

Specialized Educational Assistance under the analysis of governmentality in the school context of the municipality of Canoas, RS^{*1}

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Abstract

The text presents a study that aimed to understand how strategies and teaching practices to support the inclusion of students with disabilities have been conducted in public schools in the municipality of Canoas, RS, based on the narratives of managers and teachers from Specialized Educational Assistance (Atendimento Educacional Especializado - AEE). The research also sought to establish connections between techniques for controlling the conduct of the subjects involved, understood as practices related to the context of governmentality. This Foucauldian notion guided the theoretical-methodological framework, together with the concept of biopolitics. The study also problematized the inclusion versus exclusion binary through the notion of in/exclusion. The methodology is qualitative, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews with nine education professionals from the municipal school system⁴ of Canoas (RS), including five AEE teachers and four members of the management team. The questions addressed AEE as a support service for inclusion and its strategies. The analytical exercise was inspired by Foucauldian discourse analysis and employed concepts as analytical tools. From this, two movements were outlined, emphasizing support services for AEE and pedagogical strategies; and conceptions of in/exclusion and the impacts of AEE on the school. The perspective adopted allows one to argue that AEE constitutes an important link in representing the State in terms of “helping the other,” guiding them toward alignment with the metrics established in school curricula and institutional programs, within the context of governmentality.

Keywords

Specialized Educational Assistance (AEE) – Governmentality – In/exclusion – Pedagogical strategies – Support services.

^{*} The authors take full responsibility for the translation of the text, including title of books/articles and the quotations originally published in Portuguese.

1- Data availability: The dataset is publicly available in the appendix of the dissertation at the following link: <https://repositorio.uergs.edu.br/xmlui/handle/123456789/3680>.

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4- In Brazil, the federal system distributes responsibility for public education across three administrative levels: federal, state, and municipal. Municipalities (municípios) are constitutionally responsible for administering early childhood education and the initial years of elementary education (grades 1–5), through their own independently managed school systems (redes municipais de ensino).



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Introduction

Special Education is part of a movement of continuities and discontinuities, which does not constitute a linear historical trajectory. Records concerning the educational context and its developments make it possible to understand how this educational modality came to incorporate the perspective of inclusion in schools. In recent years, there has been an intensification of discourses and policies aimed at inclusive education, supported by legal frameworks that guarantee the right to schooling for people with disabilities (Brasil, 1988, 1996, 2009, 2015), as well as by critical analyses from scholars in the field of education (Matos; Mendes, 2014). Within the regulatory framework, the Constituição Federal de 1988 (Federal Constitution of 1988) and the Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional (National Education Guidelines and Framework Law - LDB, Law No. 9.394/1996) stand out, as they ensure specialized educational services, preferably within the regular education system. These principles are reaffirmed by the Convenção sobre os Direitos das Pessoas com Deficiência (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - CRPD, enacted in Brasil through Decree No. 6.949/2009) and the Lei Brasileira de Inclusão (Brazilian Inclusion Law – Law No. 13.146/2015), which recognize inclusive education as a fundamental right.

Mendes (2014) problematizes the outcomes of the national Special Education policy regarding guarantees of the right to education and emphasizes the importance of building an inclusive society in the pursuit of a democratic state. Pletsch (2020) highlights the conceptual re-signification in the field of Special Education, which is related to changes in social reality resulting from struggles for educational rights.

In Brasil, different educational phases have been historically shaped by governmental and social changes in the Western world. According to Jannuzzi (2012), the education of children with disabilities emerged institutionally, and timidly at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, gaining greater prominence from the 1920s onward and intensifying in the 1930s.

Studies by Sardagna (2008), the implementation of practices of institutionalization of people with disabilities can be identified between the 1950s and 1960s, with an emphasis on medicine, marked mainly by a clinical perspective, through institutions focused on health, rehabilitation, and cure, with little or almost no guidelines directed toward the education of these individuals. Between the 1970s and 1980s, the author also identifies practices concerning the organization of students' bodies, in which systems create spaces for these individuals and, through mechanisms of regulation and correction, began to guide and monitor them.

In the 1970s, Sardagna (2008) also highlights a movement toward the expansion of so-called special schools and special classes, with the aim of serving students who did not “fit” into the regular education system. In this context, the first mention of Special Education occurred in a survey conducted by the Ministério da Educação (Ministry of Education MEC) in 1974 and published in 1975, which analyzed statistical data and the general registry of special education institutions.

Special Education in Brasil took new directions with the Federal Constitution of 1988, which began to guarantee a set of universal social rights with universal access,

including specialized support services, preferably in mainstream schools, such as AEE, provided for in Article 208, item III (Brasil, 1988). In the 1990s, international movements fostered governmental policies and actions concerning people with disabilities, as Brasil committed to education for all through official documents.

