

THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY: THE MANAGEMENT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY IN MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS ACCORDING TO THE IMPLEMENTING AGENTS¹

O DIREITO À EDUCAÇÃO DE ALUNOS COM DEFICIÊNCIA: A GESTÃO DA POLÍTICA DE EDUCAÇÃO INCLUSIVA EM ESCOLAS MUNICIPAIS SEGUNDO OS AGENTES IMPLEMENTADORES²

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ABSTRACT: This work sought to investigate the implementation of a public policy for inclusive education in the Municipal Education Network of Corumbá/Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil, through the actions and perceptions of the implementing agents, both within the Secretariat of Education and the school. We sought to learn how education policies aimed at students with disabilities are implemented and the conditions of assistance to these students in the Municipal Network. As theoretical framework, we used the studies on Middle-Level and Street-Level Bureaucracy to understand the perceptions and interactions among agents. Disability Studies provided us with important keys for interpreting phenomena through the sociological perspective of disability, especially the concept of Ableism. Initially, we conducted a survey on enrollment and schools from the School Census. Then, a survey was applied to the management teams and teachers of all urban schools of the Municipal Network, from which three schools were chosen for qualitative research. The results showed that the implementing agents, despite their efforts to carry out the work, found difficulties that interfere directly with their performance.

KEYWORDS: Policy of Inclusive Education. Implementing. Middle-level Bureaucracy. Street-level Bureaucracy. Ableism.

RESUMO: Este trabalho investigou a implementação da política de educação inclusiva na Rede Municipal de Corumbá/Mato Grosso do Sul, por meio da atuação e das percepções dos agentes implementadores tanto no âmbito da Secretaria de Educação quanto da escola. Buscamos conhecer como as políticas educacionais voltadas aos alunos com deficiência são implementadas e as condições de atendimento a esses alunos na Rede Municipal. Como referencial teórico, utilizamos os estudos sobre Burocracia de Médio Escalão e Burocracia de Nível de Rua para entender as percepções e as interações entre os agentes. Os Estudos sobre a Deficiência (*Disability Studies*) ofereceram-nos importantes chaves de interpretação dos fenômenos por meio da perspectiva sociológica da deficiência, sobretudo o conceito de capacitismo. Inicialmente, realizamos um levantamento sobre as matrículas e as escolas a partir do Censo Escolar. Em seguida, foi aplicado um *survey* às equipes de gestão e aos professores de todas as escolas urbanas da Rede Municipal, sendo escolhidas três escolas para pesquisa qualitativa. Os resultados mostraram que os agentes implementadores, apesar de seus esforços para realização do trabalho, encontram dificuldades que interferem diretamente em sua atuação.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Política de Educação Inclusiva. Implementação. Burocracia de médio escalão. Burocracia de nível de rua. Capacitismo.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this research was to investigate the implementation of the Special Education Policy in the Inclusive Education Perspective from the acting of the implementing agents in the Corumbá Municipal Education Network in the hinterlands of the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil. The perspective was to understand how inclusive education policies are implemented and executed in a municipal education network of a municipality considered to be a vanguard of the national inclusive education policy; what are the conditions of care for students with disabilities; the actions of the implementing agents in the scope of the Municipal Secretariat of Education (Center for School Inclusion and Diversity) and in the context of the school units.

When investigating the educational situation of people with disabilities in the municipality, we found that most of the students are retained in the early years of Elementary School. The scarce progress of the students was configured as a motivating problem of the research, turning our eyes to the implementing agents in the scope of the Municipal Secretariat of Education and of the school units to investigate possible situations related to the performance of these actors, which could contribute to this reality.

The text was organized into five sections, starting by explaining the empirical phase and the concepts used in the research. Next, we present how Special Education is configured in the Municipal Education Network. The third session brings the results of the research on the implementation of the policy within the Municipal Secretariat of Education and the performance of the coordinators and principals of the investigated school units. The fourth session presents the results found in the context of school units. Finally, we bring the final considerations of this work.

2 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH AND CONCEPTS USED IN THE ANALYSIS

The research was carried out in the municipality of Corumbá, located in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil, with an estimated population of 110,806 inhabitants in 2018 (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics [IBGE], 2018). The work was carried out in three stages: initially we described educational services in the municipality, with emphasis on those available to students with disabilities, based on data from the 2016 School Census. Then a survey⁵ was applied to the coordinators, principals and teachers of all 16 urban municipal schools. In the third stage, three school units were selected for further study through observations and interviews⁶. In parallel to the last two data collection movements, policy documents were analyzed within the Municipal Secretariat of Education.

