

Segregate or include? Advocacy coalitions, ideas, and changes in special education in Brazil

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This article examines the changes in education for people with disabilities (PwD) in Brazil, arising from the dissemination of ideas and government actions that introduced the perspective of inclusion. Based on the advocacy coalition framework, we analyzed the national special education subsystem (SES), the advocacy coalitions that integrate the SES, the beliefs in dispute, and the factors that explain the changes observed in the sector. This case study included historical reconstruction, document analysis, literature review and secondary data collection. The results identified the existence of two coalitions in the subsystem: specialized and exclusive care (coalition 1) and inclusive education (coalition 2). The first was dominant between 1973 and 2002, and the second emerged in the 2000s, becoming hegemonic in 2008 with the promulgation of the National Policy for Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education. It was also found that coalition 1 is guided by the separation of students according to types of disability and learning abilities, emphasizing the importance of specialized clinical care and special schools. On the other hand, coalition 2 conceives that everyone is capable of learning, especially when inserted in standard classes of regular schools, within inclusive systems. As explanatory factors of the changes in the SES, exogenous variables stood out, particularly the changes in the Brazilian federal government in 2003, the worldwide dissemination of the inclusive education conceptions – reaching the education subsystems, and the feedback of public policies from the SES and other sectors.

Keywords: public policy; special education; inclusive education; advocacy coalition framework.

Segregar ou incluir? Coalizões de defesa, ideias e mudanças na educação especial do Brasil

O artigo examina as mudanças na escolarização das pessoas com deficiência (PcD) no Brasil, advindas da difusão de ideias e ações governamentais que introduziram a perspectiva da inclusão na educação especial. Com base na teoria das coalizões de defesa, analisaram-se o subsistema nacional de educação especial (SEE), as coalizões de defesa que o integram e as crenças em disputa, além dos fatores elucidativos das modificações observadas no setor. Trata-se de um estudo de caso que abrangeu reconstrução histórica, análise documental, revisão bibliográfica e levantamento de dados secundários. Entre os resultados, identificaram-se duas coalizões no subsistema: a do atendimento exclusivo (coalizão 1) e a da educação inclusiva (coalizão 2). A primeira foi dominante entre 1973 e 2002, e a segunda surgiu na década de 2000, tornando-se hegemônica em 2008, com a promulgação da Política Nacional de Educação Especial na Perspectiva da Educação Inclusiva. Também se verificou que a coalizão 1 se pauta na separação dos estudantes conforme os tipos de deficiência e capacidades de aprendizagem, enfatizando a importância do atendimento clínico especializado e das escolas especiais. Em contrapartida, a coalizão 2 concebe que todos são capazes de aprender, sobretudo quando inseridos em classes comuns de escolas regulares, dentro de sistemas inclusivos. Como fatores explicativos das mudanças no SEE, sobressaíram as variáveis exógenas, principalmente a mudança do governo federal em 2003, a disseminação mundial e nos subsistemas de concepções sobre educação inclusiva, além do *feedback* de políticas públicas do SEE e de outros setores.

Palavras-chave: políticas públicas; educação especial; educação inclusiva; teoria das coalizões de defesa.

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¿Segregar o incluir? Coaliciones de defensa, ideas y cambios en la educación especial en Brasil

El artículo examina los cambios en la educación de las personas con discapacidad (PwD) en Brasil, derivados de la difusión de ideas y acciones gubernamentales que introdujeron la perspectiva de la inclusión en la educación especial. Con base en la teoría de coaliciones de defensa, se analizó el subsistema nacional de educación especial (SEE), las coaliciones de defensa que lo integran y las creencias en disputa, además de los factores que explican los cambios observados en el sector. Se trata de un estudio de caso que incluyó reconstrucción histórica, análisis documental, revisión de literatura y recolección de datos secundarios. Entre los resultados se identificó la existencia de dos coaliciones en el subsistema: atención exclusiva (coalición 1) y educación inclusiva (coalición 2). La primera fue dominante entre 1973 y 2002 y la segunda surgió en la década de 2000, volviéndose hegemónica en 2008, con la promulgación de la Política Nacional de Educación Especial desde la Perspectiva de la Educación Inclusiva. También se encontró que la coalición 1 se guía por la separación de los estudiantes según los tipos de discapacidad y habilidades de aprendizaje, enfatizando la importancia de la atención clínica especializada y de las escuelas especiales. Por otro lado, la coalición 2 concibe que todos son capaces de aprender, especialmente cuando se insertan en clases comunes de escuelas regulares, dentro de sistemas inclusivos. Como factores explicativos de los cambios en el SEE, se destacaron las variables exógenas, principalmente: el cambio en el gobierno federal en 2003, la difusión mundial y en los subsistemas de concepciones sobre educación inclusiva, además del *feedback* de las políticas públicas del SEE y de otros sectores.

Palabras clave: políticas públicas; educación especial; educación inclusiva; teoría de la coalición de defensa.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The creation of the *Imperial Instituto dos Meninos Cegos* (Imperial Institute of the Blind Boys) in 1854 and the *Imperial Instituto dos Surdos-Mudos* (Imperial Institute of the Deaf-Mute) in 1857, both in Rio de Janeiro, marked the beginning of special education in Brazil, which was the pioneer in Latin America to have spaces dedicated to educating people with disabilities (PwD). The 20th century witnessed the spread of private institutions, traditionally philanthropic, catering to specific types of disability, such as *Sociedade Pestalozzi* (Pestalozzi Society), in 1926; *Associação de Assistência à Criança Defeituosa* (Association for Assistance to Children with Disabilities), in 1950; *Associações de Pais e Amigos dos Excepcionais* – APAES (Associations of Parents and Friends of People with Disabilities), in 1954; and *Associação Brasileira Beneficente de Reabilitação* (Brazilian Beneficent Association for Rehabilitation), in 1954.

Between the 1960s and 1970s, during Brazil's civil-military dictatorship, the country had two education laws (Lei nº 4.024, de 20 de dezembro de 1961; Lei nº 5.692, de 11 de agosto de 1971) addressing the issue of students with disabilities in the regular education system¹. During this period, two documents – a communication from the Federal Council of Education and a letter from the

¹ Regular education system here refers to the education offered by Brazilian public schools in all stages of basic education: pre-school (0-6 years), elementary (6-15 years), and high school (15-18 years) (Lei nº 9.394, de 20 de dezembro de 1996).

president of the National Federation of APAES – requested the inclusion of PwD in educational policies, and the issue entered the governmental agenda.

