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ARTICLE

The World Bank's educational agenda for people with disabilities and the Brazilian case

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the World Bank's educational agenda for people with disabilities, relating it to the general educational reform guidelines and the political program of the institution. Initially, relevant aspects of World Bank's history and its institutional configuration, its political program and the educational agenda of the entity are discussed. Then, World Bank's agenda for the education of people with disabilities is analyzed, based on the World Report on Disability, in an attempt to assess the extent to which this specific agenda converges with the World Bank's more general political program. The text also questions the recommendations of the World Report on Disability in the light of the Brazilian experience with regard to the institutionalization of social and educational rights of people with disabilities.

KEYWORDS:

educational reforms; special education; inclusive education; people with disabilities; human rights.

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A AGENDA EDUCACIONAL DO BANCO MUNDIAL PARA PESSOAS COM DEFICIÊNCIA E O CASO BRASILEIRO

RESUMO

Este artigo analisa a agenda educacional do Banco Mundial para pessoas com deficiência, relacionando-a às diretrizes gerais de reforma educacional e ao programa político da instituição. Inicialmente, discutem-se aspectos relevantes da história do Banco Mundial e de sua configuração institucional, seu programa político e a agenda educativa da entidade. Em seguida, analisa-se a agenda do Banco Mundial para a educação de pessoas com deficiência, com base no Relatório Mundial sobre a Deficiência, para avaliar em que medida essa agenda específica converge com o programa político mais geral do Banco Mundial. O texto também questiona as recomendações do Relatório Mundial sobre a Deficiência à luz da experiência brasileira no que diz respeito à institucionalização de direitos sociais e educacionais das pessoas com deficiência.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE:

reformas educacionais; educação especial; educação inclusiva; pessoas com deficiência; direitos humanos

LA AGENDA EDUCATIVA DEL BANCO MUNDIAL PARA LAS PERSONAS CON DISCAPACIDAD Y EL CASO BRASILEÑO

RESUMEN

El artículo analiza la agenda educativa del Banco Mundial para personas con discapacidad, relacionándola con las pautas generales de reforma educativa y el programa político de la institución. Inicialmente, se discuten aspectos relevantes de la historia del Banco Mundial y su configuración institucional, su programa político y la agenda educativa de la entidad. Luego, se analiza la agenda del Banco Mundial para la educación de las personas con discapacidad, basada en el Informe Mundial sobre Discapacidad, para evaluar en qué medida esta agenda específica converge con el programa político más general del Banco Mundial. El artículo también cuestiona las recomendaciones del Informe Mundial sobre Discapacidad a la luz de la experiencia brasileña con respecto a la institucionalización de los derechos sociales y educativos de las personas con discapacidad.

PALABRAS CLAVE:

reformas educativas; educación especial; educación inclusiva; personas con discapacidad; derechos humanos.

Having existed for more than seven decades, the World Bank (WB)[1] continues to cause controversy. During this period, the institution has gone through incremental changes which have expanded not only its size — jumping from less than 400 employees and 42 member states in 1946 to more than 12,000 employees and almost 190 member states in 2020 —, but also its mandate, becoming a very complex organization, different from its original format. The gradual growth of its loan portfolio was accompanied by the expansion of the areas in which it acts, which came to cover, in addition to the traditional sectors of infrastructure and energy, also economic policy, education, health, housing, environment, rural and urban development, public administration, governance and laws, and the construction and reconstruction of states. Strictly speaking, *all* activities linked to development have become objects of WB actions, which distinguishes it from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the specialized UN agencies. In Brazil, historically the institution's third largest client (behind only India and China) (World Bank, 2020, p. 23-27), the WB carries out intense activities under the auspices of the reform of public administration and sectorial policies (such as education), not only at the Federal level, but also with states and municipalities. To paint a picture of this scenario, from 1989 until July 2020, the WB carried out 324 financial operations for Brazil, of which 150 were contracted by the Union (46%), 152 by states (47%) and 22 by municipalities (7%). This reveals the complexity and the capillarity of WB's relations with the public authorities and political elites in the country.[2]

This text discusses WB's educational agenda for people with disabilities. It is organized around three central points: first, it presents and problematizes some significant aspects of the Bank's history and its configuration as a multilateral organization, necessary to understand its *modus operandi*; next, it deals with the process of the selective renovation and expansion of its policy program, around the mid-1990s, based on economic liberalization, the encouragement of broad

1 The WB consists of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), created alongside the International Monetary Fund in the 1944 Bretton Woods Conference, and the International Development Association (IDA), created in 1960. IBRD makes loans to middle income countries, obtaining funds in capital markets and lending to its clients in conditions similar to the international financial market (*hard loans*). The reserves for its operations are called general capital and are contributed by its member state in unequal proportions. IDA makes long term loans with low interest rates (*soft loans*) to countries with low *per capita* income, with little or no capacity to obtain loans in market conditions. Its main source of funding is voluntary contribution negotiations among donor countries every three years. While IBRD obtains a profit and is financially based on the international capital market, IDA depends on voluntary contributions from a few donor states to survive. The proportion from each donor involves intense negotiations with the others. Voting power in the WB is unequal and proportional to the capital invested by each member state, which is politically negotiated among the states. In an informal agreement in force since 1944, the WB president has always been a US citizen, usually indicated by the Treasury (see Pereira, 2010).