⁵ The survey used in the research was elaborated in the doctoral work of Professor Ana Cristina Prado de Oliveira (2015) in collaboration with the Research Group School Management and Quality in Education (*Gestão Escolar e Qualidade na Educação - GESQ*) at PUC-Rio, to which questions related to training and the experience of agents in the field of Special Education, as well as items related to expectations regarding the education of students with disabilities to adapt the instrument to the object of this research. The Survey GESQ-Corumbá 2017 was applied from August to December 2017. Fourteen principals, 96 teachers and 24 members of the management teams (pedagogical direction and coordination) of 16 urban schools of the Corumbá Municipal Education Network participated in the research.

⁶ A total of 24 agents were interviewed: 5 classroom teachers, 2 support professionals, 3 teachers of specialized educational services, 4 coordinators, 1 pedagogical director, 3 administrative directors and 6 professionals of the Municipal Department of Education.

The results were organized as follows: at the macro level, based on the analysis of the implementing agents in the Municipal Secretariat of Education (Center for School Inclusion and Diversity and the Multi-Professional Center for Support for Child and Youth Development – [*Centro Multiprofissional de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento Infanto-Juvenil -CMADIJ*]), and, at the micro level, integration of survey response analysis with information obtained from interviews and school observations.

Concerning the conceptions about people with disabilities, we highlight the concept of *ableism* which consists of the belief that physically fit people are superior to people with disabilities. In general, it is assumed that people with disabilities have second-class status, being considered inferior by their peers without disability, generating harmful attitudes and discriminatory behaviors based on disability, regardless of their origin (physical, intellectual, sensory). To Campbell (2009), ableism is deeply and subliminally embedded within culture. It is the result of the hegemonic positioning of individuals considered “normal” in society who attribute a negative connotation to those who do not fit the socially established standards of normality.

In the field of discussion on the implementation of public policies, Lotta (2014) states that there are two central reasons that dominate the political controversy in public services: debates about the scope and focus of public services that are directly related to the role played by these agents; and the fact that they have a big impact on people’s lives. The focus on the implementing agents we favored in this research was referenced by the concepts of Middle-Level Bureaucracy (MLB) and Street Level Bureaucracy (SLB) used in the field of political science.

Middle level bureaucrats consist of the “managers, leaders, supervisors, and agents charged with operationalizing the strategies defined at the top of the bureaucracy, but distanced from the concrete contexts of implementation” (Pires, 2011 p. 3). They act at the intermediate level of public policy at the interface between the top level and the agents who act directly with the users of a given policy. Pires (2011) states that these actors are “squeezed” both from a practical point of view, due to their position in the organizational structure and their prerogatives, and from the theoretical point of view, between the approaches that focus on the top level and the so-called “street level”. In this work, MLBs will be considered as implementing agents within the Municipal Secretariat of Education and school principals and coordinators.⁷

Street Level Bureaucracy⁸ is the term used to describe the agents responsible for the operational level of public policies. Araújo Filho (2014) emphasizes that the theory of street level bureaucracy brings as a central perspective the individual dilemmas of employees who work daily with public policies, putting them into practice. In this research, SLBs were considered the classroom teachers, teachers of Specialized Educational Services (SES) and support professionals. It is worth noting that, as in the case of MLBs, agents who act as street level bureaucrats, depending on the situation and the public with whom they relate, can also assume the role of MLB.

⁷ It is noteworthy that such agents have hybrid characteristics as defined by Mota (2018) who notes that these actors have a multiplicity of roles, acting sometimes as middle level bureaucrats, sometimes as street level bureaucrats, depending on the audience with whom they interact.

⁸ Term coined by Michael Lipsky (2010).

3 SPECIAL EDUCATION IN THE MUNICIPAL EDUCATION NETWORK OF CORUMBÁ/MATO GROSSO DO SUL

The city of Corumbá has been following the national context of public policies of Special Education, offering SES in the years following the 1988 Constitution⁹. Importantly, in 1994, the Secretariat of Special Education of the Ministry of Education, through the elaboration of the document intitled ‘Expansion and Improvement of Special Education in Brazilian Municipalities’ (*Expansão e Melhoria da Educação Especial nos Municípios Brasileiros*), recommends that the municipalities become responsible for the educational assistance of people with disabilities. Padilha (2014) points out that the creation of the document was influenced by the Decennial Education Plan (1993-2003). The author draws attention to the fact that the necessary conditions were not guaranteed for this to happen due to the absence of goals, funding mechanisms, human resources training programs, guidelines for physical fitness, among other aspects. The responsibility for schooling people with disabilities in Brazilian municipalities occurs in this context.

