

Progress and Challenges in the Educational Inclusion of Autistic Students in Brazil under the Berenice Piana Law

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Abstract: *Under the Berenice Piana Law (No. 12,764/2012), this applied, qualitative study examines the educational accessibility for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Brazil, focusing on enrollment, retention, and instructional quality. Through a literature review and empirical data from educators and families, the analysis reveals that while the legislation has advanced societal awareness and policy responses, persistent deficits in resources and teacher training continue to hinder full inclusion. Effective integration ultimately demands sustained institutional commitment to individualized support.*

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder; educational inclusion; Berenice Piana Law; special education policy; Brazil.

1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has gained prominence in Brazilian public policies, being considered a fundamental right that aims to guarantee equal opportunities for all citizens, regardless of their physical, intellectual or sensory conditions. In the specific case of people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), the right to education gained relevance with the enactment of the Berenice Piana Law (Law No. 12,764/2012), which officially recognized autism as a disability, ensuring that people with ASD have the right to specialized care adapted to their needs. This legislation represents a significant advance in the field of inclusion, but its full implementation still faces several challenges.

The delimitation of the theme of this study focuses on the right of access to education for autistic people with disabilities (PWD), analyzing how the Berenice Piana Law contributes to the inclusion of these individuals in the Brazilian educational system. The research problem seeks to understand the current panorama of access to education for people with ASD in Brazil, questioning the extent to which the legislation has been effective in promoting the school inclusion of these individuals.

The hypothesis put forward suggests that, although the Berenice Piana Law has been an important milestone in guaranteeing educational rights for people with ASD, its practical application still faces obstacles. Among these challenges are the lack of adequate resources in schools, insufficient teacher training and inadequate infrastructure to fully meet the needs of autistic students. However, the law has contributed to awareness and the implementation of inclusive policies, even if gradually.

The general objective of this research is to analyze access to education for people with ASD in Brazil in the light of the Berenice Piana Law. Among the specific objectives, it seeks to report the current panorama of the inclusion of people with ASD in Brazilian schools, identify the main provisions of the Berenice Piana Law related to access to education, and examine the advances and challenges faced in the implementation of this legislation.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex neurobiological condition that influences brain development, impacting how an individual perceives and interacts with the world around them. This disorder encompasses a wide range of challenges, presenting uniquely in each person, hence the designation "spectrum".

In recent years, there has been a considerable increase in awareness and diagnosis of ASD, which has provided a deeper understanding of this condition. Characterized by deficits in social communication and restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior, ASD represents a challenge not only for those who experience it but also for their families, educators, and healthcare professionals.

According to Silva (2012), ASD is described as "a global disorder of child development that manifests before the age of 3 and persists throughout life". The author emphasizes that ASD is characterized by "a range of symptoms that affect the domains of socialization, communication, and behavior", highlighting that interactions in these domains are generally the most impaired.

The term "autism" was coined by Plouller in 1906, in the context of research on the thought processes of individuals diagnosed with dementia. However, it was in 1911 that the word "autism" gained greater visibility through the studies of Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler, who used it to describe schizophrenic patients (Dias, 2015, p. 1, apud Ribeiro, 2020, p. 24).

The mentioned authors make us reflect on the purity, uniqueness, and greatness of the autistic child. They warn us not to be influenced by society's stereotypes regarding people with autism. Thus, "knowing an autistic person", according to Silva (2012, p. 9), is having the opportunity to participate in the "everyday miracle", that is, to rediscover daily the new facets that exist in the unique universe of each individual with ASD.

The Federal Constitution serves as the basis for the Brazilian legal system, establishing that all laws must comply with its fundamental principles. One of its central aspects is the guarantee of fundamental rights to all citizens, as stated in article 5º, which ensures equality of conditions and rights, regardless of distinctive characteristics (Brasil, 1988).

