



**Constitution of Special Education in Brazil:  
contributions by Sarah Couto Cesar and Olívia da Silva Pereira<sup>1</sup>**

Constituição da Educação Especial no Brasil:  
contribuições de Sarah Couto Cesar e Olívia da Silva Pereira

Constitución de la Educación Especial en Brasil:  
contribuciones de Sarah Couto Cesar y Olívia da Silva Pereira

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**Abstract**

The institutionalization of Special Education occurred during the military dictatorship regime (1964-1985), with the creation of the National Center for Special Education (*Centro Nacional de Educação Especial* – CENESP). The objective of this paper is to present and discuss the role of Sarah Couto Cesar and Olívia da Silva Pereira in the constitution of Special Education in Brazil. In methodological terms, the research is bibliographical in dialogue with oral history through interviews with Sarah Couto Cesar, Ilza Maria Ferreira Pinto Autran and Rosana Glat. The research showed that Sarah Couto Cesar and Olívia da Silva Pereira acted and had an important contribution in the political articulation to institutionalize Special Education in the different Brazilian states, as well as in the formation of human resources at the Graduate studies level. The text also problematizes the institutionalization of Special Education and disputes between the public and private sectors on the schooling *locus* of people with disabilities and the initial and continuing teacher training.

**Keywords:** History of Special Education. Special Education. CENESP. Sarah Couto Cesar. Olívia da Silva Pereira.

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## Resumo

A institucionalização da Educação Especial ocorreu durante o regime da ditadura militar (1964-1985), com a criação do Centro Nacional de Educação Especial (Cenesp). O objetivo deste artigo é apresentar e discutir o papel de Sarah Couto Cesar e de Olívia da Silva Pereira na constituição da Educação Especial no Brasil. Em termos metodológicos, a pesquisa é bibliográfica em diálogo com a história oral por meio de entrevistas com Sarah Couto Cesar, Ilza Maria Ferreira Pinto Autran e Rosana Glat. A pesquisa evidenciou que Sarah Couto Cesar e Olívia da Silva Pereira atuaram e tiveram uma importante contribuição na articulação política para institucionalizar a Educação Especial nos diferentes estados brasileiros, assim como na formação de recursos humanos em nível de Pós-Graduação. O texto também problematiza a institucionalização da Educação Especial e as disputas entre os setores público e privado sobre o *locus* de escolarização de pessoas com deficiência e de formação inicial e continuada de professores.

**Palavras-chave:** História da Educação Especial. Educação Especial. Cenesp. Sarah Couto Cesar. Olívia da Silva Pereira.

## Resumen

La institucionalización de la Educación Especial ocurrió durante la dictadura (1964-1985), con la creación del Centro Nacional de Educación Especial (Cenesp). El objetivo de este artículo es presentar y discutir el papel de Sarah Couto Cesar y Olívia da Silva Pereira en la constitución de la Educación Especial en Brasil. En términos metodológicos, la investigación es bibliográfica y usa la historia oral por medio de entrevistas con Sarah Couto Cesar, Ilza Maria Ferreira Pinto Autran y Rosana Glat. La investigación mostró que Sarah Couto Cesar y Olívia da Silva Pereira actuaron y tuvieron una importante contribución en la articulación política para institucionalizar la Educación Especial en los diferentes estados brasileños, así como en la formación de recursos humanos a nivel de Posgrado. El texto también problematiza la institucionalización de la Educación Especial y las disputas entre los sectores público y privado sobre el *locus* de escolarización de las personas con discapacidad y la formación inicial y continua de profesores.

**Palabras clave:** Historia de la Educación Especial. Educación Especial. Cenesp. Sarah Couto Cesar. Olívia da Silva Pereira.

History does not teach us anything, because it is we who, learning from it, learn about ourselves. Historicity, history, is ourselves. We are the teachers and disciples in this school that is our planet.

Agnes Heller (1982)

### **Initial considerations and conceptual aspects**

The Observatory of Special Education and Educational Inclusion (*Observatório de Educação Especial e Inclusão Educacional – ObEE*)<sup>2</sup>, linked to the Center for Technological Innovation and Inclusive Education (*Centro de Inovação Tecnológica e Educação Inclusiva –CITEI*) of the *Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro* (UFRRJ), has discussed, since its creation in 2009, the different dimensions of inclusive education policies in teaching networks, the schooling of people with intellectual disabilities and multiple disabilities, as well as having been dedicated to analyzing educational support networks so that the educational process of this population in regular teaching classes takes effect. Another aspect that has been addressed is the discussion and understanding of Special Education through these policies in a historical perspective.

In this sense, we understand, as discussed by Pletsch (2020), that Special Education is a transversal teaching modality that permeates all levels, stages and educational modalities, which realizes the Specialized Educational Service (SES), provides specific resources and services and guides their use in the teaching and learning processes in regular classes (BRASIL, 2008). We have also advocated that Special Education is an area of knowledge production that integrates the area of Education.

Taking this perspective as a background, a set of research shows the consolidation of Special Education as a field of research, which was important and decisive for the area to become a field of expansion of Graduate Studies in Brazil and the creation of the National Association of Research and Graduate Studies on Education (ANPEd) in 1976, already with a Working Group on Special Education (known as GT15), and also with the foundation of the *Revista Brasileira de Educação Especial* [Brazilian Journal of Special Education] (*RBEE*) and the Brazilian Association of Researchers in Special Education (ABPEE) in 1992 and 1993, respectively. Since then, scientific production has grown and has been consolidating nationally and internationally, focusing on the epistemological, political and social changes that mark the academic field of Special Education, also discussed by Casagrande (2021) and Casagrande and Mainardes (2021). The authors argue that the formation of the academic field of Special Education was preceded by training to work in this area in the 1950s and the creation of the Special Education teacher training course at the *Universidade Federal de Santa Maria* (UFSM) in 1962, and, later, the political institutionalization of Special Education in the first half of the 1970s. Drawing from Casagrande and Mainardes (2021, p. 121), we understand that the academic field of Special Education is “[...] a space where there are distinct social practices, related to the production

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<sup>2</sup> Available at: <http://obee.ufrrj.br>. Accessed on: Feb. 8, 2022.

and circulation of academic goods, which mainly involves the idea of the University”. In this sense, as discussed by the authors, the specialization of knowledge, the performance and role of different social and political characters, as well as institutions, end up contributing to understanding the process and institutionalization of a field.