In 2001, the Ministry of Education launched the National Guidelines for Special Education in Basic Education through Resolution No. 2 of February 11, 2001. Lobo (2011) states that, in Corumbá, the inclusion process was supported by these guidelines by providing for a Special Education sector to support the educational inclusion of students with disabilities. This sector was established in 2003 and is named, as already pointed out *Centro Multiprofissional de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento Infanto-Juvenil* – CMADIJ (Multi-Professional Center for Support for Child and Youth Development). The main objective of CMADIJ is to support the policy of Inclusive Education and to ensure the provision of specialized care services in the area of health and pedagogical support. CMADIJ initially has an articulation between education, health and social assistance from the offer of care by various professionals, such as: pediatric neurologist, physiotherapists, speech therapists, dentists, psychologists and pedagogues. In the same year, the municipality was chosen as the vanguard municipality¹⁰ in the Inclusive Education: Right to Diversity Program; and, in 2005, it received the implementation of its first multifunctional resource room, prior to the implementation of the Program in 2007 (Kassar, Rebelo, Rondon, & Rocha Filho, 2018).

The growth of municipal actions, especially national ones, led to the need for continuing education and other actions that contributed to the expansion of the Special Education offer in the Municipal Network. Rebelo (2012) points to a 22.22% growth in enrollment in the Municipal Network between 2007 and 2010, mainly concentrated on the inclusion of students with disabilities in the early grades of Elementary School. However, the author points out that there was no decrease in enrollment in the philanthropic private school of the municipality during the same period. These results, however, have not been an effective

⁹ Following the norms imposed in article 208, paragraph III “Specialized educational service to persons with disabilities, preferably in the regular education system” (Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, 1988) in the context of the municipalization of education.

¹⁰ In Mato Grosso do Sul, besides Corumbá, the municipalities of Campo Grande, Coxim, Dourados and Paranaíba were chosen. The group of Corumbá comprised the municipalities of Antônio João, Aquidauana, Bandeirantes, Bodoquena, Bela Vista, Bonito, Caracol, Douradina, Guia Lopes da Laguna, Ladário, Miranda, Ponta Porã and Porto Murtinho (Projeto Plurianual de implementação da educação inclusiva nos municípios brasileiros: 2003-2006, 2003 [Multiannual Project to implement inclusive education in the Brazilian municipalities: 2003-2006]). The program aimed to disseminate inclusive education policy in Brazilian municipalities and support the training of managers and educators to effectively transform educational systems into inclusive educational systems.

extension of these students' schooling, since the number of enrollments in the final years of Elementary School and High School remains very low compared to the number of enrollments in the early grades, as Rebelo (2012) observed and as verified in the 2016 School Census data survey, which pointed out that 51% of students with disabilities in the Municipal Network attended the early grades of Elementary School.

In 2015, the current Municipal Education Plan (2015-2025) is launched¹¹, which presents specific objectives and targets in various areas of the educational field. Kassar et al. (2018) reiterate that the comparison of the strategies of the National Education Plan (Law No. 13,005 of June 25, 2014) with the Municipal Education Plan (2015) indicates that, in general, Corumbá seeks to adapt its goals to the local context and its characteristics (water schools, border schools, indigenous peoples and quilombola communities). However, the authors point out that the municipality does not adopt the National Education Plan strategy regarding "guaranteeing the offer of inclusive education, prohibited the exclusion of regular education on the grounds of disability promoted the pedagogical articulation between regular education and specialized educational service" (Law No. 13,005, 2014). The consistency of enrollment in the private institution and the non-adoption of this strategy provided for in the National Education Plan may be indicative of the strength of the private care institution in local policies (Kassar et al., 2018).

This situation can also be observed in the restructuring that CMADIJ underwent in 2013. The change maintains the link between the center and the Municipal Secretariat of Education and the Executive Secretariat of Public Health. However, health professionals no longer provided care and services, except for dental care. Educational services as well as education professionals were maintained (Rodrigues, 2017). In light of this situation, we highlight Ordinance no. 1,027 SAS/MS of 2014, which implements the Specialized Rehabilitation Centers¹². In Corumbá, the implementation of the Specialized Rehabilitation Center took place in 2015 in a private charitable institution, through a contractual agreement¹³ of that institution with the City Hall. The situation in Corumbá goes in the direction of the national scenario of Special Education, which shows the constant presence of philanthropic private specialized institutions (Kassar et al., 2018).

In 2017, the municipality published the Resolution No. 082, which provides for the curricular organization of Basic Education of the Municipality for the year 2018. The resolution states that schools should provide for inclusion in the regular classroom, promoting

¹¹ Published through Municipal Law No. 2,484, of June 26, 2015, in line with the National Education Plan (Law No. 13,005, 2014) and Mato Grosso do Sul State Education Plan (State Law No. 4,621, 2014).