After signing these international agreements, Brasil began to set goals toward Special Education, adopting new discursive directions. In this context, inclusion came to be presented as an advance over integration, leading to a restructuring of the education system, as stated in the *Política Nacional de Educação Especial na Perspectiva da Educação Inclusiva* (National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education – PNEEPEI), published in 2008, which provides for AEE as a support service to be offered at all levels and modalities of Brazilian education.

These milestones help demonstrate how inclusive discourse has increasingly become a state imperative, according to Lopes and Fabris (2020). The authors also emphasize that it is not enough to map the present through policies, life histories, and statistics in order to analyze inclusion, but rather that:

It is necessary, in order to understand its emergence, to focus on past events, seeking to establish, always in a risky and challenging way, connections and occurrences that may seem disconnected, yet are capable of helping us understand what we have become, what we struggle for, and what we are in the present (Lopes; Fabris, 2020, p. 19).

Contemporary society is in constant transformation and, as practices continue to be shaped, inclusion has become a central banner in current discourses. However, what we recognize today as inclusion carries the legacy of the eighteenth century, as well as the meanings of normalization of individuals produced in the nineteenth century” (Lopes; Rech, 2013, p. 211).

The modern school is the most powerful locus of connection between power and knowledge in modernity. It operates as a powerful machine of governmentalization, making it “a privileged place to observe, for example, both the transformations that have already occurred and those that are still taking place in social logic” (Veiga-Neto, 2001, p. 24). In this sense, the school becomes an important ally of social inclusion.

Some studies (Heck; Ferraro, 2020; Pagni, 2019; Veiga-Neto; Lopes, 2007) support the analysis of education as a mechanism for controlling the population. Since the 19th century, education has been identified as a means of instructing the working classes with the aim of moralizing them, in order to make society a “better” place. The school carries out interventions intended to discipline bodies so that they may coexist harmoniously in society. In this context, AEE is presented as a strategy, with one of its functions being to assist students who are the target population of Special Education in developing the skills necessary for their permanence in mainstream schooling. This support service is offered in AEE Centers or in spaces known as Multifunctional Resource Rooms (*Salas de Recursos Multifuncionais* – SRM).

Pagni (2019) analyzes the problems arising from the formulation, implementation, and effects of the PNEEPEI and understands inclusion policies as biopolitical strategies.



Inclusion policies represent a way of ensuring that those who were once excluded from state governmentality come to enter the public sphere or political life and, especially, the competitive dynamics of the market, by offering a set of mechanisms that ensure the population's integration into the rules of this game and into the legal, economic, and political norms of what is termed a formal and contractual dimension of citizenship (Pagni, 2019, p. 4).

The author demonstrates the implementation of security dispositifs aimed at people considered excluded from society following the promulgation of the 1988 Federal Constitution. From this milestone onward, certain forms of inclusive governmentality of the population considered excluded are delineated by institutions, with the aim of making them productive and incorporating them into the market.

In a broad study analyzing AEE practices based on narratives from specialized teachers, involving 170 educators linked to AEE across 22 municipalities and 18 states, Mendes, Tannús-Valadão, and Milanesi (2016, p. 60) identify eight curricular trends that guide the teaching of students with intellectual disabilities. These are: promotion of autonomy, promotion of motivation, instrumental training, teaching of the standard curriculum, teaching of an adapted curriculum, readiness or preparation, literacy and initial reading/writing instruction, and a compensatory approach. The authors problematize practices that, in seeking to adapt teaching, end up simplifying or modifying the common curriculum, such as the reproduction of approaches typical of early childhood education in elementary school classes, highlighting the challenges of inclusive education articulated with the school curriculum.

In light of these problematizations, the study presented here derives from research conducted at the master's level in Education, whose objective was to understand how teaching strategies and practices for the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream schools in the municipality of Canoas (RS), Brasil, have been carried out, based on teachers' narratives. Furthermore, the study sought to establish relations between techniques used to govern the conduct of these subjects, understood as practices embedded within the context of governmentality.

The empirical material consisted of interviews conducted with nine education⁵ professionals from the municipality of Canoas (RS), (five AEE teachers and four members of school management teams). The interviews were conducted through semi-structured questionnaires administered in four schools within the municipality, based on a previously defined script.

The analytical exercise draws inspiration from discourse analysis (Foucault, 1996) and the mobilization of Foucauldian notions of governmentality and biopolitics (Foucault, 2001a, 2001b, 2005, 2008). The study of the notion of in/exclusion (Lopes; Fabris, 2020) also proved relevant.

5- The schools are identified by the letters A, B, C, and D. Accordingly, the participants are identified by the respective letter, accompanied by the designation Teacher or Manager. In School A, two teachers and one manager participated. In the remaining schools, one teacher and one manager participated.

