

EDUCATION OF THE DEAF BY THE DEAF: IN WHICH SCHOOL?

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ABSTRACT: The search for post-doctorate started from the assumption that the Brazilian legislation provides that deaf people have the right to a bilingual education, in school of the deaf or inclusive contexts in regular education with the listeners. The objectives to investigate according to the deaf themselves which school that crave, justifying with their life histories the option advocated. During the search or seventeen interviews were conducted by the author, also deaf, with semi-structured questions in Brazilian Sign Language (Libras), being that all actions were filmed. Each participant was asked his position, for or against the inclusion of deaf people in school listeners, and defended his position with his own school history. Flagged arguments were confronted with the theoretical framework linked to the socio-anthropological approach to deafness. The results showed all respondents indicated the bilingual school for the deaf as the ideal space, justifying the option from the report how the inclusive process in regular education brings losses of language, identity, social and cultural for the deaf subjects keeping them in invisibility and isolated between listeners, subjecting them to approval without learning, the violence as the bulling, among other situations. The search concluded the inclusion for deaf compared to other groups, is a differentiated concept, since it is founded basically from language and cultural differences, which requires that teaching be organized, both linguistic and methodologically. And only in a linguistic environment naturally bilingual this student body will built while subject of sign language as a first language

INTRODUCTION:

Through a long and arduous struggle to mobilize for their rights, deaf Brazilians, through Brazilian Law No. 10.436, of April 24, 2002 and subsequent signing of Decree No. 5.626/2005, gained official recognition for Brazilian Sign Language (locally known as, "Libras") as a legal means of communication and expression for deaf people.

Due to the recognition of sign language, Brazilian law provides that deaf people are entitled to a bilingual education. To this end, the federal educational institutions responsible for basic education must ensure the deaf individual's right to choose to study in bilingual schools and/ or classes with bilingual teachers in kindergarten and the early years of elementary school.

It is noteworthy that the defense of the right of deaf people to opt for a bilingual education in the school is supported by most members of the deaf community, and this premise is defended by researchers linked to the socio-anthropological perspective of deafness, among which stands out: ANDREIS-WITKOSKI, 2013, 2012; CAPOVILLA, 2011; PERLIN; MIRANDA, 2011; SÁ, 2011; STUMP, 2009; SÁNCHEZ, 1999; SKLIAR, 1999.

However, contrary to the features under Brazilian law, the political scenario points to an indiscriminate and mandatory inclusion of these students in mainstream education, an offense against rights they have already won. Given this national stage, it is understood that, once again, the direction for the education of deaf people is being set without considering the best type of education for deaf people.

In order to legitimize the rights that deaf students have gained, their opinion needs to be considered in the construction of public educational policies directed toward the deaf. In this way, the deaf can define the type of education needed for deepening the issue of their inclusion into mainstream education, in order to build a network of arguments to enhance the understanding of the specifics that involve the inclusive process and the education to which they are entitled. To that point, a survey

with deaf subjects was carried out in 2011 so that they themselves could show a position on these issues.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODS:

This research was conducted by the author of this paper, as part of the process of Postdoctoral Education, initiated in 2011 and completed in 2012, at the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR), Brazil, under the supervision of Professor Dr. Tania Maria Baibich.

Among the main objectives, the goal up centered in checking, according to deaf people, what their school preference was, by giving reasons from their life stories and defending their opinions.

Data collection was conducted with deaf adults who attended the National Federation of Education and Integration of the Deaf (FENEIS) of Curitiba, the Paraná state capital, in 2011, and who had gone through inclusive experiences in their educational history. The participants were seventeen deaf adults, interviewed individually using sign language. The interviews were taped, then translated into Portuguese and transcribed to written form in Portuguese by the author, also deaf and fluent in both languages.

A semi-structured type of interview was used and the first question to each of the respondents called for them to say whether they were for or against the inclusion of the deaf in standard schools for the hearing. From the responses provided, each subject was asked to argue about his position using his own school experience.

Interference by the researcher during the testimony occurred in specific situations, with questions seeking to clarify the arguments defending the position on inclusion, the very concept of this position, the differences attributed to the inclusion of these subjects compared to other “included” groups, the concept of bilingualism, and the definition of the type of school that they would advocate for themselves in order to explain the characteristics of the desired education. Flagged arguments were confronted with the theoretical framework linked to the socio-anthropological approach to deafness.

