

# Social Inclusion through Education: The IFRS in Professional Training to People with Disabilities

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**Abstract** The main objective of this work is to verify the commitment of the *Instituto Federal do Rio Grande do Sul* (Federal Institute of Rio Grande do Sul) to training people with disabilities for their inclusion in the labor market and citizenship. The approach used to obtain the required data for research and analysis was of a qualitative, exploratory nature, characterizing it as a case study covering the period from 2012 to 2018. One of the main results is the deployment of access and permanence policies for persons with disabilities, geared to professional, inclusive and citizen training. However, the main barriers are still the physical accessibility of the surroundings as well as the obstacles to expanding the participation of people with disabilities in the selective admission processes.

**Keywords** Professional training, Inclusion of people with disabilities, Access and permanence policies for PwD

## 1. Introduction

Through Federal Law No. 11.892 of 29 December 2008 [1], 38 Federal Institutes for Education, Science and Technology were created, spread across all Brazilian states. The basic principles of this law include increasing Social Justice; improving the job and income creation potential of small productive structures, in addition to promoting technological development, as an effective response to the Local Productive Arrangements (*Arranjos Produtivos Locais*, APLs) and to the territories; stimulating and supporting educational processes that lead to job and income generation; and emancipating citizens in the context of local and regional socioeconomic development.

The Demographic Census of 2010 developed by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística*) [2] states that more than 45 million Brazilians (approximately 23% of the population) declare to have some kind of disability, subdivided into motor, visual, hearing or intellectual disabilities.

Official data of the 2010 IBGE Census are crucial to qualify the institutional policies to meet this share of people with disabilities (PwD). The census reveals that of the 45 million PwD (between 0 and 50 years of age or more), only

16% attended schools or kindergartens. With respect to occupation, the census shows that 53% of people with at least one of the disabilities under study find themselves in a situation of "unemployment" [2].

As Estabel and Moro [3] state, "this is a contingent of the population that has a right to study and work, to move into all possible spaces for their personal and professional achievement and with a right to access and use of information to meet their needs to learn and act in the labor market in a way that respects diversity and includes everyone."

Integrating people with disabilities in the school environment and the labor market is one of the current challenges. One initiative involves Law No. 8213/91, which assigns part of the responsibility to include people with disabilities in society to the companies [4]. Given the poor inclusion of this population in the labor market, companies with more than 100 employees were forced to set aside a certain percentage of their work force for these people. Carvalho [5] considers that the present law and its ramifications constitute "the primary social inclusion mechanism for people with disabilities in the labor market."

Another legislative advance was the passing of Law 13.146 of 06/07/2015 (the Person with Disabilities Statute or *Estatuto da Pessoa com Deficiência*) "intended to ensure and promote, in conditions of equality, the exercise of the rights and freedoms by persons with disabilities, seeking their social inclusion and citizenship" [6]. Through this legislation, the responsibilities of the state, society and family are made clear to ensure the rights of people with disabilities regarding, among others, education, professional development, work, information and communication. It is important to highlight

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chapter 5 of the Person with Disabilities Statute: The Right to Education. This chapter guarantees an inclusive education system at all levels and throughout life for people with disabilities in order to achieve the maximum possible development of their talents and physical, sensory, intellectual and social abilities, according to their characteristics, interests and learning needs.

The principles governing the Federal Institutes are in alignment with the Person with Disability Statute, which in its article 28 ensures access, permanence, participation and learning as well as access to higher education and professional and technological education in equal opportunities and conditions as other people [6].

The overall objective of this qualitative study is to verify the contribution from the *Instituto Federal do Rio Grande do Sul* (Federal Institute of Rio Grande do Sul, IFRS) in the citizen and professional training of PwD, aiming the full exercise of citizenship and inclusion in the labor world under equal conditions.

