

## Policy of access, accessibility and educational inclusion for persons with disabilities: integrative review

*Política de acesso, acessibilidade e inclusão educacional da pessoa com deficiência: revisão integrativa*

*Política de acceso, accesibilidad e inclusión educativa de personas con discapacidad: revisión integradora*

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** to learn what concerns are addressed by scientific production on the theme of inclusion for people with disabilities in educational institutions. **Method:** this integrative literature review searched the Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System on Line, Web of Science, SCOPUS and Directory of Open Access Journals database entries from 2015 to 2019. **Results:** the twenty-one articles examined addressed themes relating to access policies, quotas and curricula, and barriers and facilitators of inclusion in education. **Final considerations:** the concerns addressed by the scientific production showed that obstacles are transversal to the students' experience in their academic life. Gaps in curricula, body stereotyping, beliefs, lack of capacity-building for teaching staffs surrounded us with evidence that, more than breaking paradigms regarding people with disabilities, there must be advances in political practices, so that barriers such as prejudice, discrimination, and segregation cease to define human relationships.

**Descriptors:** Education; Mainstreaming, Education; Public Policy; Higher Education Policy; Public Nondiscrimination Policies.

### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** conhecer os aspectos abordados pela produção científica em relação à temática da inclusão da pessoa com deficiência nas instituições de ensino. **Método:** revisão integrativa da literatura nas bases de dados *Medical Literature and Retrieval System on Line*, *Web of science*, *SCOPUS* e *Directory of Open Access Journals*. Recorte da busca de 2015 a 2019. **Resultados:** foram analisados vinte e um artigos. As publicações apresentaram temáticas relacionadas à Políticas de acesso, cotas e currículos e Barreiras e facilitadores da inclusão na educação. **Considerações finais:** os aspectos abordados pela produção científica evidenciaram que entraves são transversais à vivência dos estudantes em suas experiências acadêmicas. Lacunas curriculares, estereotipação do corpo, crenças, falta de capacitação do corpo docente cerca-nos de evidências de que mais do que quebra de paradigmas diante da pessoa com deficiência, é preciso que existam avanços nas práticas políticas para que barreiras como preconceito, discriminação e segregação não definam as relações humanas.

**Descritores:** Educação; Inclusão Educacional; Política Pública; Política de Educação Superior; Políticas Públicas de não Discriminação.

### RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** conocer los aspectos abordados por la producción científica en relación con el tema de la inclusión de personas con discapacidad en las instituciones de enseñanza. **Método:** revisión integradora de la literatura en las bases de datos *Medical Literature and Retrieval System on Line*, *Web of science*, *SCOPUS* y *Directory of Open Access Journals*. Recorte de búsqueda de 2015 a 2019. **Resultados:** se analizaron veintiún artículos. Las publicaciones presentaron temas relacionados con políticas de acceso, cuotas y currículos y Barreras y facilitadores de la inclusión en la educación. **Consideraciones finales:** los aspectos abordados por la producción científica mostraron que los obstáculos son transversales a la vivencia de los estudiantes en sus experiencias académicas. Lagunas curriculares, estereotipos del cuerpo, creencias, falta de formación del profesorado nos rodean con evidencias de que, más allá de romper paradigmas ante las personas con discapacidad, son necesarios avances en las prácticas políticas para que barreras como el prejuicio, la discriminación y la segregación no definan las relaciones humanas.

**Descriptores:** Educación; Integración Escolar; Política Pública; Política de Educación Superior; Políticas Públicas de no Discriminación.

## INTRODUCTION

Access and accessibility are concepts which are often confused with each other. Access refers to the idea of creating legal conditions and of equal rights, and accessibility is understood as daily and concrete actions that provide people with disabilities the opportunity to benefit from the same resources offered to other individuals<sup>1</sup>.

Inclusion policies contribute to entering elementary education up to university studies. However, academic enrollment does not ensure educational inclusion or accessibility. To achieve this, there is a need for an institutional follow-up policy that allows for the identification of the educational needs of people with disabilities<sup>2</sup>.

