

Educational pedagogical support teacher: plot and interpretations in a microcontext of Mato Grosso do Sul

*Professor de apoio pedagógico educacional:
enredo e interpretações em um microcontexto sul-mato-grossense*

*Profesor de apoyo pedagógico educativo: trama e interpretaciones
en un micro-contexto en el estado de Mato Grosso do Sul*

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ABSTRACT

This article aimed to analyze the process of creating the position of educational support pedagogical teacher in the municipal education system of Dourados, in order to present its political plot, as well as the actors and interpretations that competed for the stage in this microcontext of Mato Grosso do Sul. The analysis was guided by the policy cycle approach and used municipal documents and open-access videos as material. It was demonstrated that the holding of a competition for support teacher was imposed by the State Public Prosecutor's Office and, during the process to create the position, there was no broad debate with the community. The workload and duties defined in the new municipal law give rise to precarious working conditions and mischaracterization of the teaching function of these professionals. Finally, it was found that temporary hiring of support teachers was perpetuated, despite the competition held.

Keywords: Support Teacher. Regular Classroom Service. Policy Cycle Approach.

RESUMO

Este artigo teve como objetivo analisar o processo de construção do cargo de professor de apoio pedagógico educacional da rede municipal de ensino de Dourados, de modo a apresentar o seu enredo político, bem como os atores e as interpretações que disputaram o palco neste microcontexto sul-mato-grossense. A análise foi orientada pela abordagem do ciclo de políticas e teve como materialidade documentos municipais e vídeos de acesso aberto. Demonstrou-se que a realização de concurso para professor de apoio se deu por imposição do Ministério Público Estadual e, durante o processo para a criação do cargo, não houve amplo debate com a comunidade. A carga horária e as atribuições definidas na nova lei municipal dão margem para a precarização das condições de

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trabalho e a descaracterização da função de docência desses profissionais. Por fim, constatou-se a perpetuação de contratações temporárias de professores de apoio a despeito do concurso realizado.

Palavras-chave: Professor de Apoio. Atendimento em Classe Comum. Abordagem do Ciclo de Políticas.

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este artículo fue analizar el proceso de creación del cargo de Profesor de Apoyo Pedagógico Educativo en la red municipal de educación de Dourados, con el fin de presentar su trama política, así como los actores e interpretaciones que disputaron el escenario en este micro-contexto del estado de Mato Grosso. El análisis se orientó por el enfoque del ciclo político y utilizó como material documentos municipales y vídeos de libre acceso. Se demostró que el concurso para profesor de apoyo fue impuesto por el Ministerio Público del Estado y que, durante el proceso de creación del cargo, no promovió un amplio debate con la comunidad. La carga de trabajo y las funciones definidas en la nueva ley municipal dan lugar a condiciones laborales precarias y distorsionan la función docente de estos profesionales. Por último, se constató la perpetuación de la contratación temporal de profesores de apoyo a pesar de haberse convocado un concurso.

Palabras clave: Profesor de Apoyo. Asistencia a Clase Común. Enfoque del Ciclo Político.

INTRODUCTION

Public policies are the subject of conflicts and interests in different arenas. This combination allows them to take on different trajectories and developments, even when conceived in a certain way. Stephen Ball and his collaborators, when developing a method for analyzing educational policies, the policy cycle approach (PCA), theorize that political texts are the result of disputes between the various pressure groups that act to discursively influence public policy, which sometimes results in unclear and/or incoherent provisions (Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992). The more ambiguous, incomplete, and disjointed the political documents are, the greater freedom their recipients will have in the process of interpreting educational policy.

From this perspective, the authors metaphorically conceive the political process as a play, in which agents are seen as actors who, armed with the same text, give it creative and different interpretations. According to Ball, Maguire and Braun (2016), interpretation is the process of understanding what political texts mean and what is expected to be accomplished. This variety of interpretations, in turn, favors configurations — and why not say plots?¹ — that are equally varied in different school contexts.

When the curtains on special education in Brazil are lifted, an arena of clashes and disputes is revealed between the many pressure groups that seek to influence policies for the field, especially regarding the purposes of this type of education, the place where its target audience will be educated, and the professionals involved in this process (Nozu, 2013).

Among the pressure groups that operate in the special education arena, the “inclusionists” and the “total inclusionists” (Mendes, 2006) stand out. The “inclusionists” advocate maintaining a continuum of services, including special classes and schools, since, for this group, even if the school were to change to meet the needs of the diversity of students, not all would benefit from education

1 Term borrowed from the performing and literary arts, applied in this article in the sense of trajectory; of a succession of events that occurred in the process of interpreting and configuring educational policy.

in the regular classroom. In turn, the “total inclusionists” believe in the capacity of the regular school to adapt to accommodate differences, as this is also an important space for socialization and combating discrimination and prejudice. In this vein, they defend the common class as the only way to educate and the elimination of special classes and schools (Mendes, 2006).