2 See: https://projects.worldbank.org/pt/projects-operations/projects-list?lang=pt&searchTerm=&countrycode_exact=BR. Accessed: 22 May 2020.

institutional reforms, and the focused relief of extreme poverty, to then understand what the entity's educational agenda consists of; finally, in greater detail, it analyzes the central lines of the Bank's agenda for the education of people with disability, based on the World Report on Disability (WRD), published in 2011, in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), with the aim of assessing to what extent this specific agenda converges with both the WB's more general political program and the more recent historical experience of the institutionalization of the education and social rights of disabled persons. All the discussion is based on documents from the institution and the Brazilian government, and relevant national and international legislation, as well as the specialized literature.

THE WORLD BANK AS A POLITICAL, INTELLECTUAL, AND FINANCIAL ACTOR

In theoretical and methodological terms, there are two important aspects in the discussion of the WB and its *modus operandi*. The first is related to the manner according to which we understand the relationship between the WB and its client states. In general, among the WB's critics from the left and right, this relationship is seen in a linear and unidirectional form, like mere external domination. This type of approach is not only insufficient, since it does not consider the two-way nature of the relationship between the different parties, but also mistaken, since it exempts from responsibility the local dominant classes and ruling elites. The perspective adopted here understands that the relationship of the WB with client states combines different forms of pressure and persuasion, both at an international and a national scale, through which are constructed more programmatic or pragmatic agreements and alliances (Gwin, 1997; Williams, 2008; Babb, 2009; Park and Vetterlein, 2010). In this sense, to understand this relationship, it is necessary to take into account at least four dimensions. First, all WB clients have to also be a member (and thus hold a certain quota of votes), but not every member is a client (in other words, eligible for loans). This means that the WB does not prescribe anything for the richest countries with greatest influence within and over the institution (such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, France, and Canada); on the contrary, the Bank suffers a vast amount of pressure from them, especially from the United States, to the extent that the latter sought to implement their foreign policy priorities through a multilateral institution which presented itself as "technical" and politically "neutral". Second, WB's relationship with client countries is not limited to governments and state agencies, but also involves private companies and civil society organizations (such as philanthropic-business foundations, non-governmental organizations, research institutions, consultancy companies, trade unions, academic niches, etc.). In third place, due to the inequality of structural power which marked international political economy, client states have very asymmetrical conditions amongst themselves for negotiating with the WB. Finally, in any case, a determined project or policy is always implemented by the state through agencies and instruments of power of public authorities, and not the WB, no matter how significant its influence.

The second relevant aspect is related to the role of the WB as a civil society organization, on a global and national scale. Essentially, the Bank is influential because it acts in privileged conditions, in the middle of the international development aid network, which involves national and global, public, private, non-governmental, philanthropic, and business agents. It is within this field that what is understood as "development" is disputed, as well as how to promote it, what is prioritized and what is not, which interests and visions should predominate and which should be left as secondary; in short, it is where the directions and contours of transnational development agenda are disputed (Goldman, 2005; Woods, 2006; Williams, 2012). In this field, agents, even though they differ in terms of power and prestige, interact with the WB in the sense of supporting, adapting, negotiating, and transmitting ideas, prescriptions and the institution's initiatives. In this relationship, WB's discourse and practices frequently provide arguments and resources to accommodate tensions among domestic political actors and legitimate certain positions. In fact, governments frequently use the recommendations or even the conditionalities built into WB loans to support the implementation of unpopular reforms,[3] at times even in a more radical way than the WB itself preaches. In other words, the effectiveness of WB's actions depends on the construction, both external and within national spaces, worldviews, alliances (whether more programmatic or more pragmatic) and mutual interests with social organizations, political elites, and class fractions, embedded both in civil society and the state apparatus.

The WB is part of the infrastructure of United States global power. From the political and financial point of view, the United States has always been the institution's largest and most influential shareholder. Relations with the United States were decisive for the growth and general configuration of WB's policies and practices. In exchange, the United States benefitted widely from WB's actions in economic and political terms, more than any other shareholder. However, this does not mean that the WB is a mere puppet of the United States; with its highly complex bureaucracy and almost 200 member states, it has its own organizational interests and means to relieve United States pressure. In any case, the United States used its own formal voting power, its enormous informal influence and its financial leverage to delimit the general parameters of the institution's action and its trajectory. From the end of the 1960s, due to the Vietnam War and the accumulation of criticism of

3 The report *A just adjustment*, released at the end of 2017, illustrates this aspect well (World Bank, 2017). Basically, the report advocates the argument that the Brazilian state spends a lot and badly, detailing what to cut from the public budget. For example, there is an entire chapter defending fees for public universities. Two years later, the WB released another report with great impact (World Bank, 2019), once again aimed at the amount spent on public employees and advocating a profound administrative reform, which would impact wages, careers and the organization of the federal public service. In both cases, the WB documents were used by the federal government, the business media and business entities in the public dispute over how the fiscal adjustment should be done, and about which sectors and social groups should bear the cost of austerity, feeding a determined reading about what are the main priorities and problems in the country.

