



Between Norms and Practices: Paths of Specialized Educational Services in Light of the National Policy for Inclusive Special Education

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Abstract

This article analyzes the pedagogical organization of Specialized Educational Services within the National Policy for Inclusive Special Education, established by Decreto nº 12.686/2025. The study is grounded in the assumptions of inclusive education as an educational right and a public policy, engaging in dialogue with authors in the field of special education and with regulations that govern specialized services. This is a qualitative, documentary study that used Decreto nº 12.686/2025 as its corpus, in dialogue with the Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional, the Lei Brasileira de Inclusão, and Resolução CNE/CEB nº 4/2009. The results show that the decree reaffirms Specialized Educational Services as a pedagogical practice that is complementary and supplementary to schooling and introduces the case study as the foundation of its organization, strengthening its pedagogical dimension. It is concluded that the decree contributes to consolidating Specialized Educational Services as a structuring element of inclusive education.

Keywords:

Specialized Educational Services. Inclusive special education. Educational policy.

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, inclusive education has become established as a guiding principle of Brazilian educational policies, especially regarding the guarantee of the right to access, permanence, participation, and learning of students with disabilities, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and high abilities or giftedness. This movement is the result of a historical process marked by normative advances, conceptual disputes, and practical challenges that strain the relationship between what is prescribed in legal texts and what is actually accomplished in the daily life of schools. In this scenario, Specialized Educational Services (Atendimento Educacional Especializado – AEE) play an indispensable role, being conceived as a service that is complementary and supplementary to the schooling of students through the provision of services, accessibility resources, and strategies that eliminate barriers to their full participation in society and to the development of their learning.

The enactment of Decreto nº 12.686, of October 20, 2025, which establishes the National Policy for Inclusive Special Education, is situated within this context as a recent and relevant normative milestone, particularly because it resumes, reaffirms, and reorganizes guidelines for special education from an inclusive perspective. This decree, drafted amid intense public debate and subsequently corrected, reaffirms the centrality of the regular school, defines the AEE as a pedagogical activity that is complementary or supplementary to schooling, and introduces important elements for the organization of these services, such as the student case study and the articulation between the AEE and the curriculum of the regular classroom.

In view of this, the object of study of this article is the pedagogical organization of Specialized Educational Services within the National Policy for Inclusive Special Education, based on Decreto nº 12.686/2025. The analysis is grounded in the understanding that the AEE cannot be examined in isolation, but rather in dialogue with the body of regulations that have historically structured special education in Brazil, such as the Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional (Lei nº 9.394/1996), the Lei Brasileira de Inclusão da Pessoa com Deficiência (Lei nº 13.146/2015), and Resolução CNE/CEB nº 4/2009, which established operational guidelines for the AEE.

This study is justified by the timeliness and relevance of the decree, as well as by the need to deepen analyses that go beyond mere normative description, seeking to understand its pedagogical meanings and its implications for the organization of the AEE within education systems.

In this sense, the following question is posed as the research problem: how does Decreto nº 12.686/2025 conceive and pedagogically organize Specialized Educational Services, and to what extent does this organization represent continuities and changes in relation to previous legislation that regulates special education in Brazil?

The general objective of the article is to analyze the pedagogical organization of Specialized Educational Services within the National Policy for Inclusive Special Education, established by Decreto nº 12.686/2025. The specific objectives are: (1) to examine the conception of the AEE present in the decree; (2) to analyze the provisions that guide its functioning and pedagogical organization; (3) to identify continuities and changes in relation to the LDB, the LBI, and Resolução CNE/CEB nº 4/2009; and (4) to reflect on the implications of this organization for educational practice within education systems.

With respect to the state of the art, established studies in the field of inclusive education have pointed to the AEE as a fundamental element for guaranteeing the right to education, provided that it is

understood as pedagogical support articulated with regular schooling (Camargo, 2017; Kassar, 2011; Silva, Lopes & Quadros, 2024). In addition to the theoretical contributions produced in this field, the importance of the legislation that structures special education in Brazil stands out, such as the Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional (Lei nº 9.394/1996), the Lei Brasileira de Inclusão da Pessoa com Deficiência (Lei nº 13.146/2015), and Resolução CNE/CEB nº 4/2009, which establish principles, guidelines, and directives for the organization and functioning of Specialized Educational Services.