The discussion on the constitution of the field of Special Education was also carried out by Bueno and Souza (2018) when they analyzed *RBEE*'s contribution. Based on the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu's studies, the authors argue that the field of Special Education is a “[...] field of knowledge endowed with forces that move it and that both its constitution and the subject designated as its public institute itself in the contradictory dynamics of its own history and social development” (BUENO; SOUZA, 2018, p. 34).

The recognition of Special Education as a field of scientific production was only possible from initiatives of its institutionalization in the country, in the mid-1970s, from actions determined in the Agreements of the Ministry of Education (*MEC*) and the United States Agency for International Development (*USAID*)<sup>3</sup>, during the military regime from 1964 to 1985 (SOUZA; PLETSCHE; BATISTA, 2019), with the creation of the National Center for Special Education (*Centro Nacional de Educação Especial – CENESP*). Several authors have already dedicated themselves to the historical study of Special Education and its constitution as a policy and teaching modality, as well as the influence of international political guidelines propagated by the specialized organizations of the United Nations System (UN) and the World Bank (WB) in the configuration of educational policies in Brazil over time (BEZERRA, 2017; CARDOSO, 2018; JANNUZZI, 2004; KASSAR, 2011, 2013; MENDES, 2010; RAFANTE, 2011; SIEMS, 2016; SOUZA; PLETSCHE, 2017; SOUZA; PLETSCHE; BATISTA, 2019).

In this paper, our objective is to present and discuss the role of Sarah Couto Cesar, the first director-general of *CENESP*, and of Olívia da Silva Pereira, the agency's advisor, in the constitution of the Brazilian Special Education. The focus is to understand the participation and influence of these professionals in the history of Brazilian Special Education. To this end, based on biographical data of these characters, we present the role played, their relationship networks and how they contributed to the constitution of Special Education in Brazil. The text integrates the actions developed in the research project “Pioneers of Special Education Portal in Brazil: institutions, characters and practices”<sup>4</sup>.

### Methodological options for research

In methodological terms, we work primarily with bibliographic research and interviews carried out in 2018 with Sarah Couto Cesar, in 2020 with Rosana Glat, and in 2021 with Ilza Maria Ferreira Pinto Autran. Table 1 systematizes the information about the interviewees.

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<sup>3</sup> A series of agreements produced in the 1960s between *MEC* and *USAID*, which aimed to establish technical assistance and financial cooperation agreements for Brazilian education (SOUZA; PLETSCHE; BATISTA, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> The research is the result of an inter-institutional partnership between different Brazilian universities (*Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais – UFMG* – general project coordination; *Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso do Sul – UFMS*; *Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro – UFRRJ*; *Universidade Estadual de Mato Grosso do Sul – UEMS*; and *Universidade Estadual do Norte Fluminense Darcy Ribeiro – UENF-RJ*), with funding from the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), Public call from the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovations – MCTIC/CNPq no. 28/2018 - Universal (BORGES, 2019).

**Table 1** - Characterization of the interviewees

Name and age	Education	Professional position	Interview location and duration
Sarah Couto Cesar, 92 ( <i>in memoriam</i> ).	Pedagogue and Psychologist, with a Master's degree in Education.	Director of <i>CENESP</i> and Emeritus President of the Pestalozzi Society.	Interviewee's residence, approximately two hours.
Ilza Maria Ferreira Pinto Autran, 75.	Psychologist, Master's and PhD in Education.	Retired Professor from the <i>Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio)</i> .	Online via <i>Zoom</i> platform, approximately two hours.
Rosana Glat, 68.	Psychologist, Master's and PhD in Psychology.	Full Professor at the <i>Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ)</i> .	Online via <i>Zoom</i> platform, approximately two hours.

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors for research purposes.

As a result of the global pandemic caused by the new “coronavirus” (SARS-CoV-2), declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020, the interviews with Professors Ilza Maria Ferreira Pinto Autran and Rosana Glat took place online, via *Zoom* platform.

The interviews were developed from the methodology of oral history, which provides the recording of information from the memories of those who experienced past events. According to Ferreira and Amado (2006), oral history, as a methodology, establishes and orders work procedures, such as the different types of interviews and the implications of each of them on the research, the various possibilities of transcription of testimonies, its advantages and disadvantages, the different ways the researcher relates to the interviewees and the influences that this has on his/her work. We understand that knowing the stories and the experiences lived can contribute to the understanding of the constitution of Special Education as a teaching modality and as an academic field that produces science on different topics involving disability, Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and giftedness.

Based on Manzini (2020), the interview is used as a “procedure for collecting information”. With the semi-structured interview, based on the script with questions, we obtained information about the training and professional trajectory of Sarah Couto Cesar and Olívia da Silva Pereira. The interviewees (Ilza Maria Ferreira Pinto Autran and Rosana Glat) were selected for having personally lived with Olívia da Silva Pereira and for their respective trajectories in the history of Brazilian Special Education. The audios were literally transcribed by the researchers who carried out the interviews.

The bibliographic research, in the same way, served as a procedure for obtaining information, in the sense that the access to references contributed to account for access to data related to the participants of this study. In this case, we take Gil (2002, p. 45) as a basis, when he states that “[...] the main advantage of bibliographic research lies in the fact that it allows the researcher to cover a much broader range of phenomena than that he/she could search directly”.

Based on the collated data, the paper approaches the biographical data, focusing on the education and role of teachers Sarah Couto Cesar and Olívia da Silva Pereira in the constitution of Special Education in Brazil, as well as their political relations and articulations in Special Education and in teacher training in the area.

## Trajectories of Sarah Couto Cesar and Olívia Pereira in Brazilian Special Education

Data and analysis of the specialized literature (BATISTA, 2019; BLANCO, 2020; MAZZOTTA, 2011; ROCHA, 2017), as well as the curriculum of Sarah Couto Cesar, indicate that she was a personality who acted in the structuring of Brazilian Special Education in a forceful way since the 1950s up until her death in 2020, constituting her professional trajectory as a teacher, psychologist and manager. Recently, Sarah Couto Cesar was the subject of three pieces of research developed at Graduate Studies level, a fact that reaffirms her prominent place in the constitution of Special Education in Brazil.

Rocha (2017) analyzed the professional trajectory of former students of Russian educator Helena Antipoff, in order to identify the influence of the training oriented by her in Brazilian Special Education. Sarah Couto Cesar joined the investigation because she studied with Helena Antipoff and worked with Special Education. The author concludes that the legacy of the Russian educator had repercussions on the professional trajectory of her former students and, in relation to Sarah Couto Cesar, she states:

We noted that extensive training, participation in courses and visits to learn about working with people with disabilities and, finally, working at the university, are some of the activities developed by Sarah throughout her professional career. Her performance was based on training and action, another legacy of contact and experiences with Helena Antipoff. The sum of the entire trajectory of this educator is completed with the actions in the management and promotion of people with disabilities. (ROCHA, 2017, p. 147).