The specific objectives are: a) identify the skills in the professional education of PwD for their coexistence in the labor market; b) analyze the addressed limitations and barriers for the training of PwD; c) evaluate the possibilities for inclusion and citizenship in the professional training process.

## 2. Persons with Disabilities in Brazil: Entry, Acceptance and Permanence of PwD in an Educational Institution

**Table 1.** Legal Standards

Federal Constitution of 1988	Montreal International Declaration on Inclusion (2001)	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) 2006
Law 7.853-1989	Decree 3.956/2001	Decree 6.094/2007
Declaration of Jomtien 1990	CNE/CEB Resolution 02/2001	Legislative Decree 186/2008
National Policy on Special Education (1994)	National Education Plan (PNE), Law no. 10.172/2001	Decree 6.949/2009
Law 8.859/94	Law 10.436/2002	CNE/CEB Resolution 04/2009
Declaration of Salamanca (1994)	CNE/CP Resolution 01/2002	Decree 7.611/2011
MEC Ordinance 1.793/94	MEC Ordinance 2.678/2002	New National Education Plan (PNE) 2011-2020
Law 9.394 / 1996 (LDB) Law on Education Guidelines and Foundations	Law 10.845/2004	Brazilian Law of Inclusion - law n. 13.146 of July 6, 2015
Decree 3.298/1999	Decree 5.626/2005	Law 13.409/2016

The right to education and work of PwD is enshrined in the Federal Constitution of 1988 [7], which prohibits any

type of discrimination, transferring the protection and guarantee of PwD's rights to the state with regard to health care, public assistance, social integration, the setting aside of jobs in public employment, and specialized educational services at all levels. Based on this constitutional rule, the standards (Table 1) enabling the guarantee and defense of PwD's rights could be developed, with active participation of various governmental bodies.

Through Law 7853/89 [8], regulated by Decree No. 3298/99 [9], which provides for the support to disabled people and their integration, the legislative body assures the full exercise of the individual and social rights to PwD and imposes on the Public Power and its bodies the obligation to assure the basic rights of these citizens to education, health care and work, among others, as foreseen in article 2.

In this context, a public education institution, in this case the IFRS, must implement solid and permanent social policies for the inclusion, accessibility and permanence of persons with disabilities. The inclusion of people with disabilities in academic circles requires a pedagogical, curricular, cultural and attitudinal change of the institution and of the community housing it in order to eliminate prejudices and effectively include students with limitations or learning difficulties. According to Stainback and Stainbac [10], an inclusive school [...] is one that educates all students in regular classrooms. Educating all students in regular classrooms means that every student receives education and attends regular classes. It also means that all students receive appropriate educational opportunities that are both challenging and tailored to their abilities and needs; that they receive all the support and help they and their teachers may need to achieve success in the core activities. [...] It is a place where everyone takes part, where everyone is accepted, where everyone helps and is helped by their peers and by other members of the school community so that their educational needs are met.

Sassaki [11] suggests that, historically, the development of projects that map vacancies and promote the placement of PwD in companies has been the responsibility of philanthropic and religious entities, in addition to some governmental agencies. Hansel [12] emphasizes the importance of educational institutions to develop professional training courses for PwD in line with the needs of the labor market. According to Batista et al. [13], the work of educational institutions is finished with the real inclusion of PwD in society, transforming them into productive members.

## 3. Methodology

This study is qualitative and exploratory in nature and the method is a case study. According to Samara and Barros [14], an exploratory study allows for a broader understanding of the phenomenon under study. For Cervo, Brevian and Silva [15], an exploratory research "seeks to familiarize itself with the phenomenon or to obtain a new perception of it and to

discover new ideas".

According to Yin [16], a case study should be chosen when one has to understand the "how" or the "why" of a phenomenon of contemporary nature that is complex and inserted within a real life context. As for the approach, the study can be classified as qualitative since, according to Vieira and Zouain [17], this methodology "assigns fundamental importance to the detailed description of the phenomena and the elements surrounding it, to the statements of the social actors involved, to the discourses, meanings and contexts."

