

People with hearing impairments – social inclusion, concepts and challenges

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Summary

This article addresses the historical trajectory, concepts, and challenges faced by people with disabilities, with an emphasis on hearing impairment, traditionally called "deaf-mute," a term now obsolete. The research is qualitative and based on a literature review, including authors such as Fonseca (2017), Ramos (2010; 2023), Corrent (2016), among others. It is understood that, throughout history, people with disabilities have faced social exclusion, persecution, and stigmatization. The analysis highlights the historical transformations in ancient, medieval, and contemporary civilizations, the shift from the medical to the biopsychosocial model, and legal advances in Brazil and worldwide. It concludes that full social inclusion remains a challenge, requiring cultural and political changes that guarantee respect and the human rights of people with disabilities.

Keywords: Social inclusion. Hearing impairment. Ableism. Human rights. Inclusive education.

Abstract

This article addresses the historical trajectory, concepts, and challenges faced by people with disabilities, with an emphasis on hearing impairment, traditionally called "deaf-mute," a term now obsolete. The research is qualitative and based on a literature review, including authors such as Fonseca (2017), Ramos (2010; 2023), Corrent (2016), among others. It is understood that, throughout history, people with disabilities have faced social exclusion, persecution, and stigmatization. The analysis highlights the historical transformations in ancient, medieval, and contemporary civilizations, the shift from the medical model to the biopsychosocial model, and legal advances in Brazil and worldwide.

It concludes that full social inclusion remains a challenge, requiring cultural and political changes that guarantee respect and the human rights of people with disabilities.

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1. Introduction

The presence of people with disabilities is recorded at different times and civilizations in the history of humanity. However, the social treatment given to this group varied between acceptance, abandonment, and extermination. Prejudice, religious beliefs and oppressive legislation has shaped the exclusion and invisibility of people with disabilities centuries. Terms like "cripple," "mongoloid," and "sick" still echo in a society that often sees disability as punishment or weakness.

This study aims to understand the historical path of people with disabilities and discuss the concepts, prejudices and current public policies aimed at social inclusion, with emphasis on people with hearing impairments, now recognized as deaf, respecting their linguistic and cultural identity. The methodology is qualitative, with review bibliographical list of authors, legal documents and historical works.

2. Disability: Characterization and Concepts

Social inclusion is a process that guarantees autonomy and dignity to people with disability. However, the path to its implementation is still full of obstacles.

Brazilian legislation advanced with the Brazilian Inclusion Law (Law No. 13,146/2015), but is insufficient given the lack of social awareness.

Ableism, a term used by Schwarz and Haber (2021), refers to prejudice against people with disabilities. It manifests itself through speech and attitudes that reinforce inferiority and dependence, limiting the recognition of their potential.

The term “disabled person” is inappropriate because it suggests that disability is something transportable or external to the individual. “Person with a disability”, according to the Convention of the UN (2006), is the most appropriate term, as it prioritizes the person in their dignity and not the disability.

Junqueira (2021) states that the conception of disability evolved from a biomedical model for a biopsychosocial perspective, understanding that the limitation is not only in the body, but in the social and structural barriers that prevent full participation in society.

3. Historical Overview of Disability

Throughout history, disability has been viewed either pejoratively or sacredly, depending of culture. Rome and Sparta eliminated newborns with disabilities, while Egypt allowed people to fully coexist in society, especially blind and disabled people. dwarfism.

According to Corrent (2016), the Romans abandoned children with disabilities in places dangerous or exploited them as public attractions. Sampaio and Ramos (2010) reinforce that the exclusion was justified by religious beliefs and lack of medical knowledge. In contrast, the Egyptians respected the deaf and the blind. Gugel (2015) reports that

people with disabilities had access to art, medicine, and social life. The deaf were respected as mediators between gods and pharaohs. This appreciation, according to Gugel (2015), may be related to the high number of cases of blindness and deafness in the country, which led to the development of medical knowledge. However, Egypt is one of the few ancient records of inclusion, although restricted to the nobility or the priestly class. In Greece and Rome, eugenics was legal. Philosophers like Aristotle and Plato advocated the extermination of people with disabilities as a way of preserving society. The Roman Law of the Twelve Tables legitimized the killing of deformed children.

