



Special education from an inclusive perspective: advances, problems and challenges for managers and teachers in basic education schools in Angola

Special education from an inclusive perspective: advances, problems and challenges for managers and teachers of basic education schools in Angola

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SUMMARY

Angola is a country located in the South-Central region of Africa, which after independence in 1975, experienced 27 long years of civil war that ended in 2002, a dark page in the country's history that left thousands of people mutilated, including children who were victims of anti-personnel mines. This group includes children and adolescents with various disabilities, ranging from motor to intellectual. Using a qualitative approach and a systematic bibliographic research method, this article analyzes the situation of Special Education from an Inclusive Perspective in Angola, as well as the status of the institutionalization of national laws and international treaties on the rights of people with disabilities in the country. The results of this research indicate that, although the country has made progress from a legislative/regulatory point of view, the institutionalization of the rights to education of people with disabilities falls short of expectations. Structural, institutional and social barriers continue to be imposed on this group of national citizens, hindering the possibility of academic-professional and, therefore, social advancement of thousands of children in the country.

Keywords: Angola. People with disabilities. Inclusive special education.

ABSTRACT

Angola is a country located in the South-Central region of Africa, which after independence in 1975, experienced 27 long years of civil war that ended in 2002, a dark page in the country's history that left thousands of people mutilated, including children who were victims of landmines. Among this group are children and adolescents with various disabilities, ranging from motor to intellectual. Using a qualitative approach, a systematic bibliographic research method, this article analyzes the situation of Special Education from an Inclusive Perspective in Angola, as well as the status of the institutionalization of national laws and international

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treaties on the rights of people with disabilities in the country. The results of this research indicate that, although the country has made progress from a legislative/regulatory point of view, the institutionalization of the rights to education for people with disabilities falls short of expectations. Structural, institutional and social barriers continue to be imposed on this group of national citizens, hindering the possibility of academic-professional and, therefore, social advancement for thousands of children in the country.

Keywords: Angola. People with disabilities. Including special education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Contextualization

Located in the South-Central region of the African continent, on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, Angola is a country with an area of 1,246,700.00 square kilometers and a population approximately 38 million inhabitants. From post-independence to 2002, the country plunged into a bloody civil war that, in addition to the deaths, left thousands of young people and children mutilated victims of anti-personnel mines. Added to this group are the thousands of children and adolescents people with various disabilities in the country, from motor to intellectual. Thus, when dealing with a country with national legislation and signatory to international treaties that determine the institutionalization of the rights of persons with disabilities, this article, through a qualitative approach and systematic bibliographic research method, analyzes the status/level implementation of these rights, especially those concerning access to education basic from an inclusive, diverse and unprejudiced perspective.

The Convention on the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPCD) in Legislation Angolan

The Convention on the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPCD) was adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in December 2006, and entered into force on May 2008. It immediately obtained the signature of more than twenty (20) countries (ANGOLA, 2014, p. 9). Right at the beginning, Article 1 of the Convention (CRPCD) establishes that: "Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory, which in interaction with various barriers can prevent their full and

effective participation in society on equal terms with others” (ANGOLA, 2014, p. 12).

The CRPCD was the result of a consensus of the International Community, which concluded that people with disabilities face great difficulty in effectively integrating into the society, due to the behavioral and physical-structural barriers imposed on them, which prevent them from seeking means of personal and social fulfillment on equal terms with other people. “The year 1981 was named the International Year of Disabled Persons” (ANGOLA, 2014, p. 10).

Angola signed and ratified the Convention and the Additional Protocol on 5 March 2013. The National Assembly (parliament) of Angola ratified the Convention and its Protocol additional through Resolution 1/13 of January 11, and in May 2014 they were deposited. Thus, the country has been a State party to the Convention since May 19, 2014, making it a party integral part of national legislation. “The Constitution of the Republic of Angola refers to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in articles 21, d), 24, 25, 77,1 and all numbers of the 83rd” (ANGOLA, p. 10).

Statistics on People with Disabilities in Angola (2014):

The 2014 data from the Ministry of Assistance and Social Reintegration of Angola, the most current that he was able to find, indicate a global population of people with disabilities of around 150,000 in the country. But if you take into account all categories, the number far exceeds the abovementioned value. For example, if we are dealing with a country that has lived for about twenty-seven (27) long years of civil war, only people who were victims of anti-personnel landmines, in isolation, represent about 80,000 (eighty thousand) individuals in this group. Children, young people and adults with special educational needs represent around 37,000 (thirty-seven thousand) people of the category, while, civil citizens with disabilities of various categories represent about 89,438 (eighty-nine thousand four hundred and thirty-eight) people. How much to types, 61.9% of people have motor disabilities, 28.3% sensory and 9.8% mental. Regarding sex, 56% are men and 44% are women (ANGOLA, 2014, p. 12).

2. INCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM ANGOLAN

In the previous section, it was seen that in December 2006, after a historic debate, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). And that, about seven years later, on March 5, 2013, Angola has finally signed and ratified the Convention and its additional Protocol.

However, at the domestic level, the adoption of the special education modality by Angola predates the UN Convention (CRPD) itself, dating back to the post-independence period, in 1979 (ANTÓNIO, 2014). According to Angolan legislation, special education is “a teaching method that is transversal to all subsystems and is intended for people with disabilities and students with high abilities, gifted and autistic students, aiming at their socio-educational integration” (ANTÓNIO, 2024, p. 2).

As an Angolan citizen, whose country has had for about four and a half decades (45 years) internal legislation that provides for the adoption of measures aimed at the inclusion of people with deficiency in the education system, in addition to a decade (ten years) as a signatory State of the UN CRPD, and as someone who had all his basic training done in Angola, I decided to delve into my memories as an educator and start by making, from there, a critical analysis of the condition of special and inclusive education in Angola.

The Inclusion of People with Physical Disabilities in Schools in Angola

From the memories I have, I remember that the school where I did the fifth and ninth grade elementary school was a huge complex, with several buildings, some up to two stories high, an amphitheater and even a medical clinic attached. But what I also remember is that the school there was no single infrastructure for access and support for people with disabilities, especially wheelchair users. With several bathrooms among the men's and women's, the institution was lacking in not having a single private bathroom for people in wheelchairs.

I also remember that the two-story school buildings did not have a single elevator, not even the rooms on the first floor had access ramps for wheelchair users, one since some were in a slightly higher position, whose only support structure were the small staircases used by the general public.

The school cafeteria, where students bought snacks during breaks, was in ground floor, but there was no flat access, as it was necessary to climb up about 50 cm or more.

The question is, what did wheelchair users do in these situations? Well, it's not that there weren't any, but I personally don't remember seeing anyone in a wheelchair during my five years years in that school. If there was any, most likely there was little chance of going and come, given the barriers imposed by the institution's exclusionary infrastructure. According to the Ministry of Assistance and Social Reintegration of Angola, "A barrier is what prevents a person to communicate, perform a task, access a space, information or training, or achieve something" (ANGOLA, 2014, p. 16).

I remember very well that the school's principal's office was in a building that looked like more or less with an altar, with high supporting pillars whose stairs were the only means of access. Regarding the boards, Lesina, Blanco, Silva (2022, p. 18) say that "The team manager plays a fundamental role when discussing the acceptance of differences in scope of school education. It constitutes a central element in the change of a school that excludes for a school that includes".

The figure of the school manager, as stated in Angola (2017), has a central role in implementing the special education modality in a transversal manner, as it is at school that the concept of inclusive education comes to life, that is, the school is the main arena for staging the special and inclusive education policy, with the figure of the director as one of the main actors. (ANTÓNIO, 2024, p. 9).

I also remember that the school had a bus to transport students, which generally, they did not have access ramps for people with disabilities, particularly those wheelchair users. In fact, this is just a case study, because generally, public or private, Angolan schools are exclusionary. This is contrary to Angolan Law No. 21/12, of June 30, Persons with Disabilities Act, Article 22 (Right to Education and Teaching) which states, "It is the responsibility of the State to adopt specific measures necessary to ensure access by the person with disability the circulation and use of public transport networks, special transport and other appropriate means of transport." (ANGOLA, 2014, p. 17).

As far as I remember, despite having all the infrastructure on a single floor, the school where I went to high school also lacked support structures for wheelchair users. No I remember there being a single bathroom for people with special needs like wheelchair users, in fact, I don't remember seeing a single student in this one either wheelchair users. It could not be the other way around, since if children with disabilities are not present in elementary school, there is no way to have teenagers and adults in wheelchairs in high schools. That is why, according to Lesina, Blanco, Silva (2022, p. 17), "it is

necessary to implement inclusive educational practices starting from Early Childhood Education, the first stage of basic education to which the child has access”.