As such, four PcD students enrolled in technical courses of the IFRS were selected, named A, B, C and D. The study instrument was the interview and a triangulation was performed of the information obtained with the subjects with the analysis of IFRS documents, as well as with existing legislation.

#### **4. The IFRS Policy for the Access, Education and Professional Training of Persons with Disabilities: the Student's Perception**

In order to promote and strengthen its inclusion policy, the IFRS implemented an affirmative action consulting office linked to the Dean's Office, which was responsible for planning and coordinating the actions related to the inclusion policy [21]. With the implementation of the affirmative action consulting office, the Institution began to standardize its actions through a series of administrative regulations approved by the Superior Council and by decree of the Dean.

The main regulations related to the inclusion actions for PwD are:

- a. A resolution approving the IFRS' affirmative action policy [22];
- b. A resolution regulating the service centers for people with specific educational needs - NAPNES [23];
- c. A resolution approving the setting aside of vacancies in the selection processes of the *Lato* and *Stricto Sensu* Graduate's Programs [24];
- d. A resolution governing the Affirmative Action Centers - NAAfs [26]
- e. An ordinance creating the Center for Accessibility Technology - CTA [25].

In order to analyze the effectiveness of the policy geared to PwD, interviews were conducted with students with disabilities enrolled in the Porto Alegre campus of the IFRS.

For the respondents, the IFRS presented itself as an opportunity for professional qualification and insertion in the labor market. Of the four students interviewed, two were enrolled in subsequent technical courses - respondents A and D - and two were enrolled in the Technical and Professional Education Program for Young People and Adults (PROEJA) - respondents B and C.

Regarding the access to the courses, two respondents (A and D) reported not having entered the IFRS through the quota policy, despite having used specific resources during the test (respondent A is blind, while respondent D has motor limitations). Subject A has difficulties entering in competitive examinations through the quota because of the compatibility for the position and a certain resistance of the quota policy for the inclusion of PwD in certain public bodies, but he/she declares to fully support the quota program for insertion in the labor market and education. *"(...) is a good moment in time for the blind, the deaf, the wheelchair users, as there is no lack of employment; the only thing lacking is the qualification of the professionals, the ability to stay in that institution. Even blind people have the ability to be efficient or not. I think this quota issue is very good"* (Respondent A).

Respondent D also supports the quota policy, adding that there is still a long way to go in order to raise the awareness of the population and the companies about the potential of the work of PwD. For this respondent, it is important to have a broader view of what social inclusion is. *"(...) My understanding about social inclusion is to make the person participate in a social environment in a way that he feels included in this environment, even when it comes to recreation; this participation is something that today I relinquish somewhat because of my problem"* (Respondent D).

Subjects B and D joined the IFRS through the quota policy. For both, this policy enabled the completion of both high school and the technical course. And this is important, both for them and for their families.

In addition to the technical skills learned during the courses, all the respondents point to the coexistence with teachers and students, which is crucial for the development of behavioral and social skills. Such skills are important for all professionals, but they are crucial for PwD. Marque and Toldrá [18] emphasize the need of fully qualifying PwD, involving behavioral aspects and skills. The real world of work and the expectations it presents must be considered. These authors further point out that education and qualification programs should ideally be developed after a thorough investigation of the skills of PwD in order to improve the conditions for their social inclusion and vocational placement.

As might be expected, the main limitations and barriers are associated with physical accessibility. The conditions of the surroundings of the Porto Alegre Campus of the IFRS is indicated as one of the limiting factors. *"The sidewalks in the city have a lot to improve, they have a lot of holes. If a disabled person is walking somewhere in Austria and he falls into a hole, the owner of that house, that land, will have to compensate that person. (...) We are going to improve our country by making each person aware that he must improve his sidewalk. (...) I believe it will happen in Brazil, but I think it will take a little bit longer. I think those who still have to be made aware of this are the politicians"* (Respondent A).