international development aid — denounced in the United States by the left as "imperialist", and, by the right, as "expensive and ineffective" for maintaining the domination —, this relationship came to increasingly involve the American Congress, responsible for defining how much the country periodically contributes to the WB. Until then, United States policy for the WB had been defined by the Treasury and the State Department, with the Congress assuming a passive role. Rising activism by Congress in relation to this opened spaces and opportunities for political groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to act within the Legislature, with the aim of influencing the WB in social and environmental questions (Wade, 1996; Gwin, 1997; Babb, 2009). Since then, the Congress came to be the target of pressure and agreements among various agents interested in influencing US policy towards the WB, also causing it to open negotiations and partnerships with the universe of civil society organizations, many of which were linked to education.

The financial nature of the WB distinguishes it from the United Nations' specialized agencies — as is the case of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), for example —, which lack financial stability and autonomy. The WB does not lack monetary resources, and this potentializes its influence enormously. However, the Bank is not only a lender, but also, and fundamentally, a political and intellectual actor, combining the granting of loans with advice and technical assistance to governments, as well as the vast intellectual production, both its own or in partnership with other institutions, with the proposal of influencing decision-making on national and global development policies. Unlike a private bank, whose existence is aimed at the maximization of profit, the WB uses loans as instruments to spread and institutionalize ideas and prescriptions about what to do in terms of public policy issues.

The intellectual dimension has been seen as the main "comparative advantage" of the WB, and is crucial for its *modus operandi*. Becoming a "knowledge bank" — a strategy initiated in the mid-1990s — implied organizing itself as a global repository of experience and knowledge about development, an institution capable of distilling complex knowledge in simple formats and disseminating it. More than any other multilateral institution, the WB found itself well positioned to connect research, policy analysis, practical experience, training services, technical support, and a capacity for persuasion and convincing (World Bank, 2010, 2011b). As Van Waeyenberge and Fine have noted (2011), the WB's action expanded to create a global system for the administration of knowledge about development, linked to loans granted according to the performance of the country in terms of "good policies" (the control of inflation, primary surplus, commercial opening, "good governance" among the public and private sectors, etc.), gauged according to the WB's own indicators.

Although, as an institution, the WB cultivates the appearance of technical neutrality, the research it does is essentially highly normative. Generally speaking, pressurized by the need to make loans — after all, the institution lives on this, since money is the preferential vehicle of its political and intellectual influence —, the

WB carries out research which actually legitimates its political program and its financial priorities. There are, thus, structural factors which constraint and frame the research activity it carries out. As Stern and Ferreira (1997, p. 594) have argued: "In an operations-oriented institution […] researchers are not free to follow intellectual inspiration. They are under constraints of designated priorities and of an apparent need to be immediately useful to operations".

There is also the fact that the majority of WB publications tend to be based on the Bank's own sources, funded or promoted by it. An extensive evaluation of this production, coordinated by Angus Deaton and paid for by the WB itself, concluded that the institution constituted a case of acute narcissism, which at times reached the level of "parody" (Deaton *et al.*, 2006, p. 73). Moreover, the same assessment was used to "proselytize WB policies, frequently without adopting a balanced vision of the evidence and without expressing adequate skepticism" (Deaton *et al.*, 2006, p. 6).

Furthermore, there is a disciplinary bias in favor of the Economics which molds all of the WB's research. The overwhelming majority of the research team consists of economists who mainly come from the Departments of Economics of elite universities in the United States and, to a lesser extent, the United Kingdom (Wade, 1996; Stern and Ferreira, 1997; Broad, 2006). Even non-economists are pressured to adapt their ideas to the theoretical and methodological language of neoclassical monoeconomics. According to this perspective, the social world (*i.e.*, non-economic and non-individual) tends to be reduced to the economic ("market imperfections") and the economic, in turn, tends to be reduced to the individual (Van Waeyenberge and Fine, 2011). The research which the WB carries out appears socially as a technical activity, based on more consistent empirical evidence and on accumulated experience. In practice, the Bank's intellectual activity is not submitted to the rules of the scientific field, governed by blind peer review, the plurality of approaches, the grounding on evidence, and the freedom to epistemologically question the actual scientific activity (Pereira, 2014).

POLITICAL PROGRAM AND THE EDUCATION REFORM AGENDA

During the 1990s, WB's political agenda went through a process of renovation and expansion, which maintained the centrality of privatization, the permanent fiscal adjustment and economic liberalization, but now covered the economy as a whole, the commodification of nature, the (re)organization of the state and civil society, as well as the construction of individual subjectivity itself, with the aim of implementing *competitiveness* as an imperative and central value of human sociability (Cammack, 2004; Williams, 2008; Dardot and Laval, 2016). At the same time, the "fight against extreme poverty" was incorporated as a slogan by the institution, translated into temporary relief programs (typical of the end of the 1980s and the entire 1990s, but still in force) and into transitory and conditioned income transfer programs (disseminated during the 2000s), which were used as connected auxiliary liberalization mechanisms of national economies (Craig and Porter, 2006; Rückert, 2010; Babb, 2013). The forms by which this program was translated into WB operations negotiated with client states varied profoundly, in accordance with the case.