The legal protection of people with disabilities is considered essential for justice and social dignity, as defended by Martha Nussbaum. She argues that a fair approach to human justice requires recognizing equality in citizenship for people with disabilities, including mental impairments, and adequate support for their care and education. This also implies recognizing the variety of needs and dependencies that are common to all human beings, whether they are considered "normal" or have permanent disabilities (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 121).

Therefore, it is up to the State to guarantee these rights, especially for those who need special treatment, such as people with disabilities. This state responsibility is made explicit in the Law for the Support of Persons with Disabilities, in force since 1989, which in its article 2º states:

to health, work, leisure, social security, protection for childhood and motherhood, and others that, arising from the Constitution and laws, promote their personal, social, and economic well-being (Brasil, 1989).

Law No. 13,146, known as the Brazilian Law on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities or the Statute of Persons with Disabilities, was enacted in 2015 with the aim of ensuring the social inclusion and non-discrimination of persons with disabilities. This law defines disability as a long-term impairment of a physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory nature which, in interaction with barriers, may hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (Brasil, 2015).

Furthermore, the legislation covers persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Law No. 12,764, of 2012, established the National Policy for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with ASD, following an tireless struggle led by Berenice Piana, mother of an autistic boy. Her perseverance and activism resulted in the approval of the law, which recognizes the rights of persons with ASD, guaranteeing them physical and moral integrity, social inclusion, and equality of rights (Almeida, 2020, p. 1).

These laws are fundamental to ensuring the protection and inclusion of persons with disabilities, defining their legal rights and recognizing their specificities, such as ASD, in Brazilian legislation. Let us see:

Art. 1º [...]

§ 1º For the purposes of this Law, a person with autism spectrum disorder is considered to be one with a clinical syndrome characterized in the form of the following items I or II:

I - Persistent and clinically significant impairment of social communication and interaction, manifested by marked impairment of verbal and nonverbal communication used for social interaction; absence of social reciprocity; failure to develop and maintain relationships appropriate to their developmental level;

II - Restrictive and repetitive patterns of behaviors, interests, and activities, manifested by stereotyped motor or

verbal behaviors or by unusual sensory behaviors; excessive adherence to routines and ritualized behavior patterns; restricted and fixed interests (Brasil, 2012).

The 1988 Federal Constitution of Brazil establishes several articles related to the rights of persons with disabilities, seeking to guarantee their equality and inclusion in society.

Article 5° establishes equality before the law; let us see:

Art. 5. All are equal before the law, without any distinction, ensuring to Brazilians and foreigners residing in the country the inviolability of the right to life, liberty, equality, security, and property, as follows:

Thus, it is ensured that all people, including those with disabilities, are equal before the law, without any form of discrimination. Article 205, in turn, guarantees access to education, as follows:

Art. 205. Education, a right of all and a duty of the State and the family, shall be promoted and encouraged with the collaboration of society, aiming at the full development of the person, their preparation for the exercise of citizenship, and their qualification for work.

Therefore, this article establishes that education is a right of all, including persons with disabilities, aiming at their full inclusion in society.

Article 196 of the Federal Constitution addresses the right to access to health:

Art. 196. Health is a right of all and a duty of the State, guaranteed through social and economic policies aimed at reducing the risk of disease and other harms and ensuring universal and equal access to actions and services for its promotion, protection, and recovery.

This article guarantees universal access to health, ensuring that persons with disabilities have access to adequate health services. Article 224 of the FC deals with accessibility:

Art. 227. It is the duty of the family, society, and the State to ensure to children, adolescents, and young people, with absolute priority, the right to life, health, food, education, leisure, professional training, culture, dignity, respect, freedom, and family and community coexistence, in addition to protecting them from all forms of neglect, discrimination, exploitation, violence, cruelty, and oppression. (As amended by EC 65/2010).