This perspective distances us from the movements of establishing what is right or wrong, true or false. Rather, it highlights the productive character involved in the process of constituting inclusive pedagogical practices within the schools participating in the research.

Governmentality, biopolitics, and in/exclusion

By drawing inspiration from Foucauldian studies, one of the movements of this research employs concepts as analytical tools which operate with the information produced in the investigation, understood as discursive statements. Foucault (2001b) creates concepts throughout the course of his investigations and makes use of metaphor of a toolbox:

By making use of the metaphor of the toolbox, we point to the fact that we draw upon Foucauldian theorization and its respective concepts in a somewhat utilitarian manner: our interest lies in examining and dissecting, as microscopically as possible, what is said and what is done within the sphere of social practices, whether discursive or non-discursive. (Veiga-Neto; Lopes, 2007, p. 951).

Thus, we propose a more contextual analysis of the research, distancing ourselves from any universalizing approach. In this sense, the notion of governmentality is related to the notion of biopolitics which, through biopower, understood as a power exercised over the population, articulates a dual movement in which each subject governs oneself in connection with the government of others.

In the books *Society Must Be Defended* (Foucault, 2005) and *Security, Territory, Population* (Foucault, 2008a), Foucault unravels the historical a priori of the “arts of governing” that justify contemporary modes of being, introducing the concept of *governmentality*. By exploring the notion of population, the philosopher demonstrates that the triangulation between sovereignty, discipline, and governmental management constitutes an essential mechanism formed by security dispositifs that continue to govern our lives. He also alludes to another triangulation which, today, would consist of government, population, and political economy. In introducing governmentality, Foucault defines it as:

[...] the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific and complex form of power, which has the population as its target, political economy as its principal form of knowledge, and security dispositifs as its essential technical instruments. Secondly, by ‘governmentality’ i mean the tendency, the line of force which, throughout the West, has continually led toward the preeminence of this type of power that may be called ‘government’ over all others - sovereignty and discipline - and which has brought about, on the one hand, the development of a whole series of specific governmental apparatuses and, on the other hand, the development of a whole series of knowledges. Finally, by ‘governmentality,’ i believe one should understand the process, or rather the result of the process, by which during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries became the administrative State, gradually became ‘governmentalized’ (Foucault, 2008a, p. 143-144).



Although this is a complex and comprehensive notion, the investigative paths of this study are aligned with the first definition of governmentality presented by Foucault (2008a). From this perspective, it becomes possible to think about the inclusive and normalizing practices that take place within school spaces, within the framework of governmentality, as a condition that marks school contexts and the discourses that governing our regimes of truth. These regimes are related to forms of knowledge legitimized through power relations in the constitution of discourse. For Foucault (2008b, p. 149), “[...] knowledge is defined by the possibilities of use and appropriation offered by discourse.”

Within the educational field, these articulations materialize in school practices and inclusion policies, interwoven with forms of disciplinary and biopolitical power, constituting subjects and directing conduct. Thus, the actions of identifying, diagnosing, referring, and intervening in the “cases” of students considered the target public of Special Education are configured as technologies of government, in which the discourse of inclusion operates as a *dispositif* for the regulation of differences. It is within this interweaving that neoliberalism reinforces the logic of accountability and self-management, producing subjects who, while being included, are also governed through practices that naturalize surveillance, adaptation, and performance as measures of school success.

When analyzing the processes that enabled the invention of abnormality, Foucault (2008, p. 82) states: “[...] we will have an identification of the normal and the abnormal; we will have an identification of the different curves of normality [...]”. Based on these analyses, the figure of the abnormal, that is, the individual to be corrected, is understood as being positioned in this way because they do not conform to the metrics of normality established in relation to the norm of the population itself. Three figures constitute the face of anomaly: the human monster; the individual to be corrected; and the masturbating child (onanist). “These three elements begin to become isolated and defined from the eighteenth century onward, and they articulate with the nineteenth century” (Foucault, 2001a, p. 69).

Throughout history, these figures have undergone practices of exclusion and segregation, until reaching what we now understand as inclusion. From this perspective, it is possible to infer that school inclusion is an invention of our time and does not represent a solution to exclusion, since, within the perspective of in/exclusion, one depends upon the other in order to exist.

Further examination of the processes of inclusion made it possible to observe that such relations are constituted through knowledge/power relations: if inclusion exists, exclusion must previously have existed. Thus, the notion of in/exclusion is established in order to demarcate the processes and practices involving the figure of the abnormal in contemporary times, within a neoliberal logic that advocates the presence of everyone, regardless of their spatial positioning.

Thus, the impasses within the game of inclusion and exclusion demarcate the figure of the abnormal and make it possible to understand that there is no opposition between inclusion and exclusion, making the notion of in/exclusion more appropriate.