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The expansion of access to Higher Education in Brazilian society, even representing important initiatives in the field of democratization, does not ensure learning and is not satisfactory enough to overcome exclusionary differences<sup>3</sup>.

The movement in favor of educational inclusion advocates the right of all individuals, with no discrimination, to belong, learn and participate in education, and universities play a privileged role in social transformation and learning<sup>2</sup>.

In order to improve the conditions for the permanence of young individuals in federal public higher education, the Brazilian Government created the National Student Assistance Program (*Programa Nacional de Assistência Estudantil*, PNAES) in 2005, implemented in scope of the Ministry of Education. A complementary initiative was the Higher Education Accessibility Program, *Programa Incluir*, created in 2005 by the Special Education Secretariat, closed in 2014, in partnership with the Higher Education Secretariat, both linked to the Ministry of Education (*Ministério da Educação*, MEC). The main goal of *Programa Incluir* was to foster the creation and consolidation of accessibility centers in Federal Higher Education Institutions (FHEIs), in order to implement the inclusion of people with disabilities into academic life by eliminating behavioral, pedagogical, architectonic, and communication barriers<sup>4</sup>.

The first challenge that the university presents to the newcomers is for them to become students, which depends on continuation and success of their studies. There are three successive moments for accomplishing this task: estrangement, learning, and affiliation<sup>5</sup>. In the case of students with some type of disability, the path towards affiliation will present additional difficulties and must thus be provided with the necessary support to respond to the new demands created by the university.

Inclusion can be understood as a philosophical principle that advocates for the coexistence of diversities, assuming that differences are constituents of human beings and are characterized as the greatest wealth of life in society<sup>6</sup>. An inclusive society requires transformations, both architectonic and urban as well as attitudinal towards people with disabilities, thus ensuring their access to, circulation within, and permanence in common spaces<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, Higher Education Institutions need to improve their assistance and accessibility processes, which are essential elements for students to continue studying and succeed in their learning<sup>8</sup>.

The objective of this integrative review is to know the aspects addressed by the scientific production in relation to the theme of inclusion of people with disabilities in teaching institutions.