Sometimes one group exerts greater influence on government proposals, sometimes another. This alternation — just like the change of scriptwriters in film productions — eventually produces discontinuous and/or disjointed proposals, materialized in federal political-normative documents (Nozu and Bruno, 2015), requiring creativity from the actors involved in the practice to connect and interpret them.

It is in this context of disputes and disarticulation that the “play” of school inclusion comes on, with the proposal to include students from the special education (PEE) public sector in regular education classes (Brasil, 2008b). This policy has emphasized specialized support offered outside the classroom and preferably during the after-school period in regular classes. In turn, the support services offered within regular classes have not been the focus of attention in federal political-normative documents, even though they are very common in Brazilian education networks, favoring a diversity of configurations.

For example, we have the collaborative work of specialized teachers in regular classes, provided for in the National Education Council/ Basic Education Chamber (CNE/CEB) Resolution No. 02/2001, which seems to have been forgotten in subsequent documents — more recently, the role of the school support professional provided for in the Brazilian Inclusion Law (LBI) of 2015 has gained prominence (Brasil, 2001b; 2015). Research has indicated a harmful side to this lack of articulation between the guiding texts of special education — which, intentionally or not, create services to support the common class and do not mention those existing in previous documents, without clarity as to whether they coexist or have been replaced — namely, the precariousness of the work of these actors (Martins, 2011; Fonseca, 2016; Lopes, 2018; Bezerra, 2020; Agrelos, 2021).

The lack of clarity and discontinuity of federal proposals for this area (Nozu and Bruno, 2015) results, to a certain extent, from the absence of a continuous and cohesive public policy of the state, which is not at the mercy of the temporary interests of government officials (Agrelos, 2021), which, consequently, leaves ample room for the creativity of the actors involved. In this sense, studies indicate various ways in which support services in the regular classroom have been interpreted and offered (when offered!), including teachers specialized in special education, interns and professionals without a degree, with equally diverse roles in serving PEE students (Souza *et al.*, 2012; Prado and Vitaliano, 2017; Mendonça and Gonçalves Neto, 2019; Fernandes and Sampaio, 2020; Agrelos, 2021; Lopes and Mendes, 2021).

A common point among most interpretations is the precarious hiring of these characters (Martins, 2011; Fonseca, 2016; Lopes, 2018; Bezerra, 2020). Even in scenarios where there are professionals who have passed public exams, they are generally only a small fraction of the total number of workers in the service. This reality was confirmed in a survey carried out between 2020 and 2021 (Agrelos, 2021) in 11 municipalities that make up the Greater Dourados region, in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul (MS), namely Caarapó, Deodápolis, Douradina, Dourados, Fátima do Sul, Glória de Dourados, Itaporã, Jateí, Maracaju, Rio Brilhante, and Vicentina.

In Dourados, the second largest city in MS, the support service in regular classrooms, in the municipal education network, was regulated by the Resolution of the Municipal Secretariat of Education (SEMED) No. 046, of June 9, 2022, which provided for the following services: “Educational Pedagogical Support Teacher for Special Education in a regular classroom” (Dourados, 2022) and interns (Dourados, 2022). This resolution also regulated the selection process through which these actors were hired.

In 2023 however, Dourados, despite its history of precarious hiring for the service (MPMS, 2021), began to take measures to create permanent positions for support teachers and hold a public selection process. This scenario resulted in the approval of Complementary Law No. 456, of May 23, 2023, which amended the Job, Career, and Remuneration Plan for Municipal Education Professionals of Dourados (PCCR), established by Complementary Law No. 118 of December 31, 2007. Among other changes, this was meant to create the role of “Educational Pedagogical Support Teacher” (Dourados, 2007; 2023a).

The legislative process was marked by clashes and demonstrations by different interested groups, such as professionals in the field, unions, families of PEE students, and the academic community, who sought spaces in the constitution of municipal policy. Thus, this article analyzes the process of constructing the position of educational pedagogical support teacher in the municipal education network of Dourados, to present the political plot, as well as the actors and interpretations that competed for the stage, in this microcontext of Mato Grosso do Sul.

METHODOLOGICAL PATH

The research outlined is of the documentary type, having as material primary and public documents, with open access, such as municipal regulations, municipal bill, civil inquiry and recordings of public hearings and voting sessions held by the Dourados City Council (CMD) (Severino, 2007). It is a qualitative approach study, considering that, “according to this perspective, a phenomenon can be better understood in the context in which it occurs and of which it is a part, and that it should be analyzed from an integrated perspective” (Godoy, 1995, p. 21).