A mark of the period was the creation, in 1972, of a task force responsible for formulating policies on the education of PwD. The group prepared a report encouraging the creation of an agency responsible for educational assistance to these students in the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC). In 1973, the National Center for Special Education (CENESP) was created, implementing two measures: the extinction of national campaigns for the blind and people with intellectual disability (education and rehabilitation) and the inclusion of two organizations on its board – *Instituto Benjamim Constant* and *Instituto Nacional de Surdos* (National Institute for the Deaf). However, private institutions have remained the main providers of specialized services and central actors in PwD policies.

During the first civil government post-dictatorship, in 1986, CENESP was transformed into the Special Education Secretariat (SEESP)², hosted by the MEC. The secretariat formed an advisory council with representatives of specialized institutions to participate in Brazil's National Constituent Assembly.

The work of the constituent assembly was marked by social pressure around the inclusion of PwD rights in the Brazilian constitution, in a period where the *Movimento das PcD* (MPcD) (PwD movement) had a prominent place in the council of public policies for people with disabilities. Subsequently, the new Constitution of 1988 defined that the state must guarantee “specialized educational assistance to people with disabilities, preferably in the regular school system” (Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil de 1988, art. 208, our translation).

In the 1990s, a series of international events and initiatives impacted the education of PwD in the country. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Bank (WB) warned the Brazilian government about the high levels of illiteracy and the low performance of compulsory schooling, pressing the country to sign the Global Commitment to Education for All (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [Unicef], 1990)³.

In 1994, the Declaration of Salamanca (Coordenadoria Nacional para Integração da Pessoa Portadora de Deficiência [Corde], 1994) was published. It consisted of an international resolution that presents the principles of special education, determining that all children with disabilities must have access to school and to a democratic pedagogical model that meets their needs. The first Brazilian national policy on special education was enacted in the same year, providing access to PwD in regular classes in schools. It was an “instructional integration process” for those with mild disabilities or “people with special needs who have conditions to monitor and develop curricular activities programmed for regular education – at the same pace as the so-called normal students” (Secretaria de Educação Especial, 1994, p. 19, our translation).

In the same decade, SE was included in the Brazilian Statute of Children and Adolescents (Lei nº 8.069, de 13 de julho de 1990) and in the education law (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases – LDB*) (Lei nº 9.394, de 20 de dezembro de 1996).

² In 2019, the name SEESP was changed to Secretariat for Specialized Modalities of Education, the body that coordinates policies for rural and special education.

³ This commitment was the main result of the World Conference on Education for All, promoted by UNESCO, UNICEF, BM and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in March 1990.

The education law defined SE as “the modality of school education, preferably offered in the regular school system, for students with disabilities, pervasive developmental disorders, and high abilities or giftedness” (Lei nº 9.394, de 20 de dezembro de 1996, art. 58, our translation). This legislation provided for education to PwD through specific curriculum, methods, educational resources, and organization. At the same time, the law provided for other forms of educational assistance by allowing the “educational service provided in *specialized groups/classes, schools, or services*, whenever – due to the specific conditions of the students – *it is not possible to integrate them into regular classes*” (Lei nº 9.394, de 20 de dezembro de 1996, art. 58, *caput* §2, our translation, emphasis added).

New government regulations and policies were introduced in the 2000s. In 2001, a decision from the National Council of Education (Resolução CNE/CEB nº 2, de 11 de setembro de 2001) instituted guidelines for SE in basic education, requiring attendance in regular classes and – extraordinarily, when necessary – in special classes of regular schools or in special public or private schools. In the same year, the National Education Plan, the PNE/01 (Lei nº 10.172, de 09 de janeiro de 2001), set the goal of expanding the service to students with special needs in early childhood education and primary education, ratifying the importance of special classes and schools alongside the assistance to these students in regular classes. The following excerpts example these inclusions, the first taken from the section *Diagnóstico* (diagnostic) and the second concerning the fourth objective of the PNE/01 (Lei nº 10.172, de 09 de janeiro de 2001, our translation, emphasis added): “Recent policies in the sector have indicated three possible situations for the organization of educational services: participation of students in regular classes with the necessary resources, special classrooms, and special schools.”

During the first five years of the PNE/01, the government sought to adjust schools according to students’ needs, increasing special classes, classes with multifunctional resources, and other recommended pedagogical alternatives in favor and support of the integration of students with special needs in regular classes, providing them with the necessary additional support.

Also, in 2001, SEESP created the *Escola Viva* project. The project manuals used the term “inclusion” for the first time (Ministério da Educação, 2001).

Two years later, in 2003, President Lula da Silva took office, and his new cabinet launched the program *Educação Inclusiva: Direito à Diversidade* (Inclusive Education: Right to Diversity). The program sought to raise awareness and engage society in the implementation of an inclusive education policy, training managers and educators to work on changing the educational systems into inclusive systems (Ministério da Educação, 2003, p. 10).

This program subsidized subsequent educational guidelines aimed at PwD, as observed in the education development plan (PDE) (Haddad, 2008) that provide for the architectural accessibility of school buildings, specific teacher training, and implementation of specialized resource rooms. In addition, in the section *Diagnóstico* (diagnosis), the plan mentions an opposition between regular education and SE, highlighting the lack of structure for inclusion.

Also, in 2007, some SE objectives were included in the Human Rights Education Plan (Comitê Nacional de Educação em Direitos Humanos, 2007) and in the *Plano de Metas Compromisso Todos pela Educação* (plan of goals - commitment for education), such as “guaranteeing access and permanence for people with special educational needs *in the regular classes of regular education*, strengthening educational inclusion in public schools” (Decreto nº 6.094, de 24 de abril de 2007, art 2, IX, our translation, emphasis added).

Thus, it is possible to observe that the MEC has been implementing some guidelines related to inclusive education since the beginning of the 2000s, reflected in the increase of the number of enrolments of students with special learning needs in basic education, vocational education, and youth and adult education (EJA), seen in the statistics of the Brazilian school census.

