Exploring Self-advocacy in Brazilian Schools: Experiences of Teachers and their Students with

Developmental Disabilities

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Abstract

Most research on school self-advocacy focuses on contexts within the Global North. This doctoral thesis explores self-advocacy experiences through the perspectives of teachers and their students with developmental disabilities in Brazilian schools. A historical investigation of the self-advocacy movement in Brazil contextualizes the research within the current stage of inclusion. A conceptual discussion on autonomy in Critical Pedagogy and Self-determination Theory establishes a theoretical framework for self-advocacy in schools, addressing the critical and practical aspects of this research. We conducted an introductory workshop on self-advocacy with seven participating teachers, aiming to establish a common lexicon for initiating research across five schools in three major cities, informed by historical and theoretical perspectives. Educators consented to implement self-advocacy practices with students (n=25, aged 9-15 years) over two months. Data were collected at two-time points via interviews, a questionnaire administered to teachers, and focus groups conducted with students. The thematic analysis revealed that teachers' self-advocacy initiatives encompassed reflection on their work and the identification of necessary support from peers, staff, and the school board. Teachers and students both recognized rights as a fundamental component of self-advocacy. Students reflected on their disabilities and offered a critical understanding of issues within the school environment, encompassing infrastructure, pedagogical resources, and social interactions. The implementation of self-advocacy involved complexity and necessitated multi-dimensional support. Despite time constraints, students exhibited initial progress in forming a collective disability identity. The lived experiences of teachers and students regarding school self-advocacy provide practical insights that can be further developed in the Global South to enhance educational equity.

Keywords: Self-advocacy, Disabilities, Brazilian schools, Inclusive education.

Résumé:

La plupart des recherches sur la self-advocacy scolaire se concentrent sur des contextes du Nord Global. Cette thèse doctorale explore les expériences de la self-advocacy à travers les perspectives des enseignants et de leurs élèves ayant des déficiences développementales dans des écoles brésiliennes. Une enquête historique sur le mouvement de self-advocacy au Brésil contextualise la recherche dans le cadre actuel de l'inclusion. Une discussion conceptuelle sur l'autonomie dans la Pédagogie Critique et la Self-Determination Theory établit un cadre théorique pour la self-advocacy en milieu scolaire, abordant à la fois les aspects critiques et pratiques de cette recherche. En s'appuyant sur des perspectives historiques et théorique, nous avons animé un atelier introductif sur la self-advocacy avec sept enseignants participants, visant à établir un lexique commun pour initier la recherche dans cinq écoles situées dans trois grandes villes. Les éducateurs ont donné leur consentement pour implémenter des pratiques de self-advocacy avec des élèves (n=25, âgés de 9 à 15 ans) sur une période de deux mois. Les données ont été recueillies à deux moments via des entretiens et un questionnaire administré aux enseignants, ainsi que des groupes de discussion menés avec les élèves. L'analyse thématique a révélé que les initiatives de la self-advocacy des enseignants incluaient une réflexion sur leur travail et l'identification du soutien nécessaire de la part de leurs collègues, du personnel et du conseil d'administration de l'école. Les enseignants et les élèves ont tous deux reconnu que les droits constituaient un élément fondamental de la self-advocacy. Les élèves ont réfléchi sur leurs handicaps et ont proposé une compréhension critique des problèmes dans l'environnement scolaire, incluant l'infrastructure, les ressources pédagogiques et les interactions sociales. La mise en œuvre de la self-advocacy a révélé des complexités et a nécessité des soutiens multidimensionnels. Malgré des contraintes de temps, les élèves ont montré des progrès initiaux

dans la formation d'une identité collective de handicap. Les expériences vécues des enseignants et des élèves concernant la self-advocacy en milieu scolaire offrent des perspectives pratiques qui peuvent être développées davantage dans le Sud Global pour améliorer l'équité éducative.

Mots clés: self-advocacy, handicap, écoles brésiliennes, éducation inclusive.

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List of abbreviations

AAIDD – American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
ADHD – Attention Deficit and yHyperactivity Disorder
AEE – Atendimento Educacional Especializado [Specialized Educational Service]
APA – American Psychological Association
APAE – Associação de Pais e Amigos dos Excepcionais [Parents and Friends Association of the Exceptionals]
ASD – Autism Spectrum Disorder
BH – Belo Horizonte city
CACL - Canadian Association of Community Living
CONADE - Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Pessoa com Deficiência [Brazilian Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities]
CP – Cerebral Palsy
CP – Critical Pedagogy
DD – Developmental Disabilities
DSM – Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
FASD – Brazilian Federation of Down Syndrome
FENAPAE – Brazilian Federation of Parents and Friends Association of the Exceptionals
ICD – International Classification of Diseases
ICF - International Classification of Functionality, Disability and Health
ID – Intellectual Disabilities
IDD – Intellectual Developmental Disabilities
IEP - Individual Educational Plan
IQ – Intelligence Quotient
MEC – Ministry of Education and Culture
NLTS – National Longitudinal Transition Study
RJ – Rio de Janeiro city
SA – Self-Advocacy
SBC – São Bernardo do Campo city
SD – Self-Determination
SDLMI – Self-Determination Learning Model of Instruction
SDT – Self-Determination Theory
SIS-C – Support Intensity Scale for Children
T1 – Timepoint 1
T2 – Timepoint 2
UN – United Nations
UPIAS – United Physically Impaired Against Segregation
WHO – World Health Organization

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Contributions to Original Knowledge

This research explores self-advocacy in Brazilian schools from the dual perspectives of teachers and students. It contributes to human development and educational psychology and is applied to the Global South context.

1) First, this study responds to the need to contextualize the history of self-advocacy in Brazilian schools, which has yet to be described. This historical investigation contextualizes the development of self-advocacy in Brazil as a social movement and how the construct has been used in the educational context.

2) The second contribution, to the field of human development, consists of the theoretical discussion on the concept of autonomy from the perspectives of self-determination theory and critical pedagogy; commonalities and differences are presented as a framework for conceiving of self-advocacy in schools.

3) The third contribution explores teachers' and students' experiences of self-advocacy practices in Brazilian schools. Insights of teachers and students on their self-advocacy experiences from five schools located in the most populated cities of Brazil demonstrate the challenges and the improvements observed in their school environment. These reflections offer innovative contributions to the field of self-advocacy in the Global South context and how this social context may affect the development of self-advocacy, which is mainly found in the literature of the Global North.

Contribution of authors

An adapted version of the historical section of the introduction chapter has been published as a book chapter* with the collaboration of Dr. Marie Claire Sekkel and Dr. Diego Rodrigues Silva. Flavio Murahara was the primary author of the chapter (Murahara et al., 2024).

All other chapters were written exclusively by the doctoral candidate Flavio Murahara under the supervision of Dr. Tara Flanagan.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

> "I refuse to give in to the pressure of the silence.
> This is one of the things about me.
> I persist.
> I insist on speaking.
> On being heard."
> (Heumann et al., 2019)

The quote by the late disability advocate Judith Heumann (Heumann et al., 2019) represents the core inquiry of this doctoral thesis. The pressure to be silent refers to all the systemic barriers that Heumann faced throughout her life trajectory. From her first school experiences to her accomplished career as one of the most important disabled activists in history, she persistently overcame "the pressure of the silence." Her history of achievements as a disability advocate invites us to wonder how one develops self-advocacy and how these could be taught to others with disabilities still in their formative process. This inquiry aligns with the aim of this doctoral research: *how to promote self-advocacy for young individuals with developmental disabilities in Brazilian schools?* Despite the remarkable progress in the recent history of persons with disabilities participating in decision-making processes about their own lives, this question remains a relevant provocation for advocates and scholars because systemic barriers continue to hinder the full development of persons with disabilities (United Nations, 2015).

Moreover, target 16.7, "Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels" of goal 16, "Peace, Justice and Strong institutions" of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, has reinforced the importance of developing participation in the decision-making process in all institutions, including the involvement of students with

disabilities in schools. Notably, in the Global South context, where socio-economic inequity significantly impacts the lives of children and adults with disabilities, understanding the development of self-advocacy becomes a more complex task. This extra layer of cultural complexity adds new elements that will be contextualized in this research. Therefore, understanding the "pressure of silence" alludes to ways to comprehend the oppressive mechanics that suppress disabled people's voices in specific contexts. In this study, *we adopt a critical developmental psychology perspective to examine the numerous dimensions of this silencing process while assessing ways to promote self-advocacy in Brazilian schools for students with developmental disabilities*.

In Brazilian Portuguese, there is a common expression, "fazer silêncio," which could be translated as "making silence"; in other words, silence is produced as a result of an action – "one makes silence." Interestingly, teachers use this common expression to ask their students to quiet down when classrooms are noisy. This linguistic anecdote illustrates that being silent is an individual choice because one decides to keep the place quiet. Although the teacher example may seem like an ordinary situation in schools, this has a particular meaning for those with disabilities since silence has been imposed as a product of the historical process of rejection and exclusion lived by individuals with disabilities (Stiker, 2019). Another aim of this thesis focuses on how Brazilian schools may counter this silencing process by fostering the development of students' self-advocacy.

In brief, self-advocacy denotes the idea of individuals speaking up for themselves and leading decisions concerning their own lives. Defining self-advocacy is a complex endeavour because it encompasses different aspects (Chambers, 2024) such as the political aspect that includes the social movement of self-advocacy and the disability rights movements (Dybwad,

1996; Pelka, 2012); knowledge about rights (Griffiths et al., 2012); the experience of self-advocates belonging to groups (Anderson & Bigby, 2017b; Beart et al., 2004), a set of learnable skills (Shogren et al., 2017; Test, Fowler, Brewer, et al., 2005; Test, Fowler, Wood, et al., 2005; Zhang et al., 2019) including an intricated conceptual relationship of self-advocacy with the self-determination (Sands & Wehmeyer, 1996; Wehmeyer, 2007). In this thesis, we depart from a broad view of self-advocacy to a specific understanding of how self-advocacy can be applied to formal learning environments.

This thesis centers on the concept of disability. Therefore, it is essential to pinpoint that multifaceted aspects of the disability experience will be presented throughout the thesis. This entails exploring different contextual terminology (ID, IDD, DD); the terminology choices will be contextualized in each section.