Understanding how we moved from an exclusionary society to an inclusionary society is essential, since this does not mean that inclusion is guaranteed within such an inclusionary society. It is

also necessary to question whether this imperative can ever be fully realized once and for all. It is important to recognize that inclusion and exclusion feed upon one another and coexist through reciprocal exchanges, since one depends on the other both to exist and to alternation positions (Lopes; Fabris, 2020, p. 105).

In this sense, it may be inferred that school inclusion is inscribed within the meshes of governmentality, which activate strategies for the conduct of bodies responsible for blurring the boundaries separating the “abnormal” from the “normal.” Indeed, the encounter between biopolitics and education appears to reach its apex when linked to the contemporary imperative of school inclusion (Aquino, 2017, p. 102).

The developments of inclusive educational policies are grounded in the needs of the population and regulated in order to guarantee rights and duties. “These regulations are inscribed within an art of governing, within a type of governmentality based on the idea of producing freedom for those toward whom the policies are directed [...]” (Sardagna, 2008, p. 106). They operate as powerful strategies of government, that is, strategies that govern with minimal effort, in such a way that the population itself contributes to them by naturalizing them.

The study developed here makes it possible to argue that the AEE teacher may constitute one of the principal links for the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools, since they occupy the role of “helping the other” as representatives of the State, guiding them toward the closest possible alignment with the metrics established in school curricula and institutional programs. In this context, the teacher exercises a form of directing the conduct of others within the framework of governmentalization, as they adopt a political and practical position in favor of the discourse of inclusion as a social imperative.

Methodological paths of the research

The municipality of Canoas (RS), is located in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre and, according to data from the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics - IBGE), 95 elementary schools, 44 of which belong to the municipal school system. For this research, a preliminary project was submitted to the local authority, the Municipal Department of Education, requesting authorization to conduct the study in 12 schools in the municipality, three from each quadrant of the city. Authorization was granted for the investigation to be carried out in four institutions, representing three of the four quadrants of the municipality. The selection of schools considered territorial diversity and the number of enrollments in AEE.

Nine professionals participated in the research, including AEE teachers and school managers (principals and pedagogical advisors), all of whom were tenured public servants working directly in the selected schools. The AEE teachers held degrees in Pedagogy with specific training in Special Education and worked as teachers in SRM, while the managers were appointed by the municipal education authority, with responsibilities related to pedagogical coordination and institutional management. The interviews were semi-structured and addressed aspects related to inclusion practices, conceptions of



AEE, and the schooling processes of students considered the target public of Special Education. The project was approved by the University Research Ethics Committee, and all participants signed an Informed Consent Form (ICF), in accordance with prevailing ethical requirements.

The research is qualitative in nature, with exploratory and descriptive character, grounded in discourse analysis inspired by Foucauldian notions of governmentality and biopolitics. Such an analytical orientation shifts the focus away from judgments of right and wrong, or true and false, toward an understanding of how inclusive pedagogical practices and strategies for conducting subjects are constituted within school contexts.

Data production took place between August and October 2023 through semi-structured interviews conducted in person at the schools, lasting approximately 40 to 60 minutes. Two interview scripts were used: one directed at AEE teachers, containing 14 questions, and another directed toward school managers, containing 10 questions. The questions addressed themes such as conceptions of inclusion, the organization of AEE, pedagogical and support strategies, and the impacts of inclusion on everyday school life. The interviews were audio-recorded, fully transcribed, and subsequently organized into charts and tables in order to facilitate the systematization and visualization of the information.

The schools were identified by the letters A, B, C, and D in order to preserve institutional anonymity. Table 1 presents the total number of enrollments in 2021, according to data from the School Census/INEP, including the number of students receiving AEE services in each school. During the interviews, AEE teachers reported that they predominantly serve students with intellectual disabilities, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), physical and multiple disabilities, as well as occasional cases of giftedness/high abilities, in accordance with the target public defined by the PNEEPEI (Brasil, 2008). Thus, although the analyses presented in this study emphasize perceptions and practices related to the education of students with disabilities, the research universe encompasses the full scope of the AEE target public, reflecting the diversity of profiles served and the multifaceted nature of teaching work within the municipal school system of Canoas.

Table 1 - Description of the Number of Enrollments in the Schools in 2021

School	Enrollment in Early Years of Elementary Education	Enrollment in Final Years of Elementary Education	Enrollment in Youth and Adult Education	Total Enrolled Students	Students in the Target Population of Special Education
School A	403	266		669	53
School B	524	403	46	973	72
School C	299	265		564	58
School D	306	237		543	28

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the 2021 School Census (INEP, 2022).