Therefore, this article highlights the importance of ensuring that children with disabilities have access to educational, health, and leisure facilities. This same article also provides for special protection for the childhood of children with disabilities, ensuring their rights to life, health, and family coexistence. Regarding labor protection, article 7° establishes labor rights, including the prohibition of discrimination in the workplace, guaranteeing equal opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Art. 203. Social assistance shall be provided to those in need, regardless of contribution to social security, and has the following objectives:

I - protection of the family, motherhood, childhood, adolescence, and old age;

II - assistance to needy children and adolescents;

III - promotion of integration into the labor market;

This article establishes social assistance as a fundamental right, ensuring benefits and services to persons with disabilities and their families. The access to justice described in Article 227 addresses the adaptation of judicial proceedings to guarantee access to justice for persons with disabilities, including sign language interpreters, for example.

Finally, the principle of human dignity, in Article 1° of the Constitution, establishes the principle of human dignity as a foundation of the Republic, which implies the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, ensuring them a full and inclusive life. These articles of the Federal Constitution reflect Brazil's

commitment to guaranteeing the rights and equality of persons with disabilities, promoting their inclusion in all spheres of society.

That said, it is observed that the Federal Constitution prioritizes the principle of equality, guaranteeing all fundamental rights and guarantees to persons with disabilities. Furthermore, after the enactment of Law 12.764/2012, individuals with ASD are considered persons with disabilities for all legal purposes, "a fact that considerably expands the scope of State protection, as all legal norms protecting persons with disabilities apply to individuals with ASD" (Vaiano, 2020, p. 212).

Recently, two bills have drawn attention in the capital of Manaus; Deputy Joana Darc has been a pioneer in the fight for the rights of persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). In this topic, we will analyze the objectives of these bills and whether they are in accordance with Federal Laws 12.764/2012 and 13.146/2015.

Bill No. 13 of 2022 provides for the adoption of the "ABA" School Inclusion System for children and adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in public schools. Article 1 states:

Art. 1º The School Inclusion System based on the ABA - Applied Behavior Analysis technique is included in the State Education Network for children and adolescents diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

This means that the School Inclusion System based on the ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) technique is being incorporated into the State Education Network to serve children and adolescents diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The ABA technique is a proven intervention approach that focuses on behavior analysis and the application of strategies to support the development and learning of individuals with ASD. Therefore, the inclusion of this approach in the state education network aims to provide specific educational support and services to children and adolescents with autism, based on the ABA technique, in order to promote their development and inclusion in regular education.

Article 2º refers to:

Art. 2º Each educational unit must have qualified professionals for the effective implementation of the ABA - Applied Behavior Analysis technique, namely:

I - One psychologist per school unit;

II - One pedagogue;

III - Two psychology interns for every 4 (four) individuals diagnosed with autism.

Article 2º establishes the staff requirements needed in each educational unit implementing the ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) technique for children with autism. This means that each school or educational unit adopting this approach must have the following professionals:

I. A psychologist: At least one psychologist must be present at the school unit to assist in the application of the ABA technique and in evaluating the progress of children with autism.

II. A pedagogue: The presence of a pedagogue is important to help adapt the curriculum and pedagogical strategies to meet the needs of children with autism.

III. Two psychology interns for every 4 individuals diagnosed with autism: This means that for each group of 4 children with autism, the school must have two psychology interns. These interns will assist the psychologist in implementing the ABA technique and monitoring the children.

This provision aims to ensure that qualified professionals are available to provide support and guidance to children with autism who are being assisted through the ABA technique at the educational unit.

Finally, Art. 3º, Art. 4º, Art. 5º state that:

Art. 3º O The Executive Branch may evaluate the establishments that already have physical and staff structure in

the municipalities of the State of Amazonas to gradually begin the inclusion of ABA therapy in the school system, established by this Law. Art. 4° The Executive Branch may regulate this Law to ensure its faithful execution. Art. 5° Expenses arising from the execution of this Law shall be borne by specific budget allocations, consigned in the current budget.

Article 3° establishes that the Executive Branch of the State of Amazonas may evaluate educational establishments that already have the necessary physical and staff structure in the state's municipalities to gradually begin the inclusion of ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) therapy in the school system, as established by this Law. This means that the state government may verify schools that already have the infrastructure and human resources necessary to implement ABA therapy and begin its application progressively.