Batista (2019), in a study carried out within the scope of the *ObEE* at *UFRRJ*, addressed the institutionalization of Brazilian Special Education, focusing on the creation of *CENESP* and the actions carried out by this body from 1973 to 1979. Sarah Couto Cesar contributed as an interviewee, in view of having been the first director-general of *CENESP*, as previously indicated, and for her role in the different initiatives of Special Education from the 1950s to 1970s. Sarah Couto Cesar contributed to the *ObEE* with interviews, access to her private collection and gave a lecture at the 1<sup>st</sup> Seminar on the History of Special Education: Research, Policies and Teacher Training, held in partnership between *UFRRJ* and *UERJ* in the discipline “Special Topics: History, policies and methodological proposals in the area of History and History of Special Education”, taught at the Graduate Program in Education, Contemporary Contexts and Popular Demands (*Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação, Contextos Contemporâneos e Demandas Populares – PPGEduc/UFRRJ*) by Professor Márcia Denise Pletsch and Professor Fernando Gouveia.

Sarah Couto Cesar was also Blanco’s (2020, p. 32) interlocutor in the Doctoral dissertation that aimed to “[...] interpret social and cultural processes that make it possible to identify configurations of Brazilian Special Education in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”. According to the author’s analysis, Sarah Couto Cesar was integrated as a *personality of the educational elite* in view of the performance she developed both in the public and private sectors in matters of national Special Education.

Sarah Couto Cesar was a pedagogue, graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy *Sedes Sapientiae*, from the *Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUC-SP)*, a psychologist from *PUC-Rio* and with a Master’s degree in Education from the *Federal Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ)* – a Master’s degree completed in 1978. Her Master’s thesis, entitled *Integração de educandos portadores de deficiências mentais, físicas, de visão e de audição, no*

*sistema regular de ensino de 1º grau do município do Rio de Janeiro* [Integration of students with mental, physical, visual and hearing disabilities, in the regular elementary school system in the city of Rio de Janeiro], aimed to investigate how the integration of such students occurred in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Twenty schools were selected that met at least two “exceptional” categories. The results showed that the integration process of the investigated students was marked by a lack of human resources and specialized materials, factors that prevented the proper integration according to the legally recommended norms (CESAR, 1978).

Sarah Couto Cesar was born in São Luís do Maranhão, state of Maranhão, Brazil, on March 10, 1925. She was the daughter of the army officer Boanerges Lopes Cesar, born in the state of Paraíba, who, after graduating, was sent to Maranhão, and housewife Elisa Nunes Couto Cesar. Sarah Couto Cesar died on May 8, 2020, in Rio de Janeiro, at the age of 95, a victim of the coronavirus.

Her professional career in Brazilian Special Education began as an intern in the area of Psychology at Pestalozzi Society of Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro, in 1958. In this institution, she held several positions, becoming President, as well as integrating the Board of Executive Directors and the Honor Council of the National Federation of Pestalozzi Associations (Fenapestalozzi).

In the interviews granted to Batista (2019), Sarah Couto Cesar stated that she had met Olívia da Silva Pereira during her Psychology training and that the internship at Pestalozzi was her influence, the moment when she came into contact with Helena Antipoff: “I wanted to have the registration of Psychologist, which I have, so I ended up at *PUC-Rio*, where Olívia Pereira, my friend, was already there. Olívia was already taking the course to register for Psychology [...]” (BATISTA, 2019, p. 39). According to Sarah Couto Cesar:

It was because I met Olívia Pereira that I ended up at the Pestalozzi Society, now under the direction of Helena Antipoff, that’s when I applied to be a Psychology intern, because to obtain a psychologist degree you had to have an internship and I did an internship at Pestalozzi Society of Brazil, which was in Leme, here in Copacabana, where Helena was the director at the time [...]. (BATISTA, 2019, p. 39-40).

Sarah Couto Cesar mentioned in an interview that the direct contact with Helena Antipoff, at the Pestalozzi Society of Brazil and *Fazenda do Rosário*<sup>5</sup>, was essential for her training and professional career, which corroborates the findings of Rocha (2017). From the experiences acquired in these spaces, the pedagogue and psychologist started to occupy public positions, in a constant interaction and transit between public and private institutions that provided care and discussed issues of Special Education in Brazil. About Sarah Couto Cesar’s trajectory at Fenapestalozzi and her actions, Rocha (2017) points out:

Sarah has worked in the Federation since its inception, promoted courses, events, trained technicians, in short, she developed activities as she did in the Pestalozzi Society of Brazil, but with a wider scope, since in the Federation the public was from all over the country, which made possible the creation of other Pestalozzi Centers in other Brazilian states. (ROCHA, 2017, p. 151-152).

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<sup>5</sup> *Fazenda do Rosário* [Rosario Farm] was a boarding school created by Helena Antipoff to receive “exceptional” children from Belo Horizonte, state of Minas Gerais, Brazil.

It is important to remember that, in the national scenario, the assistance to people who demanded Special Education services initially had only two public spaces: the National Institute of Education for the Deaf (*Instituto Nacional de Educação de Surdos – INES*) and the Benjamin Constant Institute (*IBC*). In this way, philanthropic institutions, such as Pestalozzi and Association of Parents and Friends of the Exceptional (*Associação de Pais e Amigos dos Excepcionais – APAE*), gained national recognition as a result of the assistance they provided throughout the country, with their representatives assuming leadership positions in the public sphere and actively participating in political decisions related to Special Education (BUENO, 2004; BUENO; LEHMKUHL; GOES, 2019). In this sense, the trajectory of Sarah Couto Cesar is an example of the historical constitution of Brazilian Special Education.

Sarah Couto Cesar reported that, since 1950, she has taken several courses, both in Brazil and abroad. Sarah Couto Cesar's curriculum presents training in different areas, but all directly related to Special Education, such as: i. Specialization in projective tests: PMK (Myokinetic Psychodiagnosis) and Rorschach, at *Fundação Getúlio Vargas* (1959); ii. Specialization in Special Education, at the Pestalozzi Society of Brazil (1959 to 1960); iii. Course on Development and Behavior of Children and Adolescents, participation as a scholarship holder from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), at the UNESCO International Children's Center, in Paris (1961); iv. Course on Psychiatric and Social Aspects of Epilepsy (1967); v. Course on Monitoring Mothers of Children in Psychotherapeutic Treatment at the Brazilian Association of Applied Psychology (1968); vi. Educational Planning and Administration in Education, both at *UFRJ* (1973).