In addition to the complex challenge to define self-advocacy, putting the concept of self-advocacy into action in schools can be difficult because it requires clarifying the implication of the following features: 1) Historical and cultural overview of self-advocacy; 2) The theoretical framework: Self-determination theory and Critical Pedagogy. 3) Current overview of literature.

1.2 Positionality

I identify myself, first, as a non-disabled professional who works and develops research in inclusive education with an interest in self-advocacy practices applied to schools. I have worked as an educational psychologist for four years in Brazilian public schools and disability organizations. I moved to Canada in 2016, volunteering in the Independent Living Centre of Montréal from 2016 to 2018. In 2018, I started my PhD at McGill University and have participated in different disability-related research projects. My main interests focused on inclusive practices in educational and formative settings.

The location and context of this doctoral research in a Canadian university provoked me to reflect on my positionality and the lens that I have been using to conceptualize my research theme, self-advocacy. I realized that many experiences of my identity as a researcher from Brazil (also considered the Global South) could not be translated directly into the Canadian academic environment. It was beyond the linguistic barriers and involved many different reference points. Therefore, most of the discussion in this doctoral thesis represents this dialogue between two worlds of reference points. To start, the historical and theoretical sections present comparative and dialogical approaches to the plural aspects of this axis of Global South and North.

1.3 Historical and Cultural Overview of Self-advocacy in Brazil

The banner "Nothing about us, without us" carries an impactful message that has been shouted all around the globe and throughout history by social movements of persons with disabilities. In Portuguese, "*Nada sobre nós, sem nós*" has practically the same meaning. However, there are cultural considerations that are specific to the social movement of persons with intellectual disabilities (ID) in Brazil, which are pivotal for understanding the current situation. This section presents the history of self-advocacy in Brazil and how it evolved as a construct and social movement compared to other countries. Describing the history of self-advocacy requires examining the role of persons with ID in the decision-making process of the leading social movements in Brazil, whose specificities are compared with the development of self-advocacy in North America and Europe. Nonetheless, given that most historical depictions originate from Global North perspectives, these interpretations will be carefully considered. Through the chronological organization of the concept of self-advocacy and the social movement, we propose interpretations of the commonalities and differences found in this comparative view of self-advocacy.

Another consideration that fuels the comparative discussion on self-advocacy is the careful translation of the term self-advocacy to "autodefensoria". Choosing this translation, "autodefensoria," currently reflects an attempt to encompass the political aspects of the self-advocacy social movement and the conceptual aspects that deal with self-advocacy as a set of principles and concepts. However, we emphasize that in Brazilian literature, the term is freely translated as "autodefensoria" (APAE, 2017; Glat, 2004; Santos, 2022), "autoadvocacia" (Dantas, 2014; Neves, 2005), "defesa de direitos", or "autodefesa" (APAE, 2017). Exploring these possible translations invites us to consider the historical, political, and conceptual nuances of each choice, which will be explored throughout the historical milestones presented below.

Regarding the elaboration method of this historical section, the investigation was based on secondary sources consulted in databases (Worldcat, Scielo), including scientific articles, academic books, and Brazilian doctoral research. Data from technical manuals and guidelines from institutions for people with disabilities were also included (selected through internet searches). The keywords used for the search consisted of the term "self-advocacy"; the in Portuguese search, the most common translations referred to the terms: "autodefensoria", "autodefesa", and the less common "autoadvocacia". The usage of the term "defesa de direitos" resulted in broad preliminary results that were beyond the scope of this research project and did not lead to significant results. Thus, only references contributing to the historical development of self-advocacy were included in this survey.

Epistemological Underpinnings for the History of Self-advocacy

To begin, I will define the epistemological underpinnings of the notion of history. The political philosopher Hannah Arendt (2006) criticizes the common notion of conception of history as a linear process which results in a final product. Her critique encompasses a notion of history as full of untold stories and isolated events that do not integrate necessarily into the "main" narrative. Although from a different epistemological standpoint, Boaventura de Souza Santos (2021) presents a convergent view on the pluralist conception of the past; the author grounds history on the premise that no single report can contain the past because history is not a single entity. According to Santos (2021) the past is composed of interwoven histories. These two perspectives are particularly relevant for the purpose of this chapter since the history of Brazilian self-advocacy is not yet written, in the sense that the particularities of the self-advocacy movement have not been comprehensively contemplated within the history of the wider disability movements and require a historical exploration.

A second consideration refers to the conception of disability, which, according to Meekosha (2011) is a notion constructed mainly from perspectives of the Global North. This skewed approach ignores the oppressive mechanics of centuries of colonization, thus artificially creating a universal conception of disability. In Brazil specifically, the initial Portuguese colonization, and later, American imperialism, played major roles in the country's economic and political development. Initially through actions, and later with public policies, these external pressures have defined the environmental conditions and lives of persons with intellectual disabilities throughout history. This salient argument provokes us to adopt a critical framework and develop cultural sensitivity in order to comprehend self-advocacy history within the Brazilian context.

In this historical section, the term intellectual disability (ID) employed herein refers to a specific lens that delineates the object of study, in this case, the development of self-advocacy and its intricate origins related to intellectual disabilities.

Before delving into the history of self-advocacy, it is noteworthy that the self-advocacy history is centred at the participation in decision-making processes. Throughout history, the participation of persons with intellectual disabilities over the decisions in their lives varied according to the given social opportunities. We observe an evolution from decisions made by others, either professionals or families, to the self-representative decisions, in other words, the decisions made by persons with intellectual disabilities themselves. The following section traces the milestones and nuances related to this historical process by comparing the Global North and South realities, specifically the Brazilian historical events.

Self-advocacy as a concept arises from the social movements of people with disabilities, but its grounding tenets are embedded in the history of individuals with intellectual disabilities.

As a natural manifestation of human development, intellectual disabilities have always occurred, although the first records only appear in the Therapeutic Papyrus of Thebes, an Egyptian document dating from the year 1552 B.C. (Minnesota website, 2023). For this chapter, the history of intellectual disability is narrowed down to the social and political events that contributed to the current stage of self-advocacy advancement. Wehmeyer, Bersani and Gagne (2000) propose three major periods in the historical development of persons with intellectual disabilities; 1) *professionalism*, in this first stage, all decisions were taken by governments and professionals; 2) *the parents' movements* stage presents the creation of specialized institutions where parents assume the main decisions over their relatives' lives, and 3) the self-advocacy movements, which consisted of the decisions being made by people with intellectual disabilities. This final stage represents the current initiatives of institutions led by people with disabilities. In sum, the history of intellectual disabilities is connected to the history of the creation of institutions for the mental health and disability community, which ultimately culminates in the creation of self-advocacy movements. It is noteworthy that these three waves of historical organization (Wehmeyer, 2013) represent the North American perspective, while the history of persons with intellectual disabilities and related institutions in Latin American will be focused on and problematized throughout the text.

The First Records – 1930s: Professionalism and Eugenics

The first records of persons with intellectual disabilities being institutionalized date from the mid-1800s. At this period, intellectual disabilities could not be "objectively" identified since the first intelligence test was not designed by Alfred Binet until 1902. The use of IQ tests began in the early 20th century with Binet's effort to demonstrate that intelligence could be measured through experimental procedures. From this historical moment, persons with ID could be

distinguished from the "norm". Carlson (2010) argues that after intelligence became "visible," there were institutional implications of this identification to the lives of those being diagnosed. The quantification of the intelligence quotient would define, for instance, who could attend schools, which consequently, denied access to education for several diagnosed individuals whose only option would be to live restricted within closed institutions.

We pinpoint how the life-decisions of individuals with intellectual disabilities were made by professionals and public institutions' representatives. A representative historical piece was the publication of the Kallikak family book by Henri Goddard (1912) wherein he proposed the sterilization of those prone to have *feeble minded* descendants by using a misleading and manufactured example of family lineage of the Kallikaks. In terms of decision making, this intention shows the complete absence of decision power by people with intellectual disabilities own lives. Literally, professionals would decide about the right to existence of whole family lineages.

Another representative reference is Stanley Davies's book from 1930 *Social Control of the Mentally Retarded.* The author advocated for the confinement of persons with intellectual disabilities based on the premise that society should be protected from the menace of the "mentally retarded" (Dybwad, 1996). Davies's main argument relied on the premise that intellectual disabilities were a menace to society. This argument reinforces the segregation and institutionalization of all "deviant" people.

In Brazil, the first institutions for people with disabilities were created at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century (Mazzota, 2005). This period coincided with the country's transition from a monarchy to a republican state. The Imperial Institute for the Blind Children was created through a decree by the Emperor Dom Pedro II in Rio de Janeiro city in

1854; three years later, the emperor also decreed the creation of the school Imperial Institute for the "Deaf-Mute". More institutions for persons with disabilities were created during this period; however, concerning the purpose of this thesis, the first record of an institute specific for persons with intellectual disabilities was the State Hospital of Salvador in Bahia state in1874 – its first activities were not considered educational and focused mainly on specialized medical treatments. In the coming decade, institutions multiplied in different Brazilian regions.

It is important to highlight that there were no clear distinctions between disabilities and psychiatric conditions. Basically, all who strayed from a "normal" behavioural expectation could be institutionalized for life. For the purposes of this dissertation, we align with the well-elaborated critiques of Merleau-Ponty and Wild (1963) and Canguilhem (2012) for the conceptualization of this unrealistic normative notion that subsequently sustained the segregation of those considered "not normal." This critique reinforces the argument against the principles of eugenics and the practice of institutionalization.

1940s and 1950s the Beginning of Parents' Movements

In the *1940-50s*, the lives of people with disabilities took a different direction. The parents' initiatives characterized this second wave (Wehmeyer, 2013) as much as the human rights movements with the publication of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 in which all persons including those with disabilities should have their rights guaranteed.

