalization (FERREIRA, 2015).

According to Ferreira (2015), the concept of diversity was solidified in the context of globalization and the struggle of social movements stands out, as it is not just rhetoric of interest to excluded groups, but also to the great representatives of world economic power:

> The process of economic globalization, driven by the technological revolution that began in the last century, gains strength in the 21st century with the holding of major world events, whose meetings the political, economic, and international academic communities with power come together to define incorporation movements of large human masses [...] in their economic, political and also educational agendas because the masses must be prepared to respond to the demands generated by the information age, globalization and the knowledge society (FERREIRA, 2015, p. 301).).

In the sense expressed by the author, it is clear that the concept of diversity is based on the global interests of neoliberalism in a movement of appropriation of the agendas claimed by certain groups. For Ferreira (2015, p. 305), the emerging use of the term diversity in policies and laws formulated both in Brazil and internationally assumes the rhetoric of commitment to the "masses", but there is a tendency to empty the term diversity and even the process of homogenization of human differences to respond to economic interests. The author draws attention to the conceptual harmony between diversity and other terms such as inclusion, tolerance, acceptance, equality, and freedom; words that became guiding principles for the development of teaching materials, curricular bases, and institutional plans (FERREIRA, 2015, p. 305). In this way, the theme of diversity is compulsorily introduced into educational policy and practices.

In this line, the Salamanca Declaration (UN, 1994) was one of the important documents in the consolidation of policies for diversity because it brought the principle of inclusion associated with common education systems from the emphasis on the right to education of students who present some type of educational need that are

> [...] disabled and gifted, homeless and working, of the remote origin or nomadic population, belonging to linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities, and other disadvantaged or marginalized

groups (...). Many children experience learning difficulties and therefore have special educational needs at some point during their education (UN, 1994, p. 3).

By covering the diversities of linguistic, ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic characteristics and conditions and cognitive abilities, the Salamanca Declaration (UN, 1994) draws attention to human differences and inequalities that are generated by educational systems, mainly due to the adoption of an instrumental pedagogy model. Concerning human characteristics, this document mentions, as an educational need, the physical, social or cultural characteristics that mark students and place them in a condition of vulnerability (UN, 1994, p. 3). The concept of human diversity is understood in the Declaration, therefore, by biological dimensions and in its cultural construction. Gomes (2007) differentiates these dimensions as:

> [...] biological diversity, in the case of human beings, is characterized by equality in our condition as a human gender that has differences, cultural diversity is represented exactly in those differences that are modeled in the historical and cultural process and in the context of power relations [and that] receive stereotyped and prejudiced readings, starting to be treated unequally and in a discriminatory way (GOMES, 2007, p. 17).

Unlike the dimension of power expressed by Gomes (2007), when analyzing cultural diversity, the term biological diversity always "insinuates" the recognition of multicultural and respect for pluralism. However, this same term is addressed to those who are vulnerable to the experience of exclusion and discrimination and not to those who are not. In this case, collective diversity is identified with a disadvantageous difference. Critical theories (SKLIAR, 2000; SHAKESPEARE, 1996; WOODWARD, 2000) – in the debate about the process of building identities, collectivities and differences – analyze the process of naturalization and depoliticization of the concept of diversity. In this theoretical approach, both the taxed and different subjects (the collectives that makeup diversity and the so-called "minorities") are displaced, as well as those who remain untouchable, that is, the subjects who comply with the norm. The question is: "How to reflect on the deaf, indigenous, women, blacks, mestizos, unemployed, street children, the blind, etc. without hiding behind the mask of the terminology of natural plurality and the natural diversity of others?" (SKLIAR, 2000, p. 1).

Within the scope of Special Education, children, youth, and adults with disabilities have traditionally been labeled by specific nomenclatures, such as 'special', 'exceptional', and 'disabled'. Now, these terminologies have been replaced by the term diversity or public SEA students. What seems to be an advance still hides the assumptions that underlie the old ideology of normality, as stated in the words of Skliar and Souza (2000):

> Norms and values about complete, self-sufficient, disciplined, and beautiful bodies and minds form the basis of the discourses, practices, and organization of special institutions. In general, the norm tends to be implicit, and invisible and it is this invisibility character that makes it unquestioned. In official documents and the speeches of special education institutions, it is common to find the use of the term diversity. Diversity in this and other broader contexts portrays a conservative strategy that contains, and obscures, the political meaning of cultural differences. The ambiguity with which diversity is thought and constructed results in, in the best of cases, the acceptance of a certain pluralism that always refers to an ideal norm (SKLIAR; SOUZA, 2000, p. 7).