Angola's own Ministry of Assistance and Social Reintegration interprets the concept accessibility woven into the Convention as the ease that some places have of any person can reach or access easily. It is also the ease that some things have (equipment, utensils, tools, etc.) that can be used and seized with ease, regardless of the person's physical and/or mental condition. By signing and adopting the Convention, the Angolan State undertook to take appropriate measures to “to ensure that people with disabilities have access, on an equal basis with others, to physical environment, transportation, information and communications, and open facilities and services or provided to the public, both in urban and rural areas” (ANGOLA, 2014, p. 16). What means:

[...] the elimination of obstacles and barriers in buildings, roads, transport, schools, housing, medical facilities and workplaces so that people with disabilities can access them without problems. It also applies to communications, including, for example, sign language interpretation for deaf people, the publication of documents with useful information in Braille, among others. (ANGOLA, 2014, p. 16).

The question that arises is: what happens to Angolan legislation on women's rights? people with disabilities (law no. 10/16 of 07/27/2016) given the government's disregard and of institutions in relation to the subject? As previously highlighted, more than one issue of educational institutions, the exclusion of people with disabilities is a problem global in Angola, with different dimensions/causes. In the country, not even public buildings directly linked to the national executive power comply with current inclusion standards, since many of the buildings do not have an elevator, others have an elevator permanently closed, or elevators used exclusively by some members of the positions of management/leadership. Although they refer to Brazil, the observations of Lesina, Blanco, Silva (2022) also applies to the Angolan reality, insofar as, according to the authors:

At the present time, current legislation is consistent with the assumptions of the social model of disability, but people with disabilities continue to experience inequality and discrimination, taking into account the existence of the most diverse barriers that we still find in society. (LESINA, BLANCO, SILVA, 2022, p. 13).

The lack of “adaptable and accessible” infrastructure for people with disabilities is understood. deficiencies in Angolan schools as a cyclical problem, a problem based on exclusionary political-institutional structure in the country, since it is from the school space that



the child (and the adolescent) spends a large part of their social life and interaction in the environment of their human and academic-professional formation which, as in any “modern society”, creates conditions and possibilities for social advancement. Denying children access to education people with disabilities is to deny them such possibilities. That is why Valle, Connor (2014, p. 84) cited by Lesina, Blanco, Silva (2022, p. 13) say that, “among the multiple actions for the reducing discrimination against people with disabilities, we have School Inclusion, which is “a issue of social justice and educational equity.”

The Inclusion of People with Intellectual Disabilities in Schools in Angola

The Angolan State is a signatory to the International Convention, therefore, it has obligations to guarantee the rights of people with disabilities. “On the other hand, this protection is also guaranteed at the domestic level through Article 83 of the Constitution of the Republic of Angola, 2010 (Citizens with Disabilities)” (ANGOLA, 2024, p. 13). According to the Constitution of Republic of Angola:

- “1. Citizens with disabilities fully enjoy the rights and are subject to the duties enshrined in the Constitution, without prejudice to restrictions on the exercise or fulfillment of those for which they are incapacitated or limited.
2. The State adopts a national policy for the prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and integration of citizens with disabilities, supporting their families and removing obstacles to their mobility.
3. The State adopts policies aimed at raising awareness in society regarding the duties of inclusion, respect and solidarity towards citizens with disabilities.
4. The State promotes and supports special education and technical and professional training for citizens with disabilities” (ANGOLA, 2014, p. 13).

The International Convention (CRPCD), of which Angola is a signatory, defines Education Inclusive as an educational system that welcomes and involves people with disabilities, guided by in diversity and fostered in mutual respect. It means the inclusion of people with disabilities in the general education system (basic education) on equal terms with other students. More than the inclusion of people with disabilities in the regular education system, Education Inclusive also includes facilitating the effective training of people with disabilities. (ANGOLA, 2014, p. 16). Today, governed by a national policy, special education and inclusive has seen important advances:

[...] in terms of the legal system that adopts the main guidelines of the World Declaration on Education for All (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1990), the Salamanca Declaration (UNESCO, 1994) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations [UN], 2006) (ANTÓNIO, 2024, p. 2).

The problem is that, contrary to what the International Convention recommends (insertion of people with disabilities into the regular education system), Education of people with disabilities in Angola is more for Special Education, than for Special Education in the Inclusive perspective as the letter recommends. “It is the special school that will be the provincial NAI and this will form the remaining NAIs throughout the province (GPEE)” (ANTÓNIO, 2024, p. 13). In other words, inclusion is interpreted as access for people with disabilities (especially mental) to special education, separate and particularly aimed at this group.

For example, in the specific case of Assistive Technologies³, more than something restricted to specialized rooms, assistive technologies must be inserted into the context of the rooms conventional classes with a view to ensuring real inclusion. As Fraz (2018) says, “Therefore, no longer restricted to multifunctional resource rooms and/or educational services specialized as before, but entering the school routine as resources used to enable the execution of activities in the classroom” (FRAZ, 2018, p. 526). About inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in Basic Education in Angola, “currently, there is no can speak of the materialization or concretization of this policy, due to the fact that the minimum conditions are not created at the level of General Education schools” (ANTÓNIO, 2024, p. 9).