¹² The Specialized Rehabilitation Centers is an outpatient care center specializing in rehabilitation that performs diagnosis, assessment, guidance, early stimulation and specialized care in rehabilitation, concession, adaptation and maintenance of assistive technology, becoming a reference for the health care network in the territory. (Ambience Handbook of Specialized Rehabilitation Centers and Orthopedic Workshops, 2017). Its implementation is part of the National Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - Living Without Limits (Plano Nacional dos Direitos da Pessoa com Deficiência - Viver sem Limites, 2013), which was started with the implementation of 45 new centers throughout Brazil. The plan conducts service qualification actions and is part of the Disabled People's Health Care Network (Ordinance MS/GM nº 793, April 24, 2012) with the Unified Health System (Sistema Único de Saúde - SUS) Network (Plano Nacional dos Direitos da Pessoa com Deficiência - Viver sem Limites, 2013).

¹³ The partnership guarantees the financial transfer to enable and improve outpatient care in specialized health care for people with physical and intellectual disabilities. The specialized institution of assistance has received monthly the amount of R\$140.000,00 (about US\$33.700) for application in health care for people with temporary or permanent disabilities; progressive, regressive or stable; intermittent or continuous within the SUS. The transfer is made by the municipality itself (Corumbá, 2015).

conditions of access, permanence, participation and learning, as well as specialized support services according to the individual needs of the students. The specialized educational service offered in the multifunctional resource classrooms remains the main program for the care of students with disabilities enrolled in the Municipal Network.

It is important to highlight that the national laws that regulate the SES classify it as a complementary service for students with disabilities and/or global developmental disabilities, according to the National Policy of Special Education in the Inclusive Education Perspective (2008). However, according to Normative Instruction 01/2017/SME, the SES has broad objectives: *to promote the conditions for the inclusion of students in all school activities; to guide families towards their development and their participation in the educational process; to inform the school community about current education laws and regulations that ensure educational inclusion* (Corumbá, 2017).

Regarding support professionals, the local document presents generic guidelines, such as: *to promote the permanence and success of students with disabilities in school, implementing the principles of educational inclusion* (Corumbá, 2017). We emphasize that this responsibility should not be linked to the performance of a single professional, but rather to the entire pedagogical political project of the school¹⁴. Therefore, the documents point to an increase in the attributions and responsibilities of these professionals at the municipal level.

It is in this context that we present below the research results, initially focusing on the implementing agents that work in the middle level and then the implementing agents in the context of the schools of the Municipal Network.

4 THE SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN CORUMBÁ: PERSPECTIVES OF IMPLEMENTING AGENTS OF THE MUNICIPAL SECRETARIAT OF EDUCATION

Within the scope of the Municipal Secretariat, two supervisors of the Center for School Inclusion and Diversity were interviewed (one who was responsible for the position in 2016¹⁵ and another responsible for the nucleus in 2018¹⁶), the CMADIJ coordinator and three technical advisors¹⁷.

Supervisor II, who is responsible for the Center during the research period, states that she has activities based on frequent and intense contact with the working context of technical advisors and other school agents (principals, coordinators, support professionals) that, according to her, favors the identification of some problematic issues. However, at no time during the interview, the fact that students with disabilities did not learn to read and did

¹⁴ The Technical Note no. 24/2013 of the Ministry of Education states that the support professional's service should be available whenever the student's individual need is identified in order to ensure accessibility of communication and attention to personal care of food, hygiene and mobility. Such legislation follows the guidelines of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which proclaim that it is not the responsibility of the caregiver to develop differentiated educational activities, nor be responsible for the teaching of the student. Their performance should not replace the classroom teacher, SES teacher and any other school professional in any activity or responsibility.

¹⁵ To whom we will refer to as Supervisor I.

¹⁶ To whom we will refer to as Supervisor II.

¹⁷ We will refer to as: Technical Advisor I, Technical Advisor II and Technical Advisor III, respectively.

not progress in the schooling process, for example, was considered problematic and subject to intervention. This seems to indicate the mark of ableism even at the policy management level. The difficulties faced by students with disabilities (such as illiteracy and retention, for example) were not emphasized in any of the interviews within the Secretariat of Education, although they constitute important features in the education of people with disabilities. Martín (2017) states that value judgments about capacities are so present and naturalized in society that their exclusionary effects end up not being perceived or questioned.