## METHOD

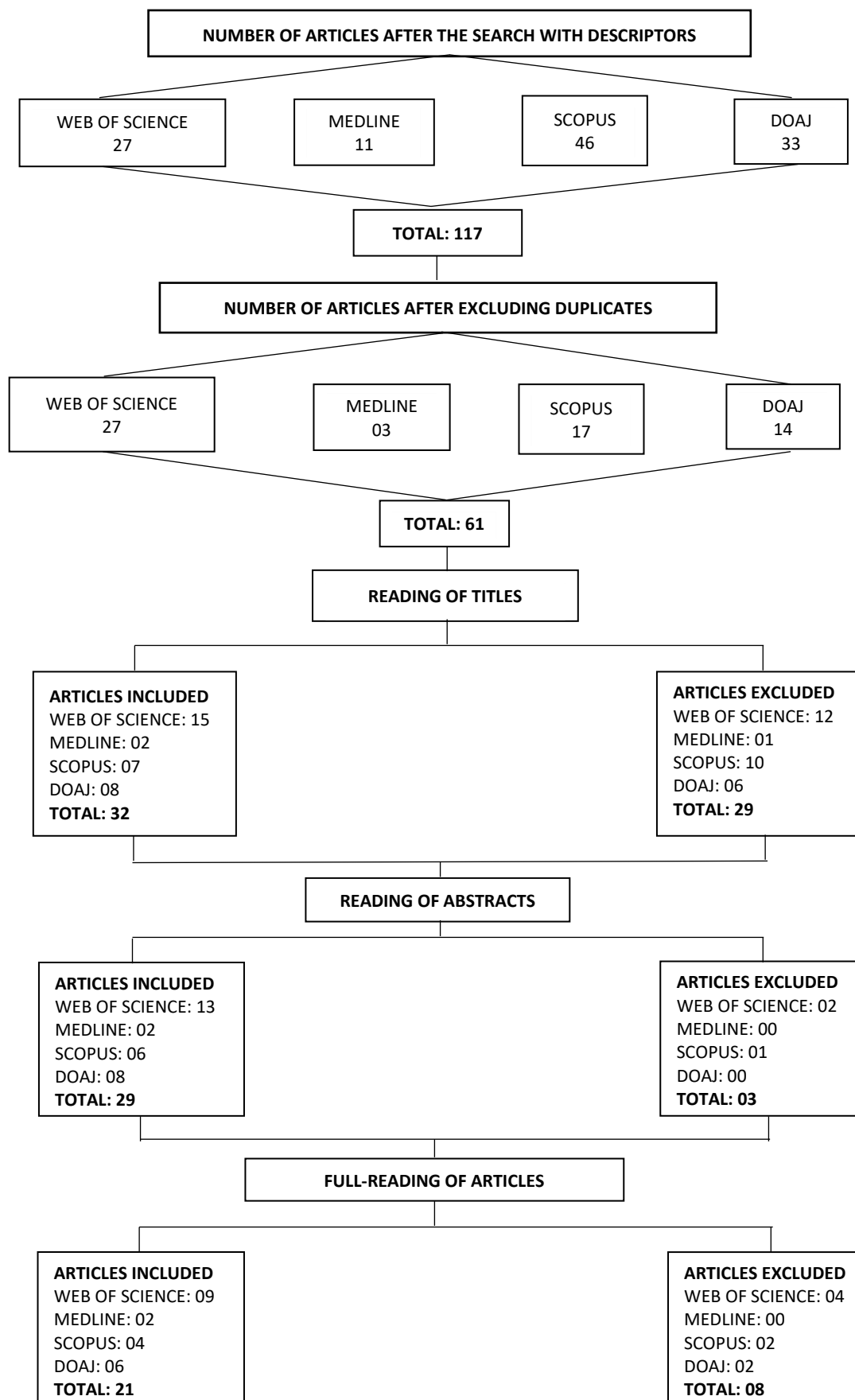
This integrative review was conducted from 2015 to 2019. This time frame was chosen because 2015 was the year when the Brazilian Law of Inclusion of People with Disabilities came into force and 2019 was the year when this review was conducted.

The stages of the integrative literature review were adopted aiming to maintain scientific rigor: 1) identification of the research theme and question to elaborate the integrative review; 2) establishment of inclusion and exclusion criteria of studies or search in the literature; 3) definition of the information to be extracted from the selected studies/categorization of the studies; 4) evaluation of the studies included in the integrative review; 5) interpretation of the results and; 6) presentation of the review/knowledge synthesis<sup>9</sup>.

In this sense, in order to contemplate the stages of the integrative review, we initially identified inclusion of people with disabilities in teaching institutions as research theme, and we asked the following question: "How has the scientific production been addressing the theme of inclusion of people with disabilities in these institutions?". Subsequently, we identified publications indexed in the following databases: Medical Literature and Retrieval System on Line (MEDLINE), Web of Science, SCOPUS and Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).

The information was collected in October 2019, according to the following inclusion criteria: articles in Portuguese, English and Spanish, available in full; peer-reviewed journals, included in the 2015-2019 period and which contained the following Descriptors in Health Sciences (*Descritores em Ciências da Saúde*, DeCS) in their titles and/or abstracts: "Mainstreaming Education OR Inclusão educacional AND Disabled Persons OR Pessoas com deficiência AND Universities OR Universidades". The following article categories were considered: research, reflection and literature review. As an exclusion criterion, we adopted articles that did not address the theme proposed.

From this, in the third stage, we concisely organized and summarized the information, creating an easy-to-access-and-manage database using the EndNote reference management software. The studies were read according to what is represented in the PRISMA flowchart in Figure 1.