Regarding Specialized Educational Assistance (AEE), Braun and Marin (2016) point out that “a perspective considered promising for practices that better structure AEE actions is the proposal of collaborative teaching, which has been endorsed in research national stamp”. (BRAUN, MARIN, 2016, p. 200). According to the experts cited by the authors, the collaborative teaching system consists of a partnership between teachers of Regular Education and Special Education teachers, “in which a regular educator and a special educator share the responsibility for planning, instructing and evaluating procedures teaching to a heterogeneous group of students”. (BRAUN, MARIN, 2016, p. 200).

The proposal for collaborative teaching, fundamentally, aims at collaboration between teachers in the development of activities in the school routine, more specifically in the classroom. In other words, everyone involved in the educational process shares the decisions made and is responsible for the quality of the actions carried out. In this way, there is no overlap or hierarchy between the actions of each teacher, but rather relationships that aim to “achieve common goals”

According to Lemos and Cahini (2019, p. 32523), “Assistive technologies are all devices and resources used to make the lives of people who require special care due to their specific needs simpler”.

negotiated by the collective” based on “shared leadership, mutual trust and co-responsibility for conducting actions” (BRAUN, MARIN, 2016, p. 201).

Furthermore, studies indicate that in Angola, the school inclusion of people with disability “has been, in the researcher’s understanding, an issue below what is expected when if we consider the more than 45 years of independence and just over 20 years of peace, marked by the end of the Civil War” (ANTÓNIO, 2024, p. 2).

In this opening of regular schools to diversity, collaborative work between General Education and Special Education is a requirement as a response mechanism to the need to guarantee “the learning and development of the target audience of special education in the schooling process” (Nozu; Bruno, 2016, p. 12 apud ANTÓNIO, 2024, p. 7).

For example, the program *Revista Zimbo* on *TV Zimbo*, aired a story on 6th April 2025, which reported that in the country, several children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (TEA) do not even have access to treatment, due to their parents' lack of financial resources, with a single therapy, for example, costing over R\$1,886. Likewise, many children with autism do not have access to education due to the barriers imposed on them by stigmas and discrimination (institutional, structural and social). During World Autism Day (2 April), whose celebration took place with the presence of the highest leader of the nation and the Prime Minister. Lady, mothers of children with ASD appealed to the sensitivity of the President of the Republic, João Lorenço, to support the families of children who find themselves in this condition. According to a of the panel commentators, Lindo Bernardo Tito, “*estimates indicate that Angola has around 300 thousand autistic people and that the inclusion of this population requires public investment (concrete) in the area*”.

Obviously, the direct appeal of mothers of autistic children to the President of the Republic makes perfect sense, since nothing is done in the country that does not have to be according to the will of this country. to be “omnipotent” and “omnipresent”. However, the model of exacerbated concentration of powers and the strong political-administrative centralization of Angola has negatively impacted the school inclusion of people with disabilities in the country:

[...] the Municipal Education Offices, which are the local representations of the Auxiliary Ministerial Department of the Head of the Executive Branch for the education sector, have the document on this policy in their collections, however, the primary schools of General Education under their jurisdiction, which should be open to diversity with the inclusion conditions previously created, do not have this document that guides the entire process of school inclusion at the country level (ANTÓNIO, 2024, p. 9).

School inclusion is a political issue. Therefore, political decentralization with the institutionalization of Local Authorities (Local Power), the municipalization of Basic Education

of the First Cycle of Primary Education and the First Cycle of Secondary Education (Education Fundamental I and II) coordinated nationally, is essential for the mitigation of orders ineffective superiors arising from an excessively vertical political-institutional structure (and unilateral) which, among other things, is slow to implement the right of access to education children and adolescents with disabilities as provided for in national Laws, Decree-Laws and International Conventions to which Angola is a signatory.