Article 4° authorizes the Executive Branch to regulate this Law, that is, to establish detailed rules and procedures to ensure its effective implementation.

Inclusive education is a concept that seeks to guarantee access, participation, and learning for all students, regardless of their individual characteristics, abilities, or special needs. It is based on the idea that each student is unique and has the right to quality education, respecting their dignity, promoting their social inclusion, and developing their full potential.

According to Stainback and Stainback (2020), inclusive education is a process that seeks to restructure the educational system to meet the diversity of students in a common learning environment. They state that inclusion is not just about the physical presence of students in the regular classroom, but also about adapting the curriculum, using differentiated pedagogical strategies, and providing adequate support to ensure the full and equal participation of all.

According to Booth and Ainscow (2012), inclusive education is a transformative movement that seeks to overcome barriers that prevent the participation of certain groups of students, such as those with disabilities, learning difficulties, or behavioral issues. They argue that inclusion is not a final destination, but a continuous process of improvement and change in schools.

Saviani (2017) already emphasizes that inclusive education is an ethical principle that recognizes and values human diversity. He argues that inclusion goes beyond formal equality, seeking equity, that is, providing fair and adequate conditions for all students to have real opportunities for learning and development.

These authors highlight that inclusive education is not just about including students with special needs in regular schools, but rather about promoting significant changes in the educational system as a whole. It is a movement that requires the commitment of the entire school community and the adoption of inclusive pedagogical practices, aiming to create welcoming educational environments that value diversity and provide equal opportunities for all students.

Educational inclusion in Brazil is a highly relevant topic that seeks to ensure access to and retention in the educational system for all people, regardless of their characteristics and needs. The 1988 Federal Constitution establishes guidelines and fundamental principles that support educational inclusion in the country.

According to Article 205 of the Federal Constitution, it guarantees the right to education as a duty of the State and the family, emphasizing equal conditions for access to and retention in school:

Art. 205. Education, a right of all and a duty of the State and the family, shall be promoted and encouraged with the collaboration of society, aiming at the full development of the person, their preparation for the exercise of citizenship, and their qualification for work (BRASIL, 1988).

In turn, Article 206, item I, establishes that education must be provided based on the principles of equality, ensuring attention to special educational needs, among other aspects:

Article 208, items III and IV, highlight the State's obligation to provide specialized educational assistance to people with disabilities, preferably in the regular education network:

Art. 208. The State's duty to Education shall be fulfilled by guaranteeing:

III - specialized educational assistance to persons with disabilities, preferably in the regular education network;

IV - childcare and preschool services for children aged 0 to 6 years (Brasil. 1988).

The Federal Constitution reinforces the right to equality and non-discrimination, guaranteeing all students, without distinction, access to and retention in school. Brazilian legislation, in line with the Federal Constitution, provides for the adoption of measures to promote educational inclusion, such as the provision of resources and specialized pedagogical support services (Melo, 2013).

The Federal Constitution emphasizes the importance of society's participation in promoting educational inclusion, encouraging collaboration between family, school, and community. The principle of democratic management of education, mentioned in the Constitution, enables the active participation of parents, students, and educators in decision-making related to inclusion and the improvement of education as a whole (Gama, 2018).

The Federal Constitution supports the need to adapt public policies and education systems to meet the specific demands of inclusion, considering the diversities present in society. The Federal Constitution also provides for the promotion of affirmative actions and policies to combat inequalities, seeking to ensure equitable access to education, especially for historically excluded groups.

Regarding the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDBEN), Law No. 9.394/1996, it is one of the main legal landmarks of education in Brazil and plays a fundamental role in the context of educational inclusion. The LDBEN establishes guidelines and principles for the organization and operation of the Brazilian educational system, including specific provisions on the inclusion of people with special educational needs (Rocha, 2022).

The LDBEN recognizes the right of all to education, ensuring equal conditions for access to and permanence in school, without any form of discrimination, as established in article 3°; let us see:

Art. 3° O Education shall be provided based on the following principles:

I - equal conditions for access to and permanence in school;

II - freedom to learn, teach, research, and disseminate culture, thought, art, and knowledge; (...) (Brasil, 1996).