The access of students with disabilities in Basic Education, in addition to being linked to the progress in the universalization of education, also relates to the implementation of policies aimed at this population. In this sense, the number of enrollments of persons with disabilities enrolled in the Municipal Network may be related to the results of these policies. The municipality of Corumbá presents a reality found in other Brazilian municipal contexts, which also show an increase in enrollment of students with disabilities in regular schools, which still need a careful look at partnerships with specialized institutions. Table 1 below shows the enrollment of students with disabilities in a private charity institution in Corumbá compared to the Municipal Network from 2013 to 2018.

Administrative Dependency	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Specialized School	160	176	167	147	133	124
Municipal Education Network	275	374	564	404	406	444

Table 1. Number of enrollments in specialized philanthropic school from 2013 to 2018.

Source: The authors based on the School Census Microdata from 2013 to 2018.

From 2013 to 2018, although there is a decrease of approximately 30% in enrollment in specialized schools, they continue to occur. In the Municipal Network there is a 60% increase in enrollment of people with disabilities in the same period. However, despite the increase in enrollment in the Municipal Network, there are few advances in relation to later education stages. Data from the 2018 School Census show that, out of a total of 295 students with disabilities enrolled in the Municipal Network, 178 attend the early grades of Elementary School, as shown in Table 2.

Administrative Dependency	Nursery	Early Childhood Education	Early grades of Elementary School					Final grades of Elementary School				EJA* - Early grades	EJA - Final grades
			1th	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th		
Municipality	9	12	12	49	47	38	32	33	15	12	9	15	12

Table 2. Enrollment of students with disabilities in 2018 at Corumbá Municipal Education Network.

Source: The authors based on the School Census Microdata from 2013 to 2018.

* EJA – *Educação de Jovens e Adultos* (Youth and Adult Education).

Another factor addressed in the interviews with the Municipal Secretariat of Education concerns the political-administrative discontinuity of municipal management. In 2018, there were changes in practically the entire staff of the secretariat and, in a short period of time (three years), the Center had three distinct supervisors. In addition, during the transition of government following the 2016 municipal elections, new team members were informed that the deadline for requesting funds from parliamentary amendments¹⁸ had been missed, which impacted year-round actions, according to the participants interviewed. Estevam (2010) describes these changes arising from management transitions as the moment that apparently “everything will change”. Activities are discontinued regardless of an assessment of their effectiveness. It is assumed that, in order for the new to be established, it must break with the past. As Nogueira (2006) points out, not infrequently these situations of political and administrative discontinuity result in the loss of accumulated knowledge (or institutional memory), reversal of advances, disbelief or demotivation on the part of those involved and the likely waste of public resources involved.

This situation was observed in the last three administrations of the City Hall, reiterating aspects of the institutional culture of municipal management, frequently observed in other Brazilian municipalities. When analyzing similar situations, Spink (1987) highlights the democratic paradox: administrative continuity, while maintaining service continuity avoids organizational schizophrenia, ensures the growth of a technobureaucratic class, which has power due to its historical knowledge of attempts to operationalize policy by the force of continuity. On the other hand, according to the author, discontinuity ensures that “the government of the day” dominates the public machine rather than negotiating with it.

CMADIJ’s technical advisors are responsible for monitoring the educational attendance of students with disabilities in the Municipal Education Network¹⁹, including the evaluation for possible referral to the SES, the monitoring of students in aspects that go beyond the pedagogical scope (especially from the removal of health professionals of the center) and by contacting health and social care professionals. In addition, they advise teachers on the use of assistive technology²⁰ resources and develop continuing education actions (mainly with SES teachers and support professionals).

Even though they were responsible for assessing and monitoring all students with disabilities enrolled in the Municipal Network, the advisors reported feeling some invisibility in the work performed. As an example, they cite the cases in which the municipality is questioned by the control agencies regarding the provision of educational assistance to students with disabilities offered in the Municipal Education Network: “When entering the Public Ministry we have to answer” (Technical Advisor II); “The small advances, these things, nobody sees,

¹⁸ Parliamentary amendments to municipalities are considered to be all amendments to the Annual Budget Law proposed by committee, bench or individual parliamentarians applied as direct transfers to municipalities (Sodré & Alves, 2010).

¹⁹ CMADIJ has six technical advisors, each responsible for monitoring five to six schools from a total of 35 school units (urban and rural). Follow-up is carried out through periodic visits established on a schedule. The schools receive the schedule with the dates of the visits and await the arrival of the technical advisor to perform the transfer of existing demands.