Considering the “active force” of the context in the movement of educational policies (Ball, Maguire e Braun, 2016), this study uses PCA as a method of analysis of the phenomenon under investigation, namely the construction of the position of educational pedagogical support teacher in Dourados. PCA “allows for the critical analysis of the trajectory of educational programs and policies from their initial formulation to their implementation in the context of practice and its effects” (Mainardes, 2006, p. 48). In this process, the verticalized idea of implementation is broken, as well as the Manichean positions of right and wrong, while paying attention to the creative processes of interpretation and political translation.

This approach proposes that the analysis of educational policy be based on three contexts: that of influence, that of text production, and that of practice (Mainardes and Marcondes, 2009). Ball, in an interview with Mainardes and Marcondes (2009), explains that these contexts are nested and interpenetrable and do not occur in a linear fashion. They are not therefore closed and in sequential stages. Thus, “there may be disputes or competing versions within the context of practice, in different interpretations of interpretations” (Mainardes and Marcondes, 2009, p. 306). The analysis of these dimensions allows the researcher to obtain clues as to the conjunctural elements that influence political creativity.

The present work was restricted to the analysis of the contexts of influence and text production, which constitute the recent educational policy of Dourados related to the support service in the regular classroom for PEE students, materialized in Complementary Law No. 456 of May 23, 2023 (Dourados, 2023a).

The context of influence, according to Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992, p. 19-20),

is where public policy is normally initiated. It is here that policy discourses are constructed. It is here that interested parties struggle to influence the definition and social purposes of education, what it means to be educated. [...] Here key policy concepts are established [...], they acquire acceptance and credibility, and they

provide a discourse and lexicon for policy initiation. This kind of discourse forming is sometimes given support, sometimes challenged by wider claims to influence in the public arenas of action, particularly in and through the mass media.

In the context of influence, the researcher's attention should focus on the clashes between the various interest groups that compete to influence educational policy, its concepts and its purposes (Mainardes, 2006). In these processes, unions, associations, politicians, etc. are involved, and these arenas do not necessarily occur in a formal manner, and can extrapolate to, for example, social networks and other communication channels.

This context of influence has a symbiotic but none the less uneasy relation to the second context, the context of policy text production. Because while influence is often related to the articulation of narrow interests and dogmatic ideologies, policy texts are normally articulated in the language of general public good. Their appeal is based upon claims to popular (and populist) commonsense and political reason. Policy texts therefore represent policy. [...] Policy is not done and finished at the legislative moment, it evolves in and through the texts that represent it, texts have to be read in relation to the time and the particular site of their production (Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992, p. 20-21).

Such documents may allow for greater or lesser involvement of the reader in the process of interpreting the policy. The more prescriptive and cohesive the texts are, the less room there will be for creativity on the part of their recipients. On the other hand, the more generic, incomplete, contradictory and/or incoherent their provisions are, the greater ingenuity will be required from the actors in the process of refining and adapting the text to the local context (Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992).

Although policy is not limited to guiding texts, these can be elements of analysis as results of disputes between pressure groups, not only as a product of mediation, but also as a materialization of the prevailing interests and voices in certain contexts.

Using PCA as a heuristic instrument, the sections of this work were developed based on the contexts of influence and text production, chosen as axes of analysis of the policy of educational pedagogical support teacher of the municipal education network of Dourados. However, it is important to emphasize that these contexts are interpenetrable, therefore it is not possible to isolate them rigidly into specific sections.

DOURADOS' POLITICAL PLOT: THE EMERGENCE OF A PUBLIC COMPETITION

Since 2003, federal policies have encouraged the enrollment of students with disabilities, global developmental disorders, and high abilities/giftedness — currently known as PEE — in regular schools (Kassar and Rebelo, 2018). This movement, known as school inclusion (Mendes, 2023), was widely disseminated by the National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education of 2008, which resulted in a significant increase in the enrollment of these students in regular schools (Rebelo, 2016).

Over the past few years, federal policy has encouraged the provision of specialized educational services (AEE) outside regular classrooms, primarily in multifunctional resource rooms (Mendes and Malheiro, 2012). However, with the increase in enrollments and the expansion of support for these students, schools have been required to also offer support within regular classrooms.

In Dourados, support services in regular classrooms have been provided by teachers proficient in special education or related areas, known as "Special Education Pedagogical Support Teachers in the

Regular Classroom”, and by interns from undergraduate courses (Dourados, 2022). These specialist teachers were hired on a precarious basis, through selection processes, the irregularities of which were the subject of complaints filed by the ombudsman with the State Public Prosecutor’s Office of MS (MPMS).