In these decades we see the creation of parents' association as a global movement. In Brazil, we observe the creation of two major institutions for people with intellectual disabilities; the Pestalozzi Institute in 1940 and14 years later, the creation of the Parents and Friends Association of the Exceptionals (APAE), which was based on the American model of parents' association Lanna (Junior, 2010). These associations would fit in the *second wave* proposed by

Wehmeyer, Bersani and Gagne (2000). It is worth noting that the creation of the Belo Horizonte Pestallozzi Association was a salient milestone for Brazilian special education given the innovative contributions of Helena Antipoff, Russian psychologist who was a pioneer in the education of children with disabilities and influenced a whole generation of young psychologist and special educators (Campos, 2003). Other institutions were created in Brazil, but here we focus only on the main institutions for persons with intellectual disabilities.

1960s: the First Self-Advocacy Initiatives

The *1960s* was a decade with significant events that shaped the future of the self-advocacy movement. The year of 1967 had two major events. First, in Sweden, Bengt Nirje organized a first international vacation trip for young Swedish with intellectual disabilities. This event was an important global milestone in the history of persons with ID because it demonstrated that people with disabilities could also experience leisure activities. This initiative gave birth to the publication of the paper "Towards independence" (Nirje, 1985), two years later which reported on training activities for 16 young adults. The first conceptualization of self-advocacy takes place in Sweden at the end of the 60s.

Another concomitant influencer of the decade was Wolf Wolfensberger who after visiting Scandinavia (Denmark and Sweden), was inspired to write about the principle of normalization. His publications and advocacy had a major impact in anglophone countries such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia (Wolfensberger, 2003). Through his exchanges with Bengt Nirje, Karl Grunewald, and Dr. Robert Krugel; Wolfensberger developed several pieces that were essential to the argument against the established institutionalization of individuals with disabilities and/or psychiatric conditions. Wolfensberger's contribution with the book *The Principle of Normalization*, which was later revised and renamed as the *Social Role*

Valorization theory, proposed guiding tenets[1] and pragmatic instructions for the services aimed

at the population with intellectual disabilities, these tenets established a new reference for

services for the persons with intellectual disabilities (Wolfensberger, 2003).

The tenets were organized in eight steps that represented values often absent in the daily

lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Each step promotes a life aspect that opposes

the conditions lived in the institutions. The normalization principle was later reconsidered

because the word "normalization" misguidedly suggested that people should fit into the normal

standard which did not represent its values.

A final consideration on Wolfensberger is that, although he contributed to the services of

people with ID, he stood against the self-advocacy concept. He strongly criticized the movement

– and the notion of self-determination (Integration, 2016). He was a controversial figure who

contributed to the deinstitutionalization movement, which unintentionally facilitated the onset of

the self-advocacy movement. According to Bersani's interview (Integration, 2016), despite

Wolfensberger's opinion on self-advocacy, the normalization theory aligned with the tenets of

the self-advocacy movement.

Wolfensberger (1999) described the important role of Gunnar Dybwad's work in the field

of *mental retardation*. Dybwad was described as acting in the background of the cause to

recognize services as human rights instead of a matter of charity or privilege. He also advocated

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[1] The normalization principles by Nirje are summarized by Perske (2004): "Plank One: Normalization means a normal rhythm of the day; Plank Two: Normalization implies a normal routine of life; Plank Three: Normalization means a normal rhythm of the year; Plank Four: Normalization calls for normal developmental experiences of the life cycle; Plank Five: Normalization calls for the valuing of individual choices; Plank Six: Normalization means living in a bisexual world; Plank Seven: Normalization means applying normal economic standards; Plank Eight: Normalization calls for living, learning, and recreating in facilities similar to those others in the community enjoy."

that the rights perspective would tackle the consequential stigma inflicted by this view of persons

with intellectual disabilities as charity receptacles. Another stigma at the time was the

assumption that adults with intellectual disabilities were childlike figures, which started to be

problematized and understood as an issue based on a normalization discussion.

In the Global North, the late 1960s were characterized by the first self-advocacy

occurrences including initial social gatherings and theoretical discussions over the main tenets of

the conceptual discussions. Conversely, it is important to distinguish that in Brazil and other

South American countries, this decade was marked by the instalment of dictatorships.

Specifically in 1964 occurred the military coup that remained in power for two decades in Brazil.

This political situation adversely affected the development of social movements and civil free

expression (Hur & Júnior, 2016). Despite being beyond of the scope of this historical

investigation, it is important to highlight the influence of the dictatorial government in hindering

social movements, possibly including the self-advocacy movement.

1970s: the First Meetings – The Beginning of the Self-advocacy Wave

In North America, the 60s' first initiatives were the basis for the onset of self-advocacy

movements in the *1970s.* The first valuable mention of the notion of self-advocacy is a product

of the Universal Human Rights Declaration of 1948; it was after 23 years, in 1971, that the

United Nations (1971) proclaimed the *Declaration on the Rights of the Mentally Retarded*

Persons, which was an important global milestone (Degener et al., 1995). This first milestone

that identified the specific needs related to intellectual disability regarding integration into

society was a strong statement against institutionalization. This decade is marked by the

beginning of the dismantling of segregated institutions around the world where numerous reports

of mistreatment occurred (Gagne, 2013). However, although deinstitutionalization was a victory

for people with intellectual disabilities and other "deviant" conditions, the reintegration into society denoted the lack of essential social skills to thrive in community life. People leaving these institutions did not have access to a formal education, nor had they developed basic social skills. These challenges created major societal issues.

In the United States, a response to these challenges was a remarkable initiative by the Reverend Dennis Heath: People First. He became the mentor of the group composed of former Fairmount institution internees, who would later compose the initial People First group. When Heath noticed that these people did not possess the basic social skills to communicate with others, make decisions, and make or deny requests (Test, Fowler, Wood, et al., 2005); he proposed social gatherings for the recent members of his community. "The embryo was people talking, and running the meetings themselves, and sharing about their lives, and listening to each other" (Pelka, 2012, p. 235). Apparently, the natural process of people gathering and talking, had offered the minimal conditions for group interaction/communication, which set the stage for the original People First group to emerge. Even though these people presented trajectories of oppression, this initiative provided the groundwork for the creation of other self-advocacy groups around the country. In the following year, in the west coast region, the first Canadian meeting took place in British Columbia, 1972. Not long after, in 1974, in Oregon, US, the People First organization was created. **This is a landmark that represents the first initiative of the third wave, the *self-advocacy movements*** (Wehmeyer, Bersani & Gagne, 2000).

Concomitantly in Europe, the United Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) was formed by Paul Hunt in 1972, followed by the proposition of the social model of disability in 1976 by the UPIAS members, Michael Oliver and Colin Barnes. This new model provides a critical framework for the disability's social movements, first in the UK and then having a global

impact. The social model of disability will also influence the debate on the world health organization International Classification of Diseases (ICD), and ultimately being a salient founding component of the International Classification of Functionality, Disability and Health (ICF). The recognition of the environmental factors on the disability experience will later also influence the discussion of the shift on intellectual disability diagnosis in which the consideration of external supports becomes a decisive factor in the diagnostic process (AAIDD). Especially when taking into consideration the environmental factors applied to educational settings, this perspective has a major impact on inclusive education and the need for mainstream schools to change. However, the discussion applied to education will take place only decades later with the inclusive education movement.

An innovative contribution to self-advocacy education took place in 1977 when the Wisconsin Association for the Retarded Citizens created a self-advocacy curriculum (Williams & Shoultz, 1982). This fact illustrates the efforts of an organized self-advocacy movement with training purposes. In other words, the educational purpose of self-advocacy seemed to be present since its early discussions. **Project two** was an exemplary project developed in Wisconsin.

Noteworthy was the annual conference Canadian Association for the Mentally Retarded in 1978 in which the president of the Canadian Association of Mental Retardation, Allan Roeher, gave a remarkable lecture that provoked the audience to make noise, in reference to making their voices being heard literally and figuratively. Thus, self-advocacy was born as a political response with collective actions. In the coming years, this movement born in Canada began to spread worldwide based on three main principles: 1) deinstitutionalization, 2) normalization (Wolfensberger, 2000), and 3) integration (Pelka, 2012).

An important milestone in the global mental health landscape was the recognition by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1973 of the work carried out in the hospital mental health service in the Italian city of Trieste, led by psychiatrist Franco Basaglia. This work gave rise to a broad deinstitutionalization movement that expanded the anti-institutional debate in various fields, resonating among students, researchers, and social movements (Serapioni, 2019). In Brazil, the 70's was the onset of the "*luta anti-manicomial* (Anti-asylum movement),*", which was the first ideological, political, and social movement against the institutionalization of "madness." An important fact consisted of the visit of Franco Basaglia in 1979 to Brazil, during which he gave several talks about psychiatry as a means of liberation against oppression. He criticized the psychiatric model of institutionalization of the time, based on his experience on deinstitutionalization in Italy. His ideas were an important source for the reform movement that ignited initiatives to propose a new Brazilian mental health system in the coming years, also known as the "psychiatric reform" movement. Among the tenets, this reform advocated for the recognition of the right to dignity for all users of the mental health system, including persons with disabilities.

1980s the Organization of Cohesive Demands

The decade of the *1980s* starts with a polemic event that is very symbolic of the differences between organizations for parents and those for self-advocates. In 1981, a public case about a woman with ID who refused to be sterilized in Canada reached the supreme court. According to Dybwad (1996) this discussion had gained public attention, and related organizations were invited to testify about the matter. The Canadian Association of Community Living (CACL) refused to assume a public position due to the conflicting interests of its board of directors. Conversely, People First of Canada advocated against sterilization in court. This

organization's dispute is emblematic of the difference between parents-founded organization and self-advocacy groups' interests. This was a historical moment that showed two opposing political standpoints.

Comparatively, the history in Brazil does not show self-advocacy organizations led by persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities. This finding showcases a cultural Brazilian characteristic that requires examination. There is no evidence of groups acting independently - the groups of self-advocates are often associated with parent-founded organizations such as the APAEs and Pestallozzi. Even in the political upsurge of the social movement of persons with disabilities that created the coalition of the major Brazilian institutions for people with disabilities, the CONADE in 1982, the group of intellectual disabilities was represented by parents. Although it was noted that the participating parents' groups had the autonomy of their relatives as a goal, we do not find records of a self-advocates initiative.

In the same year of the Brazilian CONADE took place, Nirje (2016) reports that the first international conference took place in Nairobi 1982. This meeting gathered people coming from 8 different countries, which a first initiative of its kind in the global history of disabilities.