The LDBEN emphasizes the importance of teacher training to serve students with special educational needs, aiming to promote equal opportunities and the development of inclusive pedagogical practices. The LDBEN establishes the need to adapt physical spaces, teaching materials, and pedagogical resources to ensure accessibility and promote educational inclusion, as provided for in article 58.

The Law provides for the development of pedagogical proposals that consider student diversity, ensuring curriculum adaptation and the use of appropriate teaching and technological resources, as established in article 26.

Art. 26. The curricula of early childhood education, elementary education, and secondary education must have a common national basis, to be complemented, in each education system and each school, by a diversified part required by the regional and local characteristics of society, culture, economy, and students (Brasil, 1996).

The Law reinforces the importance of family and community participation in promoting educational inclusion, encouraging collaboration among all those involved in the educational process, as established in article 12.

The LDBEN provides for the promotion of actions to eliminate barriers that prevent the full participation of students with special educational needs, as well as to combat prejudices and stereotypes related to diversity, as established in article 58. The Law establishes the obligation of the public authorities to adopt measures to ensure the provision of specialized educational services to students with disabilities, global developmental disorders, and high abilities or giftedness, ensuring their inclusion and learning, as provided for in article 58 (rocha, 2022).

The relationship between educational inclusion in Brazil and the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law (LDBEN). The LDBEN establishes guidelines that seek to promote the inclusion of people with special educational needs, ensuring access, permanence, and learning in an equal manner and respecting student diversity.

Educational inclusion in Brazil is also supported by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, an international treaty ratified by Brazil in 2008. The Convention establishes guidelines and principles for the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, including the right to inclusive education (Bearzi, 2020).

The Convention recognizes the right of all persons with disabilities to inclusive, quality education on an equal opportunity basis within the regular education system, as established in article 24.

1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. To realize this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels, as well as lifelong learning, with the following objectives (Brasil, 2009).

The Convention emphasizes the importance of ensuring means of access to education, including individualized support measures appropriate to the needs of persons with disabilities, as provided for in article 24.

d) Persons with disabilities receive the necessary support within the general education system, with a view to facilitating their effective education;

e) Individualized and effective support measures are adopted in environments that maximize academic and social development, in accordance with the goal of full inclusion (Brasil, 2009).

The Convention emphasizes the need to eliminate barriers that prevent the full participation of persons with disabilities in education, such as architectural, communication, and attitudinal barriers, as established in Article 24.

a) Facilitation of the learning of braille, alternative writing, augmentative and alternative communication modes, means, and formats, and orientation and mobility skills, in addition to facilitating peer support and counseling; (Brasil, 2009).

The Convention recognizes the fundamental role of teachers and education professionals in promoting educational inclusion, highlighting the importance of their adequate training and support measures to meet the needs of persons with disabilities, as provided for in Article 24. The Convention emphasizes the need to ensure that persons with disabilities receive the necessary support to facilitate their participation in the education system, including support services inside and outside the school environment, as established in Article 24 (Silva, 2016).

The concept of the mediating teacher in inclusive education refers to a qualified and committed professional who facilitates the learning process of students with special educational needs, ensuring their full and equal participation in the school environment (Da Silva, 2021).

Thus, the mediating teacher is one who acts as a facilitator and agent of inclusion, creating a favorable learning environment for all students, regardless of their differences and needs. He plays a fundamental role in promoting the active and effective participation of students with special needs, providing individualized support, adapted strategies, and appropriate resources.

According to Brazil's National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education, the mediating teacher is responsible for mediating the interactions and learning of students with disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, and high abilities/giftedness. He seeks to promote the comprehensive development of students, respecting their individual characteristics and stimulating their maximum potential (Silva, 2016).

In addition, the mediating teacher collaborates with other education professionals, such as psychologists, therapists, and specialists in special education, to plan and implement pedagogical strategies that meet the specific needs of each student.