Macroeconomic adjustment programs, pushed by the WB since 1980 in these countries, prescribed a reconfiguration of social policies subordinated to fiscal austerity, including education. Since the publication of the 1980 World Development Report, the WB has conceived education (as well as health) as a key variable in the reduction of extreme poverty, through the improvement of the "human capital" (competitiveness) of individuals in the labor market (World Bank, 1980). With variations between countries, the educational reform agenda prescribed by the WB since then was structured with systemic pretensions and concentrated on the following points:

- focus of public expenditure on the poorest segments of the population and basic education, to the detriment of other social groups and educational levels;
- administrative decentralization of systems;
- centralization of the definition of the curricular matrix;
- centralization of assessment, based on quantifiable and comparable learning indicators (nationally and internationally);
- exaltation of the role of the private sector (both philanthropic and profit-making);
- conversion of education into a sector of competitive services (World Bank, 1996, 1997, 2011a, 2018; Bonal, 2002; Robertson, 2012; Robertson and Verger, 2012).

It is important to consider that, in parallel, this education agenda was organized, since 1990, assuming the slogan of "education for all" as its central axis, which proposed a multilateral compromise (and, thus, one that went much beyond the WB) of universalizing access to basic education for the poorest sectors of developing countries, as announced in the World Declaration on Education for All.[4] A few years later, in 1994, the World Conference on Special Educational Necessities: Access and Quality introduced in the international debate the concept of "inclusive education", synthesized in the well-known Salamanca Declaration (ONU, 1994). Although the philosophical premises of this declaration covered a broad public, such as children from remote or nomadic populations, street children, disabled people and other minority groups excluded from access to education, in Brazil and various other countries the document was used as the basis for educational policies for access to basic education for people with disabilities. From the point of view of the WB, the target of "education for all" was in line with the educational reform program being pushed by the institution, centered on the improvement of human capital and the reduction of extreme poverty. Other non-financial multilateral organizations, such as UNESCO, more permeable to the criticisms of humanitarian organizations and the defense of public education, as well as criticisms of social democratic European governments, had to deal with pressures (and continues to do so) which the WB did not suffer with, or did so with much less intensity.

4 Started after the Jomtien Conference (Thailand), held in 1990, the multilateral partnership Education For All is coordinated by UNESCO and its main objective is to promote the universalization of basic education. It has a direct relationship with the UN's Millennium Development Goals, approved by almost 200 countries.

For whatever reason, 20 years after Jomtien, the WB (2011a) made an inflection in its educational agenda and stopped advocating universalization of access, replacing it with universalization of learning. In this new formulation, in operation since then World Bank, 2018), the gap between access and learning was seen as the great obstacle to the reduction of poverty and the increase in productivity in developing countries. To overcome this, the agenda of educational reform preached by the entity established four main directives.

The first consists of the promotion of complementarity between state and market, *i.e.*, the idea that the state, once "efficient" and "effective", fulfills a role that is necessary for the proper functioning of the market, and, for that reason, has to act as a "facilitator" and "partner" of the private sector. Furthermore, the WB also spoke more of "good governance" among public and private agents than of "decentralization". It should be noted that this formulation surpasses the hyper-marketized focus of the 1980s, when the dominant discourse preached "more market, less state". As a "partner", the state should never figure as the exclusive or principal provider of education, at the same time that the public system should internalize market principles in its operations, in accordance with New Public Management (NPM) (Verger and Normand, 2015; Dardot and Laval, 2016). In other words, the neoliberalization of the state, of which NPM is a central part, takes on the reconstruction of the state, not only at the service of companies, but of itself as an enterprise at the service of companies.

Next, the second directive establishes the goal of converting education into an effectively globalized services sector. This means, on one hand, the need to intertwine private agents (philanthropic and business) in the direct administration of the educational system (via private consultants and public-private partnerships); on the other hand, it means opening the sector to global mercantile competition, through legal changes which eliminate obstacles and guarantee judicial security to international investors.

Finally, the third directive emphasizes the need to focus public expenditure even more on the poorest of the poor, in order to provide them with a minimum educational package.

Finally, the WB reaffirmed the necessity for the payment of fees ("cost-recovery") whenever possible, above all in public higher level education.

Research both in and outside Brazil (Laval, 2004; Mello, 2012; Verger, Novelli and Altinyelken, 2012; Ball, 2014; Verger and Normand, 2015; Mundy *et al.*, 2016; Freitas, 2018) has shown that these arguments have been incorporated by a series of public teaching networks, above all via the contracting of business foundations and philanthropic institutions. Historically, in the case of Special Education, the most traditional philanthropic institutions (such as the *Associação de Pais e Amigos dos Excepcionais* — APAE) dispute with public education the condition of preferential place of schooling for disabled people, as well as act directly and indirectly in the drafting of public policies for this social group (Laplane, Caiado and Kassar, 2016; Bezerra, 2017; Paiva, 2017).