However, changes in SE in favor of inclusive education were only consolidated in 2008 with the emergence of the National Policy for Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education (PNEEPEI) (Secretaria de Educação Especial, 2008a). The PNEEPEI was created by a working group formed in 2007 by the MEC (Portaria Ministerial nº 555, de 05 de junho de 2007) composed of four SEESP managers – professionals in executive appointed positions, also advising political leaders at the federal level – and by nine university professors specializing in SE. This public policy represented a turning point in relation to previous interventions. In the opinion of Maria Teresa Mantoan, one of its formulators, the policy consolidated Brazil's vanguard position regarding inclusive projects (Secretaria de Educação Especial, 2008b, p. 19).

For ten years, the PNEEPEI guidelines were fundamental for the schooling of PwD. In 2018, the government that took office after the impeachment of President Rousseff in 2016 conducted a process of reformulating the SEESP. The National Council of Education hired consultants to form the Commission to Review the Special Education Guidelines (Kassar, Rebelo & Oliveira, 2019; Menezes, 2019). In September 2020, through Decree 10,502 (Decreto nº 10.502, de 30 de setembro de 2020), the federal government launched the *Política Nacional de Educação Especial: Equitativa, Inclusiva e com Aprendizado ao Longo da Vida* (National Policy on Special Education: Equitable, Inclusive, and with Lifelong Learning), which was criticized by professional segments and civil society, who saw it as a setback to the rights of PwD⁴. In December 2020, the Federal Supreme Court (STF) suspended the decree through an injunction (Rede Brasil Atual [RBA], 2020).

The history of the Brazilian policies on special education synthesized above points to the consolidation of Brazilian policies on special education. Against this backdrop, this article seeks to identify internal and external factors that influenced the changes that occurred in the sector in the 2000s, when the PNEEPEI was elaborated and enacted. After defining the boundaries of the subsystem and mapping the advocacy coalitions and the main actors forming them, this study identified beliefs and ideas advocated and verified the factors underlying the changes in the sector.

The theoretical framework adopted encompasses the advocacy coalition framework (ACF), one of the main approaches to the analysis of public policies (John, 2018), that emerged in the United States in the 1980s, with the works by Paul Armand Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith (Sabatier, 1988; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1988)⁵. This theory is cited as one of those responsible for the “argumentative turn” (Fischer & Forester, 1993) around ideas, general precepts, representations, beliefs, norms, and values in the production of public policies (Faria, 2003; Howlett, Ramesh & Perl, 2013). In addition, the theory contributes to the understanding of the stability and change patterns of subsystems, so it can

⁴ One example of the various demonstrations against the new public policy is a letter to Brazilian society written by the network of the National Campaign for the Right to Education (Pellanda, 2020).

⁵ This research used these initial studies and their theoretical developments: Jenkins-Smith, Nohrstedt, Weible, and Sabatier (2014), Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999), Sabatier and Weible (2007), Weible et al. (2011), Weible, Heikkila, Ingold, and Fischer (2016), Weible, Ingold, Nohrstedt, Henry, and Jenkins-Smith (2019), and Weible, Sabatier, and MCQueen (2009).

be applied to the study of the already consolidated special education subsystem (SES), in which there is a conflict of ideas and values supported by scientific and technical conceptions on PwD schooling.

As for the methodology adopted, a case study was carried out on the Brazilian SES, starting with an analysis of the history and observing the sector's main structures and rules conditioning the actors' attributions and actions. The Brazilian SES is a mature system, with almost half a century of existence, starting from its definitive incorporation by the federal government with the creation of CENESP in 1973.

The main political events and facts related to the SES were mapped, using information collected in studies, legislation, documents, norms related to public policies, government websites, and other sources. Secondary data on enrollments and organizations that cater to students with special educational needs were also compiled from statistics produced by the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (Inep).

On the other hand, we analyzed the discourses of the subsystem's key actors to identify advocacy coalitions and their beliefs. These discourses were obtained from documents and publications referring to three events where SE developments were discussed: the National Constituent Assembly, specifically the subcommittee of black and indigenous populations, people with disabilities, and minorities, in 1987; the first National Conference on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in 2006; and the colloquium where the PNEEPEI was launched, in 2008.

In addition to applying the ACF to special education, an important area of public policies, although little discussed in the scope of policy analysis, this article helps comprehend the changes in public policy subsystems. Furthermore, examining the beliefs of the coalitions allowed us to understand how educational services aimed at PwD are configured – for example, attendance in regular education in inclusive classes compared to special classes and the role of specialized services. The discourse analysis of main coalition actors and the systematization of the events that helped shape the SES dynamics represent a methodological contribution to verify the ACF's explanatory potential in the Brazilian context.

In addition to this Introduction, this article presents four more sections. Section 2 delimits the contours of the SES in Brazil, followed by subsystem coalitions and their respective beliefs and characteristics described in section 3. The fourth section explains the changes that have taken place in the SE, and finally, section 5 presents the conclusion.

2. SPECIAL EDUCATION SUBSYSTEM

ACF combines macro, meso, and microlevel elements, each tier with specific variables and interactions⁶. The most comprehensive level understands that the production of public policies takes place in a socioeconomic, biological, cultural, physical, historical, and political macro-context, which, in turn, influences the subsystems' internal dynamics.

The macrosystem encompasses two sets of exogenous factors external to the subsystems. The first is the relatively stable parameters, or structural – almost immutable – characteristics, such as basic attributes of the problem, distribution of natural resources, essential sociocultural values, and social and constitutional structure. The second set comprises external events, more dynamic and prone

⁶ For more details, please see the well-known ACF scheme, which explains all its components (Weible et al., 2011, p. 352).

(in comparison to the relatively stable parameters) to provoke significant changes in a) public policies and its subsystems (socioeconomic transformations, changes in public opinion, and governmental coalition/electoral realignment), b) decisions, public policy feedback, and modifications in other subsystems, and c) technological innovations and extreme events – crises and disasters, for example.

In addition to exogenous factors, the system encompasses two other groups of variables: 1) the long-term opportunity structures for coalitions, which include the degree of consensus needed for further changes in public policy, the openness of the political system, and overlap of social cleavages; 2) the actors' short-term constraints and resources (financial and otherwise).