By engaging in dialogue with this body of work, this article seeks to contribute to the field of inclusive education by offering a critical and up-to-date reading of the organization of the AEE within the current national policy, highlighting its pedagogical foundations and its possible ramifications for educational practice. Thus, by situating itself between norms and practices, the study intends to broaden the understanding of the role of Specialized Educational Services in the consolidation of an effectively inclusive educational system.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Inclusive special education as an educational right and policy

Inclusive special education constitutes, in contemporary times, an educational paradigm grounded in the recognition of education as a human and social right, guided by the guarantee of the participation and learning of all students. In this context, inclusion goes beyond the educational dimension and is configured as a principle that guides the organization of society, by recognizing and valuing diversity as a constitutive element of social relations. As Camargo (2017, p. 01) states, “inclusion is a paradigm that applies to the most varied physical and symbolic spaces,” showing that inclusion is not restricted to the school setting but involves broader transformations in social and educational structures.

In this sense, inclusive education is grounded in the recognition of diversity as a constitutive element of the educational process, requiring the reorganization of pedagogical practices and educational structures. As Camargo (2017, p. 02) states, educational inclusion implies understanding that all students are part of the educational process, making it necessary to consider their differences and characteristics as an integral part of the organization of teaching. From this perspective, inclusive education constitutes a process that involves the transformation of the educational environment, promoting conditions that favor the effective participation of students. As the author emphasizes, there is a “bilateral relationship of transformation of the educational environment and of the learner in question, in which the former generates, mobilizes, and directs the conditions for the effective participation of the latter” (Camargo, 2017, p. 2). Thus, special education is understood as a modality that is part of the educational system, contributing to the promotion of the participation and learning of students who are the target audience of special education.

The consolidation of inclusive special education as an educational right is directly related to the development of public educational policies in Brazil, resulting from historical and social processes that expanded access to education and strengthened the commitment to inclusion. As Kassar (2011, p. 01) analyzes, the constitution of special education as a public policy is linked to social and political transformations that contributed to the recognition of the right to education and to the expansion of students' access to the educational system. In this process, special education ceases to have a welfare-oriented character and becomes part of the field of educational policies, guided by the guarantee of the right to

schooling.

Moreover, inclusive special education represents a paradigm shift in the organization of educational systems, by shifting the focus from segregating models to an inclusive perspective. As Kassar (2011, p. 02) emphasizes, special education came to be structured as part of educational policies, assuming a fundamental role in guaranteeing the right to education and in promoting social inclusion. This shift shows that special education constitutes a public educational policy guided by the principle of equity and by the recognition of education as a fundamental right.

However, the realization of inclusive special education involves challenges related to the articulation between educational regulations and the pedagogical practices developed in schools. As Silva, Lopes, and Quadros (2024, p. 03) emphasize, inclusive education results from a historical process marked by social and political struggles that sought to guarantee the right of people with disabilities to participate in society and in the educational system. In this context, educational inclusion requires not only the guarantee of access to school, but also the implementation of pedagogical practices that favor the learning and development of students.

In this sense, educational inclusion is not achieved merely through the enrollment of students in school; it is necessary to guarantee pedagogical conditions that promote their participation and learning. As Silva, Lopes, and Quadros (2024, p. 03) state, “it is not enough to place them in this space; there must be educational practices that promote the development of their potential.” This statement shows that inclusive special education requires the reorganization of pedagogical practices and education systems in order to ensure the realization of the right to education.

In this way, inclusive special education is configured as an educational right and a public policy guided by the guarantee of the participation and learning of students who are the target audience of special education. Its consolidation results from historical, social, and political processes that redefined the role of special education within the educational system, reaffirming its pedagogical function and its contribution to the construction of inclusive educational systems. In this context, understanding inclusive special education as an educational right and policy constitutes a fundamental element for the analysis of Specialized Educational Services, especially within the scope of recent regulations that guide their organization and implementation.