²⁰ Assistive Technology is an interdisciplinary area of knowledge that encompasses products, resources, methodologies, strategies, practices and services that give more autonomy, independence and quality of life to people with disabilities, disabilities or reduced mobility (Technical Assistance Committee [Comitê de Ajudas Técnicas, 2009]).

right? But then when it's something like that²¹, people see" (Technical Advisor III). We note that responsibility in relation to the operation of Special Education policy in the municipality is largely transferred to the CMADIJ team. The speeches of the technical advisors also show that, within the Secretariat, students with disabilities enrolled in the network "belong" in practice to them, despite being the responsibility of the public authorities.

Regarding relations with the school units, we also observed the movement of accountability of the CMADIJ, in spite of the advisors' attempt to prioritize the participation of school coordinators in the care of students with disabilities and their families. The performance of school managers consists only in informing the CMADIJ team about the need for evaluation of any student. We realize that the responsibility and, above all, the demands regarding care²² do not fall directly on the direction/coordination of the school, but on the professionals of the center.

As noted earlier, CMADIJ's technical advisors are configured as hybrid implementing agents, acting at the middle level and the street level. Its performance at the street level occurs mainly in the care of families of students with disabilities and also seems to be related to the absence of professionals in the Center to perform specific jobs, especially after the departure of health professionals in 2013. This finding leads us to the need to carry out intersectoral work, as proposed by the National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education (2008), which presents as one of its objectives the "intersectoral articulation²³ in the implementation of public policies" (p. 14). Joaquim (2006), when researching the implementation of Special Education policies in the city of Campinas, in the period between 1989 and 2004, highlighted the inexistence or insufficiency of intersectoral work, making impossible a more consistent and complex attendance, such as the situation of students with disability requires.

Regarding the perception of technical advisors about teachers' work, we highlight the emphasis given to the need for a professional with a "profile" to work with students with disabilities. For them, teachers must go beyond teaching, assisting the student in their basic needs: "To work with a disabled child you have to have a profile. You cannot be disgusted, you have to be ready to change, to clean, to wash" (Technical Advisor III, CMADIJ). The discourse of professionals shows a perspective of work in Special Education as something philanthropic, relating it only to a teaching work with emphasis on activities of daily living and not on aspects related to learning content.

In the next section, we present the aspects of the policy implementation within the school units, in order to address the agents' performance and their relations with the target audience of the Special Education policy and with the other implementing agents.

²¹ It refers to situations in which control bodies question the Secretariat regarding the provision of educational assistance to persons with disabilities.

²² Both questions from the control bodies, and the Secretariat or families about the services offered.

²³ By intersectorality, we understand to be the "articulation of knowledge and experiences in the planning, implementation and evaluation of actions, aiming to achieve integrated results in complex situations" (Junqueira, Inojosa, & Komatsu, 1997, p. 24).

5 IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF IMPLEMENTATION AGENTS IN SCHOOLS

From June to September 2018, observations and interviews were made at three schools for about 30 days at each. The choice of schools considered the number of students with disabilities enrolled²⁴ among those who had the largest number of teachers who responded to the survey. The schools were identified by numbers (I, II and III). We also consider aspects related to attendance to students with disabilities in schools in order to cover a variety of organizational policy implementation contexts: resource room units and support staff (Schools I and III) and a unit that does not count on these resources (School II). School III was also selected for its track record in the education of people with disabilities in the municipality.

During the fieldwork, we collected information on how implementing agents perceive disability and the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular school. For the pedagogical coordinator I of School III, it would be sufficient for the student with disabilities attending a third-grade class to be able to count to 10 or 20 not to be retained, indicating that only Early Childhood Education content is expected from him. The classroom teacher I of School III states that it is impossible for students with Down Syndrome to perform the same activity as the rest of the class. The monitoring of the routine of school units showed that the perceptions of disability as disabling are present in both the agents' discourse and the students' routine corroborating the statements pointed out by the Disability Studies. Valle and Connor (2014) state that representations of disability are almost always "problematic because they perpetuate stereotypes, distortions and misunderstandings, which in turn perpetuate the marginalization of people with disabilities" (p. 41). From an individual perspective, teachers justify students not learning because of their "disabled" condition. In doing so, they end up taking no responsibility for the teaching-learning process as professionals. The way out found by schools, according to the reports, is what they call curriculum adaptation²⁵. However, as far as we can see, adaptation could possibly be better characterized as a simplification or reduction of supply and content requirement to be learned by these students, without a technically consistent reflection or analysis that would substantiate the decision.