THE WORLD REPORT ON DISABILITY IN LIGHT OF THE BRAZILIAN CASE

The previous discussion was necessary in order to understand that the WB's educational agenda for persons with disabilities is part of this political program. The most relevant document to discuss this specific question is the World Report on Disability (WRD). Published in 2011 in partnership with WHO, it constitutes the most influential and ambitious document on a global scale. The figures related to it are impressive. Drafting it was a three years process, involving around 380 editors, consultants and proofreaders from 74 countries, belonging to WHO and the WB, as well as numerous external consultants. More than 330 pages long, the nine chapters cover the meanings of disability (Chapter 1), its quantification (Chapter 2), medical assistance in general for disabled people (Chapter 3), rehabilitation (Chapter 4), assistance and support services (Chapter 5), facilitating environments (Chapter 6), education (Chapter 7), work and employment (Chapter 8), and, finally, recommendations for "interested parties" (Chapter 9). Translated into Portuguese in 2012 by the state government of São Paulo (during the administration of Geraldo Alckmin),[5] the report offers a more encompassing panorama on disability and brings together a set of orientations for "interested parties" (multilateral organizations, states, companies, NGOs, people with disabilities and their relatives) in order to promote health, educational inclusion and the insertion in the labor force of a contingent estimated, in 2010, at one billion people with some disability (15% of the global population), of whom around 200 million have "very significant functional difficulties" (WHO-WB, 2011).

WRD adopted as a directive the 2007 International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), from which the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities originated, which included the theme of disability within the framework of *human rights*. It is important to signal that this Declaration has been ratified by 181 countries, and, out of the richest countries, only the United States has not signed (Artiles and Kozleski, 1919).[6] In Brazil, CRPD and its Optional Protocol were promulgated by Federal Decree no. 6.949/2009, gaining the status of a Constitutional Amendment in accordance with §3º of article 5º of the 1988 Constitution. Similarly, in 2015, the Brazilian Inclusion Law (*Lei Brasileira de Inclusão* — BIL), or, as it is also known, the Statute of Persons with Disabilities, came into effect.

It should be noted that, historically, the WB sought to avoid the human rights question, under the argument that its statutes (*Articles of Agreement*) prohibited it from interfering in countries' internal political matters. After all, according to this discourse, the WB is an economic, technical, and impartial organization (Swedberg,

5 Historically, the Brazilian Social Democrat Party (PSDB) administrations have built close partnership with the WB, as well as recruiting technical staff from the WB for relevant people, both in the federal and state/municipal spheres.

6 For further information on CRPD and its ratification, see: https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-15&chapter=4&clang=_en. Access on: May 21, 2020.

1986). On the other hand, avoiding the issue was fundamental in order to dodge the responsibility for violations of human rights (whether economic, social, cultural, or environmental) attributed to the structural adjustment programs and development megaprojects funded by the institution (Díaz, 2013). However, to the extent that human rights became judicial goods protected by international law, multilateral financial institutions had to use them as a reference to some extent. In the case of the WB, this reference is *indirect* and *selective*, in the sense that, conventionally, it became unconventional to think of development without human rights, and vice-versa. On the other hand, to the extent that the theme of human rights was incorporated by these institutions, it was also dehydrated of its aspects that were potentially more critical of neoliberalism and capitalism, resulting in a type of "new humanitarianism" which accommodated to the free market (Gill and Schlund-Vials, 2014).

Returning to the WRD, disability is not seen as purely medical or social. According to the *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* (ICF), the report "understands functioning and disability as a dynamic interaction between health conditions and contextual factors, both personal and environmental". Actually, the WRD proposes to establish a "workable compromise between medical and social models", which it calls the "biological-psychic-social model." Understanding disability not as a personal attribute, but as a result of social interaction, it states that "inaccessible environments create disability by creating barriers to participation and inclusion" (WHO-WB, 2011, p. 4).

The understanding of the phenomenon of disability via a social and rights-based model meant a considerable conceptual advance, since it removed the focus from people's disabilities and centered the debate on their social roles and possibilities. As Diniz, Barbosa and Santos (2009) have argued, this perspective moved the theme of disabilities from domestic spaces to public life, legitimating it as a subject no longer restricted to private life or family care, but rather as a question of justice.

The WRD is very rich in methodological considerations about the difficulties of constructing a global panorama, due to insufficiency, precariousness, and the lack of standardization of statistics among different countries, as well as the fact that there is no universally accepted definition of "disability". Having made these reservations, the report draws on two large databases: the World Health Survey (2002–2004)[7] and the Global Burden of Disease (2004), both from WHO. Although these are not directly comparable, since distinct methodologies are adopted, they are taken as references which, given the due reservations, are more complementary than exclusionary.