Still, for Sarah Couto Cesar, internships and observation in different countries were important and formed part of her training: a. Observation Internship at the Pedagogical Institute of Sèvres, France (1961); b. Observation Internship at the Jean Jacques Rousseau Institute, in Geneva, Switzerland (1961); c. Observation Internships at Occupational Centers and Special Schools in Copenhagen, Denmark (1963); d. Observation Internships in Special Schools in Belgium and the Netherlands (1964); e. Observation Internships at Special Schools and Occupational Centers in Canada (1972); f. Observation Internship at Universities and Special Education Services in the United States, as a guest of the US Department of State (1975); g. Observation Internships in Special Education Schools and Services in Portugal (1981).

In 1967, Sarah Couto Cesar joined the staff of interns at the Service for the Promotion of Technical Cooperation (ASTEF), in Paris, in the role of Education Technician at the Ministry of Education and Culture, at the Benjamin Constant Institute. The interns were professionals from the most diverse areas, from countries in America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Oceania, more specifically from Australia, occupying important positions or who would assume such positions in their countries of origin. Most received a technical cooperation scholarship from the French government, with the benefit of a program organized by ASTEF, in the form of an internship or a special invitation. The courses had a training character, essentially practical, with a six-month duration, with the objective of technical cooperation for the dissemination of French methods, techniques and companies in the development of the trainees' countries.

In her report, Sarah Couto Cesar told us that she worked at the Benjamin Constant Institute, an institution created in 1854 for assistance to people with visual problems, as Head of the Psychology Sector, between 1962 and 1964, and as Head of the General Service Section of the Benjamin Constant Institute, from 1964 to 1965. In this regard, Sarah Couto Cesar stated:



Later, I ended up under the influence of the medical staff, my relatives, I ended up at the Benjamin Constant Institute, where I worked, I worked precisely in the Psychology office of the Benjamin Constant Institute [...].

From there, from my performance at Benjamin Constant, I was [...] called to go to CADEME (National Campaign for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Mentally Disabled) [...]. (BATISTA, 2019, p. 40).

On September 28, 1970, Sarah Couto Cesar was appointed Executive Director of the National Campaign for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Mentally Disabled (*Campanha Nacional de Educação e Reabilitação de Deficientes Mentais – CADEME*), by Ordinance no. 3,513. When *CADEME* was dissolved in 1973, as a result of the creation of *CENESP*, she became the General Director of that body. From 1972 to 1973, Sarah Couto Cesar participated in the entire process that culminated in the design and implementation of *CENESP*, an agency created by Decree no. 72,425, of July 3, 1973 (BRASIL, 1973), intended to manage the programs and Special Education projects throughout Brazil (BATISTA, 2019):

- a. manager of the Special Education Task Group (*Grupo Tarefa Educação Especial – GTEE*), which carried out the studies from February to April 1972 and concluded by creating a system of Special Education and rehabilitation, under the name of “National Coordination of Special Education and Rehabilitation” – Coner (BRASIL, 1972);
- b. employee of the Department of Complementary Education (*Departamento de Educação Complementar – DEC*), was part of the Task Group that carried out her actions between July 1, 1972 and February 28, 1973, and was responsible for setting up Priority Project no. 35 – Special Education, which resulted in the creation of *CENESP* (PIRES, 1974);
- c. manager of the Task Group Implementation of *CENESP*, created by Ordinance no. 215, of August 20, 1973, whose general objective was “[...] to implement the National Center for Special Education (*CENESP*) and promote the extinction of the National Campaign for the Education of the Blind (*CNEC*) and the National Campaign for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Mentally Disabled (*CADEME*)” (BRASIL, 1974, p. 5).

The position of director of *CENESP* was held by Sarah Couto Cesar between 1973 and 1979. During this period, actions were carried out to deal with projects for the Reformulation of Curriculum for Special Education, for the Training of Human Resources for Special Education and for Technical and Financial Assistance to Private Institutions in the area of Specialized Education (BATISTA, 2019).

Sarah Couto Cesar proudly told us that one of the actions carried out at that time was to expand the training of human resources by sending Brazilian professionals to the United States to train at Master’s level in the late 1970s, as discussed in more detail by Souza, Batista and Pletsch (2019). This training was carried out at the George Peabody College for Teachers, by 14 professionals, in 1977 (BRASIL, 1978). Regarding this Master’s course, Sarah Couto Cesar “[...] stated that the training of personnel arose from *the need to provide the country with professors at the Master’s and Doctoral level, selected by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) and with funds resulting from the MEC-USAID agreements*” (BATISTA, 2019, p. 162, author’s emphasis).

As we stated earlier, some of the professors trained in this course came to occupy a prominent place in the history of Brazilian Special Education, as they integrated the Graduate courses that were implemented in national universities and participated in research and in entities linked to the area of Special Education (KASSAR, 2016; PLETSCHE, 2020). These professionals were decisive for what Casagrande and Mainardes (2021) call the production of academic goods and, therefore, for the constitution of the research field in Special Education.

As a professor, Sarah Couto Cesar has also worked in private and public institutions. At Pestalozzi Society of Brazil, she taught the subject of Evolutionary Psychology in the Psychopedagogical Orientation courses, between 1964 and 1966. At *UFRJ*, she taught, in the Special Education course of the Faculty of Education, subjects in the areas of “mental disability” and physical disability, from 1975 to 1980. In 1977 and 1978, at the *Universidade Católica de Petrópolis*, she was a professor of the Specialization courses in Conduct Problems.

Throughout her career, she was the representative of Brazil at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Special Education Seminar, held in 1963, in Denmark; at the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Congress of the International Association for the Scientific Study of Mental Disability, in Warsaw, Poland, in 1970; and at the 5<sup>th</sup> International Congress of the International Association for the Scientific Study of Mental Disability, in Montreal, Canada, in 1972.