The data presented in Table 1 reveal a significant percentage of students considered the target public of Special Education (PAEE) in schools within the municipal school system of Canoas, RS, Brasil, with rates exceeding the national average of less than 4%, according to the School Census/INEP (2021). In School C, for example, the number of students receiving

AEE services (58 out of a total of 564) represents more than 10% of enrollments, raising reflections regarding the possible causes of this discrepancy. Considering the parameters of the municipal school system, this difference may be related to the consolidated structure of local inclusive policies, which ensure the provision of AEE in all schools, as well as to the role of the Center for Inclusive Education and Accessibility, responsible both for specialized support services offered outside regular school hours and for the continuing education of teachers (Canoas, 2020). The Political-Pedagogical Project (PPP) of the school system, by establishing inclusion as one of its structuring principles, alongside protagonism, diversity, and teachers appreciation, reveals an expanded conception of education that seeks to guarantee the right to learning for all students. Thus, the high percentage of students considered the target public of Special Education may be interpreted not as a statistical deviation, but rather as the result of effective municipal policies of identification, reception, and educational support for specific learning needs, sustained through teacher education initiatives, diversified support services, and a management approach committed to inclusion and to the social quality of education.

The Political-Pedagogical Project (PPP) of the Municipal School System of Canoas emphasizes the centrality of the student as the focus of pedagogical work, understanding each classroom experience as a process of meaningful growth aligned with students' expectations.

The following Table 2 presents the participants and their respective identifications:

Table 2 – Identification of research participants

Institution	AEE teacher	Member of the Management Team
School A	Teacher A1	Manager A
	Teacher A2	
School B	Teacher B1	Manager B
School C	Teacher C1	Manager C
School D	Teacher D1	Manager D

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

By assuming a commitment to inclusion, the municipality provides additional support services beyond those offered in SRM for students considered the target public of AEE, through the Center for Inclusive Education and Accessibility. In this space, students receive specialized support according to their specific needs, usually through weekly sessions conducted during complementary school hours.

It is important to highlight this structure of the school system as a potential force for thinking about inclusive practices capable of ensuring students' learning processes. In addition to offering diversified support services, this space maintains several initiatives aimed at teachers appreciation through continuing education actions. "The valuing of knowledge and understandings produced within the everyday school context has constituted a guiding logic underpinning the educational initiatives developed with the school system for several years" (Canoas, 2020, p. 110), which underscores teacher protagonism.



Specialized educational assistance as support for inclusion within a context of governmentality

The objective of this research is revisited here: to understand how teaching strategies and practices aimed at supporting the inclusion of students with disabilities in public schools in the municipality of Canoas (RS), Brasil, have been conducted, based on the narratives of AEE teachers and school managers. The analytical exercise, inspired by the Foucauldian notions of governmentality and biopolitics, sought to highlight how inclusive pedagogical practices and the power-knowledge relations traversing everyday school life are constituted. The analysis of the empirical corpus produced through the interviews was carried out through an inductive and interpretive movement, beginning with a floating reading, the tabulation and organization of the statements, and progressing toward the identification of discursive regularities distributed around two central dimensions: the strategies and support services of AEE, and the conceptions of in/exclusion together with the impacts of AEE within the school context.

These dimensions emerged from the materiality of the narratives, constituting the two central axes of analysis presented below. The axis AEE Support Services and Pedagogical Strategies predominantly concentrated the statements of AEE teachers, who address pedagogical practices, resources, and forms of mediation with mainstream education. The axis Conceptions of In/Exclusion and Effects of AEE within the School more recurrently brought together the discourses of school managers, who reflect upon the institutional role of AEE, inclusion policies, and the effects of these processes on school dynamics. This distinction between axes and subjects was not established beforehand, but rather emerged from the empirical material itself, revealing distinct positions of enunciation and different ways of signifying inclusion according to the functions performed within the schools.

It is important to emphasize that, throughout the analysis of the dissertation, three complementary movements of reading were considered: (1) the mapping of AEE strategies and support services; (2) the analysis of expectations and forms of conducting students; and (3) the understanding of the conceptions of inclusion and exclusion present within institutional practices.

In this direction, the analysis considered that the participants, in narrating their experiences, occupy positions linked to Foucault (2008b) notion of the subject; that is, the subject who is objectified within the fields of knowledge and practices of power, while simultaneously being subjectivized through transformations produced by the gaze of others and of oneself. This understanding makes it possible to consider that the statements of teachers and managers are not merely descriptions of practices, but rather utterances through which ways of being and positioning oneself in relation to inclusion policies and AEE strategies are constituted.

These movements were subsequently organized into two interpretive axes of a synthetic nature, articulated with Foucauldian notions of governmentality and biopolitics, which make it possible to understand how inclusion policies operate as dispositifs for the regulation of life and the conduct of subjects considered the target public of Special Education.