The mediating teacher acts as a link between students with special needs, their classmates, and the school community in general. He promotes interaction, cooperation, and mutual respect among all students, seeking to eliminate barriers and stereotypes. In short, the mediating teacher plays a fundamental role in building an inclusive and equitable education, ensuring that all students have access to quality education. He is a qualified and committed professional who promotes active participation, equal opportunities, and academic success for all students,

regardless of their differences and needs (UNESCO, 2017).

Mediating teachers aim to promote the inclusion and comprehensive development of children with SEN, considering their abilities, difficulties, and individual characteristics. They seek to create an inclusive, welcoming, and stimulating learning environment where all children feel valued and capable of learning.

Mediating teachers have specialized knowledge in various areas, such as psychology, pedagogy, special and inclusive education. They use specific strategies and resources, adapting the curriculum and activities according to the needs and capacities of children with SEN (Dos Santos, 2021).

According to author Sosa, she alludes to the topic:

Mediator teachers work in close collaboration with other education professionals, such as psychologists, speech therapists, and occupational therapists, to develop individualized teaching plans and provide multidisciplinary support to children with SEN. Mediator educators value the active participation of the families of children with SEN, seeking to establish a collaborative partnership with parents and guardians. They share information, exchange experiences, and work together to ensure the children's progress and well-being (Sosa, 2019, p. 28).

Thus, mediator teachers use a variety of strategies and methodologies, such as differentiated classes, the use of visual resources and adapted materials, conflict mediation, and stimulation of the development of children's social and emotional skills. In addition to promoting the social inclusion of children with SEN, encouraging interaction and cooperation among all students. They work to combat stereotypes and prejudices, promoting the appreciation of diversity and mutual respect (Nunes, 2017). They are also responsible for closely monitoring the progress of children with SEN, conducting continuous assessments and adapting teaching strategies as needed. They are always looking for innovative and effective ways to support children's educational development.

Mediator teachers act as advocates for the rights of children with SEN, ensuring they receive adequate support and access to quality education. They work to overcome barriers and challenges, promoting inclusion in all aspects of school life. Mediators are dedicated professionals who possess not only technical knowledge but also empathy, patience, and commitment. They believe in the potential of all children and are willing to make a difference in their lives, contributing to a more inclusive, equitable, and just education (Da Rocha, 2022).

All children, including those with special needs, have the fundamental right to inclusive and quality education (UNESCO, 2017). Children with special needs have the right to receive education adapted to their individual needs, ensuring equal access to education (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, article 24). Children with special needs have the right to fully participate in school and social life, without discrimination or segregation (Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 23).

Children with special needs have the right to receive individualized support and adequate resources to ensure their full academic, social, and emotional development (Freire, 2017). Children with special needs have the right to be included in all educational, recreational, and cultural activities, without undue restrictions (Lopes & Sanches-Ferreira, 2016).

Children with special needs have the right to receive support services, such as occupational therapy, speech therapy, psychology, and others, to promote their integral development (Luckasson et al., 2012). Children with special needs have the right to receive an accessible educational environment, including physical, technological, and pedagogical adaptations, to ensure their full participation and learning (Hallahan and Kauffman, 2012).

The role of the mediating teacher in promoting students' autonomy is fundamental in inclusive education. The mediating teacher seeks to develop skills and competencies in students so that they become increasingly independent in their learning and in their lives. According to the National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education, the mediating teacher is responsible for encouraging the active and effective participation of students with special needs, assisting them in developing strategies to achieve autonomy (Neves, 2014).

The mediating teacher acts as a facilitator, guiding students in identifying their strengths, interests, and personal goals. They promote reflection, decision-making, and self-management, encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning. By using differentiated and adapted pedagogical strategies, the mediating

teacher promotes autonomous learning, encouraging students to seek solutions to the challenges they encounter. They provide individualized support but also stimulate students' ability to overcome obstacles and develop problem-solving skills (Tébar, 2023).