4. Hearing impairment and muteness in History, exclusion and silence

The trajectory of people with hearing impairment and/or muteness throughout history is marked by stigmas, silencing and social exclusion. In Antiquity, especially in Greco-Roman civilizations, individuals with hearing impairments were often considered incapable of learning or participating in society. Plato, for example, associated oral language with rationality, and that is why many philosophers of the time saw the deaf as intellectually inferior because they could not speak. Aristotle even stated that “he who does not listen cannot learn”, reinforcing the prejudice that orality was the only valid means of communication and learning. During the Middle Ages, the scenario was no more promising. In a society deeply influenced by religiosity, many deaf people were seen as possessed by evil forces or punished for past sins. The absence of speech was often confused with the absence of reason, and “muteness” was treated as a sign of spiritual or moral inferiority. At that time, complete isolation was common of these people, without any systematic form of communication or access to education. Only during the Renaissance did specific initiatives focused on teaching deaf. Educators like Pedro Ponce de León, in the 16th century, began teaching deaf children of the nobility through visual and gestural methods, opening paths for the recognition of the intellectual capacity of these people. However, access to education remained extremely restricted, aimed only at elites and without policies public.

From the 18th century onwards, with the Enlightenment and the valorization of human reason, there was greater scientific interest in sign languages and the development of education for the deaf. In 1755, the first public school for the deaf was founded in France by

Charles-Michel de l'Épée, who recognized the importance of sign languages. This was a milestone in the recognition of deaf people as subjects capable of communicating and learn, although oralism (a method that prioritizes speech and lip-reading to the detriment of sign language) gained strength in the 19th century, especially after the Congress of Milan (1880), which banned the use of sign language in schools for the deaf for almost a year. century in various parts of the world.

It was only in the last decades of the 20th century that there was a significant reversal of these policies, with the recognition of sign languages as legitimate and natural languages of deaf communities. In Brazil, Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) was officially recognized by Law No. 10,436 of 2002 and regulated by Decree No. 5,626 of 2005.

Still, many deaf people, especially those who grew up in without access to bilingual education or inclusion policies, they reached adulthood without never having learned Libras, remaining in linguistic and social isolation.

The history of people with hearing impairment and muteness, therefore, is not just a history of oppression, but also of resistance and overcoming. Deaf communities, over time, they built their own identities, developed visual cultures and fought for the recognition of their linguistic and educational rights. The current challenge is to ensure that this trajectory of overcoming is converted into effective public policies, which respect the linguistic and cultural specificities of the deaf person, ensuring their full social inclusion.

5. Legal Advances and Social Inclusion

The Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006), Law No. 13.146/2015 and other regulations consolidate the obligation of social inclusion, educational and professional. However, challenges remain: lack of accessibility, prejudice, and lack of professionals trained in Libras, especially in schools public.

True inclusion depends on building a culture of respect for diversity. As states the Ministry of Health (2010), it is necessary to recognize disability as a social construction and not just a clinical or medical problem.

6. Final Considerations

The trajectory of people with disabilities, especially deaf people, reveals a long history of exclusion, social invisibility and systematic discrimination. Despite the legal advances achieved in recent decades, such as the officialization of the Language Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) and the enactment of the Brazilian Inclusion Law (LBI), still there is a historical debt to a large part of the deaf population, especially those who have already reached adulthood without having had access to Libras or schools with resources multifunctional. These people in some cases grew up linguistically isolated, without the basic right to communication and effective schooling, which compromised profoundly their autonomy, employability and social participation. The absence of intersectoral public policies aimed at the education of deaf youth and adults, as well as the lack of continuing education programs in Libras for family members and professionals, further aggravates this scenario of exclusion. Therefore, it is essential that inclusive actions are not limited to childhood and formal schooling, but extend to deaf adults who, throughout their lives, have been deprived of their linguistic rights and educational. Only then will it be possible to build a truly inclusive, that recognizes and repairs historical inequalities, breaking with the structural ableism still present in various social spheres. Promoting inclusion is collective responsibility and demands effective actions in public policies, education, health and culture. Valuing people with disabilities begins with changing mentality, language and social stance towards difference.

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