One of the most interesting aspects of WRD is the discussion on how social inequalities cause health and disability problems. In effect, disability is seen as a mixture of a biological condition and social phenomenon, which is manifested in immense diversity and encompasses factors such as gender, age, income, ethnicity, sexuality, cultural inheritance, and educational capital. In other words, the relations of

7 This involves the largest multinational household survey ever carried out. It used a unique set of questions, based on the ICF conceptual model. It covered 70 countries, of which 59 (64% of the global population at the time) had weighted data.

inequality which structure social life also structure the social experience of disability. For this reason, individuals with the same disability can have completely distinct social experiences. The biological existence of disability does not respond to the way society and public authorities treat disabled individuals, and neither do cultural and attitudinal barriers erase the biological condition. According to the report, disability is understood as a multidimensional social experience which is manifested within a continuum of greater and lesser difficulties of *functionality*. There is also a strong consideration of disability as a question of *development*, due to its relationship with poverty. In this sense, it states that "disability may increase the risk of poverty, and poverty may increase the risk of disability" (WHO-WB, 2011, p. 10).

The WRD calls for attention to the polysemy of terms such as "special educational needs", "inclusive education" and "special education" at an international scale. Nevertheless, it emphasizes that there is a tendency in considering that they encompass broader public than people with disabilities, with the necessities arising out of the resulting disadvantages of gender, ethnicity, war, trauma or orphanhood (WHO-WB, 2011, p. 209).

This polysemy is also present in Brazilian debates. The term "special educational needs" is very generic and depends on conditions of physical and curricular accessibility — the central axis of the social model — made available to people with disabilities. In other words, all "special educational needs" are much more related to attitudinal, physical, and curricular barriers imposed on people with disabilities than to their organic condition, as is evident in the WRD.

In the case of "inclusive education", many understand it as a synonym of Special Education. According to the National Policy of Special Education from an Inclusive Perspective (Brasil, 2008), Special Education is a modality of teaching transversal to all levels, stages, and education modalities, which offers Specialized Educational Assistance (*Atendimento Educacional Especializado* — AEE),[8] providing specific resources and services, as well as guidance about its use in the teaching and learning process in common classes of regular teaching.[9] However, as proposed by Pletsch (2020), not only it is legitimate, but it is also necessary to consider Special Education as an area for the production of interdisciplinary knowledge about the development of people with disabilities. The proposal of inclusive education consists of a public policy which assumes diverse configurations, through interaction between international orientations and commitments and their local institutional translations. In this direction, it takes on the commitment to human rights and full citizenship as a mark, based "on the recognition of differences and participation in subjects" (Brasil, 2008, p. 6). This implies, in Pletsch's interpretation (2020), not only of the guarantee of access to

8 AEE is offered in multifunctional resource rooms outside school hours, in a complementary form for students with disabilities and global development disturbances, and a supplementary form for gifted students.

9 In Brazil, when legally authorized by the relevant bodies, special (segregated) schools are part of the teaching system and are considered regular schools. For this reason, the term "common schools from the regular network" is used to demarcate the reference to non-segregated schools.

education, but also the commitment to the full development of individuals, respect for cognitive plurality, and the valorization of coexistence with cultural diversity.

In the Brazilian case, inclusive educational policies, especially those established after 2008, expanded in an unprecedented and considerable manner the access of people with disabilities to the public educational system, which benefitted the learning and development of the majority of this population (Souza, 2013; Mendes, Pletsch and Hostins, 2019). According to the 2019 School Census, 1,3 million students with disabilities, global development disturbances, and/or gifted students were studying in (inclusive) common classes or exclusive special classes, which represents an increase of 34% in relation to 2015. 92% of these were registered in common classes in regular teaching, most of them in the public teaching system (Brasil, 2019). By way of contrast, in 2001, 59% of registrations were in special schools, most of which were philanthropic (Brasil, 2001).

In pedagogical terms, the WRD advocates the adoption of student-centered methodologies, which recognize that individuals have specific modes of learning and capacities. Not by chance, the report adopts Amartya Sen's approach (1999) to human capacities, highlighting the role that the state and all the other "interested parties" can or should encourage the educational inclusion of people with disabilities in common schools from the regular teaching network. The meaning of inclusion is clear: individuals have to be educated in progressively "less restrictive" environments, in which systemic (divided ministerial responsibility; absence or insufficiency of legislation and/or public policies; insufficient or inadequate resources), school (non-adapted curriculum and pedagogy; inadequate teacher training; physical barriers), and attitudinal barriers (labelling, stigma, violence, bullying and abuses) are removed or minimized.

Inclusion in common schools from the regular network is seen as a cheaper educational form than education in specialized or segregated institutions, and it is also in harmony with the rights of coexistence, integration, and the dignity of people with disabilities. Therefore, alongside the humanitarian argument, is an economic argument. It is interesting to note that the WRD recognizes that "ensuring children with disabilities are able to access the same standard of education as their peers often requires increased financing", at the same time that it affirms that "inclusive settings are more cost-effective" (WHO-WB, 2011, p. 220). In other words, by definition, inclusion costs less than segregation, and, even when there is an increase in *per capita* cost, the expenditure is more efficient (better cost/benefit relationship).