In this way, the concept of diversity is built for the misfits, for those people and groups that are "considered "different" from what the ruling class defines as "standard": a "certain" reference that becomes naturalized in social relations" (FERREIRA, 2015, p. 307). In this logic, those who are not different are left with the perpetuation of the values that make up their domain and privilege. Skliar and Souza (2000) argue that the discourse on tolerance of diversity tends to disguise what is political in difference and does not solve the problem that generates exclusion and discrimination, on the contrary, it maintains the norm in its place. In this sense, the difference is defined "as the diversity that is almost always understood as acceptable and respectable variants of the hegemonic project of normality" (SKLIAR; SOUZA, 2000, p. 6-7). According to Ferreira (2015), how the term diversity is exalted in official discourses does not drive the necessary changes for the quality of Brazilian education and still

maintains "those who are called "different" in a theoretical-conceptual vacuum" (FERREIRA, 2015, p. 306). For this reason, the concept of human difference is indispensable in the analysis of the narrative of inclusion and diversity.

THEORIZING HUMAN DIFFERENCE TO DISPLACE NORMALITY

Three approaches are predominant in the conceptualization of disability: the medical model that focuses disability on physical-cognitive characteristics (FERREIRA, 2004); the social model, in which disability is understood as an experience associated with barriers and impediments imposed by society (OLIVER, 1983) and the biopsychosocial model that tries to balance information in the field of health and human functionality and aspects of the empirical experience of disability (OLIVER, 1983). WHO, 2011). Following the flow of international guidelines, the national political-legal framework places these models but does not present single rhetoric to define the disability category, as in some texts it is conceptualized within medical specifications, such as the Accessibility Decree number 5296/2004 and, at other times, interpretation is sought in the social model or the biopsychosocial model, as it appears in the Brazilian Law of Inclusion (BRASIL, 2015).

In addition to these models, the guidelines for inclusion bring tolerance and respect for diversity as key principles for the formulation of national policies (UN, 2015-2030), with people with disabilities being the focus group of the so-called human diversity. At the global level, the term diversity emerges as an alternative for States to solve the social problem of exclusion and intolerance against specific groups and, at the same time, to unify the masses to respond to neoliberal demands, without this altering the systems of dominance (FERREIRA, 2015; SKLIAR; SOUZA, 2000).

The third way of analysis arises for theorizing about disability: the critical theory of difference present, for example, in Cultural Studies and Gender Studies (SILVA, 2000; WOODWARD, 2000; PINTO 2014; FARIAS, 2011; SOARES, 2010; MELLO, FERNANDES, 2013; SILVA, 2014). In this bias, the deconstruction of normality is the starting point for reflection on human differences and identities. Critical discourse analyses contest the extent to which biological characteristics are a basis for justifying cultural values and reinforcing human inequalities (WOODWARD, 2000; SKLIAR, 2000). According to Skliar and Souza (2000), it is evaluated, in the critical discourse, the disability that

> [...] it is not the person who is in a wheelchair or who uses a hearing aid or who does not learn according to the rhythm and the way the norm expects, but the social, historical, economic, and cultural processes that regulate and they control how the bodies and minds of others are thought and invented. To explain it in more detail: disability is not a biological issue but social, historical, and cultural rhetoric. Disability is not a problem for disabled people or their families or specialists. Disability is related to the very idea of normality and its historicity (SKLIAR; SOUZA, 2000 p. 5).

Therefore, disability is not an issue reduced to the scope of medicine. Much more than that, it is a narrative of a collective order that has more to do with what is established as normal than with what is assumed to be abnormal. Analyzing these aspects, Pinto (2014) states that the demarcation of what is disability exists within representation systems that value certain physical attributes, classifying, defining, and separating people and groups. In the same way, Woodward (2000) argues that the body is one of the places where borders or approximations are established from the process of (self) identification of human differences and similarities. Such differences are what constitute identities. In other words, identity only exists because there is a contrasting difference. Therefore, a possible biological or historical essentialism is used to justify and group subjects considered similar and distinguish those judged to be different.

In the post-structural critical approach to discourse, the concept of difference starts from the notion that it is necessary to denaturalize any human characteristic said to be biological and essentialist to find the social norms that govern them, since "empirical differences – such as the color of skin or deafness--have, in themselves, no natural value. They do not carry any intrinsic meaning", however, "they receive meanings as an effect of the historical and political relations that are articulated in societies where these marks of differences are present" (CANGUILHEM, 1995, p. 186). Thus, it is

the social representations formed by discourses, symbols, and practices of legitimation and meaning that make the individual, through a psychosocial process, attribute meaning to the experience and position himself, making it possible, therefore, to find answers to questions like Who am I? Where am I from? Who is different? Who is equal? (WOODWARD, 2000; SILVA, 2000).

Thus, it is from the meaning of representations of being different and being equal that identity is constituted in the cultural arena. In this case, we learn, throughout life, to be who we are and, in this sense, the difference from the other is the basis of our identity (SILVA, 2000). Therefore, we conclude that there is no identity without a difference. We are who we are because we see ourselves through the reflection of those who do not represent us and who we think are similar to us. This game of approximation and exclusion of the other is marked by the relationship of alterity:

> [...] otherness remains reabsorbed into our identity and reinforces it even more; making her possible, more arrogant, more secure, and more self-satisfied. From the point of view, the madman confirms and reinforces our reason; the child our maturity; the savage, our civilization; the marginal, our integration; the foreigner, our country and the disabled, our normality (LARROSA; PEREZ, 1998, p. 3).