Furthermore, the mediating teacher fosters students' autonomy by creating an inclusive environment that values diversity and encourages everyone's participation. They promote collaboration, communication, and interaction among students, allowing them to develop important social and emotional skills for their autonomy.

In this way, the mediating teacher plays an essential role in promoting students' autonomy, equipping them to make informed decisions, act independently, and take control of their lives (Ferreira et al., 2018). By valuing and strengthening students' autonomy, the mediating teacher contributes to building a more inclusive and equitable society.

The role of the mediating teacher in promoting the social interaction of special needs children in the classroom is of extreme importance for the overall development of these students. The mediating teacher acts as a facilitator, creating an inclusive environment that promotes interaction among all students, regardless of their differences and needs.

One of the mediating teacher's functions is to promote the active and meaningful participation of special needs children in group activities. They seek to create opportunities for social interaction, encouraging communication, collaboration, and teamwork. The mediating teacher must use appropriate pedagogical strategies to promote inclusion and social interaction. They can use cooperative games, group activities, collaborative projects, and other approaches that stimulate interaction among students (Farias, 2013).

Additionally, the mediating teacher works with the other students in the classroom, promoting awareness and respect for differences. They conduct activities to raise awareness and value diversity, encouraging empathy and mutual acceptance. By facilitating the social interaction of special needs children in the classroom, the mediating teacher helps promote the development of important social and emotional skills, such as communication, cooperation, conflict resolution, and building friendships (Lima, 2019).

According to Kauffman and Hallahan (2015), the mediating teacher plays a fundamental role in promoting the social interaction of special needs children, providing them with opportunities for active participation, promoting equal opportunities, and valuing their individual contributions.

In this way, the mediating teacher contributes to building an inclusive and welcoming environment where special needs children feel accepted, valued, and integrated. By promoting social interaction, the mediating teacher assists in the social and emotional development of students, allowing them to build healthy relationships and fully engage in school activities.

Inclusive early childhood education faces a series of challenges but also presents promising prospects. According to Stephani (2019), these include the lack of adequate resources and infrastructure: Many early childhood education institutions struggle to provide the resources and infrastructure needed to meet the needs of all children, especially those with disabilities or special educational needs.

As well as inadequate teacher training in the area of inclusive education remains a challenge. Many teachers are not prepared to deal with student diversity and do not have sufficient knowledge about inclusive teaching strategies (Domingues, 2015).

Furthermore, stigma and prejudice: there is still a stigma associated with disability and diversity in society. This can lead to discriminatory attitudes and the exclusion of children with special needs in the school environment. As well as the need for curriculum adaptations: therefore, it is necessary to adapt the curriculum and teaching materials to meet the needs of all children, ensuring they have access to meaningful education appropriate to their development (Pletsch, 2015).

Finally, lack of family support: some families may have difficulty understanding and supporting the educational inclusion of their children with special needs, which can negatively affect their involvement in school.

Regarding the prospects for inclusive early childhood education, the existence of legislation and policies that

promote inclusion in early childhood education is a promising prospect. These policies provide guidelines and rights that must be ensured, creating a more favorable environment for inclusion. In addition, ongoing training of teachers in the area of inclusive education is essential. Investing in training and professional development programs can strengthen teachers' skills to deal with student diversity and implement inclusive pedagogical practices (Lima, 2020).

It is essential to ensure that early childhood education institutions have access to specialized resources and support, such as special education professionals, therapists, and psychologists, who can assist in meeting the individual needs of children. As well as promoting awareness and sensitivity regarding inclusion is an important prospect. This involves educating the school community and society in general so that everyone can understand and value diversity and contribute to creating inclusive environments (Iglesias Rodríguez, 2020).