By the mid-*1980s* hundreds of groups of self-advocates were created in North America and Europe. In 1988, A remarkable stand was the **We Want Out!** Movement which was an initiative organized by the residents of Southbury Training School in Connecticut against institutionalization. This was an example among many other occurrences, Pelka (2012) posits that many voices or different stories were being told at the same time in different locations. Several organizations were developing their own work without having a coordinated movement. However, a few years later, in the United States, the first national group came together for the

creation of the American Disability Act; the most relevant document in terms of public policies that protected the population with disabilities. This act is significant because it represented the unification of the diverse demands coming from different groups of disabilities and demanded an organization of each specific group. The scattered groups of self-advocates in response had to organize themselves and propose policies that would represent their interest as one cohesive group. Similarly, in Brazil, the CONADE was the first national meeting of all groups of disabilities had to discuss the common causes that would unite all groups of different disabilities. We may notice a pattern in the social movements of persons with disabilities as a global movement and not isolated, this similarity may be associated to the global weakening of the former institutions for persons with disabilities.

According to Glat (2004), the self-advocacy movement in Brazil began in 1986 at the event held in Rio de Janeiro, the 9th World Congress of the International League of Societies for Persons with Mental Disabilities. This event, promoted by the institution now recognized as Inclusion International, had over 150 participants from 15 countries. The author argues that this was one of the first occasions where people with intellectual disabilities could be heard. It is understood that the proposal for self-advocacy in Brazil originated from an international discussion on the subject.

1990s the Consolidation of "Nothing About Us, Without Us."

The *1990s* marked the consolidation of self-advocacy under the banner **"Nothing about us without us"** when the first conference of self-advocate groups in North America took place in Colorado, USA, in 1990 – namely, "First North American People First Conference". After years of iterations and gatherings to discuss the American with Disabilitis Act, in 1991, the Act was made official and approved, which became one of the most important milestones in the history of

disability in North America that had repercussions all over the globe due to the solid

participation of persons with disabilities in this policy co-construction. In the same year, the

second North American conference took place in which the conception of self-advocacy was

collectively defined:

> Self-advocacy is about independent groups of people with disabilities working
>
> together for justice by helping each other take charge of their lives and fight
>
> discrimination. It teaches us how to make decisions and choices that affect our
>
> lives so we can be more independent. It teaches us about our rights, and we
>
> learn about our responsibilities. The way we learn about advocating for
>
> ourselves is supporting each other and helping each other gain confidence in
>
> themselves to speak out for what they believe in. (Dybwad, 1991, p.2 – Taken
>
> from the SABE)

This definition represents the trajectory of this major self-advocacy group and

summarizes the main tenets and experiences from years of discussions and exchanges. This

movement has matured as a national organization. In 1993, there were People First chapters in

37 American States. On a global scale, the declaration of the Salamanca Statement in 1994 was

the most significant international document for inclusive education with primary global

resonance. Some parallels can be traced between the tenets of Salamanca's statement and

principles for creating the self-advocacy movement, deinstitutionalization, normalization, and

mainstreaming.

Moreover, the Salamanca statement marked the beginning of inclusive education, which

promoted a change in the conception of education by proposing clear guidelines against the

preference of enrolment of students with disabilities in special institutions. More specifically, it

criticized the structure of special classroom in mainstream schools (UNESCO, 1994). Although

the document does not mention self-advocacy as a tenet, some principles relate directly to the

self-advocacy movement, "Inclusion and participation are essential to human dignity and to the

enjoyment and exercise of human rights (UNESCO, 1994, p.11)." This connection will be

discussed in depth later.

2000s First Brazilian Self-Advocacy Initiatives

The technical manuals and guidelines consulted from the APAE organization (APAEMG,

2023; FENAPAE, 2021) do not clearly indicate the work carried out since the beginning of self-

advocacy mentioned in 1986. However, there is a consensus that self-advocacy within this

institutional network gained prominence in 2001, when the first national self-advocates forum

took place alongside the 20th national APAE congress in Fortaleza (APAEMG, 2023). This

forum resulted from collective activities first conducted in the organization's municipal and state

networks. From this event onward, the national self-advocates forums of APAEs have been held

parallel to the national congresses of the National Federation of APAEs (FENAPAE). It is

noteworthy that each self-advocacy forum produced letters summarizing the discussions of the

event, facilitated by supporters; this document would guide the future actions of the groups.

This decade was also marked by the Brazilian ratification of international policies on the

rights of persons with disabilities and inclusive education, such as the United Nations

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). Brazil was a signatory of the

document, which reinforced national policies and important internal discussions. Notably, this

document was discussed at the first national meeting of APAE self-advocates in 2007, according

to FENAPAE president Eduardo Barbosa:

The proposal to bring them together was important. Similarly, it was rewarding

to see them articulate their positions with such clarity. And, above all, it was

invigorating to hear them talk about their experiences, their impressions and

opinions on affective life, family relationships, health, school inclusion, and

work (Barbosa, p. 8, 2009).

Despite the positive message in the text, it is evident that the FENAPAE president took

the leading role in the event organized by FENAPAE, which invited the self-advocates to

participate. This positioning reveals the significant nuances of decision-making within the

organization. Referring to the third wave of self-advocacy (Wehmeyer, Bersani, and Gagne,

2000), which would be the emergence of movements led by people with disabilities,

FENAPAE's initiatives in Brazil appear to be hybrid, in which the members with ID have a

limited autonomy circumscribed to the major institution.

2010s – Present: Current Brazilian Initiatives of Self-Advocacy

In 2015, a significant milestone for Brazil was the creation of the Inclusion Law (Brasil,

2015), the first and most impactful national policy designed for people with disabilities to ensure

equal opportunities and exercise their rights in all environments. This comprehensive statute

influenced various societal segments, including labor laws, consumer protection codes, urban

planning accessibility legislation, voting accessibility, and most importantly, promoted

protection against ableist discrimination. It promotes inclusive education and encourages

participation in all settings, which is fundamental for self-advocacy.

From 2010 onwards, other Brazilian self-advocacy groups were created within

institutions, first in APAEs distributed throughout the country, and after 2010 in institutions like

the Instituto Jô Clemente (formerly APAE-SP), the Brazilian Federation of Down Syndrome

(FBASD), and Pestalozzi Institutions. Although more recent, all self-advocacy groups in Brazil remain circumscribed to associations originally created by parents, without people with disabilities in their executive boards. This fact underscores the cultural difference compared to the third wave of self-advocacy observed in North America by Wehmeyer, Bersani, and Gagne (2009). For example, the 8th national self-advocacy forum of APAE held in Brazil in 2023 still occurred as a parallel event to the FENAPAE national congress. This cultural aspect requires deeper investigation to understand the decision-making aspects implicated in this historical linkage of self-advocacy to parent movements.

Despite the self-advocacy movements not being independent of organizations initiated by parents, these groups still represent opportunities for the development of individuals with disabilities. From an individual perspective, self-advocates gain opportunities to develop skills associated with achieving an independent life. Glat (2004), one of the few Brazilian authors to discuss the topic, proposes that self-advocacy is about ensuring full citizenship for people with disabilities. The concept is understood in its political and educational aspects, based on four principles: 1) elimination of labels, 2) self-identity, 3) autonomy and participation, 4) defense of their rights. Therefore, self-advocacy groups promote opportunities for engaging in activities aligned with these principles.

The most recent event occurred in 2024 when the Ministry of Education launched the self-advocacy network against ableism. The event featured 80 self-advocates from institutions like FBASD, Instituto Jô Clemente, and the Brazilian Association for the Action for the Rights of Autistic Persons. The innovation of this network was the incorporation of self-advocacy as a social technology within a governmental body. It is worth noting that event also included an association focused on autism (Ministry of Education's Social Communication Office, 2024).

In sum, these movements follow a global trend towards a neurodivergence political movement that includes a broader scope of individuals with various conditions, including autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD, Dyslexia, among other disabilities or conditions). In English-speaking countries, collectives adopt the term self-advocacy to identify themselves, while in Brazil, the corresponding terms (self-advocacy, self-management) are not used. Regardless of the term used, there is an alignment in the purposes of these groups to empower themselves in decision-making processes, following the motto "nothing about us, without us." However, the connection with the self-advocacy movement originating from APAEs must be more evident and comprehensively examined.

Historical Implications on Self-Advocacy in Brazilian Schools

Revisiting the historical milestones of the self-advocacy movement in Brazil highlights the notable absence of independent movements separate from parent associations. We propose questioning which social (or cultural) factors have contributed to this scenario without a definitive answer. Additionally, we ponder which historical aspects present in other countries must be revised to produce paradigm shifts in Brazilian self-advocacy. This is not about adopting a colonial logic that awaits the evolution of the movement in the Global South to match the same development in the Global North but understanding what arrangements could support the self-advocacy of people with intellectual disabilities for greater autonomy.

Even without a direct association with self-advocacy, the current development of neurodivergent collectives in Brazil has shown principles similar to those of the self-advocacy movement in North America. Therefore, these groups may indicate how this movement has been organized spontaneously, outside the institutional frameworks established in the charity history

of Latin countries. This issue underscores the need to examine these contemporary movements in the future.

The historical evolution to the current situation of emergence of new collectives in Brazil and around the globe **indicates the evolution of these movements**, which are responding to a demand for a representation that current institutions of persons with disabilities have not contemplated. Furthermore, this knowledge developed within these grassroots organizations could benefit younger generations of individuals still in the formative process. However, the ways in which this knowledge could be adapted have yet to be explored in the Brazilian context. One of the goals of this research is to examine the implications of implementing self-advocacy in the school environment.

1.4 Theoretical Frameworks: Critical Pedagogy and Self-Determination Theory

As the historical evolution of self-advocacy has demonstrated, implementing self-advocacy in Brazilian schools has yet to be duly explored. As such, we also identify a lack of scholarship on self-advocacy that would underpin a school-based work adapted to the Brazilian socio-cultural context. Henceforth, this research section aims to present a theoretical framework through the discussion on autonomy, a concept directly connected to self-advocacy. Thus, this section will explore the conceptual connection by addressing the commonalities between autonomy and self-advocacy, which will enable us to ground self-advocacy in a solid theoretical discussion. For this reason, we present a complementary debate over autonomy from two distinct theoretical perspectives: Critical Pedagogy and Self-Determination Theory. Ultimately, the combination of these two theoretical frameworks aims to connect autonomy and self-advocacy to provide the theoretical underpinnings to support the discussion on self-advocacy

in schools based on including students with disabilities in education and the self-advocacy teacher training workshop (description in the methods chapter).