Among the complaints filed was News of Fact No. 01.2020.00001023-9, which reported a lack of transparency in the criteria established in the selection process and the continued hiring of the same professionals (MPMS, 2020). After receiving numerous complaints, the MPMS instituted Administrative Procedure No. 09.2020.00003866-0 to investigate possible irregularities in the contracting processes.

The Administrative Procedure gave rise to a Conduct Adjustment Agreement (TAC), signed by the municipality of Dourados with MPMS on October 20, 2021. The reasons that led to the signing of TAC, referred to therein as considerations, are in short:

- that the Federal Constitution of 1988 enshrined the public examination as a fundamental principle;
- that this principle embodies the ideal of the democratic regime of equal opportunities for access to public service, “in addition to being an important instrument for selecting the most qualified to hold public office”;
- that temporary contracts aim to meet temporary needs and are of an exceptional nature;
- that there is a need to moralize hiring and appointments;
- that subjective evaluation criteria do not meet the principles that guide Public Administration (MPMS, 2021, p. 2-3).

Among the obligations established in the TAC, the municipality of Dourados committed to holding a public selection process to hire 250 support teachers for special education within 180 days (MPMS, 2021). The deadline was not met by the municipal entity. However, in 2023, there were effective moves to comply with the adjustment, by sending a bill to the CMD, as a preparatory stage for holding the competition.

The role of the MPMS, as a recurring external agent in inducing education policy in MS education networks, especially in acting to compel managers to provide support teachers in legal proceedings, has been confirmed by academic studies (Coimbra Neto, 2019; Agrelos, 2021). Agrelos’s research (2021) indicated that, in some municipalities, the actions of the MPMS and the judiciary have been a guiding element in the systematic support of regular classrooms in education networks. In one of the municipalities investigated, a manager of the Education Department reported that, when parents’ requests for a support teacher for their children were denied, they appealed to the MPMS and the judiciary and always obtained a request, so that the education network was compelled to provide the service. In this context, the municipal education management adopted the stance of responding to all requests for the service, in advance and indiscriminately, since, if denied, the parents would appeal to those public agencies (Agrelos, 2021).

The judicialization of support teacher services in MS was also identified by Coimbra Neto (2019), who analyzed decisions of the State Court of Justice (TJMS) regarding the right to special education in 20 individual lawsuits, which had already been judged by first instance judges and which, at that time, were being processed in the TJMS for consideration of the appeals filed. It was identified that 13 of them demanded support teacher services. In that scenario, it was also found that the MPMS acted in individual lawsuits, through public civil actions, which as a rule are intended to protect diffuse and collective rights.

In turn, Melo and Kassir (2023), when investigating whether the phenomenon of judicialization of special education occurs in the municipality of Corumbá-MS, found only three lawsuits, between

2009 and 2020, in which specialized services for PEE students were requested. Two of these were public civil actions brought by the MPMS against private institutions. However, the three lawsuits demanded support services in the regular classroom, which together with other studies may indicate a trend of demand for this type of support in MS.

It is worth noting that although policy formulation is generally the responsibility of the Executive Branch, the Public Prosecutor's Office, as an oversight body and defender of "the legal order, the democratic regime and the inalienable social and individual interests" (Brasil, 1988), is included in the political creative process, given the inertia or ineffectiveness of the public administrator in promoting the policies necessary to guarantee rights. In the case at hand, the MPMS acted to compel the municipality to break with practices that favor political patronage and that reveal a potential lack of commitment by the state entity to guarantee the AEE services, necessary for the process of inclusion of PEE students. This is because the hiring of temporary professionals for the service may be an indication of an administrative culture of provisionality in special education, which still does not see these students as a permanent part of the common school context.

Among the administrative obstacles alleged by the municipal administration to comply with TAC was the need to change the PCCR, to update the position of specialist teacher of special education to support teacher in a regular classroom. Thus, the Executive Branch of Dourados forwarded to the CMD Complementary Bill No. 02/2023, aiming to change the PCCR and "adapt, in the teaching staff of the Municipality, the position and duties of teacher for special education" (Dourados, 2023b, p. 1). In this act, it was argued that:

it turns out that the duties of the 250 positions indicated in the law, which have not yet been filled, are out of date, since the legal text dates back to 2007. Considering that the Municipality intends to finalize the legal and administrative procedures for holding a public selection process to fill the aforementioned permanent positions this semester, it is essential to adapt the law to current requirements for special education for children and young people with special pedagogical needs, to be provided by duly qualified professionals, in the classroom together with the head teacher (Dourados, 2023b, p. 1).