Soares, Fernandes, Ferraz, & Riani (2010) state that teachers' expectations can influence students' performance and point out that the teacher's diagnosis and, consequently, their expectations are based on their perceptions of students' cognitive abilities, and not rare, in stereotypes. Disability is often one more stereotype that can influence such expectations. M. M. Oliveira (2017) states that the perception of school agents in relation to students' learning may present, eventually, discriminatory aspects, especially if the teacher assumes that the student has some biological or structural failure. Situations like these are also described by

²⁴ School I had 1,153 enrolled students, 35 with disabilities. School II had 1,287 students, 14 with disabilities, and School III had 739 students, 35 with disabilities. Compared to the other administrative facilities, the Municipal Network had a total of 444 students with disabilities, while the state network had 132, the same number as private schools.

²⁵ Guaranteed by the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* - LDB no. 9.394 of December 20, 1996) and ensured by legislation concerning Special Education (such as the Curriculum Guidelines for Special Education in Basic Education/2001; Resolution no. 2/2001) consists of offering "basic content, teaching methodologies and differentiated teaching resources and assessment processes appropriate to the development of students with special educational needs, in line with the school's pedagogical project".

Almeida (2015) who also considers that, in the school context, the denial of access to necessary basic cognitive skills should be considered a “degradation of the offer of a right” (p. 101).

It is also worth mentioning the conceptions of the implementing agents in the school about Special Education and Inclusive Education. Most of the agents related Inclusive Education only to the inclusion of people with disabilities in the school environment: “The school is inclusive because it welcomes students that ... that we do not have problems ... to enroll students who have some kind of disability” (Assistant Principal, School II). For most respondents, an inclusive school is an environment that receives (“welcomes”) students with disabilities. The fundamentally philanthropic and welfare-oriented background of services for people with disabilities seems to contribute to this: “all my planning I try to involve them, no matter how much they don’t follow” (Classroom teacher I, School IX). In this sense, learning would be at a secondary level and, to some extent, contained in a horizon of teacher and school impotence in the face of the challenge of effective school inclusion.

The analysis of these reports, however, needs to consider the working conditions experienced by these actors. During the fieldwork, it was possible to notice that the actions of the coordinators and principals tend to prioritize actions other than the assistance to students with disabilities. We highlight here the need for schools to hold award and raffle fairs, for example, to raise money for the maintenance of facilities, which in principle should be guaranteed in the municipal education budget. The managing director of School I said that the transfer of resources is not enough, that the school has been without repairs for years which are constantly necessary. The practice of collecting its own resources is common in the Brazilian education scenario. Peroni and Adrião (2007) state that this is one of the controversial aspects of the *Programa Dinheiro Direto na Escola* (Money Directly to the School Program), which would stimulate the search for resources in the community, relieving the state from financing the school.

Understanding the performance of principals and coordinators implies considering the context in which they are inserted, local demands and the precarious functioning of the school unit, which *requires* (using the expression of the administrative director of School I) these professionals to use strategies that enable the minimum working conditions at school (a lamp, a bathroom door, a water cooler). With regard to the student with disabilities, all managers interviewed emphasize that, upon the arrival or discovery of a case at school, they immediately seek CMADIJ technical advisors and request assistance. It would be worth asking if there is a specialized (even incomplete) team to worry about issues related to people with disabilities, why would this be a priority for the school manager already burdened with other demands?

Regarding the performance of SES support professionals and teachers, the observations pointed to a more individual work with the students. In one of the classrooms observed at School III, the support professional performed activities with a student with cerebral palsy, while the classroom teacher applied a distinct activity to the other students. The discourse of support professionals in schools seems to be permeated by contradictory perceptions and practices. Sometimes they vehemently affirm that the student does not belong to them, sometimes they describe their professional practice, making it clear which objectives they intend to achieve, assuming this responsibility. The discourse of the classroom teachers corroborates this situation by referring to the work of the support professional, attributing:

“And from today onwards she will... see what she can use of concrete material, right? [...]. I hope I can help her” (Classroom teacher I, School III).

Lopes (2018) points out that the performance of the support professional has happened, in a national context, in a precarious, indefinite, non-standardized and with conflicts and misconceptions, even though the need for their performance and its importance are widely recognized. Lopes stresses the importance of differentiating between the support professional and the support teacher²⁶. As this is a new practice in the school environment, each municipality has been organized autonomously to offer support according to the perspective of school inclusion it assumes (Lopes, 2018). In Corumbá, the support professional ends up having his/her job mixed with the role of a support teacher. The municipal legislation presents the nomenclature *support teacher* (Corumbá, 2017), but the descriptions refer to the performance of a *support professional*, because it is up to him/her to aid in activities of daily living and also to support student learning²⁷.

Regarding the performance of the SES teacher, we found that the articulation of his/her work with the classroom teacher presents many difficulties and in some cases little interaction²⁸. The teacher of the SES of school III claims to be able to perform this mediation and highlights that her students have good results. Respondents who declare unable to maintain this dialogue emphasize the difficulties and express their powerlessness in the face of this situation.