We start with a brief overview of autonomy, which has historically been explored in several fields of knowledge, such as philosophy (Deligiorgi, 2012), political science (Badie et al., 2011), feminist studies (Davy, 2015), psychology (Allport, 1950; Angyal, 1951), and education (Bridges, 1997). Its complexity derives from the cultural context and historical relevance of concepts related to autonomy, such as freedom, independence, free will, decision-making, and empowerment (Chirkov et al., 2011). Autonomy plays an essential role in guaranteeing well-being, self-determination, and self-advocacy. In this section, we draw from varying fields of knowledge to contextualize this complex concept.

Another important piece of this theoretical discussion entails introducing the relational aspect of autonomy and self-advocacy. The reflections on the relational aspects of autonomy by Davy (2015) present a perspective that conceives autonomy as an interdependent relationship between individuals and their social and political spheres. This understanding of autonomy is relevant because it aligns with conceptual aspects of self-advocacy as seen in the historical development in the previous section; the development of self-advocacy demonstrated individuals striving to have their voices heard throughout the history from eugenics and institutionalization to the organization of a political movement. In this sense, achieving self-advocacy also meant becoming more autonomous from societal determination. The nuances of this conceptual connection will be explored throughout this section.

The diagnosis of ID will first be described and conceptualized in terms of the role of autonomy, followed by an introductory discussion about the epistemologies of CP and SDT.

The Role of Autonomy in Intellectual Disabilities

While the diagnosis of ID has evolved over the years (Cervantes et al., 2019), the current DSM-5 (APA, 2022) developed by the American Psychological Association (APA) defines ID based on two premises: intellectual functions (reasoning abilities, problem-solving skills, planning, abstract thinking, judgement, practical understanding, and learning), and adaptive skills of daily living in a variety of areas (conceptual, social, and practical) (APA, 2013). The most recent version has more similarities with the 11th edition of the International Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (World Health Organization, 2020), in which the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) is no longer the central element of the diagnosis definition; instead, the focus has shifted to the level (mild, moderate, severe or profound) of supports needed by the individual. In brief, this latest shift in focus refers to how individuals can autonomously behave daily. However, it is worth emphasizing that daily activities and cognitive reasoning cannot be comprehended independently. This relationship (between adaptive skills and cognition) demands further exploration because both refer to autonomy in different but intrinsic ways.

The change in the diagnosis of ID from focusing on individual aspects (such as IQ) to assessing *the support needs* denotes that the environmental and social elements gain more relevance. For instance, the United Nations (2007) proposes another form of defining ID that describes people with severe ID as individuals who require more intensive support. This definition emphasizes the external elements that interact with the person. Moreover, Thompson et al. (2009) considers support to be the strategy and resource that enhances human functioning, and identifying the intensity of support also has a significant role in research on people with ID. Wehmeyer (2005) observed that studies on self-determination often exclude those with a more intensive need for support because most data collection procedures rely on

self-reports; this argument demonstrates the need for conceiving research that could accommodate the varying levels of support needs. In conclusion, the shift in the conception of disabilities demands corresponding methods that aim at the interactional aspects of disability experiences.

It is imperative to acknowledge that this conceptual shift represents the social model of disability (please see the history of self-advocacy section), which has impacted public policies and ignited discussions on different fields of knowledge. A relevant perspective for this research encompasses the previously mentioned feminist critical perspective on ID (Carlson, 2010). Davy (2015) posits that this perspective on social aspects criticizes psychological or physiological depictions of ID as a lack of some typical development feature because these depictions contribute to the stigmatization of the disability experience. Furthermore, when applying feminist reflection to this research focus, Davy (2015) rejects an individualist emphasis on specific development features because autonomy is construed as an interdependent relationship between individuals and their social and political spheres.

The presentation of this approach to the ID sets the stage for the discussion of CP and SDT as theories that approach this relationship of interdependence of disability experiences. The epistemological features of each theory will be presented next to explore the different conceptions of autonomy and their relevance to self-advocacy school interventions for individuals with IDD.

Epistemological Aspects of Autonomy in CP and SDT for the Development of Self-advocacy

Critical Pedagogy and Self-Determination theories have autonomy as a central construct; however, these two theoretical perspectives differ concerning their epistemologies. On one hand,

CP (Giroux, 2020) uses a theoretical lens that focuses on the impact of social injustice in educational processes. On the other hand, SDT refers to the individual's agency in opposition to social determinism (Wehmeyer, 1999). Although both theories focus on the relationship between individual agency and society, there are significant discrepancies in methodologies and theoretical applications. CP has autonomy as an educational goal (Freire, 2018b), whereas SDT uses a psychological lens to conceive autonomy (Shogren et al., 2018). The first aspect to be explored is the conception of dialectic in each theory.

Freirian Critical Pedagogy (Freire, 2018b) is based on dialectical materialism, implying that the educator and student relationship is not viewed from an isolated objectivist or subjectivist perspective. When Freire utilizes the concept of materialism, he asserts that the "materialist view our consciousness comes from and is a reflection of our interaction with a material world that exists objectively outside of our subjective perceptions instead of the world emerging from human consciousness alone" (Au, 2017, p. 174). In this sense, a material (objective) world occurs outside one's consciousness (Au, 2017). In practical terms, the learning process is conceived in an objective social world, translating into the relationship between students and teachers within a material and objective reality. In Freire's (2018b) words, "the oppressed [students] must confront reality critically, simultaneously objectifying and acting upon that reality. A mere perception of reality not followed by this critical intervention will not transform objective reality" (p. 34). Students are not considered objects of their educational process but agents interacting with educators and their educational settings. Autonomy is conceived in this dialectical relationship as the goal to enable students to pursue their freedom of choice. Moreover, Giroux (2020) states that "Critical pedagogy attempts to understand how power works through the production, distribution, and consumption of

knowledge within particular institutional contexts and seeks to constitute students as informed subjects and social agents" (p.180). Hence, students transform their immediate realities as they reflect, produce changes, and act dialectally in the world.

Similarly, SDT is also a theory grounded in a dialectic viewpoint. However, the organismic dialectic (Ryan & Deci, 2002) originates from the convergence of two discrepant psychological perspectives: on the one hand, classified by the authors as organismic theories, such as humanistic, psychoanalytic and developmental psychologies, and on the other hand, the behavioural and cognitive theories. Respectively, they represent the natural tendency of human beings to continuously develop their sense of self and the social environment's influence on their development. Thus, SDT focuses on the interaction of individuals with their social environment.

The innate tendency of self-development in SDT is the combination of three basic psychological needs.—autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2000)– an individual must have for Self-Determination (SD) or control over one's own life. More specifically, autonomy denotes a feeling of volition and choices, relatedness refers to a sense of connectedness with others, and competence signifies a sense of achieving cherished outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Wehmeyer (2004) understands that all individuals are connected through social interactions as they are autonomous only to a certain extent; therefore, having completely autonomous behaviour is unachievable. Moreover, behavioural autonomy is defined according to two functions: first, it is a synonym of independence in interventions in unique education settings; and second, it draws upon the developmental psychology literature (Chirkov et al., 2011; Jacobs & Klaczynski, 2005) in which autonomy is the outcome of the individuation process.

Conversely, for Paulo Freire, the "father" of Critical Pedagogy (Kirylo, 2013), who became well-known for his successful experiment in the *60's* that taught three hundred illiterate adults how to read in a period of 40 hours (Freire, 2017), does not consider autonomy in the literacy process a psychological stage of development or a psychological need. His pedagogy of autonomy is centred on experiences that promote decision-making and social responsibility (Freire, 2018). In Freire's conception, autonomy is a continuous process in which one gradually makes decisions and participates actively in the world.

The authors present distinct perspectives. Freire uses critical and philosophical lenses to comprehend autonomy (Dullo, 2014); conversely,, Wehmeyer (2003) presents pragmatic possibilities to intervene and promote autonomy through SD skills development. The theoretical framework explores how this dialogue on autonomy can be utilized for self-advocacy development in educational programs and practices for students with ID. It is worth mentioning that the two concepts are interconnected, given the relational aspects of autonomy and self-advocacy, as exploring these theories enlightens the relationship between individuals and society. Moreover, this thesis comprises a critical analysis that proposes a theoretical bridge between these two theories concerning their epistemological and pragmatic perspectives.

In the next section, the studies on SDT are presented, followed by a second section with the studies on Critical Pedagogy. This unique lens review concludes with an integrated discussion of the construct of autonomy in both theories and the connection with self-advocacy.

Self-Determination Theory

As stated, autonomy plays a central role in SDT, defined Ryan and Deci (2020) as "a sense of initiative and ownership in one's actions. It is supported by experiences of interest and

value and undermined by experiences of being externally controlled, whether by rewards or

punishments" (p.1). From this definition, different approaches to autonomy were found

throughout the literature. This section organizes the varied forms of autonomy in the following

arrangement: 1) autonomous motivation, 2) the implications of the level of support needs and

relational autonomy, 3) autonomous support, and 4) autonomy opportunities and culture. This

section concludes with a summary of the studies presented and the role of autonomy concerning

interventions for students with ID.

Autonomous motivation. Several major studies in SDT (Black & Deci, 2000; Frielink et

al., 2017; Katz et al., 2011; Koestner et al., 2008) were dedicated to examining autonomous

motivation in learning processes. A wide range of motivational processes vary from a lack of

intentionality (motivation) to progressive levels of extrinsic motivation up to the state of intrinsic

motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Intrinsically motivated individuals have their actions guided by

the interest of completing the task instead of an external motive, such as a reward, representing

an external regulation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Deci and Ryan (2000) define autonomous

motivation as the combination of intrinsic and integrated (extrinsic) motivation; extrinsic

motivation refers to behaviours provoked by motives aside from inherent drives. The three basic

psychological needs (autonomy, relatedness and competence) regulate this autonomous

motivation. These essential needs, when satisfied, are associated with well-being and self-

development regardless of intellectual functioning (Deci, 2004).