AEE support services and pedagogical strategies

The support services of AEE are situated within the framework of the notions of norm and normalization, insofar as they define who should or should not receive such assistance, directed toward those who deviate from the socially established norm and who therefore become targets of dispositifs of control and regulation. The AEE teacher plays a fundamental role in supporting the inclusion of students within mainstream schools, since they are assigned an empowering function, capable of “eliminating barriers” to the full participation of these students. Foucault (2008) contributes to understanding this movement:

The norm is at play within differential normalities. The normal comes first, and the norm is deduced from it; or rather, it is from the study of these normalities that the norm becomes established and performs its operative role. Therefore, I would say that this is no longer a matter of normation, but rather, in the strict sense, of normalization (Foucault, 2008, p. 83).

In the interviewees’ responses, it becomes evident that not only teachers are engaged in the inclusion of students considered the target public of AEE, but that the school management team also contributes to the government of students’ conduct from the moment they arrive at school.

It is important to emphasize that, in order for inclusion to become effective within mainstream schools, teachers and managers must employ various inventions/interventions aimed at including students with disabilities, adopting strategies that lead students and teachers to accept, welcome, and respect differences. This task proves to be complex in consolidation what is proposed in official documents with a view toward “Education for All,” converging with practices of governmentality and the conduct of oneself and others, since “the work of the AEE teacher is guided by the Municipal Department of Education and the Inclusion Directorate” (Manager D, 2022).

Students are referred to specialized support services so that the AEE teacher may carry out the necessary articulations within the school. Within their sphere of action lie not only the curricular foundations, but also efforts to minimize risks, reinforcing the role of the school in monitoring and surveilling students considered the target public of Special Education. Thus, the school is the institution responsible for recognizing and referring bodies considered abnormal, in the expectation that specialized forms of knowledge may “intervene in living conditions in order to modify them and impose norms upon them” (Foucault, 2008, p. 86).

The support service is responsible for directing and activating practices and strategies involving everyone within the school, thereby contributing to the improvement of the functioning of governmentality. Consequently, the AEE teacher constitutes an important link between the family, the school, and other individuals involved in the education and development of students with disabilities, as demonstrated in the information presented in Table 3.

Table 3 – Teachers’ responses

Topic: The role of the AEE teacher in consolidating inclusion and permanence of students with disabilities in school
Teacher A1 – This teacher constitutes the link between the student, the family, and the school, seeking to carry out the work of inclusion in the most effective way possible, whether by assisting the family in understanding the processes their child will experience within the school (adaptation and inclusion in classes) [...]. (Emphasis added by the authors) Teacher A2 – The AEE teacher needs to adopt a differentiated perspective toward each student and work with their specificities within the school context through a perspective of welcoming, enabling their inclusion in the educational and social environment on equal terms. (Emphasis added by the authors) Teacher B1 – The AEE teacher must be attentive to welcoming the student through listening to the family, prioritizing clear and caring communication, since our students participate in different activities outside school and attend follow-up healthcare appointments. (Emphasis added by the authors) Teacher C1 – The role of the AEE teacher is fundamental for communication among everyone involved in the education of students with a disability. They assist curricular adaptations and goal planning. They represent a source of security within the school to ensure that the rights of these students are respected. (Emphasis added by the authors) Teacher D1 – It is, above all, about believing that everyone can learn and coexist socially together. (Emphasis added by the authors)

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

The statements presented in Table 3 above make it possible to understand that teachers take upon themselves the task of making the inclusion of students with disabilities effective within school environments, thereby activating governmentality. Teachers adopt a strategic posture aligned with the public policy of “Education for All.” Such action is not restricted to the school environment, but also involves preparing students for life in society, serving as a link between the student and the entire school community.

The students who attends AEE is one whose learning processes is affected. Consequently, it becomes necessary to resort to practices capable of developing what is impaired in relation to the ideal established for that age group.

There will therefore be the normal, overall curve, alongside the different curves considered normal, and what will the technique consist of? It will consist in seeking to reduce the most unfavorable normalities, those most deviating in relation to the general normal curve, reducing them to this general normal curve (Foucault, 2008, p. 82).

The excerpts also reveal discourses present in official documents of the Ministry of Education, in the media, and within the schools investigated, such as curricular adaptations and goal plans. Thus, the valuing of students’ subjectivity through similar practices across the schools can be observed. This movement is related to what Lockmann emphasizes:

Thus, we may understand that the discourses currently circulating within the field of education are not autonomous individual choices, but rather choices governed by a set of values that surround us and direct our gaze so that we carry out certain actions in our everyday work (Lockmann, 2014, p. 276).