Some of the actions carried out by Sarah Couto Cesar were: organization of the 1<sup>st</sup> Seminar on the Preparation of Specialized Personnel for Mental Disability, held by *CADEME*, in the state then called Guanabara (now Rio de Janeiro), in 1971; and the 1<sup>st</sup> Regional Seminar (Northeast) for the Study of Special Education, along with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Seminar of the Faculties of Education of the North and Northeast, also in 1971, in Ceará; Technical Coordination of the 1<sup>st</sup> Seminar on Gifted Persons held at the Faculty of Education of the *Universidade de Brasília*, in 1971; Member of the Organizing Committee of the 1<sup>st</sup> Latin American Seminar on Planning and Organization of Services for the Mentally Disabled in Developing Countries, in São Paulo, in 1971; organizer of the Special Education Seminar, in Manaus, in 1972; Technical Coordinator of the 8<sup>th</sup> National Week for Exceptional Children, held by *MEC*, in 1972; Organizer of the 1<sup>st</sup> Seminar on Planning for Special Education, held at the Faculty of Education at *UFRJ*, in 1974; Technical Coordinator of the Seminar on Integration Planning in Assistance to the Exceptional, in Paraná, in 1976.

Both the Seminar on Planning for Special Education and the Seminar on Planning for Integration in Assistance to the Exceptional were actions aimed at meeting the goals established for *CENESP*'S performance (BATISTA, 2019; SOUZA; PLETSCHE; BATISTA, 2019). The first was directed by the professor of Special Education at the University of Arizona, Samuel Kirk (psychologist and administrator), for the technical training of personnel who would execute Special Education programs in Brazil. The second was part of the Special Multinational Education Project in Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, with a view to fulfilling “technical and financial cooperation with state education systems” and to discuss the planning of Special Education for the national context (BATISTA, 2019; SILVA, 2017).

It is also important to point out the network of relationships that Sarah Couto Cesar established during her trajectory in Brazilian Special Education, for example with political agents and important names in Brazilian society. An example of this is the case of the Minister of Education and Culture Jarbas Passarinho, with whom Sarah claimed to work directly. When recalling the process of constituting *CENESP*, Sarah also mentioned other names and bodies that were present, such as: Maria Helena Novaes, Maria Luíza

Bittencourt, Dulce Maciel and Dr. Odylo<sup>6</sup> “he was a journalist and had a very large penetration in political circles. Because political support was needed: without politics you could not do anything. It was also necessary for politicians to influence heavily in the Chamber of Deputies, in the Senate” (OBEE Database, 2019-2021).

Sarah Couto Cesar also proudly told us about the awards she received: in 1973, she was awarded the National Order of Educational Merit, for having distinguished herself for “exceptional services provided to Education” (BRASIL, 2003). In turn, the Human Rights Award, in the category Guarantee of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, was received in 2000. In 2019, she was awarded with the *Brasil Mais Inclusão* Award, in the Darci Ribeiro Merit category – this honor is offered annually by the Chamber of Deputies. Deputies of the Brazilian National Congress to “[...] companies, Unions, States and Municipalities, entities such as NGOs and Civil Society Organizations of Public Interest (OSCIPS) or even personalities that have carried out actions in favor of the inclusion of people with disabilities or who are, themselves, examples of life and overcoming” (BRASIL, 2021, n.p.).

With regard to Sarah Couto Cesar’s intellectual production, few works by her were found, and the analysis of these works presents a sense close to those who held management positions and expounded on the political guidelines adopted by the Brazilian authorities. Table 2 lists the author’s texts.

**Table 2** – Production by Sarah Couto Cesar

Year	Title	Journal/Event
1972	<i>A situação da Deficiência Mental no Brasil</i> [The situation of Mental Disability in Brazil]	<i>Revista Brasileira de Deficiência Mental</i> [Brazilian Journal of Mental Disability]
1975	<i>Atuação do CENESP na educação de excepcionais</i> [CENESP’s role in the education of exceptional people]	<i>UFRJ</i>
1975	<i>Área de ação prioritária do Ministério da Educação e da Cultura</i> [Priority action area of the Ministry of Education and Culture]	<i>VII Congresso Nacional da Federação Nacional das Apaes – São Paulo</i> [7 <sup>th</sup> National Congress of the National Federation of APAES – São Paulo]
1992	<i>Da CADEME ao CENESP – 13 anos de conquistas na Educação Especial no Brasil</i> [From CADEME to CENESP – 13 years of achievements in Special Education in Brazil]	<i>Anais do I Congresso Brasileiro sobre a Experiência Antipoffiana na Educação</i> [Annals of the 1 <sup>st</sup> Brazilian Congress on the Antipoffian Experience in Education]
2008	<i>Políticas Públicas</i> [Public policies]	<i>III Encontro Nacional do ConBraSD</i> [3 <sup>rd</sup> National Meeting of the Brazilian Council for Giftedness (ConBraSD)]

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors for research purposes.

<sup>6</sup> “Odylo Costa Filho, journalist, columnist and poet, graduated in Law from the *Universidade do Brasil* (1933). He was press secretary of President Café Filho; director of the newspapers *Tribuna da Imprensa* and *A Noite, Jornal do Brasil*, the magazines *Senhor* and *O Cruzeiro* and *Rádio Nacional*, reporter for *Jornal do Comércio*, secretary of the magazine *O Cruzeiro Internacional*, literary critic for the *Diário de Notícias*, cultural attaché at the Brazilian embassy in Lisbon (Portugal), editor at *Editora Abril*. Elected member of the *Academia Brasileira de Letras* in 1969, he was part of the third generation of Modernism. He passed away in 1979” (BATISTA, 2019).

As we can deduce from the biographical data and the reports obtained through interviews, Sarah Couto Cesar experienced the historical path that resulted in the institutionalization of Brazilian Special Education, from the beginning of the Pestalozzi Society of Brazil, in the late 1950s, up until her death, as a result of Covid, in 2020. Her professional trajectory surpassed the limits imposed by retirement, remaining active as a speaker at events of philanthropic institutions, which were recurrent throughout her career. She also knew how to establish a network of relationships that made it possible for her to return to the academic environment, now as a personality, as defined by Blanco (2020), who, based on her narratives and her personal collection, contributed to studies on the history of Special Education.

Another great pioneer of Special Education in Brazil, who had a direct connection with Helena Antipoff and Sarah Couto Cesar and contributed to the academic constitution of the field of Special Education, was Olívia da Silva Pereira (1918-1995). Her name was mentioned several times by Sarah Couto Cesar during interviews and activities carried out between 2016 and 2020 at *ObEE/UFRRJ*. One of Sarah Couto Cesar's concerns was precisely the lack of research that registered the very important role played by Olívia da Silva Pereira in the process of implementing Special Education in Brazil and her direct connection with Helena Antipoff.