Specialized Educational Services: conception and pedagogical organization

Specialized Educational Services (Atendimento Educacional Especializado – AEE) constitute an essential pedagogical service for guaranteeing the right to education of students who are the target audience of special education, being guided by regulations that define their function, organization, and articulation with regular education. In the Brazilian educational context, the AEE is linked to the principles of inclusive education, which ensure the right to schooling in regular classes, with the support necessary to favor access to the curriculum and the educational development of students. Its conception is grounded in the understanding that special education is part of the educational system and contributes to the elimination of barriers that may compromise the schooling process.

The Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional (Lei nº 9.394/1996) establishes that special education is a modality offered preferentially within the regular education network, intended for students with disabilities, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and high abilities or giftedness. As provided in Article 58, § 1, “there shall be, when necessary, specialized support services in the regular school to address the

particularities of the special education population” (Brasil, 1996). This provision shows that specialized services are part of the school’s organization, contributing to the guarantee of adequate conditions for the educational process. In addition, Article 59 determines that education systems must ensure “specific curricula, methods, techniques, educational resources, and organization” (Brasil, 1996, art. 59, item I), reaffirming institutional responsibility in the provision of resources and strategies that meet the educational needs of students.

The Lei Brasileira de Inclusão da Pessoa com Deficiência (Lei nº 13.146/2015) reinforces this understanding by recognizing education as a right of the person with a disability and by ensuring the institutionalization of Specialized Educational Services within the pedagogical project of educational institutions. As established in Article 28, item III, it is incumbent upon the government to guarantee a “pedagogical project that institutionalizes specialized educational services [...] to guarantee their full access to the curriculum under conditions of equality” (Brasil, 2015). This provision shows that the AEE constitutes a structuring element of educational organization and must be developed in an articulated manner with regular education.

With regard to pedagogical organization, Resolução CNE/CEB nº 4/2009 defines Specialized Educational Services as a service intended to “identify, develop, and organize pedagogical and accessibility resources that eliminate barriers to the full participation of students” (Brasil, 2009, art. 2). This definition highlights the pedagogical character of the AEE, guided by the identification of educational needs and by the organization of strategies that favor access to the curriculum. The resolution also establishes that the service must take place, preferentially, in the Multifunctional Resource Room, during a shift opposite to that of regular schooling, with the purpose of complementing or supplementing regular education.

In this context, Specialized Educational Services contribute to the promotion of educational accessibility through the organization of pedagogical resources, assistive technologies, and strategies that favor the development of students. Their realization depends on the articulation between educational regulations and the pedagogical practices developed in educational institutions, becoming consolidated as a fundamental element in the organization of inclusive educational systems.

Specialized Educational Services within the National Policy for Inclusive Special Education: foundations and pedagogical organization

Decreto nº 12.686, of October 20, 2025, which establishes the National Policy for Inclusive Special Education, reaffirms the commitment to guaranteeing the right to education within an inclusive educational system, establishing guidelines that direct the organization of special education and, specifically, of Specialized Educational Services (AEE). The decree defines special education as a cross-cutting modality that is part of the educational system, guided by the promotion of access, participation, permanence, and learning of the students who make up the target audience of special education. In this sense, it establishes that “the guarantee of an inclusive educational system occurs through the organization of the general educational system, so as to ensure that students who are the target audience of special education have the right to be included in regular classes and schools, with the support necessary for their participation, permanence, and learning” (Brasil, 2025, art. 1, § 3).

Within the scope of this policy, Specialized Educational Services are defined as a pedagogical service that contributes to the elimination of barriers that may compromise the schooling process. As the decree establishes, “Specialized Educational Services constitute a pedagogical activity of a complementary character to the schooling of persons with disabilities and autism spectrum disorder, and supplementary to the schooling of persons with high abilities or giftedness” (Brasil, 2025, art. 5). This definition reaffirms the non-substitutive character of the AEE and consolidates its function of supporting regular education, contributing to the educational development of students.