Subsystems are situated at an intermediate level, and a psychosocial conception of the individual as limitedly rational stands out at a micro-level (Cairney, 2016; Sabatier & Weible, 2007). The scope of subsystems can be regional, national, or bring together countries and international organizations (Henry, Ingold, Nohrstedt & Weible, 2014; Pierce, Peterson, Jones, Garrard & Vu, 2017; Sabatier & Weible, 2007).

A policy subsystem is the ACF's main unit of analysis. This subsystem is equivalent to a "group of people and/or organizations regularly interacting over periods of a decade or more to influence policy formulation and implementation within a given policy area/domain" (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999, p. 135, our translation). This definition includes a geographical and territorial delimitation in which the circulation of technical and scientific information is an important catalyst for internal dynamics.

In subsystems, advocacy coalitions compete while members develop coordinated strategies and actions to claim space in the public agenda and propose policies. The actors are those that directly or indirectly influence, on a regular or occasional basis, the issues and related activities. They are interest groups, public officials (in different hierarchical positions), members of legislative and judiciary branches, business and nonprofit organizations, scientists and consultants, think tanks, media professionals, and others. Politicized disputes or technical clashes are common and may occur from the political spotlight (Cairney, 2016). Regardless of whether they belong to coalitions, some individuals with resources and negotiation and leadership skills can act as policy brokers, intervening in conflicting situations to establish reasonable agreements, compromises, and solutions between opponents (Pierce et al., 2017; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993).

Subsystems are not entirely autonomous, as they are superimposed and nested with each other in greater or lesser degrees of coordination. They can be connected based on intergovernmental links (vertical alignment) or particular topics or jurisdictions (horizontal and cross-sectoral relationships). On the other hand, within and among subsystems, there are multiple policy venues (legislatures, executive agencies, judicial courts) or institutional spaces for discussion and decision-making on public policies. These are strategic spheres for the activities of coalitions (Sabatier & Weible, 1999; Weible et al., 2019).

A long-term perspective (10 years or more) is needed to understand a subsystem and present facts based on past events (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014). A subsystem maturity (or consolidation) is related to the following aspects: the importance of the issue is publicly recognized, participants share a domain of expertise, they continue for a more extended period and generate learning, there are already consolidated coalitions and specialized sub-units in government or interest groups (Sabatier & Weible, 1999; Weible et al., 2016).

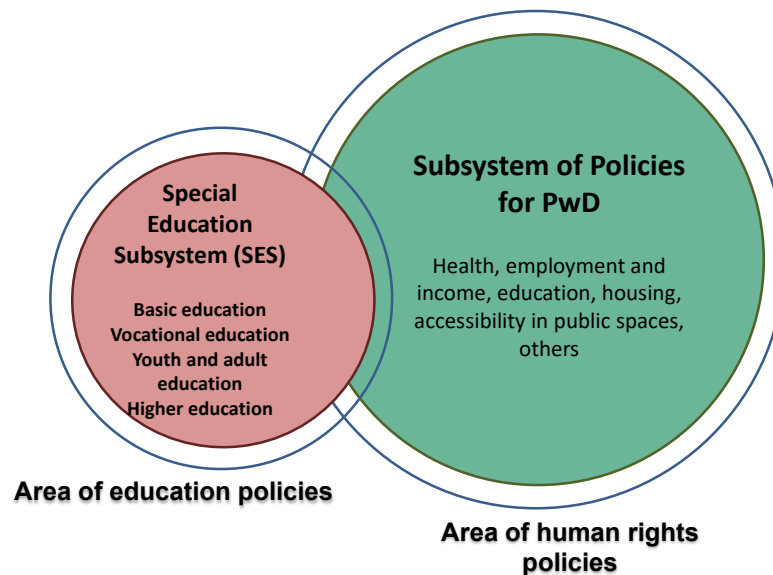
According to Sabatier and Weible (2007), a subsystem is identified, in practical terms, based on empirical specifications that primarily consider the characteristics of the political system (whether unitary or federative), how intergovernmental relations are organized, the interaction among actors, and the particularities of each area of public policy.

Therefore, it is possible to delimit the focus of this article on the special education subsystem (SES). The subsystem was demarcated considering the importance of the issue for the political agenda, its long history of consolidation, and the relationships established with other subsystems and with the broader system. As described in the Introduction, from 1973, special education (SE) went through a process of institutionalization in the area of educational policies, where government structures were created, formal and informal rules enacted (particularly the laws and programmatic guidelines aimed at the education of PwD), and the political actors mobilized around the theme. In addition, the subsystem is based on constitutional competencies shared between the union and subnational entities, while the provision of services is carried out by public educational establishments – federal, state, and municipal – and private (business or nonprofit) organizations⁷.

SE is a cross-sectional modality when considering both education levels (basic and higher education) and other types of education⁸. Therefore, the provision of the constitutional right to education for PwD is part of a complex framework of competencies, administrative instances, rules, and actors such as political leaders, civil servants, policymakers, researchers, educational institutions, teachers, students, mothers and guardians, school communities, external control bodies, and media.

In addition to being in place for a long time, the SES is part of the broader area of education policies. The SES is interconnected with other sectors, including the Subsystem of Policies for PwD (SPPwD) (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1 SES AND SPPWD AND INTERCONNECTIONS



Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the ACE.

⁷ It is possible to establish a connection between these elements and the institutional approach. However, we decided to privilege the premises of the ACE to keep this article concise.

⁸ Other types of education include: rural, distance, vocational, and technology education, youth and adult education (EJA), indigenous school education, and *quilombola* school education.

The vertical and horizontal interaction between subsystems, and of these with the broader system, is an argument little explored in empirical studies adopting the ACF (Henry et al., 2014; Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014; Jones & Jenkins-Smith, 2009; Weible et al., 2009).

This interconnection is implicitly referred to when authors adopting the ACF, such as Sabatier and Weible (2007), mention the results and decisions regarding public policies arising from other subsystems as exogenous factors that provoke changes. Weible et al. (2016, p. 7) explicitly mention this aspect when arguing that “all political subsystems overlap and are nested in relation to other public policy subsystems within its political system of government. Although no policy subsystem is completely autonomous from others, the degree of overlap and nestedness varies across subsystems.”