A study conducted by Guay et al. (2017) in Québec with a sample ($N = 422$; 47% female;

age range = 8-11; $M = 9.57$; $SD = 0.96$) of students without ID examines the importance of the

teacher's role in the development of students' autonomous motivation. This study might also be

relevant for cases with mild ID. The term "teacher structure" is understood as the orientation given

by teachers, such as the rules or directions that clarify the expectations of students. It also elucidates the students' responsibilities in the classroom the consequences for abiding or not abiding by the class rules. The study findings suggest that when teachers regularly provide differentiated instruction to students, there is a positive effect on students' autonomous motivation, and it is only partially moderated by students' competence. In addition, when differentiated instruction was not frequent, there was a negative association between students' autonomous motivation and teacher structure. The authors understood that autonomous motivation was related to integrated regulation, and the students autonomously integrated the class activities as their responsibilities. Hence, they felt an inherent satisfaction in completing their tasks. We may also understand teacher structure as a form of autonomy support, and this finding can potentially be transposed into the education of people with ID if teachers clarify the students' expectations towards a specific goal.

The implications of the level of support needs and relational autonomy. The proposed SD Functional Model Wehmeyer (2003) explores the ways in which SDT can be applied to special education. He posits that all individuals are autonomous regarding their self-regulation, self-direction, and, to some extent, their self-determination. However, the self-determination of people with high support needs may be more strongly influenced by available environmental opportunities than that of those with mild intellectual disabilities (Wehmeyer, 2004). (Wehmeyer, 2005) suggests that teachers should not aim to control the students' behaviour but focus on creating opportunities for students to develop more self-determination by helping them to express preferences, engage them in problem-solving and decision-making situations, and promote student-directed learning. By differentiating control and self-determination, Wehmeyer (2005) argues that control inaccurately defines SD because this term

does not imply that the actions are volitionally motivated. Although one may control one's

actions, such actions are not volitional if the underlying motives originate from an external

regulator. Therefore, in an educational setting, the students' autonomous-determined actions are

not exclusively specific expected behaviour outcomes but expressions of their own volition.

Wehmeyer (2005) posits that all students develop different levels of self-determination

capacity according to external support received. Wehmeyer's focus (2005) on the external

elements of the environment aligns with the work of Davy (2015) and Carlson (2010), who

utilize a perspective of relational autonomy that differs from the concept of personal autonomy,

or the self's development. This perspective proposes relational autonomy as an interactive

process among individuals. Consequently, this conception implies that personal autonomy can

only be understood in context with other people and other environmental contingencies.

A qualitative study conducted by Stefánsdóttir Guðrún (2018) in an Icelandic home for

persons with ID who require highly intensive support aimed to evaluate the autonomy development

of 24 participants (aged from 24 to 66, 11 women and 13 men) and to understand how to enhance

the participants' autonomy. Through focus group interviews, the findings showed that the

supportive environment was one of the main factors that fostered the personal autonomy of the

participants. However, the focus group interviews revealed that some of the support staff did not

always offer opportunities for the participants to express their desires or dedicate enough effort to

interpret and understand the participant's intentions. Moreover, the observational analysis and

interviews showed that rigid routines and authoritarian attitudes are salient aspects that hinder the

development of the participant's autonomy. In sum, those who have more intensive needs can

enhance their autonomy if the environment provides opportunities for participation in decision-

making processes. Although this study was not conducted in a school environment, it emphasizes

that autonomy can be developed even in cases requiring intensive support if the surrounding family or staff understand their responsibility to promote participation.

Compared to studies conducted with people with ID with higher support needs, studies of mild support are the most frequent. The higher number of studies on self-determination and autonomy with mild impairments is because researchers typically use self-report methods as the means of data collection, which excludes people who require communication support (Wehmeyer, 2005). Moreover, teachers commonly perceive that people with ID with higher support needs do not benefit as much from SD goals development, unlike people with mild needs who are more frequently the targeted population by Wehmeyer and collaborators (2000).

Miller and collaborators (2015) examined the efficacy of self-monitoring checklist usage to increase the autonomy of three students (ages 14, 15 and 19) with moderate ID when completing inquiry problem-solving science content activities. Multiple probes across students' designs were utilized to examine the percentage of independent performance throughout the multiple stages (baseline, intervention, generalization, maintenance). Each task of science or functional life problem-solving independently was recorded on their iPads after initial training during the baseline stage. The findings indicated that all three students improved their autonomy to perform tasks independently in science and functional problem-solving activities. Although the sample was limited, this study presented an effective strategy to develop personal autonomy and self-determination skills for students with moderate support needs in a functional curriculum. More importantly, results showed that students generalized inquiry problem-solving steps to daily problem-solving situations.

Autonomous Support. Another set of studies focused on autonomous support, which examined the environmental elements promoting autonomy. In other words, how social systems

impact individual autonomy. For example, being employed and economically independent, having a home, and making autonomous decisions about their own lives are the most frequent goals for young adults with ID (Di Maggio et al., 2020). However, these goals to be achieved require specific autonomous support. Thus, in this section, we organize studies about different strategies that enhance individual autonomy in relation to autonomous support found in educational and community systems.

As an illustration, the research conducted by Frielink et al. (2018) underscores how SDT tenets, such as autonomous support, basic psychological need satisfaction, and autonomous motivation, are interrelated and associated to the subjective well-being specifically of people with mild support needs. It is worth noting that autonomous support is defined as the elements in the environment that reduces pressure and control over the individual, and it promotes self-initiative, opportunities for choice, and decision-making. A total of 183 users (female = 41%, age range = 18-84, $M = 40.3$, $SD = 14.9$) from social services in the Netherlands participated in this study, and a structural equation modelling was used to assess the SDT tenets in this population. Evidence has shown consistent interrelationships between the constructs of autonomous support, autonomous motivation and well-being, and their basic needs, such as autonomy, relatedness and competence among people with mild to borderline levels of functioning; this linkage is similar to the relation expected for the general population without ID. However, interestingly, the participants demonstrated dissatisfaction towards requesting assistance from staff. According to the authors' interpretation, the participants' refusal to receive support from others might be related to the conception of dependence as an antonym for autonomy. Yet, it is well-stated by the authors that one can be willingly dependent on others and still be autonomous, as *the opposite of autonomy is heteronomy, not dependence.*

Chirkov et al. (2003) explore these constructs' distinctions in the SDT literature; for instance, autonomy is differentiated from independence when related to individualism. When one voluntarily relies on another person, this decision is defined as an autonomous dependence which is different from being forced to submit to someone else's guidance (e.g., parents giving advice to children). In fact, if the definition of independence is not relying on anyone else in SDT, there would be an absence of relatedness, which is a basic psychological need. In SDT, independence may also be understood as separateness. The opposite of autonomy would be *heteronomy*, which refers to external forces controlling one's actions and compelling one to behave in certain ways without necessarily having the agreement or awareness of one's interest.

Adding to the distinction between **autonomy and independence**, Wehmeyer and Shogren (2020) emphasize the importance of **autonomy-as-volition**. In other words, acting autonomously is not only the result of choice-making, but also the belief that one's action is based upon their own preferences (volition). A volitional action is the degree in which some activity being performed, or choice being made, is in accordance with the individual goal or interest. This is of extreme relevance for individuals with disabilities that may not act without others' aid.

Pelletier and Joussemet (2017) conducted a study about the effects of autonomy support on the promotion of personal autonomy in a group of 51 students with a mild ID (Women N=28, Men N=23), aged between 16 and 61 years ($M = 35. 86$; $SD = 13.60$). Self-report questionnaires were completed with assistance. The authors considered independence promotion as an encouragement to act without others' support, which was the aim of the study. The participants were divided in two groups, and both were subjected to experimental tasks that required the completion of several activities: the first group with autonomy support, and the second without autonomy support, thus

serving as a control group. Autonomy support in this context was composed by four factors: 1) offering rationales, 2) offering choices, 3) demonstrating empathy, and 4) avoiding authoritarian/controlling language. The findings demonstrated that autonomy support significantly increased the level of engagement and stimulated motivation. Most importantly, participants who received autonomy support reported feeling more autonomous. The results were consistent with the expectations for the general population without ID, which means that the mild level support does not affect autonomous motivation. Importantly, as this study was conducted in schools, the strategies used in this study can be directly useful to teachers or special educators in their autonomy-promoting interventions.

Autonomy opportunities and cultural variation. The studies presented so far focused on the external influences of the environment in the development of autonomous people. Alternatively, researchers have also examined the individual aspects of autonomy such as self-realization, empowerment, and decision-making skills. Shogren et al. (2014) investigated the SD constructs of autonomy, empowerment, and self-realization in the United States National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) using 10 years of data (2000-2010) regarding students with all disabilities divided into12 different categories. A self-report questionnaire measured these skills, and the findings suggest that the correlations across disability groups did not differ; there was the same mean pattern for all groups. It is salient to highlight that this study has also shown no mean level differences in autonomy for students with intellectual disabilities in comparison to other disabilities, unlike previous research that indicated that students with IDD presented lower autonomy scores (Shogren et al., 2007; Williams-Diehm et al., 2008)). When analysing the latent variance differences, the data on disability categories are not sufficient to determine the variability of scores on autonomy, psychological empowerment, and self-

realization, this indicates that other factors should be considered, such as personal (social skills, level of supports need) and environmental (opportunities to self-determine) factors. Thus, research on autonomy as an adaptive skill also reinforces the idea that environmental aspects profoundly influence autonomous behaviour.