The decree also establishes guidelines that direct the provision of Specialized Educational Services, by providing for the “offer of assistive technologies and reasonable accommodations, in accordance with individual needs” and the “adoption of individualized and effective support measures, in educational environments that maximize academic and social development” (Brasil, 2025, art. 3, items V and VI). In addition, it determines the “provision of the AEE, preferentially in the regular schools of the education systems’ regular network” (Brasil, 2025, art. 3, item VII), reinforcing the centrality of the regular school as a space for schooling.

With regard to pedagogical organization, the decree establishes that Specialized Educational Services must be structured based on the identification of students’ educational needs and the organization of strategies that favor their educational development. In this sense, the policy ensures “the access, participation, permanence, and learning of students who are the target audience of special education in educational establishments, in regular classes” and guarantees “the AEE at all levels, stages, and modalities of education” (Brasil, 2025, art. 4, item I, subparagraphs c and d), demonstrating its integration into the educational system.

One of the central aspects established by Decreto nº 12.686/2025 concerns the organization of Specialized Educational Services based on the student case study, which constitutes a fundamental instrument for identifying their educational needs and for planning pedagogical actions. This guideline represents an advance in the organization of the AEE, by reinforcing its pedagogical dimension and by guiding services based on the educational needs of students. In this context, the case study contributes to the definition of pedagogical strategies, the organization of accessibility resources, and the implementation of support measures that favor their educational development.

The analysis of Decreto nº 12.686/2025 in dialogue with Resolução CNE/CEB nº 4/2009 reveals both elements of continuity and advances in the pedagogical organization of Specialized Educational Services. Resolução nº 4/2009 defines the AEE as a service responsible for “identifying, developing, and organizing pedagogical and accessibility resources that eliminate barriers to the full participation of students” (Brasil, 2009, art. 2), emphasizing its pedagogical function and its articulation with regular education. Decreto nº 12.686/2025 reaffirms this understanding by defining the AEE as a “pedagogical activity of a complementary character to schooling” (Brasil, 2025, art. 5), and advances by establishing the case study as the foundation for the organization of these services. This aspect strengthens the pedagogical dimension of the AEE and guides its organization based on the educational needs of students, contributing to its realization within the context of inclusive education.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach, as it enables the interpretive analysis of normative documents and the understanding of their foundations, meanings, and implications within the context of

public educational policies. The qualitative approach makes it possible to examine phenomena in their complexity, considering their meanings and relationships, which makes it suitable for research involving the analysis of educational documents and regulations. As Gil (2008) states, qualitative research enables an in-depth understanding of social phenomena through the interpretation of their meanings and contexts. As for the type of research, this is a documentary study, of an analytical and interpretive nature, that uses official documents as a source of data. According to Gil (2008, p. 51), documentary research is characterized by the use of materials that have not yet received systematic analytical treatment, making it possible to analyze and interpret them in accordance with the objectives of the investigation. In this sense, documentary research makes it possible to examine the foundations, guidelines, and conceptions present in the regulations that guide the organization of special education and Specialized Educational Services. (2008, p. 51).

The research corpus consists of Decreto nº 12.686, of October 20, 2025, which establishes the National Policy for Inclusive Special Education, this being the central document of the analysis. For the purposes of contextualization and comparative analysis, the Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional (Lei nº 9.394/1996), the Lei Brasileira de Inclusão da Pessoa com Deficiência (Lei nº 13.146/2015), and Resolução CNE/CEB nº 4/2009 were also examined, as they constitute normative milestones that regulate Specialized Educational Services within the Brazilian educational system.

As a data collection instrument, documentary analysis was used, carried out through the complete and systematic reading of the normative documents, with the objective of identifying the legal provisions related to the conception, purpose, and pedagogical organization of Specialized Educational Services. As Gil (2008) emphasizes, documentary analysis makes it possible to obtain relevant data from documents, contributing to the understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

The methodological process was developed in three stages. The first consisted of an exploratory reading of the documents, with the objective of identifying the provisions related to Specialized Educational Services. The second stage involved the selection and organization of the data, with the identification of the articles, items, and paragraphs that address the conception and pedagogical organization of the AEE. The third stage consisted of the interpretive analysis of the data, seeking to understand the pedagogical foundations of the service and to identify continuities and changes in relation to previous regulations.