In Brazil, the debate about the funding of Special Education and the cost of inclusion has been going on for a long time (Arruda, Kassar and Santos, 2006). The relationship between the public sector and philanthropic institutions of Special Education has not always been transparent in relation to public expenditure in the agreements with these institutions, which gain space to the extent that the universal provisions of services by the state retreats (Kassar, 2001).[10]

10 Of relevance here is the work of the Network of Researchers on the Funding of Special Education, who have been producing a series of studies on public investments in the education of disabled persons in Brazil. Available at: http://www.redefineesp.fe.usp.br/. Access on: June 20, 2020.

In relation to the funding of school inclusion, the WRD highlights that some countries fund schools, the specific demands of institutions (material, training, operational support), or individuals directly. According to the report, inclusion has greater chances of success when school funding is decentralized, budgets are delegated to the local level, and funds are based on the total number of registrations (WHO-WB, 2011, p. 220). It can be noted that, in the Brazilian case, the arrangement followed differs from the recommendations of the report, since the registration of a disabled student in a common class in the regular teaching network with the specialized support of the Specialized Educational Assistance (AEE) counts as dual registration. In other words, the same student is registered twice, once in a common class and another time in AEE, which duplicates the *per capita* expenditure. In this sense, the Brazilian experience goes against what is advocated by the WRD, which is based on the normative primacy of the reduction of expenditure per beneficiary.

In the educational sphere, the WRD makes a series of generic recommendations to governments and "interested parties", including:

- preparation of clear national policies (with the provision of well-delimited laws, responsibilities, and resources);
- construction of monitoring and assessment systems, investment in infrastructure, and universalization of minimum standards of accessibility and transport;
- improvement in teacher training, above all in the rural environment;
- adoption of individualized educational plans and teamwork in classrooms;
- provision of specialized services and support to teachers where necessary;
- *refrainment from building more special schools* and establishing collaboration between common and special schools as a form of *transition*;
- expansion of the participation of all "interested parties".

The report is emphatic in affirming that educational inclusion plays a decisive role in the insertion of people with disabilities in the labor market, improving their "human capital", understood as the stock of economically valued knowledge which is incorporated by the individual, a private good which provides remuneration to the individual who possesses it. Human capital is considered important to:

- break the connection between disability and poverty;
- maximize the use of human resources in productive work;
- promote human dignity and social cohesion.

According to the report, the number of people in productive age with disabilities tends to increase — due to chronic conditions of health, more structured rehabilitation services, and increased life expectancy —, for which reason a set of measures is necessary to expand the use of this labor force and, thus, "relieve" the expenditure of public systems of social protection for these individuals, especially in countries where the level of protection is highest. In countries where this level is low, the report recommends the inclusion of people with disabilities in social protection programs, but with "stimuli" for those who seek work in the market (*e.g.*, the gradual reduction of benefits, and not their loss, when employment is found, with the possibility of the return of the benefit if employment is lost) (WHO-WB, 2011).

As well as advocating the revision of social protection systems, the WRD strongly emphasized the need to change the predominant attitude of employers, in order to remove prejudice that prevents the hiring of people with disabilities. This would involve clarification campaigns, but also different material incentives. Here, the central point is that the report puts greater weight on antidiscrimination laws than on legal quotas, arguing that "overprotection" in labor laws can lead employers to see workers with disabilities as less productive and more expensive; thus, less desirable.[11]

Here, the Brazilian case goes in the contrary direction to the one preached by the report. In1991, the country introduced legal quotas for people with disabilities, which apply to companies with more than 100 employees (Law no. 8.213/1991). Redig and Glat (2017) showed the fragilities of the enforcement of this legislation, above all in the case of people with intellectual disabilities (more than half the population with disabilities in Brazil). According to them, the main problem consists in guaranteeing the professional qualification of people with disabilities. In addition, the Brazilian Inclusion Law (Brasil, 2015, seção III, art. 37) stipulates that employers will be responsible for the "provision of individualized supports which meet the specific needs of people with disabilities, including the provision of assistive technology supports for people with disabilities, facilitative agents, and support in the work environment".

There also exists the Continuing Benefit Program (*Benefício de Prestação Continuada* — BPC), stipulated in the 1988 Constitution and in the Basic Social Assistance Law (*Lei Orgânica da Assistência Social* — LOAS). This benefit of one minimum wage per month is aimed at people with disabilities who do not have the means to guarantee their subsistence or a monthly family income of less than 25% of the minimum wage. In 2007, the BPC at School program was created, with the aim of stimulating the schooling of these people. This program accompanies and monitors beneficiaries in school, which resulted in all of them frequenting the school universe (many for the first time) in less than a decade Sobrinho, Cunha and Pantaleão, 2018). This represents an important achievement in the issue of the educational rights of this social group.

Finally, it should be highlighted that the WRD reiterates central points of the Bank's institution reform agenda as the path to improve the efficiency of resources and the effectiveness of results of services necessary for educational and laboral inclusion. In its own terms: "contracting out service provision, fostering

11 The Employers'Forum on Disability in the United Kingdom was decisive in pushing this vision which is used as a reference in the WRD. This non-profit organization was created in the 1980s and was funded by around four hundred members, including more than one hundred mega-corporations (such as Shell, HSBC, Bank of America, Merrill Lynch, American Express, Microsoft, etc.). Its objective was to stimulate employers to hire disabled people or do business with them. It played a key role in the lobby which overturned the quota law and drafted an anti-discrimination law in that country, considered by employers as much less burdensome. Recently the organization changed its name to the Business Disability Forum). Available from: https://businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/. Access on: June 20, 2020.

public-private partnerships, notably with non-profit organizations, and devolving budgets to persons with disabilities for consumer-directed care can contribute to better service provision" (WHO-WB, 2011, p. 266).