Difficulties were also reported regarding the development of professional activities. Such difficulties go beyond physical and architectural aspects. They involve the difficulties of companies understanding the role to be played by PwD and the skills and qualifications of these professionals. In some cases, such difficulties are faced by PwD in the school environment.

All respondents evaluated the performance of the IFRS and its policies as very positive in terms of inclusion and the broadening of citizenship. One of the elements mentioned by respondents B and C was the possibility of developing activities, as scholarship holders, with the administrative sectors of the Campus. In the respondents' words, this experience helped them better understand the subjects under study. Respondent A reported that he/she completed an internship at the Porto Alegre Campus Library, which enabled a faster professional insertion after finishing the course. *"Actually, when I was graduating, around the time of the presentation of the end-of-course assignment, I always say that I sought out the teacher ... because I was thinking about dropping out. I did not think any library would accept me like this, it's not an inferiority complex, but I thought it was something very far removed, far away. And I even thought about not delivering the final report and interrupting the course. And then the teacher ... said: 'No, now that you've come this far you have to continue.' So I did the internship, and at the internship, which did not last the time it should, it lasted twice as long, I spent a year practically in the library, adapting myself, because there was a moment many years ago when I worked at a library with my sight, now it was another time of my life working inside the library, but without sight. So there at that moment of the internship, when the internship prepares you for the streets, for life, because everything is in theory, but then you have to go do it in practice. So it was very good because of that. Then I finished, and within my internship, I received a phone call, I sent my resume, I enrolled in the website, at another school."*

It is necessary to consider that the school curricula and environments have to be open to the needs of PwD, since the issue of inclusion is complex, and increasingly frequent in the different IFRS courses. A survey conducted in the first half of 2018 with the Inclusive Actions Consulting Office of the IFRS' Dean's Office revealed that the Institution served 210 students with disabilities, representing approximately 1.5% of all students enrolled at the IFRS.

## 5. Conclusions

It is important to emphasize that the requirement to set aside admission quotas for people with disabilities in public universities and federal institutes, established by Law No. 12.711/12 [19], still provokes a great debate, with people in favor and against it, making it a very controversial subject. But it is important to note that despite the implementation of the quota system for PwD in the IFRS, the total number of reserved vacancies is not totally occupied by this public. In

the IFRS' selection for the first semester of 2018, one can see that of a total of 1,130 places on offer for the subsequent Technical Courses, with 338 set aside for PwD, only 210 students with disabilities actually attended the institution, showing that the vacancies for PwD were not fully filled, with the surplus being redistributed to other candidates.

Maintaining the quota system and the inclusion of people with disabilities is therefore imperative, whether because of citizenship issues or because of legal and institutional requirements. It is important to note that this inclusion, which begins in the family environment, extends beyond the spaces of academic training, reaching the various possibilities of employment.

Through interviews with four PwD students from the Porto Alegre IFRS Campus, the contribution of the IFRS in the professional training and inclusion of these students was studied, as well as the effectiveness of its inclusion policies. Through these interviews, it was possible to identify the barriers and difficulties encountered, focusing on the analysis of the possibilities for professional inclusion and the expansion of opportunities for PwD.

The main barriers encountered by the students interviewed concern physical accessibility aspects in the Campus environment. The internal conditions of the Campus, on the other hand, are reported as being satisfactory. A lack of understanding on the part of the companies regarding the roles and professional functions to be performed by PwD was also reported.

Finally, according to the interviewed students, the Institution has been presenting satisfactory results regarding professional qualification and citizen inclusion. By committing itself to a policy for the inclusion of PwD, therefore, the IFRS has effectively contributed to the professional training, inclusion in the labor market and full exercise of citizenship of these people. However, work still needs to be done to get closer to this public in order to show that the IFRS is prepared to receive and serve PwD.

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