From a cultural perspective, Chirkov et al. (2003) posit that some Western societies value autonomy differently from Eastern ones, and it was observed in cross-cultural research that all these different notions (heteronomy, independence, dependence) are culturally divergent. In western culture, people tend to act more individualistic; however, it does not imply that autonomy is an attribute of individualistic behaviour. This study with 559 participants consisted of a cross-cultural examination of autonomy in four different countries (South Korea, Turkey, United States, Russia). The findings demonstrated that there is no distinction regarding the importance of autonomy for women or men, and that autonomy (defined as the inner validation of individual actions) was considered a psychological basic need in all four cultures studied. Considering the cultural nuances, the authors cautiously suggest that autonomous performance relates to greater well-being, and is unrelated to the societal characteristics (individualistic, collectivistic, horizontal or vertical) of the country in question. This study is relevant here as as it highlights that the conceptualizations of autonomy vary culturally, while autonomy was equally valued by women and men. Although these notions should not be simply generalized to the Brazilian reality, this study invites us to ponder the cultural implications of autonomy in Latin American countries.

Summary of SDT. We conclude this SDT section by emphasizing that autonomy within SDT has diverse connotations. Authors in this perspective seem to agree that, in educational

settings, trained teachers have an important role of removing barriers to promote autonomous motivation in students. The varying levels of the intensity of supports needed in the field of Self-determination studies indicate the demand for systemic adaptations. Moreover, the majority of the studies indicate that personal autonomy is directly related to external factors. While not all of the research uses the definition of relational autonomy, this perspective seems to be very important.

Critical Pedagogy

As previously stated, Critical pedagogy (CP) proposes a critical lens to conceive the educational phenomena. In reviewing CP in relation to ID literature, it became apparent that the literature is almost exclusively theoretical or philosophical in nature. Therefore, below is a detailed review of the elements of the CP theoretical literature that are particularly relevant to ID applications with respect to the examination of autonomy. First, in this section, fundamental principles in the tradition of Critical Pedagogy related to autonomy are recapitulated, followed by the importance of disability as an intersectional category in inclusive education, and finally, the particular methodology used in this research field. The ways in which autonomy is conceptualized in CP may have implications for practices with people with IDD; this is mentioned throughout the section.

Critical Pedagogy: Autonomy Principles. The philosophical tenets of this pedagogy center autonomy as an essential goal. Although there is a vast literature that critically examines different aspects of education (Freire, 2018a, 2018b; Giroux, 2020; McLaren & Kincheloe 2007), this review of theoretical foundations is restricted to the construct of autonomy and its related concepts: human unfinishedness, libertarian education, critical thinking, and banking education.

Autonomy is related to the idea of *human unfinishedness* (Freire, 2018), which means that students are in a permanent process of search and development. Education is an on-going progression wherein the contextual reality is critically examined. In other words, students critically analyse their own reality from the standpoint of active agents. In this sense, autonomy refers to students as subjects, and not as objects of the education process. In a *libertarian education*, individuals are agents of their own thinking as they reflect upon their own thinking (Freire, 2019). This form of education does not solely signify an individual development, but it also refers to the contributions that students can pose within their immediate realities. In Freire's (2018b) conception of unfinishedness, autonomy is a continuous process, which denotes an understanding that human development is not divided into developmental stages as typically theorized in psychological literature. Therefore, according to this philosophy, adults can become more autonomous as they critically comprehend the contexts where they are immersed; likewise, individuals with disabilities develop their autonomy continuously.

According to Freire (2018b), *libertarian education* is associated with freedom, yet it is not contemplated as a utopic concept: "Freedom is not an ideal located outside of man; nor is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion" (p.29). Moreover, freedom of choice is not naturally given to all; the extent of one's decision-making power is determined by social conditions, and in some cases, it is due to uneven societal determination. In Freire's successful experiment to teach a group of 200 illiterate adults in Brazil's northeastern region, libertarian education promoted autonomy through literacy. This conception of education is defined as: The important thing, from the point of view of libertarian education, is for the people to come to feel like masters of the thinking by discussing the thinking and views of the world explicitly or implicitly manifest in their own suggestions and those of

their comrades. Because this view of education starts with a conviction that it cannot present its own program but must search for this program in dialogue with the people, it serves to introduce a pedagogy of radical collaboration (p. 124).

Freire (2018) understands that the literacy process entails autonomy through empowerment when mentioning the importance of their students "feel[ing] like masters of [their own] thinking" (p. 124). A libertarian education requires active participation, which implies a freedom to contribute in a subjective way. Moreover, relevant to this project is the well-known Freirean process of literacy of adults, understanding the history of the factors that determined one's present situation and/or understanding that their illiteracy was a result of a social process of oppression.

Pertinent to this discussion, Giroux (2020) states that *critical thinking* involves becoming a historical being and learning to understand the complexities and implications of the world. Autonomy, in this case, referred to being free from the internalized mindset of the oppressor, as it implied recognizing the condition of being oppressed and enabling action in favour of social justice through the development of critical thinking (Freire, 2018). It is worth remarking that in this autonomy conception, Freire is not referring to an individual behaviour but an individual realization of the oppressor's influence in one's view of the world. For this reason, becoming autonomous, in a Freirean sense, entails recognizing the historical process of oppression in one's identity development.

Moreover, the premises of a libertarian education oppose the concepts of a *banking education*, in which reality is perceived as unchangeable, students are considered simple knowledge depositories, and their own culture or intentionality is not taken into consideration in the educational process (Freire 2018). *Intentionality* in CP draws from Jaspers'

phenomenological notion that individual consciousness is always directed towards something in the world. When this notion is applied to education, it denotes that students are not empty vessels; they have consciousness of the world in a meaningful way. In other words, students are capable of agency after reflecting on their own life goals and the social reality. Thus, when students have a critical understanding of their realities in terms of social, political, and economic dimensions, they may contribute to its transformation according to their singular volition and needs. By volition and needs, we may understand the interests and facts that make students engage in the schools—their intentionality.

Moreover, Saul and Giovedi (2016) posit that CP is characterized by having a strong political basis in Marxist tenets, which implies there is no neutrality of students or teachers in educational processes. More specifically, Freire (2018b) states that economic ideologies influence the education system, and consequently, schools reproduce social inequality. Thus, critical pedagogy fosters democratic school communities to contest the hegemonical discourse by promoting liberatory pedagogical actions (Liasidou, 2015). More specifically, in the 1980's, Freire's work aimed at empowering the socio-economically oppressed working class in Brazil by addressing their lived experiences of social injustice and inequality, thus encouraging them to pursue justice and emancipation. Gradually, over the years, CP explored the intertwined nature of oppression related to other social categories of race and gender (Giroux, 2022).

The Intersectionality Conundrum in Critical Pedagogy

Consistent with critical pedagogy principles, introducing intersectionality into the discussion is important for understanding the role of inequality in the lives of persons with disabilities. Intersectionality refers to the individual experience of belonging to multiple social categories simultaneously. Cole (2009) emphasizes the asymmetrical relations in which one is

subjected to comparisons with others within the same context; perception, experience, and outcomes are defined by the intersectional social categories of an individual. The categories of race, gender, social class, and sexuality represent "historical and continuing relations of political, material, and social inequality and stigma" (Cole, 2009, p. 173). The acknowledgement of these categories in research is extremely salient for studies in psychology and education, as these categories are not exclusively viewed as individual characteristics but as social processes. Cole (2009) criticizes psychologists who reduce the complex nature of identities to a simplistically determined factor as opposed to acknowledging the interactive web of exogenous elements. Notably, this perspective of conceiving social determinants in one's life is connected to one's autonomy experience. As previously stated, since autonomy refers to the Critical Pedagogy framework acknowledging the internal oppressive mindset through critical thinking, intersectionality aligns with this perspective by identifying the social dimensions of this oppressive process.

We discuss how intersectionality relates to autonomy in lived experiences of disability. However, first, it is relevant to contextualize intersectionality (disability) and Critical Pedagogy. In the early 2000's, Erevelles (2000) observed that despite CP criticism against the marginalization of disadvantaged minorities in education, disability matters were excluded from the mainstream discussion within the field. The author argued that disability issues exposed the theoretical limits of CP theory at the time since the literature would address the socio-economic inequity, racism, and gender discrimination but did not include disability as a social experience to be addressed equally. Liasidou (2015) further explored this contradiction and suggested that it was only after the late 1990s that disabilities were discussed as a social construction as a result of the social model of disability (Oliver, 2013). Around the same period, inclusive education

movements began worldwide, propelled by international policies such as the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (Nations, 2006). Thus, according to Liasidou (2015), the disability studies field and the scholarship on inclusive education have modified the ways in which disability was conceived in education, and consequently, disability is now considered as a social category, making it possible to theorize the disability experience differently than previously allowed using the medical model.

The conception of disability as a social category in an intersectional perspective implies an understanding of power relations, similar to analyses already explored with other social categories, i.e., class, race, and gender (Cole, 2009). According to Giroux (2020), interrogating the social relations and dominant discourses creates possibilities to analyse policies that hinder opportunities for youth to connect the challenges experienced over their educational process to broader dimensions of radical democracy and economic justice. In this regard, educational policies exert an important impact on student's lives. Consequently, debating intersectionality is timely and appropriate with respect to inclusive education policies and the challenges faced by students with disabilities; the usage of intersectional lenses and the analysis of power relations in school offer possibilities to critically conceive the challenges faced by all students while contemplating the complexities of one's identity.

Summary of CP. The studies of CP referred to theoretical pieces that were based on the materialism dialectic (Freire, 2019). CP proposes a liberatory education in which critical thinking is an essential element for students to understand and act in the educational-political sphere. Although this theory is mainly based on the social injustice of minority groups, surprisingly, the disability group was not present in the studies review. This fact was discussed by Erevelles (2000) and Liasidou (2015), who both propose that CP may contribute significantly to disability

studies, especially when taking into consideration the intersectional aspects of disability experiences in the school by examining disability identity isolated from other dimensions of a student's identity such as class, race, and gender in the current Brazilian socio-cultural context. In sum, critical pedagogy literature provided elements to explore autonomy within a perspective of libertarian education. Consequently, it offered a framework to develop critical self-advocacy practices in the school environment.

Analytical Convergence of Both Theories

The autonomy construct reflects salient aspects of the lives of people with ID, and both theories contribute to examining autonomy from two distinct standpoints. A unique conceptualization emerged, as each theory offered different interpretations of autonomy; however, potential for theoretical complementarity exists. In Self-Determination Theory, autonomy is recognized as a fundamental psychological need, crucial for leading a self-determined life, as it is associated with well-being across various cultures and levels of intellectual functioning, with appropriate considerations. In other words, people with any level of support intensity would require some level of autonomy support. From the perspective of CP, autonomy is also essential for transforming marginalized groups' social realities. Autonomy is linked directly to a libertarian education.