Among the rare documents found about Olívia da Silva Pereira, we had access to the article written by Autran and Loureiro (2010), entitled *Memória da educação especial na PUC-Rio: resgatando a história* [Memory of special education at *PUC-Rio*: rescuing history]. Based on this article, we contacted Professor Ilza Maria Ferreira Pinto Autran, one of the authors, who granted us an interview and promptly made available the original (printed) version of Valéria Marques' Master's thesis, defended in 1994 at the Graduate Studies Program in Education from *UERJ*, under the title *A história da Educação Especial no Brasil através da história de vida da professora Olívia Pereira* [The history of Special Education in Brazil through the life story of Professor Olívia Pereira], one of our basic references for the study of Olívia da Silva Pereira.

According to Marques (1994), Olívia da Silva Pereira was born on August 23, 1918, at Rua Concórdia, São José district, in Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil. She is the daughter of Manoel Praxedes Pereira and Targelia Coelho da Silva Pereira, the second of four brothers, with an older brother and two younger sisters. Considered “[...] a pioneer in the field of special education, under the great influence of Professor Helena Antipoff, she established the pillars of special education and contributed to its evolution [...] a restless, transformative and innovative woman” (MARQUES, 1994, n.p.). Olívia da Silva Pereira died in 1995, one year after the defense of Marques' thesis (1994).

She came from a middle-class family and her parents were concerned about their children's education. She always studied in public schools, and a curiosity at the time is that students took the chairs they used to school. According to an interview with Marques (1994), Olívia da Silva Pereira commented: “I remember that the chairs where I would sit at the school I attended [...] I would take my chair. So everyone took their chair, stayed there and then brought it back. When it broke, they would change it” (MARQUES, 1994, n.p.).

Olívia da Silva Pereira obtained her teaching degree in 1939. At the Teaching School, she also attended Junior High School. Later, she joined the Institute of Education of Pernambuco and, in 1942, when she finished her studies, because she had done well in the exams, she was invited to the first school for the care of exceptional children, created at the Department of Interior of Pernambuco, Aires Gama School, where she remained from December 30, 1942 until 1950 (MARQUES, 1994).

Her connection with Professor Helena Antipoff began in the regular course, thanks to a didactics teacher with innovative characteristics who introduced the author to her. An interesting fact that Olívia da Silva Pereira reported in the interview with Marques (1994) is that the aforementioned teacher was designated by the government of Pernambuco to receive Helena Antipoff in the 1920s, when she arrived in Brazil. “Even not knowing at that time that she would work all her life developing projects with Helena Antipoff, she was already fascinated by what she had heard about her” (MARQUES, 1994, n.p.). Also according to the author, Olívia da Silva Pereira knew the work of Dr. Ulysses Pernambuco, a psychiatrist, began to visit, take courses and work in his team, which was a reference at the time. She had the psychologist Anita Paes Barreto by her side, and they continued working together in Recife, after Dr. Ulysses Pernambuco became ill and moved to Rio de Janeiro.

At the time (1942 to 1944), Olívia da Silva Pereira attended the first course in the Northeast of Social Assistance, but she did not identify herself with it. As a result of not presenting the final work, which would be a case study, she was not able to obtain such a degree, and stated: “[...] I was not very enthralled by the social services, because I don't know very well how to solve problems of [...] for example: food, money [...] I'm not very skilled at that [...]. *It's interesting because my training is much more about [...] training people [...]*” (MARQUES, 1994, n.p., emphasis added).

We highlight, in her statement, the area that she would really embrace intensely in her professional life, the “training of human resources”, with the main purpose of professionals to work in the area of Education for people with disabilities. In an interview with Professor Dr. Ilza Maria Ferreira Pinto Autran, who worked very closely with Olívia da Silva Pereira at *PUC-Rio*, she reported “[...] the importance of Olívia in the process of training human resources for the area of special education in Brazil” – interview conducted on May 17, 2021 (OBEE, 2021, n.p.).

According to data analyzed from the interview of PhD Professor Ilza Maria Ferreira Pinto Autran and PhD Professor Rosana Glat, as well as records made by Marques (1994), we analyzed the biography and performance of Olívia da Silva Pereira. In 1943 and 1944, she started her first contacts with Helena Antipoff in Rio de Janeiro, and took the course with Dr. Myra y Lopes, organized by Helena Antipoff. Olívia da Silva Pereira returned to Rio de Janeiro in 1944, as a representative of Pernambuco, now with the purpose of taking the course offered by Helena Antipoff, at the *Instituto da Criança* [Child Institute], of the Ministry of Health. Unfortunately, the course was already underway and, for that reason, she was unable to attend. However, she did not give up and talked to Helena Antipoff, who promptly invited her to participate in another course and in the organization of the Pestalozzi Society of Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro, in 1945 (MARQUES, 1994; OBEE, 2021).

In 1945 and 1946, she began her courses, her internships and her visits under the guidance of Helena Antipoff, in Rio de Janeiro, the capital of Brazil at that time. In Belo Horizonte, she also followed the courses on Child Psychotherapy and Exploration Method by Dr. Myra y Lopes, at the Education Department of *Fundação Getúlio Vargas* (MARQUES, 1994).

Among some internships, in 1945, Helena Antipoff recommended Olívia da Silva Pereira and three other people for an internship at *Fazenda do Rosário*, in Belo Horizonte, to get to know the project conceived by Helena Antipoff that was being developed there. The objective indicated for each intern was the elaboration of a Special Education action plan. Olívia da Silva Pereira pointed out how productive this internship was, mainly due to the attitude of Helena Antipoff, who respected the creativity of each intern, giving space for them to forward suggestions and solutions for the cases. According to Marques (1994, n.p., emphasis added): “She required a work plan [...]. Ms. Helena was very interesting, she wouldn't say [...] the person was the one who had to get the solution out of their own mind. This is something I got a lot from her [...]. *The person is the one who has to know how to do things [...], solve situations*”.

After the internship, Olívia da Silva Pereira was invited by Helena Antipoff to put into practice her action plan aimed at exceptional<sup>7</sup> teenagers at Pestalozzi Society of Brazil in Rio de Janeiro. It was an invitation for three or four months, but Olívia da Silva Pereira remained in that state all her life. Thus, she started coordinating the pedagogical workshops of the Pestalozzi Society of Brazil under the supervision of Helena Antipoff in 1945. In this way, she deepened her studies on the professionalization of people with disabilities. In 1946, also at the request of Helena Antipoff, she took the Psychopedagogy and Internship courses for teachers with the purpose of Specialization in the area of Special Education, at the Pestalozzi Society of Brazil (MARQUES, 1994). Still during this period, she made investments in her training, as she participated, in 1945, in the 1<sup>st</sup> Psychopedagogical Orientation Course, which had an agreement with the National Children's Department and the Pestalozzi Society of Brazil. "Unprecedented experience in the guidance of mentally retarded youths and those with serious conduct disorders [...]" (PEREIRA, 1974, p. 4 *apud* MARQUES, 1994, n.p.).