**FIGURE 1:** PRISMA flowchart which guided the search for articles, Florianópolis, SC, Brazil, 2019.

For the fourth stage of this integrative review, we performed a detailed analysis of the selected articles, in search of different or conflicting results in the selected studies. The fifth stage involved the phase of discussion of the results, grounded on the critical assessment of the studies included and in comparison with the theoretical knowledge of national and international studies. In this stage, the elaboration of the analysis categories emerged from the floating reading of the texts. In the last stage of the review, we present a knowledge synthesis made possible by means of this scientific article.

## RESULTS

Nine articles were found in the Web of Science indexing database, two in MEDLINE, four in SCOPUS and six in the DOAJ database (Figure 2).

Title	Year	Journal	Country
Inclusive education a "rhetoric" or "reality"? Teachers' perspectives and beliefs <sup>10</sup> .	2015	<i>Teaching and Teacher Education</i>	USA
Social participation of children and youth with disabilities in Canada, France and Germany <sup>11</sup> .	2015	<i>International Journal of Inclusive Education</i>	Canada
Bullying and Students with Disabilities: Examination of Disability Status and Educational Placement <sup>12</sup> .	2015	<i>School Psychology Review</i>	USA
A deficiência em foco nos currículos de graduação da UFRN: uma abordagem histórica (1960-2015) <sup>13</sup> .	2016	<i>Holos</i>	Brazil (RN)
Legislação para estudantes com deficiência no ensino superior no Brasil e em Portugal: algumas reflexões <sup>14</sup> .	2016	<i>Acta Scientiarum. Education</i>	Brazil (PR)
Análise de Acessibilidade: Aplicação Parcial do Modelo Sicogea em um Centro de Ensino de uma Instituição Federal de Ensino <sup>15</sup> .	2016	<i>Revista de Gestão Ambiental e Sustentabilidade</i>	Brazil (SC)
Disability inclusion in higher education in Uganda: Status and strategies <sup>16</sup> .	2016	<i>Revista Africana de Deficiência</i>	Africa (Uganda)
Inclusive education in New Zealand: rhetoric and reality <sup>17</sup> .	2016	<i>History of Education Review</i>	New Zealand
A inclusão na prática: alunos com deficiência no Ensino Superior <sup>18</sup> .	2017	<i>Revista Eletrônica Política e Gestão Educacional</i>	Brazil (SP)
Andrew F. v. Douglas County School District (2017) and special education law: What teachers and administrators need to know <sup>19</sup> .	2017	<i>Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth</i>	USA
Students with Disabilities: Practical Information for School Counselors in Turkey <sup>20</sup> .	2017	<i>Int J Adv Counselling</i>	Turkey and USA
The role of entrepreneurship education in shaping entrepreneurial action of disabled students in Nigeria <sup>21</sup> .	2017	<i>Journal of Small Business &amp; Entrepreneurship</i>	Nigeria and Africa
The Impact of a Faculty Training Program on Inclusive Education and Disability <sup>22</sup> .	2017	<i>Evaluation and Program Planning</i>	Spain
Attitudes towards inclusion in higher education in a Portuguese university <sup>23</sup> .	2017	<i>International Journal of Inclusive Education</i>	Portugal
Including students with disabilities in Education for All: lessons from Ethiopia <sup>24</sup> .	2017	<i>International Journal of Inclusive Education</i>	USA
Oferta, Demanda e Nota de Corte: Experimento Natural sobre Efeitos da Lei das Cotas no Acesso à UFMG <sup>25</sup> .	2018	<i>DADOS – Revista de Ciências Sociais</i>	Brazil (MG)
Facilitators and Barriers of Assistive Technology and Learning Environment for Children with Special Needs <sup>26</sup> .	2018	<i>Occupational Therapy International</i>	Thailand
La inclusión en la formación inicial de profesores de matemáticas <sup>27</sup> .	2018	<i>Acta Scientiarum. Education, [s.l.], v. 40, n. 3, p.1-12</i>	Brazil (PR)
Implementation of disability policy framework in Namibia: A qualitative study <sup>28</sup> .	2018	<i>Revista Sul-Africana de Fisioterapia</i>	South Africa
Funding and inclusion in higher education institutions for students with disabilities <sup>29</sup> .	2019	<i>Revista Africana de Deficiência</i>	South Africa
Image is everything: educator awareness of perceived barriers for students with physical disabilities in geoscience degree programs <sup>30</sup> .	2019	<i>Journal Of Geography In Higher Education</i>	USA

**FIGURE 2:** Articles selected for the review. Florianópolis, SC, Brazil, 2019.  
Source: The authors, 2019.

With regard to the number of articles and their places of publication, six were published in Brazil, six in the United States, four in Africa, one in Canada, one in Thailand, one in New Zealand, one in Portugal, and one in Spain.