RESULTS:

All respondents indicated a bilingual school for the deaf as being the ideal space for themselves. Among the many negative aspects of the inclusion process related by the deaf subjects was the question of coexistence between linguistic differences and potential isolation within the classroom (cited by all respondents), as can be glimpsed in the quotes below:

“Deaf in hearing school suffers a lot, it is not easy because there is no communication, all talk, and deaf suffers.”

“Inclusion no, better separate, deaf inclusion always alone, just one, and deaf do not understand clear.” (ANDREIS-WITKOSKI, 2012, p.36)

It is noteworthy that the situation of isolation of the deaf is not restricted to the classroom, but also in typical places and times of exchanges among students. In this regard, please note the description given by one of the deaf subjects that demonstrates the exclusion of inclusion:

Class finished, snack time, break, all the children playing, and I alone, waiting, just watching, 30 minutes, waiting. [...] (ANDREIS-WITKOSKI, 2012, p. 37)

In addition to isolation, it can be seen that the respondents also reported many situations of violence they suffered, showing a lack of respect for differences, as reported by Schneider (2006), in that they remained in a hostile school environment. Many reported being mocked within the school environment, with colleagues laughing at them or avoiding any attempt at being approached. Below is a transcribed report of a bullying story suffered by one of the deaf interviewees:

Also during breaks there was a lot of prejudice, bullying too. They provoked, **teased, I walking and they shouted expletives at my back, I did not hear, children all laughed at me, I turned around and did not know what was going on,** did not understand. However, **there was a worse event:** I was sitting, two big boys came, about 13, 14 years old, and said, "Come in the bathroom!" I asked why, I was innocent, and did not understand what might happen, so I went back into the bathroom. One of boys took a cup and **peed in it, and gave it to me, and said, "Drink!"** I signaled, "No", and he gave me the cup and warned if I did not drink they would hit me, hit, hit. I did not know what to do, because I would be beaten, so trembling I drank the pee in one gulp. **The two laughed and left.** I was ill, distressed, with that horrible taste of strong pee, then I left crying. (ANDREIS-WITKOSKI, 2012, p.51)

Another negative factor in the so-called inclusive process for the deaf, which points to the invisibility of this subject within the school context, was highlighted by all respondents and refers to the fact that inclusion implies a teaching system for the hearing that does not match the system for the deaf. In this sense, in emphasizing the absence of this student, as a person with his own culture, one of the interviewees explained the situation:

I feel inclusion in the method of the hearing does not match the method of deaf. I feel, for example, that in the classroom has history of the colonization of Brazil, the Jesuits, the Indians, slavery, **all have history, but deaf culture, sign language has no history. And the deaf person is influenced by the hearing culture and feels humiliated,** [...] the hearing forget the deaf. (ANDREIS-WITKOSKI, 2012, p.45)

It is worth noting that despite the Brazilian legislation, through Decree 5.626/2005, Article 22, which provides for the presence of a sign language interpreter (ILS) for the deaf student upon inclusion at regular schools. According to deaf people, this measure, although fundamental as a linguistic accessibility tool, it is not a magic solution to the problems involved in inclusion in mainstream education. In this sense, the question is in the complexity of the introduction of these professionals within the classroom, noting that the simple interpretation for deaf children of the content taught orally by the teacher does not constitute a real possibility of learning, in that the student who does not hear remains isolated, and the teaching method follows the learning logic of the hearing, among other factors.

This time, what is observed is that the permanence of deaf children and young people in the subordinate conditions of the hearing, keeping them in a "land of exile" (terminology used by Perlin (1998)), where they do not socially share a language, information, interactions, or responsibilities, among other things. That is paradoxically called inclusion, in addition to constituting a traumatic process, robbing deaf students of the possibility of building a positive deaf identity.