It is interesting to note that this point is included in the recent Decree no. 10.502, dated 30 September 2020, from the Jair Bolsonaro administration, which created the National Special Education Policy: Equitable, Inclusive, and with Learning Throughout Life (Brasil, 2020). Numerous criticisms of the decree have been made by researchers, scientific associations, organizations of families of people with disabilities, members of congress, and sectors of the Federal Prosecution Service (Abrasco, 2020; Ampid, 2020; Anped-Abpee, 2020), of which two aspects in particular are important. The first is that this new legislation ruptures with the previous one, in force since 2008, by revaluing segregation through special schools — the majority of which in Brazil are private philanthropic entities funded with public resources. Since their creation in the 1950s, these entities have exercised political protagonism in the definition of the *preferential* place for the schooling of people with disabilities, disputing resources with public education through well-organized lobbies. This trajectory underwent an inflection with the 2008 Special Education Policy in the Perspective of Inclusive Education, put into practice by the administration of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003–2010) and expanded by the Dilma Rousseff administration (2011–2016). In other words, since the WRD recommends that no more special schools be constructed, it can be concluded that the position of the current Brazilian government goes in the opposite direction. The second aspect is related to the reduction of the role of the state as the provider of education to people with disabilities, to the extent that the new federal policy created the primacy of the family in the choice of this type of education to be offered to their children, according to the neoliberal discourse of the sovereignty of the consumer in freely choosing the best service provider (Silva *et al.*, 2020).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The educational agenda of the WB, which results from its broader neoliberal political program, has expanded since the 1990s, and advocates the following aspects:

- systemic marker orientation and diffusion of the commodity form in all areas of education;
- colonization of public educational administration by Economics and business models (New Public Management, managerialism, etc.);
- diversification of providers of public services in education beyond the state;
- elimination of sectorial restrictions to full competition between national and foreign private actors;
- weak state regulation of business responsibilities in the educational sector and strong judicial-institutional protection of the rights of capital;
- privatization "within" the state through various types of educational public-private partnerships;

- formatting of basic education as a package of minimum knowledge focused on the poorest segments of the population.

Fundamentally, this agenda drives the advance of the commercialization of education at all levels of teaching, at the same time that it evokes the idea of "inclusive education" as a palatable label for the dismantling of universal public education. "Inclusive education" configures a politically disputed idea and its local translation into public policies has always been the subject of conflicts and negotiations between actors with distinct visions and interests, with the WB notably being one of them.

Regarding the educational agenda for people with disabilities, the WRD is structured by economic considerations within a broader tone of "promotion of development". Disability is considered within a continuum of the lesser to greater *functionality* of individuals, according to the concept of human capital. This involves seeing the functionality of individuals as a labor force for capital. On the other hand, considerations of a humanitarian order of people with disabilities (such as autonomy, dignity, equality and liberty) places the discussion of their inclusion in the field of *human rights*, which, contradictorily, opens space to question the economistic premises of the actual inclusion proposed by the WRD. Historically, the WB has sought to sidestep the question of human rights, in order to avoid criticisms of the socially regressive impacts of its economic agenda.

The fact is that, in the political sphere, the linking of the WB with WHO, more porous to pressures of this type, appears to have been decisive to push it into dealing with this theme. While there exists a "new humanitarianism" which is consistent with economic liberalization, it is also true that the human rights agenda is polysemic and cut across by various disputes, all the more so in a world of growing inequalities of wealth and power within and between nations. Thus, in terms of conceptions of development, there exists a contradiction between the metapolicy of the conversion of education into a commodity and the idea of education as a human right and transformative activity of social life, as there is a contradiction between the "inclusion" of people with disabilities thought of in terms of functionality and human capital and the progressive ideal of the universalization of human rights.

These contradictions can be observed when the WRD is read in light of the Brazilian experience of the last 20 years. At the same time that there was a defense of inclusion in a neoliberal form, following an economicist orientation aimed at the formation of human capital for the market, there was also a humanist orientation, centered on the defense of the social, economic, cultural, and civic rights of people with disabilities. The accelerated and significant process of inclusion in common classes in public education perhaps does not have a parallel in the international reality, even reaching third level (at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels) through the reservation of places (Brasil, 2016), which is distinct in the Brazilian experience. Likewise, the dual funding per included student was a Brazilian innovation, going in an opposite direction to what is preached by the WB, which is centered on the reduction of expenditure per student with inclusion. The advances achieved in the country were fundamental to ensure the access of people with disabilities to public education, but the right to learning is still a pending construction.

In this sense, the challenges raised for people with disabilities do not substantially differ from those raised for the public education of the majority of the population.

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