For the analysis and interpretation of the data, interpretive documentary analysis was used, understanding the normative documents as products that express educational guidelines and conceptions. This procedure made it possible to examine the content of the documents and to understand their meanings within the context of the National Policy for Inclusive Special Education.

The categories of analysis were defined based on the research objectives and organized into three main axes: (1) the conception of Specialized Educational Services, considering their definition and purpose; (2) the pedagogical organization of Specialized Educational Services, including their guidelines, foundations, and structuring; and (3) continuities and changes in the pedagogical organization of Specialized Educational Services, based on the comparative analysis between Decreto nº 12.686/2025 and previous regulations.

In this way, documentary research made it possible to analyze Specialized Educational Services in light of the National Policy for Inclusive Special Education, enabling an understanding of their normative foundations and their pedagogical organization within the context of inclusive educational policies.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of Decreto nº 12.686, of October 20, 2025, shows that the National Policy for Inclusive Special Education reaffirms principles already consolidated in previous regulations, while at the same time introducing elements that contribute to strengthening the pedagogical organization of Specialized Educational Services (AEE). The interpretation of the document makes it possible to identify important advances in the consolidation of the AEE as a pedagogical service structured based on the educational needs of students and articulated with regular education.

The consolidation of Specialized Educational Services as a pedagogical practice

Decreto nº 12.686/2025 reaffirms Specialized Educational Services as a pedagogical activity that is complementary and supplementary to schooling, consolidating their function of supporting regular education. By establishing that the AEE constitutes a “pedagogical activity of a complementary character to schooling” (Brasil, 2025, art. 5), the decree reinforces a conception already present in the Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional and in Resolução CNE/CEB nº 4/2009. However, by situating this definition within the context of a national policy aimed at organizing an inclusive educational system, the decree broadens the understanding of the AEE as a structuring element of inclusive education.

This aspect shows a movement toward the consolidation of the AEE as a pedagogical practice integrated into the educational system, and not as a parallel service disconnected from regular education. By ensuring the right of students who are the target audience of special education to schooling in regular classes, with the support necessary for their participation and learning (Brasil, 2025), the decree reinforces that Specialized Educational Services must contribute directly to access to the curriculum and to the educational development of students.

This conception is aligned with the understanding that inclusive education requires the reorganization of educational practices, as Camargo (2017) emphasizes, in stating that inclusion implies the transformation of educational structures. In this sense, the decree strengthens the AEE as a pedagogical practice that contributes to the construction of inclusive educational systems, consolidating its role within the context of Brazilian educational policy.

The case study as the foundation of the pedagogical organization of Specialized Educational Services

One of the main advances identified in Decreto nº 12.686/2025 concerns the centrality attributed to the case study as the foundation for the organization of Specialized Educational Services. By establishing that services must be structured based on the identification of students’ educational needs, the decree introduces a guideline that strengthens the pedagogical dimension of the AEE, guiding its organization based on the analysis of educational conditions and of the barriers that interfere with the schooling process.

This aspect represents an advance in relation to Resolução CNE/CEB nº 4/2009, which emphasizes the identification and organization of pedagogical resources but does not explicitly state the case study as a structuring element of pedagogical planning. By introducing this guideline, Decreto nº 12.686/2025 shifts the focus of the organization of the AEE from a logic centered predominantly on the provision of

resources to an approach guided by the analysis of students' educational needs.

This change strengthens the pedagogical character of Specialized Educational Services, by showing that their organization must be grounded in the understanding of educational needs and in the development of pedagogical strategies that favor the development of students. In this sense, the case study constitutes an instrument that contributes to the organization of services in a more systematized manner and articulated with the school curriculum, favoring the promotion of learning and the elimination of educational barriers.

This aspect is consistent with the understanding of Kassir (2011), in emphasizing that special education constitutes a public educational policy aimed at guaranteeing the right to education. By strengthening the pedagogical dimension of the AEE, the decree contributes to consolidating its function within the context of inclusive education.

