

## Facts, challenges and accomplishments

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The first challenge faced by this article is to talk about Brazil, in a summarized and complete way, since our diversity, present in all fields and spheres – environmental, cultural, educational, social among others, creates regional scenarios with very unique characteristics.

The data below outline the Brazilian reality in short topics:

- Brazil – officially the Federative Republic of Brazil – is a federative, presidentialist republic, located in South America, formed by the union of 26 states, divided into 5565 Municipalities including the Federal District, where the National capital city, Brasilia is located.
- Estimated Population: 191.939.434 people, making it the 5<sup>th</sup>. most populated nation in the world:
  - 31,8% are in between 0 and 15 years of age
  - 28,5% are in between 15 and 29 years of age
- Area of 8.514.876,599 km<sup>2</sup>, equivalent to 47% of the South American territory. This is the 5<sup>th</sup>. greatest area among all other countries;
- The population is distributed along the Northern, North-eastern, South-eastern, Midwest and Southern regions, and has very diverse habits and cultures, as well as geographic environments.
- Brazil has had Portuguese colonization, and is the only country in the American continent to speak the Portuguese language;
- Brazil has one of the most multi-racial societies in the world, which is formed by European, Indigenous, African and Asian descendents;
- 9<sup>th</sup>. largest economy of the planet and largest economy in Latin America;
- Ranked 39<sup>th</sup> among the countries with the best Quality of Life on the planet;
- Holds between 15 and 20% of the world's biodiversity;
- Has 27 million people with disability, which is equivalent to 14.5% of the total population (year 2000 Demographic Census by IBGE – Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics).

## Educational Reality

Special Education has Inclusive Education as its perspective, and for this reason is an intrinsic part of the educational scenario as a whole. After a brief characterization of national Education, this paper will focus on Special Education.

In Brazil, according to determinations of the Federal Constitution (1988) and the Law of Guidelines and Bases for National Education (LDBEN), Education is administrated and organized separately by the respective federation units – municipalities, states and federation. Each one is responsible for maintenance and management of funds, as well as for the mechanisms and sources for financial resources.

### Brazilian Educational System

Levels and Modes	Age
Pre-School	0 to 03 years old 04 to 06 years old
Elementary/Middle School The State has the obligation to ensure universal access	06 to 14 years old 09 years duration in total
Education for Youngsters and Adults (EJA)	15 years old and up
High School or Professionalizing Education	15 years old and up 3 to 04 years duration in total
Higher Education	18 to 24 years old Undergraduate and Graduate levels

#### Access, Permanence and Quality

Enrollment is compulsory in Elementary/Middle school for children and adolescents between 06 and 14 years of age. In 2006, 97% of the children and adolescents in this age group were going to school. The current challenge is to improve quality of the education being offered.

#### Illiteracy

In 2007, according to the National Sample Survey in Homes (PNAD), there were 10% of illiterate citizens, which equals 14.1 million Brazilians.

This rate has been decreasing, thanks to the increase in specific investments in the modality of Education for Youngsters and Adults (EJA) and in programs as “School Grant” and, in a wider perspective, in teacher-valuing policies and other measures.

# Special Education

## Current Conception

It is understood as a **field of knowledge** and of a **transversal teaching mode** that aims to make available several specific services, resources and strategies to favor the schooling process of each and every student in regular classrooms, and their interaction in educational, family, social and cultural contexts.

## Which Students?

Students with disabilities (physical, visual, auditory, intellectual and deaf/blindness), global developmental disorders (autism, autistic spectrum syndromes, child psychosis and neurosis) and high abilities/ high-functioning individuals.

## Main Guidelines

- To assure the right of each and every student to share the same school space, without discriminations of any nature;
- To promote equality and to value the differences when organizing a curriculum that favors the learning of each and every student and that stimulates methodological and systemic transformations in the different stages of the educational process;
- To assure Specialized Educational Guidance to students with disabilities, global developmental disorders and high-functioning abilities in the time of day opposite to that which these students attend regular classes of regular schools;
- To provide guidance for school system so that there are teaching strategies and attention to each student's special needs, in heterogeneous learning environments.

## The path of Special Education in the perspective of inclusion: a few landmarks

We may take the year of 1854 as the beginning of Special Education in Brazil, with the opening of the Imperial Institute for Blind Boys (current Benjamin Constant Institute), by Emperor D. Pedro II, in the city of Rio de Janeiro. It was a boarding school and took in boys from all over the country as well as from other countries in South America. It was the first educational institution for the blind in Latin America.