She graduated from *Fundação Getúlio Vargas*, on March 31, 1948, with the course Psychotherapy for Minors and with the course Critical Analysis of Personality Exploration Methods, on October 15, 1949. In 1949, at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of Santa Ursula, she studied Pedagogy. She had the opportunity to make a theoretical relationship between her studies and her practice, directly linked to the demands in the works she presented to Helena Antipoff (MARQUES, 1994).

From 1958 to 1961, she began her participation in several Specialization courses to introduce education of the exceptional in universities such as: *PUC-SP*; *PUC-Rio*; São Paulo Rehabilitation Institute; Institute of Psychology at *UFRJ*, as well as advising several University Teaching Nuclei, for the introduction of disciplines related to the Psychology of Education of the Exceptional. At that time, she also collaborated with the formation of *APAE* de São Paulo (MARQUES, 1994). In the interview with PhD Professor Ilza Maria Ferreira Pinto Autran commented on the possibility of Olívia's degree in Psychology being acquired by expertise knowledge (OBEE, 2021).

In 1961, she joined the Public Service at *INES*, with projects aimed at multiple disabilities, people with hearing impairments and people with mental disabilities (term used at that time). In the following years, according to our data, more specifically in 1964, the year of the military dictatorship in Brazil, she began her studies on the translation and adaptation of *Gunzburg's PAC I-2* test, which, in 1967, with the collaboration of Professor Luiza da Rocha Silveira, published a final version considering adaptations to Brazil's socioeconomic conditions.

Years later, in 1970, she transferred her enrollment to *CADEME* to act as an advisor and participate in the Task Groups that worked specifically on studies and planning for the effectiveness of an implementing agency for Special Education, since the creation of the Priority Project no. 35. She was an advisor for the "mentally handicapped" area of the Special Education Task Group and a specialized advisor for the Implementation of *CENESP* Task Group, a sector that, years later, she started to manage as deputy director alongside director Sarah Couto Cesar.

During this period, she was also a professor in the Department of Psychology at *PUC-Rio*, specializing in Therapeutic Pedagogy. She taught the discipline of "Psychology of the Exceptional" and worked at Pestalozzi society of Brazil. According to Autran and Loureiro (2010), Olívia da Silva Pereira was the main creator and teacher of the Qualification of Educator of Exceptional People, in 1970, of the Pedagogy course at *PUC-Rio*.

According to Autran and Loureiro (2010), at *CENESP*, Professor Olívia da Silva Pereira acted as an advisor in the area of "mental disability" and coordinated the Human Resources Training Project, one of the areas listed as a priority for the Center's activities. This project

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<sup>7</sup> Term used at the time.

proposed the qualification of Master's in Special Education at George Peabody College for Teachers, as previously mentioned based on the reports of Sarah Couto Cesar. Also according to the interviewee, Professor Olívia da Silva Pereira was an important figure in the establishment of partnerships between *CENESP* and *PUC-Rio*, through the Department of Education, for the realization of several improvement courses in the area of Special Education. In the interview, Autran adds: "Olívia was very important, because she gave this boost to the training of professionals in Special Education, her great desire was to train teachers, pedagogues or teachers in Special Education (OBEE, 2021, n.p.)."

Another important role played by Olívia da Silva Pereira was in the area of giftedness, which Helena Antipoff dedicated herself to in the last years of her life. In 1971, she participated in the Seminar on Gifted, at the Faculty of Education of the *Universidade de Brasília*. The purpose of the event was to provide "[...] knowledge and survey, within the Brazilian reality, the problem of the gifted in terms of conceptualization and care programs, aiming at a planning by MEC through suggestions and measures proposed by specialists" (BRASIL, 1971, p. 5).

Unlike Sarah Couto Cesar, Olívia da Silva Pereira has been strongly involved in research and has published several papers and chapters in the field of Special Education, as well as organizing and publishing books. She has also participated in international and national research projects. Among the academic assets, we highlight the book *Integração do excepcional na força de trabalho* [Integration of the exceptional in the workforce] (PEREIRA, 1977) and the participation of the team that integrated the Special Multinational Education Project Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, developed through an agreement between *MEC* and the Organization of the American States (OAS) in the 1970s.

The professionalization of people with disabilities – in particular people with intellectual disabilities, who are the majority of the enrollment of the Special Education public in Basic Education –, and their integration into the labor market still today have been constituted as a negative goodwill (REDIG, 2016). Olívia da Silva Pereira, in *Integração do excepcional na força de trabalho* [Integration of the exceptional in the workforce], presents a set of guidelines for the development of actions aimed at the professional preparation of the "exceptional" and their integration into the competitive or protective force of work. In the work, she brings philosophical foundations, a historical retrospective of official international documents and movements that took place in Brazil, as well as factors that influenced the defense for exceptional's preparation for work (psychological, social, technological, administrative and legal), concepts (habilitation and rehabilitation), service models; examples of types of occupation for "mentally", physical sensory (visual, auditory) and non-sensory physically handicapped; techniques and resources for professional training; indications for vocational assessment based on the concepts of eligibility and degree of ability to perform the task or performance of the function/job; list of research carried out in Brazil on the professionalization of the "exceptional"; training of human resources (BATISTA, 2019; OBEE, 2021). In one of the book chapters published by Olívia da Silva Pereira, in 1983, the origin, the historical, philosophical and social aspects, and the factors related to the implementation of the principles of normalization and integration, focus of debate and research at that time in the country, are presented.

Olívia da Silva Pereira also worked in the training of human resources, as reported by Rosana Glat's interview, in the constitution of the Master's in Education at *UERJ* in 1979. In this program, she was a visiting professor in the Special Education area, teaching disciplines and guiding research such as those of the teachers Rosita Edler de Carvalho and Rosana Glat. She also worked at *PUC-Rio*, as previously indicated. She was a member of scientific committees of national references in the field and a research advisor. Rosana Glat told us that

Olívia da Silva Pereira was very concerned with the training of personnel for Special Education: “Olívia was more connected to the University [...], she was a full professor at that time. She took part on my doctoral examination board and Olívia developed a lot in this part of human resources. That was Olívia’s idea” (OBEE, 2021, n.p.) – referring to the project to train master’s and doctoral students in the United States, managed during the period of Sarah Couto Cesar when she was head of CENESP – in an interview held on October 2, 2020. In Table 3, we systematize Olívia da Silva Pereira’s scientific productions.