The Bill provides for the transformation of the position of "Special Education Teacher" into "Educational Pedagogical Support Teacher" and provides for their functions, which are:

the Special Education Pedagogical Support Teacher will work in regular education, where students with disabilities, global developmental disorders and high abilities and/or giftedness are enrolled and who have significant difficulties in the process of interaction, communication and autonomy for the execution of pedagogical activities, in the Teaching Units of the Municipal Network, in the stages of Basic Education and in the modalities of Indigenous Education, Rural Education, and Education of Young People and Adults. He will work in the regular classroom where a Target Audience student of Special Education is enrolled who demonstrably needs mediation. They will act as a mediator in pedagogical activities in the execution of playful and recreational activities, adaptations and adjustments of materials, and also in eating, hygiene, and locomotion, assisting individually when necessary the student with disabilities who does not perform these activities independently and autonomously (Dourados, 2023c, p. 4).

It is evident that, once compelled to provide on a permanent basis the support service of a specialist teacher in special education in the regular classroom, Dourados also found itself

obliged to create this professional in its network by statute. However, this specialized teacher, working in the regular classroom has been provided for since 2001, in Resolution CNE/CEB No. 02 of the National Education Council (Brasil, 2001b) and in Opinion No. 17/2001 (Brasil, 2001a), with the following definition:

§ 2º Teachers specialized in special education are considered those who have developed skills to identify special educational needs to define, implement, lead, and support the implementation of flexibility strategies, curricular adaptation, teaching and learning procedures, and alternative practices suitable for meeting these needs, as well as working as a team, assisting the regular classroom teacher in the practices that are necessary to promote the inclusion of students with special educational needs (Brasil, 2001b, p. 5).

It is worth noting that this teacher specialized in special education is responsible for identifying special educational needs, providing leadership and support in implementing strategies for curricular flexibility and adaptation, and teaching and learning procedures that must be worked on collaboratively with the regular classroom teacher (Brasil, 2001b).

CNE/CEB Resolution No. 02/2001 was not revoked and the specialized teacher provided for in it, working in the regular classroom, is a frequent actor in the contexts of the education networks of MS, as demonstrated, for example, by the research by Bezerra (2020), Agrelos (2021), Santos (2022) and Carpes (2023). However, this professional did not receive attention in subsequent federal documents that guide the special education policy in the country. This resolution was issued in the last year of the Fernando Henrique Cardoso government. From 2002 onwards, at the beginning of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's first term in office, political proposals for the area were marked by a more radical perspective of school inclusion, so that the provision of pedagogical support within the regular classroom was seen as an integrationist bias.

Nevertheless, from 2008 onwards, other actors in the support service in the regular classroom emerged in federal documents, such as: "monitors or caregivers" (Brasil, 2008b), "other education professionals" (Brasil, 2009), "support professional" (Brasil, 2010), "specialized companion" (Brasil, 2012), and "school support professional" (Brasil, 2015). The lack of clarity in the political-normative-guiding framework regarding the coexistence and functions of each of these characters, contrasted by the recurrence of support services in regular classes in Brazilian schools, puts pressure on education networks to produce their own interpretations.

Educational policy documents may leave more or less room for interpretations by agents working in education networks (Mainardes, 2006). According to Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992), political interpretations are processes of dispute, power relations, which have as a backdrop the most diverse interests, so that, in this dynamic, some texts are rejected or intentionally ignored.

The more prescriptive and articulated they are, the less room there is for interpretation and consequent varied creations. On the other hand, the lack of articulation between documents, omissions, and ambiguous wording force actors to fill these spaces and articulate provisions — in this process omitting some and privileging others —, according to the contextual factors in which they are inserted (Mainardes, 2006; Ball, Maguire e Braun, 2016).

Therefore, even though Resolution CNE/CEB No. 02/2001 influences the special education policy in the city of Dourados, since the specialized teacher in the regular classroom has been a frequent character in recent years, its existence seems distant from the federal normative forecast, making this influence only implicit. In this scenario, there is a need to recreate an already existing function.

AM I A TEACHER OR NOT? THAT IS THE QUESTION FOR THE EDUCATIONAL PEDAGOGICAL SUPPORT TEACHER

Complementary Bill No. 02/2023 was received by the CMD on February 23, 2023, and put to a vote on March 13, 2023. At that time, councilor Elias Ishi, from the Workers' Party (PT), requested to review the bill for analysis and discussion with the base. Despite the time that elapsed between its receipt by the Chamber and the voting session, some councilors claimed that they only became aware of the document on that date. In turn, councilor Ishi maintained that, although he was previously aware of the matter submitted for voting, there were attempts to dialogue with the Executive Branch to improve the proposal. However, he reported that he received no response, and that, given the relevance of the topic, dialogue with society would be important (TV Câmara Dourados, 2023a).