*"The institute aims to educate blind boys and prepare them according to their individual capability, to perform an art, a profession, a liberal occupation. It is, therefore, a house of education and not an asylum, much less a hospice; a triple specialty, music, work, science, this is what constitutes its special organization".*

1857 – Opening of the Imperial Institute for the Deaf/Mute, in the city of Rio de Janeiro, which is now the INES – National Institute for Deaf Education. At that time, the Institute was a boarding school, which only accepted deaf boys. They came from all over the country and many were abandoned by their families;

1948 – Brazil signs the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that ensures the right of all persons to Education;

1954 – The first Association of Parents and Friends of the Mentally Disabled (APAE) is founded. Special teaching as an option to regular schooling begins;

1961 – The Law of Guidelines and Bases ensures the right of the child with disabilities to Education, preferably in the regular schooling system;

1971 – Law 5.692 represents a legal step back, since it reinforces special schools;

1988 – Promulgation of the current Constitution, which ensures enrollment of children and adolescents preferably in regular schools, as Education is a right of all, and should ensure “equal conditions of access and staying in school” (article 206);

1990 – Brazil signs the World Declaration of Education for All

1994 – Brazil signs the Declaration of Salamanca, which brings the conception of inclusive education and defends the need and right for inclusion of students in the regular school system, having as its principle an “Education for All”;

1999 – Decree 3.298 discusses the National Policy for Integration of the Person with Disability, regulates Law number 7.853/89 and defines special education as transverse to all teaching modes, emphasizing complementary actions of special education to regular schooling;

2001 – Resolution CNE/CEB nº. 2 which establishes that it is a crime to refuse enrollment of children with disabilities. It is an inflection point in the process of inclusion;

2002 – Resolution CNE/CP nº. 1 defines that the University should educate Elementary School teachers preparing them to, among other things, “welcome and deal with diversity”;

2002 – Law 10.436/02 recognizes LIBRAS (Brazilian Sign Language) as a legal means of communication and expression;

2002 - Order 2.678/08 approves norms for usage, teaching, production and transmission of the Braille alphabet in all educational levels;

2003 – The Federal Department of Education creates the program Inclusive Education: The Right to Diversity, to prepare teachers to disseminate Inclusive Education;

2004 – The Federal Public Prosecution Office reaffirms the right to schooling of students with and without disabilities in regular schools in the document entitled *The Access of Students with Disability to Regular Schools and Classrooms*;

2006 – The Special Secretariat for Human Rights, the Department of Education, the Department of Justice and UNESCO launch the National Plan of Education in Human Rights which has, among its aims, to support, in the elementary education syllabus, themes relative to people with disabilities, and to develop affirmative actions that promote inclusion, access and endurance in higher education;

2007 – In context with the National Plan for Growth Acceleration – PAC – the Plan for Educational Development – PDE is launched, reaffirmed by the Social Agenda of Inclusion of People with Disabilities, having as its axis the architectural accessibility of school buildings, the implementation of resource rooms and education of teachers for providing specialized educational guidance;

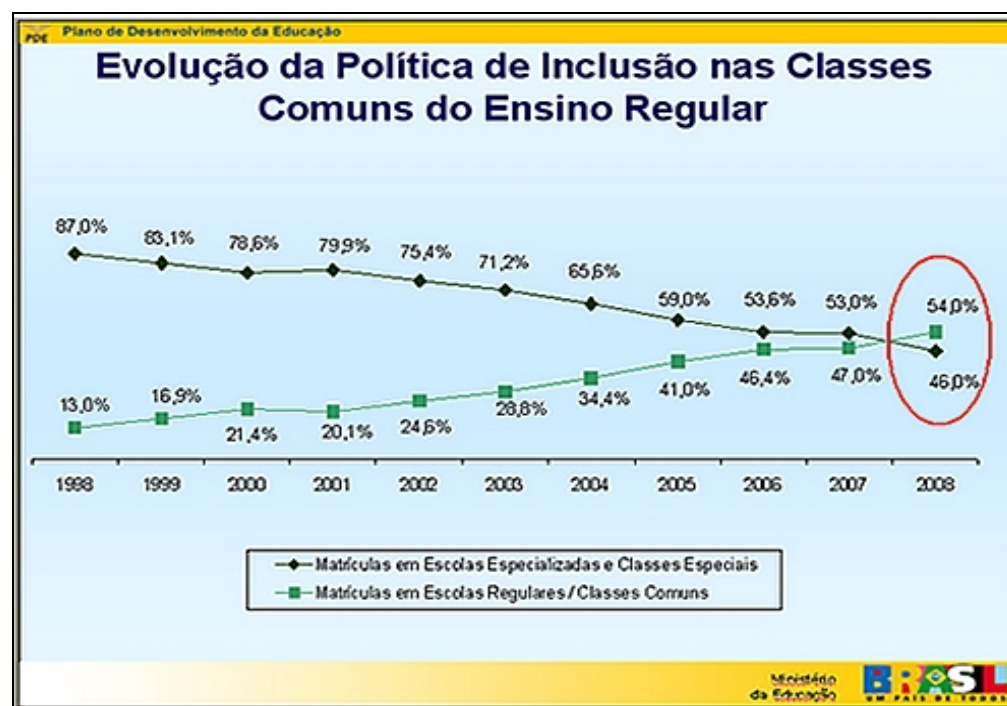
2008 – The National Policy for Special Education in the perspective of Inclusive Education defines that everyone should be enrolled in regular schools. For the first time the number of children with disabilities enrolled in regular schools (54%) is greater than the number of those enrolled in special schools (46%);