Given the above, we will discuss the findings referring to the aspects addressed in relation to the theme of educational inclusion of people with disabilities by means of two categories: Access policies, quotas, and curricula; and Barriers and facilitating factors for educational inclusion.

## DISCUSSION

### Access policies, quotas, and curricula

Social and educational inclusion of people with disabilities represent an ethical and moral motto and a social duty, in the sense of solving differences in the response to their everyday demands.

Social and educational inclusion is a paradigm that ensures students with disabilities access to and permanence in a qualified educational system. People with some type of disability are less present in the regular education setting when compared to those with no disabilities, in percentage terms<sup>31</sup>. This percentage is important, because it later creates a major difference in the number of people with disabilities integrated into higher education.

The publication of legal norms has been an important measure to ensure the rights of this population and to fight more incisively against discrimination and prejudice towards disability<sup>14</sup>.

Worldwide, Inclusive Education (IE) has gained notoriety since 1994, due to the statement developed in the World Conference about Special Education, held in Salamanca. This Statement reported the importance of educational inclusion of people with disabilities, advocating that teaching institutions should adjust to the needs of the individuals enrolled and established an agreement between countries and international organizations that committed to promoting changes in education so as to assist all students, regardless of their differences or difficulties<sup>14,18,32</sup>.

Brazil committed itself to implementing public policies to integrate people with disabilities into society and started to pass laws such as the Law of National Education Guidelines and Bases, known as LDB (Act No. 9,394/1996), approved in December 1996<sup>14</sup>.

In the 1970s and the 1980s, Portugal started a progressive consecration of the fundamental rights of citizens with disabilities, expressed in legal devices such as: Constitution of the Portuguese Republic in 1976, Law of Bases for the Education System (Law No. 46 of 1986), and Law of the Bases for Prevention, Rehabilitation and Integration of People with Disabilities (Law No. 9/1989)<sup>14</sup>. It can be seen that Portugal was more advanced than Brazil with regard to ensuring rights to people with disabilities, which can justify the current active work of the country in the rehabilitation area. The legislation on inclusion of people with disabilities in Higher Education in Brazil and in Portugal is at different stages, a fact that appears to be perfectly understandable, considering the understanding of IE as a process<sup>14</sup>.

A study<sup>2</sup> conducted in Namibia revealed that, despite the existence of an IE program organized by the Ministry of Education at the national level focusing on hearing and visually impaired students, there are still gaps in the human rights of people with disabilities, resulting from the fact that Namibia is a country with many social, economic, and political weaknesses. In addition, with regard to elementary and high school education, the absence of equality in IE and of appropriate preparation prior to the release of the Sectoral Policy on inclusive education was addressed<sup>28</sup>.

In the United Kingdom, the inclusion of people with disabilities in HEIs is currently facilitated by the Equality Act of 2010, which prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in all spheres of their lives. In the higher education scope, the funding model for people with disabilities is mainly based on the principle of equal access to education<sup>29</sup>. These inclusion aspects implemented by the country corroborate its development, since it is a sovereign State that acknowledges people with disabilities as able to perform functions in society.

In the United States, the Congress enacted the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as a measure to prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities, creating incentives in the form of federal funding for HEIs that made their facilities more accessible, with adapted classrooms, for example. This act played a major role in the improvement of inclusion of these students, by prohibiting discrimination against them<sup>29</sup>. Similarly, Canada adopted an approach on human rights that promotes the inclusion of students with disabilities, in order to provide equal opportunities and prohibit discrimination<sup>29</sup>.