School II, which does not have a resource room, is even farther from working with the SES teacher. As far as we can see in the field research, when the school unit does not have this space, this interaction does not happen or happens in a timid and ineffective way, with responsibility being transferred once again to CMADIJ and the family. It is important to note that the policy that ensures the SES does not provide for the resource room to function in all school units and ensures that, where the school does not have the resource room, students with disabilities receive care in a school nearby. In such cases, it is even more necessary - and certainly more difficult - for the interaction between the classroom teacher and the SES teacher of the other school, as stated in the policy²⁹.

When we verified the work of the SES support professionals and teachers, actors who interact more closely with students with disabilities, in most cases we saw an effort to do the work, with little interaction with SES teachers in the multifunctional resource rooms that work in nearby schools (and serve some students with disabilities from School II), except for their proximity to the CMADIJ staff. Implementing agents who work directly with

²⁶ On the one hand, the support professional is responsible for assisting the student in activities in which he/she is dependent (basic care, assistance in school activities). The support teacher, on the other hand, is a professional with academic education who works by supporting the classroom teacher in planning and teaching.

²⁷ It is important to highlight that the requirement for hiring a support professional in the municipality of Corumbá is the same requirement for hiring a support teacher (Special Education training and/or experience), which further confuses the role of the professional.

²⁸ Of the eight teachers interviewed (five classroom teachers and three SES teachers), only one classroom teacher said they work together with the SES teacher.

²⁹ The National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education (2008) provides that the SES should identify, elaborate and organize pedagogical and accessibility resources in order to eliminate barriers to student participation; however, such activities should be differentiated from those offered in the common classroom and not a substitute for schooling. The SES should supplement student education to ensure their autonomy and independence at school and beyond.

students with disabilities maintain greater contact with middle level implementing agents who are responsible for the special education sector in the municipality. Interaction appears to be concentrated among those who are directly responsible for students with disabilities. The other implementing agents (classroom teachers, principals and coordinators) have little performance, despite their importance, mainly due to the lack of knowledge and the predominance of enabling conceptions about disability. Possibly the concentration of students with disabilities in the initial grades of Elementary School and their high retention rates are one of the consequences of this set of perceptions, conditions and performances.

Lima and D'Ascenzi (2013) state that the implementation process is defined from the consequence of an intention (expressed in the plan) and the elements of the action context. Thus, it is possible to integrate these two elements and insert cognitive variables such as actors' ideas, values and worldviews. Arretche (2001) points out that the diversity of implementation contexts can produce entirely different results in different realities. The author states that institutions impact practices, but the actions, values and contexts of individuals impact institutions. We believe that the research carried out contributes to the knowledge about the implementation of the inclusive education policy, both regarding the implementing agents and regarding the local conditions for the realization of the right to education of students with disabilities.

6 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This work aimed to investigate the implementation of the Special Education policy from the perspective of inclusive education, based on the actions of the implementing agents in the Municipal Education Network of a city located in the hinterlands of Brazil. The results showed that the margin of discretion of these agents is small, since the aspects related to the ableism and the infrastructural conditions of the school units negatively interfere in the implementation of the policy.

Another factor pointed out by the research concerns the characteristics of a policy marked by discontinuity. Management changes that impact the continuity of actions and change of actors that initiate (at least every four years) a new way of managing the policy, often without considering or evaluating what was previously built, tending to leave its "mark" management by changing what has already been done. In addition, public-private relations that mark the history of the countryside also influence local design and public policy outcomes for people with disabilities.

As a background to the implementation of the policy, we have the perceptions of the agents, who, through aspects related to ableism, added to the naturalization of precariousness, can explain the current situation of the Municipal Network regarding the schooling of students with disabilities: high number retention in the early grades of Elementary School. Ableism, present in the speeches and actions described by the agents, especially in the classroom, do not consider the specificities of the students, their abilities and give the "welcome" of the school and all its actors the success of the policy implementation. Importantly, these issues are not present in the formulation of Special Education policies; however, they present themselves strongly in their implementation.

The work, which aimed to investigate the performance of the implementing agents of the Special Education policy in Corumbá Municipal Network presented important aspects of the “school floor” that eventually impact the results of such policies. Moreover, the research showed us the influence of the perception of implementing agents in relation to people with disabilities and how this influences the implementation of the policy aimed at the educational service of this population. Research that focuses on “background” such as this study is necessary because it points to factors that will possibly illuminate the understanding of the current situation of these actors: both the conditions of implementing agents and persons with disabilities.

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