Implications of the decree for the organization of Specialized Educational Services

The analysis of Decreto nº 12.686/2025 shows that the organization of Specialized Educational Services is guided by a perspective that values the identification of students' educational needs and the adoption of pedagogical strategies that favor their educational development. By providing for the offer of assistive technologies, reasonable accommodations, and individualized support measures (Brasil, 2025), the decree reinforces that the AEE must contribute to the elimination of barriers that interfere with the educational process.

This aspect shows that Specialized Educational Services are not limited to the provision of resources but constitute a pedagogical practice that requires planning, monitoring, and articulation with regular education. In this sense, the decree contributes to strengthening the organization of the AEE as a pedagogical service structured based on the educational needs of students, consolidating its function in the promotion of inclusive education.

In addition, by reaffirming the provision of the AEE preferentially in regular schools, the decree strengthens the centrality of the school as a space for the schooling of students who are the target audience of special education. This guideline contributes to consolidating inclusive education as a guiding principle of educational organization, showing that Specialized Educational Services must operate in an articulated manner with regular education.

In this way, the analysis of Decreto nº 12.686/2025 shows that the National Policy for Inclusive Special Education contributes to strengthening Specialized Educational Services as a pedagogical practice structured based on the educational needs of students. By establishing guidelines that direct their pedagogical organization, the decree reinforces the role of the AEE in the realization of inclusive education and in the guarantee of the right to education.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study aimed to analyze the pedagogical organization of Specialized Educational Services within the National Policy for Inclusive Special Education, established by Decreto nº 12.686, of October 20, 2025, seeking to understand its conception, its foundations, and its implications for the organization of these services within education systems. The analysis showed that the decree reaffirms principles already consolidated in Brazilian educational legislation, while at the same time introducing elements that

contribute to strengthening the pedagogical dimension of Specialized Educational Services.

The results of the research indicate that the decree consolidates Specialized Educational Services as a pedagogical practice that is complementary and supplementary to schooling, reaffirming their function of supporting regular education and contributing to the educational development of students who make up the target audience of special education. By situating the AEE within the context of an inclusive educational system, the decree reinforces its articulation with regular education and its importance in eliminating barriers that interfere with the schooling process.

One of the main advances identified concerns the organization of Specialized Educational Services based on the student case study, which contributes to strengthening their pedagogical dimension and to guiding services based on the identification of educational needs. This aspect represents an important contribution to the organization of the AEE, by favoring pedagogical planning and the definition of strategies that promote the access, participation, and learning of students. In this sense, the decree contributes to consolidating Specialized Educational Services as a pedagogical practice that is structured and articulated with the school curriculum.

In addition, the study showed that the decree reaffirms the centrality of the regular school as a space for schooling, reinforcing the commitment to inclusive education and to the guarantee of the right to education. By establishing guidelines that direct the provision of Specialized Educational Services and their pedagogical organization, the decree contributes to strengthening special education as a cross-cutting modality that is part of the educational system.

However, the realization of these guidelines depends on the concrete conditions of implementation within education systems, especially with regard to teacher training, the organization of multifunctional resource rooms, and the articulation between Specialized Educational Services and regular education. In this sense, the implementation of the case study as a guiding instrument for these services requires the construction of pedagogical practices that consider the educational needs of students and promote their learning.

As a limitation of this study, it is worth noting that it is a documentary analysis, which does not allow for an examination of how the guidelines established in the decree will be implemented in educational practice. Thus, it is recommended that future research investigate the implementation of the National Policy for Inclusive Special Education within education systems, analyzing its implications for the organization of Specialized Educational Services and for the pedagogical work of teachers.

It is also recommended that studies be developed to investigate the case study as an instrument for the organization of Specialized Educational Services, analyzing its contributions and challenges within the context of pedagogical practice. In addition, research examining teacher training for Specialized Educational Services may contribute to the understanding of the conditions necessary for the realization of inclusive education.

Finally, this study contributes to the field of inclusive education by offering a critical analysis of the pedagogical organization of Specialized Educational Services within the National Policy for Inclusive Special Education, highlighting its advances and its implications for the organization of the educational system. By situating Specialized Educational Services between norms and practices, the study reinforces the importance of their pedagogical organization for the consolidation of an inclusive educational system and for the guarantee of the right to education.

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