In India, the advances in access and equality are threatened by the constant decline in HEI funding by the Indian government since the mid-1990s, which resulted in higher education being increasingly funded by non-governmental resources, thus perpetuating exclusion and marginalization of these students<sup>29</sup>.

In Portugal, the students with disabilities have equal access to higher education guaranteed, but there is certain weakness in monitoring these students to ensure equality during their entire academic development<sup>23</sup>.

In Brazil, the Quotas Law<sup>33</sup> (Law No. 12,711, of August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012), which was enacted in 2012 and gradually implemented since 2013, established a minimum standard for affirmative actions for access to federal higher education. In 2016, Law No. 13,409, dated December 28<sup>th</sup>, amended the Quotas Law by including a quota of vacancies for people with disabilities<sup>34</sup>. In this context, an increase is verified in the demand of the Brazilian population for higher education, culminating in the change of the students' profile, where quota students tend to remain in the university for a longer period of time, with similar performance when compared to other students<sup>25</sup>.

With regard to the curricula of undergraduate courses, education is the knowledge area that covers the highest number of curriculum components addressing the theme of disabilities, accounting for 44%<sup>13</sup>. They are followed by curriculum components referring to the teaching of the Brazilian Sign Language, totaling 38%. Health, technology and music represent 9%, 5.5% and 3%, respectively. This study indicated that there is an increase in the number of curriculum components addressing disabilities in the curricula of undergraduate courses. However, this number is restricted to the Bachelor's degrees, not allowing students attending other courses to have the opportunity to discuss and deepen the concept of disabilities inserted in the various ways of living and acting<sup>13</sup>. There is still a gap in the health area, because the curricula are still based on a biomedical and curative model.

In these sense, major curriculum changes for inclusive education prove to be crucial and require the implementation of training actions aimed at professors<sup>30</sup>, as well as the identification of barriers to the participation of students with disabilities to improve accessibility. From another perspective, it also becomes necessary to provide the future professionals with knowledge on the inclusion of people with disabilities, in order to contribute with reflections on the pedagogical practice regarding the differences and to promote genuinely inclusive education and assistance<sup>27</sup>.

Access to elementary, high school, and higher education enables the development of people with disabilities and contributes with reflections for the accomplishment of democracy and justice, as long as they are provided with adaptations and meeting the different needs. However, the achievement of these goals is hampered by unfamiliarity with the topic, which, motivated by prejudice, results in the reproduction of outdated concepts and paradigms, centered on the charitable and medical models of disability.

### **Barriers and facilitating factors for educational inclusion**

The greatest problem faced by people with disabilities is not the absence of laws and of legislations applicable to concrete cases, as we observed in the previous category, but rather the applicability of these legislations.

We understand that, in addition to the establishment of laws that enable students to begin and continue their studies, it is equally important and indispensable to implement continuous training for professors in the guidelines for elementary, high school, and higher education. The professors' preparation to assist students with disabilities is paramount for the teaching-learning process to be consolidated and for the strengthening of ME<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, it is necessary to go beyond the fight for rights and to actually search for instruments and resources for an education that promotes maximum development.

In the last decades, many countries were able to implement policies favoring the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education. However, the political panorama has not been successful in other countries. In a study conducted in New Delhi<sup>10</sup>, capital of India, the professors defined students with disabilities as those who have physical or intellectual disabilities. Although this attitude shows the teachers' support to students with disabilities, it also reveals a poor view on how to include them, given the absence of institutional norms.

In this same research study, it was found that many professors see inclusion as a concept based on the principles of morality and ethics, because practices are influenced by their systems of beliefs and standards. These perceptions became evident with the use of religious examples to justify the practice of inclusion and with views contrary to the inclusion of students with disabilities in common classrooms because they are considered special, vulnerable, weak, and thus more susceptible to bullying<sup>10</sup>.