**Table 3** - Productions by Olívia da Silva Pereira

Year	Production
1948	A labor therapy experience in the pedagogical workshops of Pestalozzi Society of Brazil. Semi-annual newsletter, July to December, Pestalozzi Society of Brazil, Rio de Janeiro.
1967	With the collaboration of Professor Luiza da Rocha Silveira, she published a final version of the translation and adaptation of <i>Gunzburg’s PAC 1-2</i> test.
1970	<i>The adjustment of social education targeted to different cultural settings</i> . Rio de Janeiro.
1970	Specialized teacher preparation. In: 1 <sup>st</sup> International Seminar on Special Education and Rehabilitation of the Mentally Retarded. July to December. <i>Malmö</i> , Sweden
1974	Personal memorial. Rio de Janeiro.
1979	Organization of Pedagogical Workshops. Pedagogical Workshops Course. Pestalozzi Society of Brazil. UERJ, Rio de Janeiro.
1977	Integration of the exceptional into the workforce.
1978	Master’s thesis: Evaluation of the professional training of mentally retarded adolescents adopted by the pedagogical workshops of Pestalozzi Society of Brazil.
1978 a 1994	13 productions of papers and various texts published in <i>Revista Pestalozzi</i> .
1980	Special Education: current challenges. <i>Interamericana</i> . Rio de Janeiro.
1981	Technology applied to special education. Area of assistance for the mentally handicapped. <i>Revista Tecnologia Educacional</i> . <i>Associação Brasileira de Tecnologia Educacional</i> (ABT), July/August, n° 41, year X.
1982	From philosophy to action in the work of Helena Antipoff. 12 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of the National Federation of the Pestalozzi Society. October, Recife.
1983	Chapter: Principles of normalization and Integration in the Education of the “Exceptional”, from the book <i>Educação Especial - atuais desafios</i> [Special Education - current challenges].
1990	Current status of special education in Brazil. <i>Reunion Internacional para el estudio científico del retraso mental. Homenaje a M<sup>a</sup> Soriano por 63 años de investigación del retraso mental</i> . [International meeting for the scientific study of mental retardation. Tribute to Maria Soriano for 63 years of investigation on mental retardation]. From May 28-31, 1990. Aisla, Santiago de Compostela.

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors based on Marques (1994) and ObEE (2021).

Like Sarah Couto Cesar, Professor Olívia da Silva Pereira was also a member of Pestalozzi, an institution in which, among other actions, she wrote texts for *Revista Pestalozzi*, with varied approaches and themes, such as contributions by Helena Antipoff, protected pedagogical workshops, concept of “mental retardation” (term of the time), summary of conference proceedings, seminars, among other topics.



## To wrap up

Throughout this paper, the data show the contributions and importance of Sarah Couto Cesar and Olívia da Silva Pereira in the constitution of Special Education in Brazil. The work of Olívia da Silva Pereira covered different fronts, such as training human resources, participating in research projects, writing papers and public management of Special Education. Sarah Couto Cesar, on the other hand, dedicated herself more to institutional projects, through the management of *CENESP* and the elaboration of policy guidelines. Both were responsible for training qualified human resources at the Graduate level, through partnerships with the United States, necessary to train teachers in Brazil and, later, to constitute the academic field of Special Education. For all that they carried out, the research allows us to infer that they left an important legacy in the constitution of Brazilian Special Education as a public policy in education.

The relationship of Sarah Couto Cesar and Olívia da Silva Pereira with different political agents of the time and with private philanthropic institutions was important in that historical context, especially to strengthen and advance Special Education projects in the country. However, this relationship ended up, in a way, interfering in the disputes, still imperious in Brazil, about the *locus* of schooling for people with disabilities. Despite the pro-inclusion legal advances since the 1988 Constitution (BRASIL, 1988) and the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law – Law no. 9,394, of December 20, 1996 (BRASIL, 1996), such as the National Policy of Special Education (BRASIL, 2008), the Brazilian Inclusion Law – Law no. 13,146, of July 6, 2015 (BRASIL, 2015), and the National Education Plan, in force through Law no. 13,005, of June 25, 2014 (BRASIL, 2014), the term “preferentially” continues to be used in relation to the enrollment of the population with a disability in the regular school. The dispute between the public and private-philanthropic system in the education of people with disabilities is constitutive of the history of Brazilian Special Education (LAPLANE; CAIADO; KASSAR, 2016; PEREIRA; PLETSCHE, 2021).

With regard to teacher training, privatization is evident. Research data presented in the Special Education Task Group 15 (GT15) at the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of ANPEd show that there are 272 undergraduate degree courses in Special Education registered with the Ministry of Education, of which only two are offered by public universities (0.7% of the total). The primacy of the private sector is repeated in continuing education, in which 95.3% of the 633 Specialization courses in Special Education are offered by private institutions (SIEMS *et al.*, 2021).

Throughout the text, we identify the importance of the two characters portrayed. Many of the challenges faced by Sarah Couto Cesar and by Olívia da Silva Pereira in their time have not yet been fully overcome, with regard to the educational and social rights of people with disabilities, ASD and giftedness. Currently, we have a huge set of children and young people with disabilities out of school, without access to professionalization programs and without guarantee of specialized educational support from Specialized Education Service (SES) in resource rooms, as provided for in Brazilian legislation as a right of these students (BRASIL, 2009). Of this population of 1.251 million enrolled in Basic Education, only 38.7% have access to SES. It is important to mention that, of this total, 1.1 million enrollments are in regular education classes and 160 thousand in private segregated spaces, according to data from *Educacenso*<sup>8</sup>.

Knowing the history of Special Education is urgent and necessary, especially at a time when, in Brazil and in other countries, the violation of human rights and democracy has grown. In this sense, defending the educational rights of the population with disabilities, ASD and giftedness in an inclusive perspective, with social justice as a horizon, is also a way of defending the democratization of social life and the recognition of differences as constitutive of humanity.

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<sup>8</sup> Available at: <http://censobasico.inep.gov.br/censobasico/#/>. Accessed on: Dec. 10, 2021.

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