The point is that in the process of alterity for the construction of identities, norms, stigmas, and inequalities are created (WOODWARD, 2000). For example, in the case of people with disabilities, society considers "certain bodies as inferior, incomplete or subject to repair/rehabilitation when compared to hegemonic functional/corporeal standards" (MELLO; FERNANDES, 2013). In society, certain physical forms are valued over others based on social standards of functionality, communication, aesthetics, gender, activity, and cognition (SILVA, 2014). Consequently, this causes the person with a body marked by some type of disability to be stigmatized and placed in a position of social disadvantage. Such an experience places the stigmatized person as a deviant subject from the norm (ality) who, when feeling "strange to himself", opens the door to "domination that is articulated ideologically and politically through the weakening of collectivities, interiorization, directed repression, divisionism" so that they stop questioning the hegemonic order and even begin to identify with it" (SKLIAR; SOUZA, 2000, p. 3).

Therefore, the representations of identity and human differences create boundaries between the so-called disabled and non-disabled people. In the process of socialization, people appropriate the place assigned to them and learn to talk about themselves, to defend or resist their identity. Any discourse that constitutes models of disability is based on systems of representation (WOODWARD, 2000). Thus, both the medical model and the social model – as well as the biopsychosocial model – are operative in the dynamics of normality that only gain meaning in the cultural arrangements in which they are constructed. Depending on what is legitimized in the community, disability models can impose limiting stereotypes, intensify borders or, in another way, reconstruct social meanings and new representations that are more beneficial to people with disabilities in the involuntary process of differentiation and approximation in the constitution of identities.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article aimed to characterize conceptual differences between disability, diversity, and human differences. It is noted that the definitions, objects of analysis, sometimes are aligned with the critical perceptions of the discourse, and sometimes reproduce the normative view of subjects-bodies-minds, camouflaging, in a subtle way, in the official rhetoric about inclusion and diversity, the asymmetrical social construction of human differences.

In summary, we examined that the definition of disability is not unitary both in national and international guidelines and in the approach of critical social theory. Among the models of disability disseminated is the medical model in which disability is taken as an object of Health Sciences and the physical-cognitive characteristics of the individual are displaced from the social context, being interpreted as a "natural" datum. In opposition, the social model became a second reference for the conceptualization of disability, far beyond the biological mark, being a collective phenomenon (FERREIRA, 2004). The social model denounces the different barriers that prevent people with

disabilities from enjoying human rights and fundamental freedoms (UN, 2006). More recently, with the publication of the Brazilian Inclusion Law (BRASIL, 2015), the official Brazilian rhetoric is aligned with the attempt to reconcile the medical and sociological perspectives of disability in the adoption of the biopsychosocial model. This last approach is close to what Carol Thomas (2008) recognizes as empirical aspects of the experience of disability - which are not directly social barriers but reveal the pragmatic and particular dimensions of the disability experience.

With the dissemination of documents, by United Nations bodies, in defense of tolerance and respect for diversity, there was a significant growth in the political-legal framework for inclusive education in Brazil (BRASIL, 1996; 2000; 2004; 2008; 2015). For UNESCO (2002), the concept of diversity is understood as a heritage of humanity and composes what is original and plural in human identities. Although recognition of the value of human diversity induces positivity in official discourse, this narrative conveys the illusory idea that there is symmetry between social groups and that, supposedly, broad tolerance is enough to break cultural tensions and promote world peace. In addition, the defense of diversity in its essentialist and naturalizing form maintains the status quo and the project of normality that is so often imagined to be fighting (SKLIAR; SOUZA, 2000).

Critical difference theory counters the simplistic notion of diversity to destabilize normality. In this case, it is not only subjects marked by stigmatized differences that gain visibility in the debate, but also those who are untouchable by the privilege of being the normal subject. In the context of education, the discussion about difference and identity seeks to denaturalize any value that stigmatizes a group or person, as well as questions the dominant position. This process begins with the deconstruction of the meanings involved in school relationships and pedagogical norms, didactic procedures, and power-knowledge relationships. The normative in school education benefits the attributes of non-disability and the profile of the average student - that is, the student predicted by the norm, excluding those who do not fit the aesthetic, learning, communication, behavior, and interaction standard (SILVA, 2019).

In this way, by highlighting the norm that guides (dis)adjusted bodies and minds in the commonplace, the recognition of difference, as a constituent of identities, becomes a powerful frame of reference for reflecting on the experience of disability. When referring to the issue of disability, diversity, and human differences, critical analysis is the way to understand the conceptual bases that underlie official discourses. Does the narrative of inclusion respond to the interests of different social groups or is it aligned with the project of normality? It is up to contemporary theories to denaturalize and politicize the categories of disability and difference to displace the legitimized normality – and untouched in the discourse of diversity –, since the norm is the root of the phenomenon called (in)exclusion.

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