A public hearing was then called and held on March 23, 2023, promoted and conducted by councilor Ishi, who is a member of the CMD Education Committee, whose panel included the participation of councilor Olavo Sul, from the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB) party, the representative of the Municipal Union of Education Workers (SIMTED), the representative of parents of students with disabilities and professor and researcher Dr. Reinaldo dos Santos, as a representative of the Postgraduate Program in Education of the Federal University of Grande Dourados (UFGD). It is worth noting that no other councilor from Dourados participated in the debate panel, although they were invited, as reported by the councilor conducting the hearing. According to the information provided in the session, although invited, the Mayor and the Municipal Secretary of Education did not attend the public hearing and did not even send representatives (TV Câmara Dourados, 2023b).

Councilor Elias Ishi and SIMTED union leader, Prof. Kelly Cristina Silva Vieira, began their speeches by highlighting the lack of dialogue with the Municipal Executive Branch regarding the proposed law. The councilor pointed out that, when invited to meetings at the CMD to discuss the issue, the Municipal Government did not send representatives. In turn, the union leader highlighted the holding of a parallel meeting in the Mayor's office, on the eve of the public hearing, with some parents and teachers, without the participation of the category's legal representative, namely SIMTED. According to Ishi, this meeting had the purpose of emptying the audience (TV Câmara Dourados, 2023b).

Among the problems identified in the Executive Branch's proposal is the 20-hour work week. According to the union representative, SIMTED's proposal was that the professional performing support services in the regular classroom should be a specialist teacher, with a 30-hour work week, considering that this professional has the right and need to spend hours planning and preparing "adaptations and adaptations of materials", as provided for in the bill. According to her, since most students need constant support, the planned work hours would be entirely carried out in the classroom (TV Câmara Dourados, 2023b).

The union representative also pointed out that the bill represented a setback for special education in Dourados, considering that the law that was intended to be changed (PCCR) provided for collaborative work between the special education teacher and the main teachers, while the bill introduced the role of a mediator. That is, there is a simplification of specialized work, which results in overloading of the main teachers and makes the service offered precarious (TV Câmara Dourados, 2023b). Accordingly, research has indicated that teachers who work in the support service usually do not have time dedicated to planning and preparing material, and exchanges with the main teachers, when they occur, are improvised, often in the school corridors (Agrelos, 2021; Michelluzzi, Cordeiro and Selau, 2022).

Law No. 11,738/2008, which established the national minimum wage for professionals in public education for basic education, establishes in its Article 2, paragraph 4, that "in the

composition of the workday, the maximum limit of 2/3 (two thirds) of the workload shall be observed for the performance of activities involving interaction with students” (Brasil, 2008a). In other words, at least one third of the teachers’ workday must be reserved for activities other than those performed with students.

In view of the legal provision, the question arises: under what justification would the law that guarantees one third of the workday for preparing activities not be applicable to these support teachers? Would they be a type of second-class teacher? Once again, one can see signs of the culture of provisionality that permeates such services, given that, even in the context of effective contractual employment of professionals who work in support services, through public competition, their work dynamics are still based on improvisation and precariousness. This perception regarding the administrative culture is also reinforced by the provisions of Art. 75B of the bill:

in the event of an insufficiency of special students to absorb the supply and development of the functional duties of the Educational Pedagogical Support Teachers, the Municipal Department of Education may reallocate the employees for use in the network’s teaching units, according to demand and professional qualifications, so that they are not left idle in the municipality (Dourados, 2023c, p. 2).

The 1988 Federal Constitution establishes in its Article 41, paragraph 3, that “when the position is terminated or declared unnecessary, the tenured civil servant will be placed on standby, with remuneration proportional to the length of service, until they are suitably employed in another position”. Therefore, the availability and use of civil servants, when their functions become unnecessary, are measures that can be adopted by all civil servants, and there is no legal reason that justifies such a specific provision for support teachers. It is therefore understood that, among the contextual factors that influenced the political proposal of the Executive Branch of Dourados, there are indications that the culture of provisionality of special education in regular schools played a relevant role.

Complementary Bill No. 02/2023 also provides concepts that disqualify teaching work and pedagogical training, by conferring functions that make the performance of the professional teacher precarious, assigning them activities not covered by their area of training and specialization, such as support “in eating, hygiene and locomotion, attending individually when necessary the student with a disability who does not carry out these activities with independence and autonomy” (Dourados, 2023c, p. 4).