The excerpts reveal the imperative of inclusion insofar as all the teachers interviewed adopt an inclusive posture. By accepting and desiring that inclusion become effective, they

become “partners of the State”, often taking upon themselves the management of risks (their own and those of others). Within this logic, teachers monitor and guide children in learning to live with differences. Through the strategies adopted in their pedagogical work, it becomes possible to foster the inclusion and permanence of everyone within the same environment. The second analytical axis of the study is discussed below, emphasizing more specifically the conceptions and impacts of AEE.

Conceptions of in/exclusion and the impacts of AEE within the school

The teaching practices developed with regard to students with disabilities within the school environment are strongly marked by discursive orders and regimes of truth that exceed beyond local arrangements. These are practices grounded in a rationality present within discourses of inclusion as an imperative, and this notion guides ways of being and acting within the school context.

It may be observed that not only teachers are engaged in the inclusion of students considered the target public of AEE, but that the school management team also contributes to the government of students conduct from the moment they arrive at school, as evidenced in Table 4.

Table 4 - Managers’ responses

Topic: AEE in the school as a support service
Manager A1 – As an educational support service of great importance for the development of students with special needs and giftedness/high abilities. The school [...] seeks, in every possible way, to include these students in socialization with their peers, offering activities that they find enjoyable to carry out. The school seeks to provide a welcoming environment.” (Emphasis added by the authors). Manager B2 – AEE is understood as a support space for students and teachers [...], to such an extent that the school **** [name omitted] is regarded as a reference school for inclusion within our quadrant, due to the excellence work carried out here. (Emphasis added by the authors) Manager C1 – A space for supporting students who need to be stimulated in order to develop potentialities that affect their learning development. We strive to meet the entire inclusion demands of the school, whether through services provided in the SRM or through the development of goal plans for students who require curricular adaptations. (Emphasis added by the authors) Manager D1 – AEE services are directed toward monitoring students with special needs, contributing both to their cognitive and socio-emotional domains [...] many times we face shortages in the teaching staff and a lack of interns to properly support these children but we always strive to do our best. (Emphasis added by the authors)

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

A unanimous concern may be observed regarding the search for strategies aimed at keeping students in school under the guidance of curricular parameters. On the other hand, it is possible to identify AEE as an element that enhances biopolitics, insofar as it is implemented through public policies and disseminated across all schools.

There are also external strategies, such as efforts to strengthening of bonds with families in order to facilitate their guidance toward clinical services, with the aim of controlling risks, in addition to producing disciplinary and regulatory effects. Thus, the partnership between health and education emerges as a powerful dispositif for the regulating of population.



Within the set of analyses, it is also possible to observe that the continuous movements aimed at ensuring that everyone remains included, through with the different strategies adopted to keep students within the system, maintain a certain relationship with the logic of neoliberalism, which seeks to leave no one outside.

In this context, neoliberalism constitutes as a rationality of government that guides the practices of the municipal public administration, within a context in which power operates through the production of freedom and the responsabilization of subjects. Thus, when managers guarantee resources, mediations, and conditions of access so that everyone may take part in the [neoliberal] logic, they not only fulfill an administrative role, but also participate in a biopolitical dynamic of government that regulates populations through inclusion. From this perspective, managerial and teaching actions are not limited to ensuring educational rights, but also operate as strategies for regulating and adaptation of bodies and conduct to the norms of school performance and productivity. As Lopes and Fabris (2020) argue, inclusion presents itself as a State imperative sustained by the logic of in/exclusion, in which being included also means remaining under the permanent risk of exclusion. In this way, the school, by guaranteeing “access for all,” acts as an instrument of neoliberal governmentality, promoting the entry and permanence of subjects within the system, but under the condition that each individual becomes an entrepreneur of oneself, responsible for one’s own success and for maintaining the social logic.

Lopes and Fabris (2020) problematize public policies and their rules and regulations in the implementation of the imperative of inclusion through the interpellation of the State. The naturalizing character of inclusion present within discourses makes it possible to problematize the social process of inventing the binary relation inside-outside (in-ex) and highlights their historical contingencies. The spelling of the term in/exclusion refers to the understanding that, before there was inclusion, exclusion first had to exist, thus enabling the comprehension of the inventive character of this social practice.

To be included is to live with the possibility of, in the very next moment, experiencing exclusion. In/exclusion must be the condition through which we think about our school educational practices. If legislation presents inclusion to us as a State imperative, it is through the choice of the process of in/exclusion that we may share the burden of this imperative (Lopes; Fabris, 2020, p. 110).

The impacts evidenced reflect a school committed to the imperative of inclusion, whose principal function is to include and socialize. School professionals assume responsibility for inclusion, mobilizing efforts so that it may be achieved in accordance with the principles established by political and pedagogical discourses. In light of this analysis, it becomes necessary to radicalize the critique and to think about the processes of in/exclusion beyond dichotomous conceptions of inside/outside, understanding them as part of a continuous and constantly transforming movement.