Another element suggesting such links is identified when the belief systems – which will be discussed later in this article – are analyzed. At this point, it is worth highlighting the differences regarding the scope of deep core beliefs compared to policy core beliefs. Thus, while deep core beliefs are observed across sectors, policy core beliefs tend to be limited to a certain subsystem, within which they represent the element connecting the advocacy coalitions (Weible et al., 2019).

Figure 1 shows the SES horizontal connection with the SPPwD, together with the aforementioned vertical alignment with the broader area of education policies. The SPPwD is part of the broader area of human rights policies and is linked to other sectors such as health, housing, employment and income, and accessibility.

In 2019, the National Secretariat for the Rights of PwD of the Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights was the highest federal body of the SPPwD, replacing the previous administration’s National Secretariat for the Promotion of the Rights of PwD. Another important body in this area is the National Council for the Rights of PwD (CONADE), created in 1999.

The *Movimento das PcD* (MPcD) (PwD Movement) is a key player in the SPPwD. It emerged on the Brazilian political scene in the 1980s, after a meeting gathering various organizations, nonprofit institutions, religious and lay groups, and party groups. Subsequently, the different agendas converged on the National Coalition pro-Federation of Institutions for People with Disabilities, which turned into the current movement⁹.

A landmark event in the SPPwD was the Inter-American Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities, held in Guatemala in 1999, which inspired subsequent meetings in Brazil. Later, in 2003, MPcD representatives participated in the International Disability Caucus, responsible for implementing the South-South Project. The project sought to guarantee the participation of developing countries in the formulation of the International Convention on the Rights of PwD, promoted by the UN in 2006. Ratified by the Brazilian government three years later (Decreto nº 6.949, de 25 de agosto de 2009), this convention is recognized for establishing the social model of disability, a demand put forward by the MPcD, with repercussions on all public policies aimed at this social group, including educational policies.

The medical model of disability prevailed before the incorporation of the social model of disability that supported inclusiveness in educational policies. The medical model was focused on

⁹ Detailed information about the MPcD and general policies aimed at PwD can be found in Borges (2018) and Lanna (2010).

the rehabilitation of subjects, who should go through a segregated insertion in society (Diniz, 2007). In the social model, PwD came to be seen as “those who have long-term physical, intellectual or sensory impairments that, together with other various barriers, can obstruct their full and effective participation in society on equal terms of conditions with other people” (Decreto nº 6.949, de 25 de agosto de 2009, art. 1, our translation).

In the social model, the center of the subject’s condition is displaced from the body (the focus in the medical model) to the social context. In other words, the social disadvantage of PwD is not caused by physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairment, but by non-inclusive structures and societies, insensitive to human diversity (Diniz, Barbosa & Santos, 2009).

From the mid-2000s onwards, with the worldwide dissemination of the guidelines provided by the International Convention on the Rights of PwD (2006), the social model of disability became a deep core belief influencing all subsystems of public policies related to PwD in Brazil.

On the other hand, the perspective of inclusive education represents a policy core belief, on which the Brazilian MPcD does not seem to have a defined position, either in favor or against, as observed in the discussion put forward by Borges (2018). This situation refers to the argument by Weible et al. (2019). For the author, some actors who participate in more than one sector may be positioned differently from those in only one subsystem. They may not adhere, therefore, to the beliefs of a single advocacy coalition.

3. ADVOCACY COALITIONS IN THE SES

Advocacy coalitions gather hundreds of organizations and individuals that undertake actions and strategies to produce public policies. To a non-trivial degree of coordination and over a considerable period, the coalition participants share and advocate values and beliefs while distancing themselves from the beliefs of the competing coalition(s). For the ACE, these collectives compel government agencies to implement actions aligned with their points of view, so public policies would translate their beliefs in different situations: a single unopposed coalition – as in the case of policy monopolies (Weible et al., 2019) –, a winning (Weible et al., 2016) or dominant (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993) coalition, or even of a negotiated agreement or compromise between competing coalitions (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Sabatier & Weible, 2007).

Belief systems are formed by three ideational layers, organized hierarchically from the most abstract and difficult to change to the most concrete and susceptible to change:

1. Deep core beliefs are ontological and aprioristic axioms related to political ideologies, values, identities, cultural orientations, and basic priorities (freedom versus equality or security, market versus government, for example). Such convictions pre-exist individuals. They circulate in the sociopolitical system, among subsystems, and are not limited to a specific public policy. They are rigid and difficult to modify, resembling “religious conversions” (Sabatier, 1988, p. 145).
2. Policy core beliefs comprise normative values and perceptions about the general objectives of a public policy area. They encompass positions on the severity, urgency, and causes of a public

problem, establishing priorities and alternatives to address the issues. Finally, policy core beliefs involve general understandings about administrative processes.

3. Secondary beliefs refer to perceptions about the adequate means and instruments to achieve programmatic objectives, including budget allocation and bureaucratic procedures¹⁰.

Advocacy coalitions are in constant dispute for hegemony – dominance and leadership – within a subsystem, through actions that reinforce their ideas, delimit who they are, and distance them from others' conceptions. The perception of possible threats also leads individuals to participate and remain in these collectives, especially when they exaggerate the opponents' power and cunning, seen as more powerful and less reliable – devil shift (Sabatier & Weible, 2007).

As for the coalition's dynamics, policy-oriented learning stands out. It is a continuous cognitive process occurring in the interaction among actors of a given subsystem enhanced by research and technical debate around public issues and interventions. It encompasses knowledge about the parameters of problems and their causes, counting on feedback from the policy outcomes or from analyses, proposals, and diagnoses based on indicators. Professional forums, seminars, meetings, and other policy venues are potential spaces for learning and sharing beliefs within and between coalitions. These include actors of strategic importance who generate, disseminate and evaluate public policies, influencing the policymakers' performance (Henry et al., 2014; Ma, Lemos & Vieira, 2020; Sabatier, 1988; Weible et al., 2019).