2008 – Brazil ratifies the Convention on the Rights of People with Disability with constitutional amendment status – Legislative Decree 186/2008;

2008 – Decree 6571/08 which refers to Specialized Educational Guidance is promulgated. These two decrees establish that inclusive educational systems are ensured in **all** levels;

2009 – Decree 6.949/09 that ratifies the Convention on the Rights of People with Disability is now directly promulgated by the Executive Office;

2009 – Resolution CNE/CEB number 4 which establishes the Operational Guidelines for Specialized Educational Guidance in Elementary Education is promulgated.



**Evolution of Inclusive Educational Policy in regular classrooms**

**Black: Enrollment in Specialized Schools and Special Classrooms**

**Green: Enrollment in Regular Schools/ Classrooms**

## Accomplishments and Challenges: sides of the same coin

The path of Special Education as one of the instruments to carry out Inclusive Education is a relatively recent process, in historic terms, in Brazil and in the world, adopting as its landmark the Declaration of Salamanca – 1994.

Considering the complex Brazilian reality, one will be able to find that relevant steps were taken, and that are accomplishments to be celebrated.

We have walked a long way; in some places our actions were more effective than in others, and in some spheres, as the legislative sphere and production of knowledge, more than in others. The approved legislation, although having a few aspects that may be faced as steps backwards, deserves to be highlighted, especially the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disability, with constitutional amendment status, which has its article 24 dedicated to Inclusive Education.

The numbers below point to achievements in the number of enrollments of students who are targeted by Special Education

	Daycare	Pre-school	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	EJA – Elementary/Middle School with required attendance	EJA Integrated – High School and Vocational	
BRAZIL								<b>TOTAL</b>
State – Urban	2.094	6.156	82.374	48.167	15.353	8.445	2.663	165.252
State - Rural	1	79	3.251	1.492	342	297	10	5.472
Municipal – Urban	4.804	23.050	173.536	31.101	586	18.450	119	251.646
Municipal - Rural	250	2.548	28.105	5.277	36	4.125	2	40.343
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7.149</b>	<b>31.833</b>	<b>287.266</b>	<b>86.037</b>	<b>16.317</b>	<b>31.317</b>	<b>2.794</b>	<b>462.713</b>

Source: [http://www.inep.gov.br/censo/escolar/DOU\\_final\\_2008.htm](http://www.inep.gov.br/censo/escolar/DOU_final_2008.htm)

However, these achievements also point to challenges to be met. As the well-known metaphor says, the glass is simultaneously half-full and half-empty. There is much to accomplish yet, for in education we are always halfway there.

Currently we have moved forward enough to know that the challenges are set not “only” in and for the children, teenagers and adults with disability. All of us, people with and without disability, are responsible for carrying out this fundamental human right which is Education.

A few important points that outline these challenges are:

- Transformation of schools into democratic spaces that suit the needs of students, whichever their individual characteristics are, and that this perspective may imply in the continuous transformation of their educational projects, teaching methods, evaluations and attitudes of teachers so as to favor social inclusion, in constant adaptation to offer quality educational services for each and every one;
- Abandoning assistentialist and paternalist feelings. Each student is a person with rights and duties and should be treated as such, as a means of learning to exercise democracy and citizenship;
- Implementing and carrying out existing legislation;
- Intensification of the preparation process of teachers and all who take part in the school community, from their training at the university. Preparation courses have been ministered by federal, state and municipal spheres for many years and to a significant number of teachers. However, these are, in some form, still not sufficiently effective in promoting inclusion;
- Adaptation of existing school buildings and their surroundings, according to the guidelines set by Norm 9050, by ABNT – Brazilian Association for Technical Norms;
- Construction of new buildings following the guidelines proposed by Universal Design;
- Articulation and interface with the community (in a broader sense) to promote a culture of Inclusion and Accessibility, identifying synergy points with different instances (such as public transportation to school) and increasing extramural educational function;
- Investment in the dissemination of information on educational resources, existing technologies, publications, successful cases, thesis, research projects and legislation;
- Investment in communication channels and networks that promote the exchange of experiences between teachers, students, and family members;
- Investment to develop and improve Technologies (assistive, information and communication) that allow for an increasingly broader access to available knowledge in the 3-dimensional and virtual worlds.

*“No one educates anybody; no one educates oneself alone; men educate each other in communion”.* Paulo Freire, Brazilian educator

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