3. THE TEACHING ROLE, POSSIBLE STRATEGIES AND INTERVENTIONS

About the conduct of teachers and possible interventions in cases involving Specific Learning Disorder (ASD) and other intellectual disabilities with similar characteristics, Lins, Avila, Stange, Sartori, Dias (2020), as well as Nascimento, Rosal, Queiroga (2018) and Gomes, Poulin, Figueiredo (2010) leave some tips that special education teachers in Angola can take ownership of, such as:

At school level, the teacher can contribute to the containment and/or reduction of impacts of dyslexia stimulating the cognitive skills of children and adolescents which are essential for reading, as well as for the individual's own socialization. (Lins, Avila, Stange, Sartori and Dias, 2020, p. 10). For this to be effective, "it is essential to the educator's knowledge on the topic of dyslexia, so that he can help the child in the process learning" (NASCIMENTO, ROSAL and QUEIROGA, 2018, p. 92). Furthermore, the teacher training must be continued:

Continuing education allows educators to update themselves, acquire new knowledge, and deepen their knowledge about literacy, interdisciplinarity, and inclusion as fundamental principles of the educational process. Education should focus on lesson plans, teaching sequences, and mapping each student's skills and competencies to develop strategies that enable learning. This will allow teachers to reflect on the challenges that arise in the literacy process. (NASCIMENTO, ROSAL and QUEIROGA, 2018, p. 92).

Lins, Avila, Stange, Sartori and Dias (2020, p. 10) say that some points of "intervention in dyslexia are the stimulation of phonological awareness, teaching in some cases, work on other skills (such as memory, vocabulary expansion, teaching organization and planning) can also be important". This training makes the



children develop and improve their reading and writing skills, although in some more specific cases, some children and adolescents may need emotional support. (LINS, AVILA, STANGE, SARTORI and DIAS, 2020, p. 10).

Teachers should avoid exposing the student, such as making him read aloud, and if necessary really necessary, make sure beforehand that the student is prepared after a while practicing reading. Repeating explanations whenever necessary, giving instructions brief and objective, avoid comparing the work of the child/adolescent with dyslexia with that of other colleagues, allocating more time, always giving feedback, promoting self-confidence in the student, etc. "Throughout the sessions, training these skills makes that they develop and improve! Some children and adolescents with dyslexia may also need emotional support." (LINS, AVILA, STANGE, SARTORI and DIAS, 2020, p. 10).

According to Gomes, Poulin, Figueiredo (2010), the AEE teacher has as one of the main tasks to propose activities that contribute to the teaching and learning of concepts, "in addition to proposing experiential situations that enable this student to organize his/her thought. This service must be based on problem situations, which require the student uses his reasoning to solve a given problem". (GOMES, POULIN, FIGUEIREDO, 2010, p. 8). Furthermore, according to the authors:

To develop AEE, it is essential that the teacher knows his/her student and his/her particularities beyond his/her cognitive condition. The job of the AEE teacher is to help the student with intellectual disabilities to act in the school environment and outside of it, considering his/her cognitive specificities. Specificities that mainly concern the relationship he/she establishes with the knowledge that promotes his/her intellectual autonomy. GOMES, POULIN, FIGUEIREDO, 2010, p. 8).

The AEE teacher must create situations that favor the student's development with intellectual disabilities, with a view to the cognitive development of their learning, the that requires innovation. To this end, the teacher is responsible for producing teaching materials-pedagogical, as well as teaching strategies that adapt to the specific needs of students in question in the classroom/regular education. "This work must be carried out focusing on the student attitudes towards learning and provide the development of tools intellectuals that will facilitate their academic and social interaction." (GOMES, POULIN, FIGUEIREDO, 2010, p. 9).

It is by exercising their cognitive activity that the student with intellectual disabilities builds knowledge, which, however, occurs precisely with the stimuli caused by

intervention of the teacher, which is elaborate and intentional. “the work of the AEE teacher consists of managing learning processes, evaluating this process and its monitoring”. (GOMES, POULIN, FIGUEIREDO, 2010, p. 9).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Depriving people with disabilities of the right to support infrastructure is denying the access and the right to education for this part of the population is to deny the training of future professionals, the right to growth, personal fulfillment, the right to come and go. It is time for society demand that the Angolan government fulfill its humanitarian obligations, the implementation of the fundamental rights and guarantees of citizens, which include people with disability. When we do this, then we will be one step further in realization of a truly democratic and law-based state. According to Lesina, Blanco, Silva (2022, p. 11) citing Brasil (2008, p. 28) “Much more current and dynamic is the understanding disability as part of the area of social development and rights humans, giving it a more personalized and social dimension”.

The resolution of this problem, that is – the inclusion of people with disabilities in schools of basic education in Angola involves the continued training of teachers, creation of working conditions, enhanced by a unified struggle of the movements social with an emphasis on general and inclusive education, the politicization of the cause with the reinforcement of legislation, and therefore, the coercibility and imperativeness of the current standards under penalty of judicial sanctions on institutions and entities that fail to implement them, including the National Executive Power. As Lesina, Blanco, Silva (2022, p. 11) say, “Conceiving the disability as an important aspect of human rights allows public policies can be proposed and implemented with the aim of expanding the inclusion of people with deficiency”.

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