In this regard it is stated that only through interaction with other deaf people can deaf students build their own deaf identity. It is a process of identification to the extent that "being deaf is constituted as an identity, as a difference, as an otherness within deaf representations." (Perlin, 2003, p.101)

It is noteworthy that the importance of being among their peers and extending the discussion to the central importance of language in the identity formation process of the deaf subject was discussed by one of the interviewees to explain the difficulty imposed by inclusion, as transcribed below:

Best school is the deaf one, is sign language, deaf is not alone. In hearing school we are like "mute". I think sign language is best to develop the thought, cognition. **Sign language is important to build identity.** (ANDREIS-WITKOSKI, 2012, p.42)

This time, it is observed that all respondents supported bilingual schooling for the deaf as the ideal space for their education, and this needs to be structured from the design of their right to a bilingual education. And the concept of bilingualism is understood from the basic premise that sign language should be considered a first language and Portuguese as a second language, as glimpsed in some statements transcribed below:

First learn sign language well, when mastered, then Portuguese writing. **First drawing, no written Portuguese, just L1, then L2, written Portuguese, signing, words in Portuguese, such as English, Portuguese.**

At first **there must be sign language, then Portuguese, because then Portuguese gets easier.** [...] because it is easier communication, Portuguese is from the hearing.

Bilingual school is language, is culture. **Learning needs to be bilingual, it is no use speaking the words,** together the meaning must be explained. **So, small child needs to learn sign language, then Portuguese writing.** Needs bilingual school. (ANDREIS-WITKOSKI, 2012, p.96)

It is observed that the need for organized education, both linguistic and methodologically from the singularities of the deaf student learning was also highlighted by respondents, so that the curriculum takes into account the legitimate knowledge of the hearing and culture of the deaf, as illustrated in the testimony given by one of the interviewees:

Deaf curriculum needs to contemplate the history of deaf identity, culture, language all within the curriculum, like the hearing [system], it needs to have what is from the deaf. (ANDREIS-WITKOSKI, 2012, p. 94)

Another important issue highlighted by the subjects refers to the importance of the deaf teacher, pointing to the importance of the relationship between the deaf teacher and the formation of a positive identity for deaf students, highlighted in the statement below:

It is also **important because of identity.** I feel as a deaf person that the deaf feel comfortable only with the deaf, and the hearing are prejudiced against the deaf. If deaf people show other deaf people what they can do, **if a teacher shows a deaf identity, the deaf realize equality between them, with each other, and exchange, create identification with the contact,** the union is important. (ANDREIS-WITKOSKI, 2012, p.101)

In this perspective, it is important to note that according to respondents, when asked directly about the difference of inclusion for the deaf in relation to other groups,

they stated that the basis is in the linguistic and cultural differences, as in the interviews transcribed below:

For example someone in a wheelchair hears sounds, **but the deaf do not hear sound, the visual is important for the deaf. Example the hearing have a voice and the deaf have visual expression, each belongs to each group: hearing and deaf.** Therefore, someone in a wheelchair who hears, or intellectually disabled, or blind is different because **the first thing is language.**

I do not agree with inclusion because **teacher cannot explain and also only has the influence of the hearing**, only loses. Deaf inclusion different because language is different.

My opinion [is] inclusion is not good. Because if there is inclusion, how will the teacher know how to plan and teach the **deaf? And the deaf need to know sign language, where will they learn? [...]** Deaf is different because **different language**, when you go to college there may inclusion, not before. Cannot learn, little ones cannot, they need specialized teacher who knows how to teach words, is another education, is **another method.** It's different for the hearing, deaf inclusion is different from others because deaf is different from hearing. (ANDREIS-WITKOSKI, 2012, p.106)

CONCLUSIONS:

The inclusion for the deaf in relation to other groups is on a different concept, as it is founded primarily from linguistic and cultural differences, which requires that teaching be organized, both linguistically and methodologically, for the deaf culture. Only in a naturally bilingual language environment will these deaf students, in fact, have the possibility of learning with sign language as a first language. That argument provides the pillars that support the defense of a deaf student's right to study in a bilingual school for the deaf. And this assumption differs radically from the simple acceptance of sign language within schools for the hearing, through the presence of an ILS, which still does not provide the deaf with a bilingual education.

Bilingual education has, as a support axis, sign language as the language of instruction for the deaf, and the official spoken language of the country as a second language. Thus, the truism is reinforced that such a possibility does not exist in a school for the hearing where the language of instruction is oral and all teaching is organized from the hearing perspective of being.

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