In his speech at the public hearing, Professor Dr. Reinaldo dos Santos highlighted the problems in the legislative proposal presented, because at the same time that the city of Dourados is moving forward in establishing a career for support teachers, it is presenting a bill with outdated concepts and that, intentionally or not, confuses the roles of teacher and support professional, making it impossible to know whether “it is to reduce the workload or to eliminate the activity time” (TV Câmara Dourados, 2023b).

The professor emphasized that the use of terms such as “mediator” may eventually have the purpose of mischaracterizing the teaching activity performed by the support teacher, which generates repercussions in relation to the rights of these professionals. According to Dr. dos Santos, the big problem is that the proposal “calls him a teacher but demotes him to mediator and combines two in one; that is, it pays one salary to perform two functions”. He concluded by emphasizing that, as the legislative proposal was presented, it will harm the quality of education in the municipal education network of Dourados (TV Câmara Dourados, 2023b).

Agrelos’s research (2021) indicated that, in most municipalities in the Greater Dourados region that offered support teachers, these players were also responsible for physical support activities for

students, such as transportation, eating and hygiene. However, the LBI provides for a professional to specifically carry out such activities:

III - school support professional: person who performs feeding, hygiene and transportation activities for students with disabilities and works in all school activities where necessary, at all levels and types of education, in public and private institutions, excluding techniques or procedures identified with legally established professions (Brasil, 2015).

Therefore, in the municipality of Dourados, we see a process of bricolage of the duties of the specialized teacher, provided for in Resolution CNE/CEB No. 02/2001, with those of the school support professional, provided for in the LBI, with a view to reducing the cost of labor. In addition to the financial aspect, the municipal Executive Branch seemed to interpret the support service in the common classroom only as a care activity but chose to keep a specialized education professional in the service because their replacement could be unpopular.

After the first public hearing, in which these problems in the government proposal were discussed, councilor Sergio do Nogueira (PSDB), leader of the government base and responsible for presenting the project to the Legislative Assembly, called a new public hearing, entitled “Special and Inclusive Education: Duties, Rights and Competencies of the Main Teacher and the Special Education Teacher”, with the “objective of listening to the public to discuss the Special Education Complementary Bill — PLC 1/23 (2), authored by the Executive” (TV Câmara Dourados, 2023a).

The hearing was held on March 29, 2023 and, once again, was not attended by the Municipal Secretary of Education or a representative of the Municipal Mayor. At this event, the problems existing in the government proposal were corroborated by the guests who made up the table, especially by the technical member of the MS State Department of Education, professor Me. André Gustavo Garcia Bruno (TV Câmara Dourados, 2023a).

Prof. Gustavo Garcia Bruno stressed the importance of distinguishing between the roles of specialized pedagogical support teacher and support professional, pointing out the latter as the major knot of interpretation to be unraveled, with regard to the policy that Dourados intended to establish. He emphasized that “the specialized pedagogical support teacher works by making reasonable adaptations within the space of the regular classroom. He mediates the teaching/learning process,” while “the support professional will work with adaptive behaviors” such as “hygiene, eating, medication, control of self-aggressive behavior. [...] These are completely different things from what the pedagogical support teacher does in the regular classroom”. He also emphasized that these services are not confusing and coexist when necessary (TV Câmara Dourados, 2023a).

In local microcontexts, policies take on peculiar plots, considering the range of actors and contextual factors involved in the political creative process. Following the theatrical metaphor, the plot of the educational support teacher policy in Dourados was constructed by the MPMS and, later, by the Executive Branch. Once the plot of the public competition was established, actors competed to offer their creativity in the interpretation of the plot. However, the direction and the leading role were assumed by the same actor, namely the Municipal Executive Branch, whose interpretation prevailed, despite the possibilities presented by other actors, which, apparently, were not even considered. This interpretation seems to be permeated by contextual factors (Ball, Maguire e Braun, 2016), such as budgetary restrictions, a culture of provisionality in special education services, and the non-recognition of the support teacher as a real teacher.

This is because, despite the statements made by representatives of SIMTED, workers, family members, and the academic community who participated in the public hearings, in which the weaknesses outlined above were pointed out, there was no change in the Executive Branch’s

proposal and Complementary Bill No. 02/2023 was approved in full, culminating in Complementary Law No. 456 of May 23, 2023 (Dourados, 2023a; 2023c).