An effective partnership with the families of children with special needs must be established, which is crucial. The active involvement of families in their children's education, together with support and guidance from the school, can promote an inclusive environment and strengthen children's development.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research uses a qualitative approach, which will allow an in-depth exploration of the experiences and perceptions of those involved in the educational inclusion process of people with ASD. Detailed analysis of the Berenice Piana Law and other relevant legislation that guarantees rights to people with disabilities. The data collection procedure used was the analysis of bibliographic works, based on the use of the aforementioned teaching strategies practiced by teachers with students with ASD. From this perspective, data collection on the topic reaffirmed the need for a more inclusive approach in the educational field, with all members of the school community addressing the needs of each student, focusing on their potential so that the student truly feels included, thus making teaching/learning effective.

The research is applied in nature, as it seeks to solve specific problems related to the educational inclusion of people with ASD. Furthermore, it is descriptive and exploratory, as it investigates and describes the current landscape of inclusion and analyzes the implications of the Berenice Piana Law. The opinions of users were collected, including education professionals, family members of autistic individuals, and people with ASD

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results obtained were compared with the law's guidelines and the reality experienced in schools and educational institutions. Gaps, advances, and areas requiring greater attention were identified. Researches, studies, and documents discussing the school and social inclusion of people with ASD in Brazil were analyzed. A documentary and bibliographic research was conducted to identify and analyze the main provisions of the Berenice Piana Law, as well as other legal and regulatory documents related to the right to education for people with ASD. This stage involves reviewing academic literature, scientific articles, books, theses, dissertations, and specialized publications on educational inclusion and public policies for autistic individuals. The legal effectiveness of the legal provision and the main challenges to achieving the social and school inclusion of these individuals in the academic environment were considered.

5. CONCLUSION

The analysis conducted throughout this work showed that access to education for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Brazil, in light of the Berenice Piana Law (Law No. 12,764/2012), is a fundamental right that still faces significant challenges. Despite the advances promoted by this legislation, such as the recognition of autism as a disability and the guarantee of access to inclusive education, the full implementation of its provisions encounters structural, pedagogical, and social limitations that need to be overcome.

The Berenice Piana Law was an important milestone in Brazilian legislation, bringing crucial innovations to the field of including autistic individuals by guaranteeing specialized educational care and the development of specific public policies. However, the reality in Brazilian schools shows that infrastructure is still insufficient to meet the specific needs of students with ASD. Many educational institutions lack adequate material resources, such as support rooms and assistive technologies, as well as trained professionals to deal with the particularities of the

autism spectrum.

Another critical point identified was the inadequate training of teachers. Many education professionals still do not have adequate training to work with students with ASD, which compromises the quality of education and the true inclusion of these students. Continuous training of teachers and other members of the school community is essential for inclusion to be effective and for the learning process to be meaningful for autistic individuals, respecting their individual needs.

The research also highlighted that awareness-raising and sensitization of society in general and the school environment in particular are indispensable for the success of including people with ASD. Inclusion goes beyond the mere physical presence of autistic students in schools; it requires a change in mindset and the construction of a welcoming school environment adapted to the specificities of these individuals. In this sense, the Berenice Piana Law was an important awareness-raising tool, but its full application depends on a joint effort between the State, society, and schools.

On the other hand, it is necessary to recognize that the Berenice Piana Law has brought significant advances, especially in the field of the rights of people with disabilities. It has provided greater visibility to autism and has promoted an increase in the creation of educational policies aimed at inclusion. Initiatives such as the establishment of multifunctional resource rooms and the encouragement of training specialized teachers are examples of measures that have contributed to improving the educational care of people with ASD.

Despite these advances, the full educational inclusion of people with ASD is still a goal to be achieved. The effective implementation of the Berenice Piana Law requires a continuous commitment to improving public policies and the allocation of adequate resources. The success of inclusion depends, to a large extent, on investments in school infrastructure, professional training, and the strengthening of support policies for families and autistic individuals themselves.

Thus, the Berenice Piana Law is an important step towards the educational inclusion of people with ASD, but the challenge of effective inclusion still demands greater efforts from the State and society. For the right to inclusive education to be truly guaranteed to all autistic people, it is necessary to expand the debate on existing gaps and implement more effective policies. Only then will it be possible to ensure that these people have full access to the educational system and can develop fully as citizens with equal rights.

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