Based on the discussion above and on clues collected from scholars specialized in the ACF, we identified two advocacy coalitions active in the Brazilian SES from 1973 to 2008: coalition 1, for exclusive service, and coalition 2, for inclusive education. As of 2008, the second is dominant in the subsystem and in the special education policymaking field. It counts on the effective participation of its members in the elaboration of the inclusive perspective. In 2016, after the change of government in Brazil due to an impeachment process, this coalition lost dominance in the SES, giving space to coalition 1. However, the analysis of this third moment goes beyond the time-lapse analyzed in this article.

Box 1 synthetically presents the main attributes and beliefs of the two coalitions: when they started, period of hegemony, main actors and beliefs – deep core and policy core regarding SE. It was prepared based on information on political events and facts that marked the history of SE in Brazil. In addition, we used analysis of the discourses¹¹ of key actors in the subsystem, collected from documents and publications related to three policy venues in which there was discussion and developments about SE: the National Constituent Assembly, in 1987, when coalition 2 did not yet exist; the first National Conference on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in 2006 (with the participation of

¹⁰ According to Henry et al. (2014), surveys that use ACF usually do not differentiate policy core beliefs from secondary aspects. In this work we do not make such a distinction either.

¹¹ According to Caregnato and Mutti (2006), discourse analysis works with the meaning of the text. The method involves adopting categories that identify the discourses' themes and reference the main content that a given author delivers to their audience. Thus, based on coding categories, it is possible to examine excerpts that indicate the idea behind an action or strategy proposal and the form chosen to develop a certain action (Gill, 2002).

representatives from both coalitions); and the colloquium in 2008 launching the PNEEPEI, without the presence of the coalition 1¹².

The last three items in Box 1 present the beliefs, which were identified by examining empirical material using the Nvivo® software. The analysis considered the following axes: conception of disability, access to schooling, and specialized services. The first concerns a fundamental belief or value observed in the larger system (see the previous section). The last two refer to beliefs related to important aspects of the SES and its public policies: the guarantee of access to regular school and specialized services – clinical and therapeutic care, referral to work, social assistance – throughout the schooling process PwD.

BOX 1 SYNTHESIS OF CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TWO COALITIONS IN THE BRAZILIAN SES

Characteristics and beliefs	Coalition 1 Exclusive service	Coalition 2 Inclusive education
Started	- In the nineteenth century, with institutionalization in states and federal governments after the creation of CENESP in 1973 (replaced by SEESP in 1986).	- Early 2000s
Period of hegemony in the subsystem	- From 1973 to 2002 - During this period, there was only one coalition, i.e., there was a policy monopoly.	- From 2003 to 2016 - The emergence of coalition 2 brought competition to the SES.
Main actors	- Institutions specialized in special schools and organizations of PwD (such as Pestalozzi, APAE, AACD, <i>Associação de Pais e Amigos dos Deficientes Auditivos</i> , and others. - Health professionals (doctors, dentists, physiotherapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists). - SEESP and team, playing a secondary role.	- SEESP and team had a central role. - University professors and researchers in the area of SE. - Policy entrepreneurs (Kingdon, 1984) – represented by the working group created in 2007 to elaborate the PNEEPEI and the SEESP leaders after 2003 – until mid-2016, with the impeachment of President Rousseff.
Beliefs <i>Deep core</i> Conception of disability	- Medical model – Disabilities are considered as a physical-biological problem rather than a social problem.	- Social model – Disabilities are experienced within a social context that imposes barriers to PwD.

Continue

¹² ACF-based research typically map coalitions, actors, and beliefs through document analysis and interviews. See Ma et al. (2020), Pierce et al. (2017), Weible and Sabatier (2006), and Weible et al. (2019).

Characteristics and beliefs	Coalition 1 Exclusive service	Coalition 2 Inclusive education
<p><i>Policy core</i> Access to schooling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some students with disabilities are unable to learn, particularly those with cerebral palsy or multiple disabilities. - Access encompasses the elimination of architectural barriers, as well as specialized services offered by institutions according to the type of disability. - Public schools have a supplementary role, serving students without financial conditions. - The government has to guarantee better conditions – accessibility, material resources, job opportunities – to improve services of specialized institutions and promote their work with tax incentive mechanisms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Everybody has the right to education and can learn. The relationships established in the school environment are beneficial to all. - Principles: inclusion, accessibility (not only regarding architecture and materials but also regarding communication, transportation, teacher training, flexible curriculum), and special education is cross-sectional. - It is mandatory to allow the enrollment of PwD in regular classes and schools or in special schools. - The educational structure must be prepared to embrace human diversity. - Organization of inclusive educational systems in Brazilian states and municipalities.
<p><i>Policy Core</i> Specialized services (health, social service, labor, etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specialized institutions have to operate preparing PwD to enter the labor market and integrate into society, intermediating their access. - Specialized institutions are prepared to offer adequate services, such as clinical and therapeutic assistance. - Regular schools must incorporate the services these institutions offer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specialized services – support centers or networks – must be interdisciplinary, inter-sectorial, and has to complement schooling. - These services have to be offered by regular schools to all students with learning difficulties, not only to PwD. - Specialized institutions and special schools shall not replace regular school teaching.

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on Câmara dos Deputados (1987), Conade and Corde (2006), and Secretaria de Educação Especial (2008a, 2008b).

Coalition 1, advocating exclusive service, remained hegemonic during a long period of the SES' stability (around 30 years). Its main actors are the specialized institutions and health professionals who provide clinical and therapeutic care to PwD. Coalition 2, on inclusive education, gained influence in the 2000s, mainly through the actions of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), SEESP directors, and academic researchers from SE. This coalition gained strength in 2007, with the creation of the working group to prepare the PNEEPEI. The working group symbolized the federal government's recognition of the need to define and implement broader, more coordinated, and effective programmatic guidelines for school inclusion. The establishment of the group led to changes in the configuration of the SES, from a "policy monopoly," i.e., with a single coalition (Weible et al., 2019), to a competitive environment with two coalitions, in which the pre-existing one lost space and the new one took over leadership.

Regarding the deep beliefs, as analyzed before in this article, coalition 1 is guided by the medical model while coalition 2 advocates the social model of disability.