Final considerations

The discussion presented in this article constitutes part of a broader research study whose objective was to understand how teaching strategies and practices aimed at

supporting the inclusion of students with disabilities in public schools in the municipality of Canoas (RS) have been conducted, based on the narratives of school managers and AEE teachers. The study also sought to establish relationship between the techniques for controlling the conduct of the subjects involved, understood as practices configured within the context of governmentality.

In order to address the research problem, it was initially necessary to investigate the context of inclusive policies and the process through which what we now call inclusion was constituted. Throughout this investigative exercise concerning the processes of inclusion, it was found that such relations constituted through knowledge/power: if inclusion exists, exclusion must previously have existed. Thus, the notion of in/exclusion is established in order to demarcate the processes and practices involving the figure of the abnormal in contemporary times, within the neoliberal logic that advocates the presence of everyone, regardless of their spatial positioning.

Within this scenario, the analyses were carried out based on interviews conducted with teachers and managers from four schools in the municipality of Canoas (RS). From these interviews, it was possible to demonstrate that the practices developed with students with disabilities within the school environment are strongly marked by regimes of truth that exceed beyond personal desires. These are practices grounded in a rationality that functions as a set of technologies of government, making explicit certain ways of being and acting. Such practices are traversed by public policies aimed at ensuring that everyone is included, guided, and regulated.

Pro-inclusion discourses also emerged expressively, within a movement of constant struggle to keep everyone included. In the teachers' statements, the movement accompanied by strategies used for the conduct of bodies becomes explicit, so that all students with disabilities may have access to pedagogical and clinical services. The actions of these professionals aim to enhance processes that, in this study, are also aligned with processes of normalization and correction of bodies, by positioning and establishing certain "destinations" for these subjects.

The analysis also highlights the importance of public inclusion policies for maintaining everyone within the neoliberal order. Such policies possess the power to subjectify teaching conduct which, by including and directing bodies, contributes to the imperative of inclusion.

When reflecting upon the role of schools and the subjects investigated, it becomes evident that contemporary school inclusion operates as a *dispositif* of government, in which pedagogical, administrative, and clinical discourses intertwine with the neoliberal logic of accountability and performance. Managers and teachers, in seeking to ensure access and permanence for all, simultaneously operate as agents of care and control, activating strategies that promote the students' adaptation to school and social norms. This movement should not be interpreted as a mere contradiction, but rather as part of the tensions inherent to governmentality, which transforms inclusion into a policy for guiding conduct under the sign of freedom and autonomy.



In this context, AEE emerges as a privileged space of this political rationality, functioning as a mediator between the discourse of equality and practices of normalization. The AEE teacher, while guaranteeing the right to learning, also becomes a professional responsible for adjusting bodies and conduct to institutional parameters, configuring oneself as a biopolitical operator of inclusive policies. This ambiguity highlights the strength of the dispositif of inclusion which, while promising emancipation, also produces new forms of regulation and surveillance over subjects.

It is necessary for inclusive education to become a theme that is studied and debated within school spaces. It is necessary to question the common-sense understandings surrounding the naturalization of inclusion, with the purpose of comprehending the emergence of inclusive education in order to resignify and constitute our pedagogical practices in ways that are open and sensitive to the condition of the other.

As limitations of the study, it is important to highlight the analytical focus restricted to AEE teachers and the management team, which may have limited the understanding of the dynamics of inclusive education within the context of mainstream schooling. Such delimitation may have privileged a perspective linked to specialized management, leaving in the background the pedagogical tensions that emerge within classrooms, the space in which the schooling practices of students considered the target public of Special Education are concretized. Furthermore, the participation of approximately 10% of the municipal schools constitutes a relatively small sample, limiting the scope of the findings. In this sense, future studies may broaden the investigative scope by incorporating mainstream classroom teachers, students, and families, as well as including institutions from state, federal, and private school systems, in order to enable comparative analyses and deepen the understanding of the multiple configurations of inclusive education within the municipality.

Finally, this study makes it possible to affirm that rethinking inclusion through inspiration drawn from Foucauldian notions encourages a reconsideration of the very role of the school as an institution that produces subjectivities and regulates social life. This implies shifting the focus away from merely technical practices toward an ethical and political field, interrogating the effects of truth that sustain the discourse of inclusion. The critical potential of this movement lies precisely in recognizing that inclusion does not constitute a point of arrival, but rather a field of disputes, tensioned between freedom and control, equality and normalization. Thus, to think about inclusive education through the prism of governmentality means opening space for new forms of resistance and for the creation of pedagogical practices that not only conduct, but also make possible the exercise of difference as a transformative force.

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