A study conducted in the United States asserts that students with disabilities are disproportionately involved in bullying and in quarrels than their peers without disabilities, suggesting that students with disabilities experience more victimization<sup>12</sup>. As barriers for a successful inclusive educational practice, the New Delhi professors mention humiliation of students with disabilities by their peers or by the teachers, since students with disabilities are not able to defend against those humiliations.



In India, although corporal punishment has been abolished by the legislative and legal systems, it is still a popular disciplinary method in schools. Other reported barriers were systematic factors, such as large classes and lack of preparation to assist students with disabilities<sup>10</sup>. Half of the New Delhi professors considered that disability is a condition that requires a medical approach rather than an educational model<sup>10</sup>.

In addition to that, considering that students are encouraged to follow their vocation, those with visual impairment are often seen as singers<sup>10</sup>. Stereotyping of people with disabilities was also observed in a research study<sup>30</sup> conducted in the United Kingdom: when asked about their perception on access and inclusion of students with physical disability in Geoscience courses, the professors answered that the course is seen as a science for able people, who climb mountains and go to remote locations.

The definition of disability changes according to the model adopted. For instance, the World Health Organization (WHO) indicates disability as an interaction between health conditions, environmental factors, and personal factors<sup>35</sup>. Similarly, the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) provides a universal classification of disability and health, conceptualizes disability as an umbrella term covering disabilities, activity restrictions, and involvement limitations<sup>36</sup>.

These conceptualizations of disability highlight the need to know individuals as a whole, as well as their limitations, restrictions, and experiences resulting from biological, psychological, and social factors. Therefore, professors and school coordinators must be aware of the individual differences when working with students with disabilities, because these students do not have the same experiences, limitations, or responses to their difference, even when they have the same type of disability<sup>20</sup>.

The positive impact of training on disabilities and IE on the teaching practice was shown in a study about the knowledge acquired by 20 professors after participating in a training program on IE and disabilities in a Spanish University, highlighting that they perceived themselves as more informed, trained, and aware<sup>22</sup>.

For IE to become a reality, it is necessary that professors, parents, and community believe that all students with disabilities are able to learn<sup>24</sup>. In this sense, educators must be aware of the laws and updates related to IE and know the best practices to be implemented<sup>19</sup>, because investing in education also consists in training teachers to offer IE, being fundamental to demystify outdated beliefs and models on disabilities.

#### **Limitações do estudo**

As a limitation of this study, we highlight the lack of studies from the gray literature, which could bring more discussion elements for the assessment of this integrative literature review.

#### **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

It is possible to witness how far we are from equal rights for several segments of society. Although much has been achieved about IE in elementary, high school, and higher education, in practical terms, it is still distant from the theoretical and legal assumptions.

Aspects addressed in the scientific production in relation to the inclusion of people with disabilities in teaching institutions reveal that many developing countries have laws and norms for the implementation of IE in schools and universities, which were created after a major global agreement.

When speaking about inclusion, access, and accessibility in education, we cannot only deal with the issues concerning structure and physical access, but rather with how to assist people with disabilities, promoting conditions for their development and for the construction of knowledge. As observed in the findings of this research, laws exist, but they do not allow students with disabilities to stay in teaching institutions, since many barriers are cross-sectional to the academic experiences of these students.

In relation to the obstacles present in the education of students with disabilities, studies reported scarce funding, weaknesses concerning the theme of disability and inclusion in undergraduate curricula, stereotyping of bodies with limitations, limiting beliefs, and lack of professors' training to promote the inclusion of students with disabilities from elementary to higher education.

The studies analyzed in this review provided us with evidence that, in rather than breaking paradigms related to people with disabilities, there is a need for advances in the political practices so that barriers such as prejudice, discrimination, and segregation cease to define human relationships.

Referring to the implications of our analysis in the Nursing context, this literature review showed the importance of studies such as the present one in the training of nurses, considering that there is a gap in the academic curriculum of these professionals when it comes to disability and inclusion. Given that the theme is cross-sectional to the contents,

its approach becomes necessary, because nurses understand the influence of the social determinants on people's health and actively participate in the rehabilitation and re-socialization process of people with disabilities.

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