Soon after, on June 21, 2023, the city of Dourados published the public tender notice, Notice No. 01/2023/PMD, with 250 vacancies for the position of Educational Pedagogical Support Teacher, with a 20-hour workweek (Dourados, 2023d). The competition was held in 2023, and its results were approved on December 15 of that same year (Dourados, 2023e). On January 8, 2024, the municipal manager published Decree “P” No. 1392, appointing exactly 250 candidates for the position (Dourados, 2024a).

However, the Dourados Educational Pedagogical Support Teacher gained a plot twist² worthy of a blockbuster³, because after appointing the 250 candidates approved in the competition, the municipality of Dourados, in line with its history of precarious hiring in the area, called at least 300 candidates approved in the competition to sign temporary contracts as support teachers (Dourados, 2024b). This fact indicates that municipal demand is probably much greater than the number of vacancies created for the permanent position, which in turn may indicate the perpetuation of an administrative culture of provisionality in special education and that the creation of 250 permanent positions and the holding of the public competition, it seems, constitute a mere bureaucratic fulfillment of the obligations established in TAC.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The process of hiring support teachers in regular classrooms could represent an important step towards improving support for school inclusion in Dourados. However, it is clear that the identification of the need and the political initiative did not originate from the responsible state entity, with a view to meeting the needs of society and school demands and updating special education services. On the contrary, the public administrator was compelled by MPMS to adopt such measures, and during this process, it did not prioritize plural dialogue with the interested community or the scientific and updated proposals for support services in regular classrooms, presented in a public hearing.

In this scenario, it is clear that the municipal administration focused mainly on meeting the obligation established in TAC, without necessarily prioritizing the continuous improvement of educational policy. This is because the Municipal Executive Branch voted on an outdated proposal to create the position of educational support teacher without broad debate with the public regarding its duties and working conditions. Despite the political will of the municipal administration and even without the participation of its representatives, the debates were held within the scope of the CMD; however, the proposals and objections were not considered, since they did not result in any change in the approved law.

The processes of political interpretation are influenced by a series of contextual factors that make them unique. In this sense, financial resources, conceptions of the professionals involved in the political elaboration, institutional cultures, the actions of external agents, among other factors, are *sui generis* characteristics that directly or indirectly imply political creativity (Ball, Maguire e Braun, 2016).

The creation of the position of educational pedagogical support teacher, in the municipality of Dourados, may represent an advance and strengthening of the category of these professionals; however, it is loaded with conceptions and provisions that, in the long term, may not represent an improvement for special education services as a support for school inclusion. In this context, although effective, support teachers will not have adequate working conditions to carry out their

² Term used in the performing and literary arts to indicate an unexpected twist in the plot.

³ Book, film, exhibition or other cultural object that achieves great popularity or success.

activities, as they are denied rights granted to teaching professionals, such as the allocation of a third of the working day to preparing activities, in addition to the possible decharacterization of their teaching role to that of a mere mediator.

Apparently, the holding of the public selection process in 2023 was just an “act” in the establishment of the support teacher service in regular classrooms in Dourados, since the practice of precarious hiring for the position persisted after the selection process. Although there are signs of greater fairness in the selection process, considering the use of the list of approved candidates in the selection process, the number of professionals hired reveals a large group of students who demand the service whose existence in regular schools is still treated as temporary. In this context, it is important to be clear that rights are a struggle (Ihering, 2003): a struggle to conquer, a struggle to maintain, and a struggle not to regress. Therefore, it is up to professionals, PEE students and their families, the interested community, and regulatory bodies to remain mobilized to guarantee the rights of teaching professionals, which are denied to educational pedagogical support teachers, as well as to guarantee qualified care for the specific educational needs of students in the process of inclusion in regular schools. Future studies also need to analyze how these new professionals will act in the context of practice, that is, in the daily routine of schools and in light of the working conditions defined by the political text.

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How to cite this article: AGRELOS, Camila da Silva Teixeira; NOZU, Washington Cesar Shoit. Educational pedagogical support teacher: plot and interpretations in a microcontext of Mato Grosso do Sul. **Revista Brasileira de Educação**, v. 30, e300110, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1413-24782025300111>

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that they have no commercial or associative interests that represent a conflict of interest regarding the manuscript.

Funding: Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel — Brazil (CAPES).

Author Contributions: Investigation, Methodology, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing — First Draft, Writing — Review and Editing: Agrelos, C. S. T. Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal Analysis, Supervision, Writing — Review and Editing: Nozu, W. C. S.

Data Availability Statement: The dataset supporting the results of this study is publicly available, as per the links provided in the references, with the exception of the document “Message of Complementary Bill No. 02/23-PGM,” which is available upon request to the author, Camila da Silva Teixeira Agrelos, as it is not published on official websites.

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Received on April 14, 2024

Approved on August 20, 2024

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