The policy core beliefs of coalition 1 understand that, in general terms, not all people with disabilities can learn. The coalition advocates the importance of clinical and assistance services and care offered by specialized institutions and believes that the state has a secondary role: guarantee the financial, legal, and material conditions so these institutions can work. In contrast, coalition 2 advocates the right of all to education, guaranteed by regular schools prepared to include PwD, integrally and in regular classes. Furthermore, the coalition understands that the union and subnational governments have a central role in organizing inclusive educational systems. In this case, specialized institutions have a supplementary role concerning the schooling of PwD.

Public policies directly or indirectly influenced by the coalitions' beliefs were: a) coalition 1 – first National Policy for Special Education (Secretaria de Educação Especial, 1994), National Guidelines for Special Education in Basic Education (Resolução CNE/CEB nº 2, de 11 de setembro de 2001) and the National Education Plan (Lei nº 10.172, de 09 de janeiro de 2001); b) coalition 2 – Inclusive Education Program: Right to Diversity (Ministério da Educação, 2003) and PNEEPEI (Secretaria de Educação Especial, 2008a, 2008b). The differences among these policies have already been detailed in the introductory section of this article. However, further information is worth discussing at this point.

The contents of PNEEPEI are different from the guidelines of the first National Policy for Special Education (Secretaria de Educação Especial, 1994), particularly by defining that the special school does not replace the regular school and by the role attributed to the state in the provision of educational services aimed at PwD, primarily in regular classes.

On the other hand, the incorporation of the coalitions' beliefs by SE policies has to do, primarily, with the greater proximity, influence, or even with the direct participation of the coalitions' members in the MEC, especially in SEESP. This fact is observed in the expressions the coalition used, which reveals differences in conceptions, such as (1) “retarded,” “exceptional,” and “mongoloids,” terms conveyed by representatives of specialized institutions in the period of the national constituent (Câmara dos Deputados, 1987); (2) “the same pace as the so-called normal students,” statement used in the first National Policy on Special Education (Secretaria de Educação Especial, 1994, p. 19, our translation); (3) “we can no longer admit a discrimination in which the child is segregated [...] instead of assuming that the student must adjust to the standards of normality in order to learn, it is the school that has the challenge of adjusting to meeting diversity” and “the principle of participation in overcoming prejudice and segregation for the transformation of educational systems into inclusive educational systems,” at the first National Conference on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Conade & Corde, 2006, pp. 208- 209, p. 216, our translation); (4) “students with disabilities will have guarantees regarding their right to schooling, coexisting and learning in heterogeneous environments,” statement made at the Colloquium launching the PNEEPEI (Secretaria de Educação Especial, 2008b, p. 30, our translation).

The first National Conference on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Conade & Corde, 2006) was an exemplary event. Two years before the enactment of PNEEPEI, the conference had already exposed for discussion the inclusive guidelines for SE. This discussion occurred by the initiative of the then Director of Policies of Special Education from SEESP/MEC, one of the leaders of coalition 2. The national conference was the only of the three policy venues examined that count on the participation of members of both coalitions. The participants argued pro and against the PNEEPEI, regarding the specialized services and their place in the inclusive perspective:

We do not believe in inclusion itself; we do not believe that regular education, with a room of 40 students, will provide special care for CP [referring to a person with cerebral palsy], for example, whom you have to take to the bathroom, change diapers, bathe, feed, and everything. It is also necessary to count on the clinics because they need more than only the educational part. They need a speech therapist, a physiotherapist, an occupational therapist, a clinician, a doctor, a dentist, all these people (coalition 1, representative of APAE of the state of Roraima, 2006, p. 226, our translation).

[Specialized educational assistance] does not replace the right to access education or attend lessons in regular classes offered in the regular education system. I mean, children are often removed from the classroom and only have specialized educational care. But they are, like the others, entitled to four hours a day of regular class education in the regular school system, plus specialized educational care. This service highlights the pedagogical focus. [...] Here, also as additional support, there is clinical, speech therapy, and other necessary care [...] for students with special educational needs. This specialized educational service, seen in this way, organized in this way, should benefit all students, eliminating barriers that hinder participation and learning at school (coalition 2, director of Special Education Policies at SEESP/MEC).

As observed, the member of coalition 1 highlights the history of the specialized institutions – in this case, APAE – and the importance of specialized and clinical care. They express a disbelief in the capacity of the inclusive school to meet the multiple needs of students with disabilities. As for the member of coalition 2, they advocate that such services are “supplementary support” accessible to all students in regular schools, in the sense of eliminating the barriers that hinder learning.

The confluence between the key actors’ speeches, the resources they have available, and the contents of SE policies, therefore, highlight the notorious influence of the two coalitions, but whose presence and hegemony varied according to the moment in the history of the SES.

4. CHANGES IN SES: CONSOLIDATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

For the ACF, the history of a given subsystem brings together periods of stability and balance among its forces, intercalating crises and changes. Policies remain stable as long as the structure of coalitions does not change (Weible et al., 2016).

This research examined the ideas advocated by coalition 2, culminating with the enactment of PNEEPEI (Secretaria de Educação Especial, 2008a), a public policy that changed the positions occupied by both coalitions and modified the special education system (SES). The main changes brought with the dominance of coalition 2 were the guarantee of specialized educational assistance for all students, the definition of people with disabilities, pervasive developmental disorders and/or high abilities/giftedness became the target audience of special education (SE), and the deliberation on the impossibility of refusing enrollment for PwD in regular public and private schools. As an immediate effect, there was a considerable increase in enrollments of PwD in regular classes and schools, together with a reduction in the number of students in special classes or in exclusive schools,

as shown by the subsequent information obtained from the statistics on basic education (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira [INEP], 2016).

The data on enrollments in regular classes and exclusive services – the sum of classes in regular and special schools – from 1998 to 2016 showed an increase of 188% in the number of students in SE (basic education, vocational education, youth and adult education. Higher education was not included). While enrollment in regular classes grew by 1713%, those in exclusive services decreased by 40%. The year 2008 marks a turning point, in which the number of students enrolled in regular classes surpassed that of exclusive classes, reaching 54% of the total. This proportion grew progressively until reaching, in 2016, 82% of the 971,372 students in the Brazilian SE. Regular schools progressively incorporated regular classes. In public schools, they represent 51% (1998), 92% (2008) and 98% (2016); in the private schools, 21% (1998), 77% (2008), and 90% (2016).

The last element to discuss here is the factors that explain the changes in the SES with the adoption of the inclusive perspective. The ACF stipulates four main variables, which are generally combined: a) exogenous elements or shocks external to the subsystems, considered a necessary (although not sufficient) cause for changing the central attributes of the policy (for example, cultural and socioeconomic changes, regime and government changes¹³, pressure from the media, repercussion of ideas and policies outcomes observed in other subsystems, accidents and disasters, opportunities, and redistribution of resources among actors); b) policy-oriented learning, within or between coalitions, as a result of the circulation of scientific and technical information and the debate held in policy venues; c) internal events or shocks arising from the legacy of previous policies, which may confirm coalition beliefs and thus influence government decisions; d) agreements or commitments negotiated between coalitions, often mediated by policy brokers.

When analyzing the changes in the SES based on the information collected about political events and facts, we observed that the main explanatory factors are related to external shocks or exogenous factors – starting with the change of government, in 2003, when a new political coalition took office, changing the entire cabinet, including the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) and the SEESP. Under the direction of the left-wing Workers' Party, this new political arrangement remained in power over four terms: from January 2003 to August 2016. The governments in this period followed a reformist trend in favor of expanding social spending and participation of society in policymaking.

Another exogenous factor associated with the changes that culminated in PNEEPEI and reverberated while this national plan was in force was the dissemination of feedback on policies and ideas from other sectors and subsystems, both from the broader area (education policies) and from the SPPwD (Figure 1). Thus, the circulation of conceptions about inclusive education and about the social model of disability in international forums, together with declarations and agreements signed by multilateral agencies, had repercussions in the countries' subsystems. This is true particularly in the case of the World Conference and the Commitment Education for All (1990), the Salamanca Declaration (1994), the Guatemala Convention (1999), and the International Convention on the Rights of PwD (2006).

¹³ According to Soares and Alves (2015), external shocks bring together the variables that better explain incremental or large-scale changes. Among them, government changes are the most cited factors among empirical studies that adopt the ACF.

On the other hand, this study suggests hypotheses that require future research. These hypotheses refer to policy-centered learning and to elements endogenous to the SES. As for the first, the international debate since the early 1990s seems to have contributed to expanding learning on inclusive education in the context of the SES, circulation of ideas, and accumulated knowledge in educational policies, with a strong presence of experts and scholars focused on the subject.

A possible research question referring to endogenous aspects of the SES concerns the political actors (experts and scholars). The role of the scientific community in the SES seems to be crucial to modify the relevant policies by promoting debates, sharing beliefs, gathering support, and proposing programmatic guidelines in favor of inclusive education. After 2003, these actors seem to have come closer to the state and federal governments, including occupying appointed positions in the MEC. However, only with the consolidation of coalition 2 did the MEC join the inclusive agenda, as the ministerial actions in the early 2000s were still incipient and disjointed.

5. CONCLUSION

The guidelines of the national plan PNEEPEI enacted in 2008 expanded the access to schooling for PwD in the regular education system, mostly in the regular classes. They changed the logic of providing specialized services (primarily provided by private institutions) and inserted the social model of disability among the foundations of special education.

Thus, the Brazilian federal government coordinating the special education subsystem with the participation of states and municipalities organized in subnational structures, and the work of public and private regular schools, created inclusive teaching-learning spaces, and offered training to teachers. These entities took a leading role regarding the schooling of PwD and persons with abilities/giftedness.

This change in the Brazilian SES encouraged us to examine explanatory factors, focusing on the 2000s. This study incorporated premises and methodological guidelines from the ACF, a framework still little used in Latin America (Ma et al., 2020).

Thus, this study firstly demarcated the borders of the SES and identified the coalitions and participating actors. Coalition 1 is made up of specialized institutions and health professionals who provide clinical and therapeutic care adopting a segregationist logic, equally present in the special classes of regular schools. This group dominated the SES from 1973 to 2002, influencing SE policies.

Coalition 2 emerged in the early 2000s, led by political leaders and managers of the MEC, academic scholars, and professionals who advocate inclusive education, directly influencing policies between 2003 and 2016. It is possible to say that SEESP leaders, from 2003 to 2016, and the working group that formulated the PNEEPEI, between 2007 and 2008, acted as policy entrepreneurs (Kingdon, 1984). By forming coalition 2, these entrepreneurs provoked the insertion perspective of inclusive education on the SE agenda and fostered its developments.

Among the factors that influenced the modifications in the subsystem, external elements stood out. We observed the significant influence of a) the change in government with the arrival of a new political coalition in Brazil's presidency in 2003; b) the influence of ideas about inclusive education that circulated worldwide; c) the debates and international agreements to which Brazil was signatory; and d) the dissemination of conceptions and feedback on actions from other subsystems and public policy areas.

When observing the role played by SEESP and the Ministry of Education and Culture advocating the perspective of inclusive education and consolidating such perspective, and the emergence of coalition 2 during the administration of President Lula da Silva and President Rousseff, it is important to highlight that the Brazilian experience is different from other political contexts, in which the influence of the legislative branch and societal groups in the production of public policies is greater, such as in the United States¹⁴. Therefore, MEC plays an important role as a policy venue where advocacy coalitions dispute their agendas or as an implementer of beliefs and programmatic alternatives advocated by specific interest groups. In Brazil, it is assumed that, despite federalism, the central government enjoys autonomy and expressive control over the subnational and sectoral policy process.

In future qualitative research, in addition to the hypotheses already suggested in section 4, it would be worthwhile investigating the implementation of PNEEPEI, observing the role of subnational governments and regular schools, verify the situation of both coalitions and the balance of forces in the SES after President Rousseff impeachment in 2016, and explore the current reproduction of disability models, researching resources, strategies, and practices of coalitions and their agents.

Finally, there is a broad research field to be explored based on the premises of the ACF. We hope that this work encourages the continuation of these studies.

¹⁴ For Klüber (2001), several hypotheses related to the strategies used by advocacy coalitions cannot be generalized to non-federal or multiparty political systems, different from the North American context, were the ACF emerged.

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