The main aspects of each theory are presented subsequently (See Figure 1).

Figure 1
Comparison of Autonomy-Related Constructs in SDT and CP

Self-Determination Theory — Autonomy — Critical Pedagogy

Self-Determination Theory: Organismic dialectic, Problem-solving, Decision-making, Self-advocacy, Future goals, Autonomy support, Autonomous motivation, Independence ✕ Volition, Majority of Quantitative methods

Autonomy (overlap): Dialetics, Anti-determinism, Intentionality

Critical Pedagogy: Materialism dialectic, Libertarian Education, Critical Thinking, Unfinishedness, Freedom, World Consciousness, Intersubjectivity, Intersectionality, Participatory Action Research

SDT encompassed psychological studies in which autonomy was conceived as an interaction of internal processes with a strong influence from external factors (autonomy support), such as teacher structure, teaching strategies, and professional conduct. Interestingly, 'autonomy' originates from 'self-ruling' or 'freedom from external influence' (Hoad, 1996), but external factors exert a significant influence. Autonomy support consists of offering assistance for developing rationales, making choices, demonstrating empathy, and avoiding authoritarian language (Pelletier & Joussemet, 2017). These supports were provided in a non-coercive manner that promoted the autonomous motivation of the students to learn and perform better. This is consistent with the findings of Shogren et al. (2014), who revealed similarities between students with ID compared to those other disabilities. This further corroborates the fact that opportunities (i.e., external factors) influence autonomy development regardless of disability type. Hence, these two studies illustrated how autonomy in educational settings, with the appropriate support, is more influenced by external contingencies than internal factors (e.g., intelligence and adaptive skills). The efforts of teachers and other school stakeholders play a crucial role in development,

regardless of the types of disabilities present in schools. CP recognizes the social and public

spheres as determinants of personal autonomy, highlighting the similarities between both

theories concerning the influence of external deterministic factors on autonomy. Therefore, *the*

most salient conclusion is that if external factors determine personal autonomy, education plays

the most crucial role in one's autonomy.

In psychological terms, making a decision independently or autonomously refers to two

different processes regarding intrinsic motivation, as presented by Chirkov et al. (2003). For this

reason, the distinction between autonomy and independence is essential. Autonomy (Hoad,

1996) refers to acting without external influence; however, the analysis of autonomy based on

CP tenets refers to the intersubjective relation of human beings, similar to the SDT analysis

(Chirkov et al. 2003). Thus, autonomy refers to responding to others' influence and volitional

actions (Shogren & Raley, 2022) instead of actions without others' interference. More

specifically, CP tackles social oppression and the role of education in promoting social

transformation.

Applying a Dual Theoretical Framework of Autonomy to Self-Advocacy in Schools

This conceptual review suggests that an alignment of both theories is feasible, respecting

the methodological and epistemological boundaries of each perspective. Thus, it provides a

theoretical framework for this research to examine different yet complementary aspects of

autonomy-applied self-advocacy concerning the relationship between students with disabilities

and teachers in the school environment.

The examination of autonomy through the lens of Self-Determination Theory and

associated research highlights the necessity of developing strategies that acknowledge the

interactive aspects of individual autonomy. The educational system, via the actions of educators

and school stakeholders, significantly contributes to eliminating barriers and fostering students' autonomous behavior. This argument, detailed in various studies on autonomy and disabilities, underscores the significance of teachers in fostering self-advocacy for this research.

Moreover, in the Critical Pedagogy theoretical examination of autonomy, important tenets such as liberatory actions, banking education, intersectionality, and critical thinking contribute to conceptualizing a critical perspective to self-advocacy in schools in view of integrating a materialistic perspective. Even if personal autonomy is being developed within interventions focused on different skills (e.g., decision-making or problem-solving) or some other kind of autonomous support, it may still reinforce an established social system. In this sense, CP can contribute to elaborating a critical approach to self-advocacy research by considering the implications of social and political contexts in the school and students' realities.

Having established a theoretical framework for self-advocacy that grounds the practical and critical elements of self-advocacy in schools. The following section explores a current overview of self-advocacy literature and relevant aspects for the research introduction.

1.5 Overview of Self-Advocacy Literature: Core Concepts and Current Experiences

As presented in section 1.3, social barriers to the full participation of persons with disabilities in society have been historically established with a long trajectory of discrimination, exclusion, and even extermination (Stiker, 2019); however, a significant change occurred with the emergence of Self-Advocacy (SA) groups who highlighted the importance of people with disabilities making decisions regarding their own lives. Through the movements' representation of these groups, significant progress was made in increasing each disability community's participation in forming public policies and adapting services for each of their needs. In this

section, we look at the current practices and discussion on self-advocacy applied to the school context.

One of the most important and recent Brazilian disability policy milestones is the 2015 Brazilian Statute of Persons with Disability (Brasil, 2015), popularly known as the 'lei Brasileira de inclusão,' demonstrating a participatory national policy elaboration. The statute was elaborated in two stages; the first consisted of a conflicting initiative of national disability entities and the governmental representatives that disagreed about creating a specific law for the population with disabilities (Braga, 2021). The second stage started after the promulgation of the United Nations Convention of Persons with Disabilities in 2007, in which the Brazilian Statute incorporated the content from the UN Convention (2006). Most importantly, public consultations have created an adapted document based on the dialogue with civil contribution (Gabrilli, 2016). The statute reinforces the fundamental right to education for all people with disabilities. This policy posits that it is a governmental responsibility to ensure the participation of students with disabilities and their families in the school community. In addition, participation in public and political life is considered an accessibility right. This statute represents a progressive engagement with the social movements led by individuals with disabilities regarding public policies of accessibility and disability participation (Cordeiro, 2011). Although the Brazilian Statute of People with Disability presents comprehensive norms for the education and participation of persons with disabilities in society, including a specific subclause on the right to education about school involvement, the document does not specify how students and families can participate in the school environment. Thus, the rights protected under this statute are not necessarily utilized by those with a disability, especially those with IDs.

Advocacy and Representation

Based on the concept of participatory parity, Fraser (2013) refers to fair and open deliberation processes in which all [those involved in a given social structure] contribute within a lateral relationship. When associating this concept with the inclusive education conception of non-normalization, educational institutions are fundamental sites of possibility and advocacy to challenge injustices and attitudinal barriers (Keddie, 2012). *Advocacy* refers to public support for a change of a situation or policy; this concept is salient when associated with an inclusive education project since it relates to voicing students' or community member's (parents and staff) school's perspective of ameliorations; this is significantly relevant when it refers to marginalized groups and the possibilities for them to speak up Mitchell (2006). Fraser's terms (2013) would enable possible misrepresentation to be addressed; in other words, misrepresentation denies equal participation in decision-making processes. Conversely, representation refers to "inclusion in, or exclusion from, the community of those entitled to make justice claims on one another. At another level, which pertains to the decision-rule aspect, representation concerns the procedures that structure public processes of contestation." (Fraser, 2013, p. 29). Advocacy refers to parents' or students' claims as voices that oppose the misrepresented decisions of the school organization.

Regarding the political aspect of social justice in advocacy, it is noteworthy that not all advocacy practices contemplate promoting social justice. Keddie (2012) posits that political justice is more complicated than just including marginalized voices once these voices embody complex and multifaceted realities. There is the risk of a particular group's interest prevailing over other marginalized groups. Likewise, Black (2011) points out that during school meetings, adult voices may reflect only their voices over students. Thus, an inclusive perspective invites all to consider how different realities might be regarded when advocating. Fraser (2013) emphasizes

representation as a critical lens for examining advocacy and inclusion. This perspective prompts

an evaluation of whether representation is occurring and whether inclusive practices adequately

address the complexities of participatory parity, specifically regarding the reinforcement or

opposition of inequalities, even at a micro level. Advocacy in schools underscores the

significance of open communication among all stakeholders within the educational framework,

ensuring equitable access to justice for individuals expressing their experiences. These

discussions offer essential principles for evaluating self-advocacy experiences in educational

settings.

Students' Voices in Self-Advocacy

To explore the concept of students' voice, we start by presenting Len Barton's (1998)

definition of *voice*. Based on the social model of disability, the author posits that voice "alerts us

to the various structural, institutional, and attitudinal barriers to participation, including the

impact of learned helplessness and socialization into a dependency role" (p. 30). This notion of

voice refers to the experiences of persons with disabilities in society, which implies that when an

individual with disability speaks up, one is denouncing the barriers to participation and how

these barriers can be manifested in different forms and complexities. This conception of voice is

connected to the social model of disability, which embraced a critique against the impact of the

exclusion of participatory processes in the lives of those with disabilities. Referring to "learned

helplessness and socialization into a dependency role", Clough and Barton (1998) address a

pivotal barrier to participation, the lack of agency (or advocacy), which results in persons with

disabilities assuming dependency roles. Their critique addresses a social process of learned

unresponsiveness, developed over a lifetime, which creates barriers to societal participation. This

definition of voice clarifies the primary focus of this research: the connection between voice and self-advocacy.

Within this research scope of examining the schooling process of self-advocacy, we introduce the concept of the student's voice. That is a form of applying voice in the school context, according to Messiou et al. (2024): The term 'student voice' therefore encompasses a broad range of actions and student behaviours, including their presence, their expression of views through verbal or non-verbal means, discussion and dialogue about matters that concern them, as well as playing an active role in decisions that hold implications for the school and its stakeholders (p. 2).

Therefore, student's voice encompasses not only expression but entails a form of school participation. According to Messiou (2024), student's voice implies taking part in decision-making in the school environment, which aligns with the self-advocacy tenet of participating in the decisions regarding one's life (Wehmeyer et al., 2013). In the school context, the concept of student voices entails educational practices such as student consultation, in which teachers and students interact and teachers actively listen to students to promote school changes (Messiou, 2019). This form of practice is consistent with the conception of self-advocacy practices in schools. Especially for students with ID, participation through representation in mainstream schools may be the catalyst for increased opportunities for agency in their own inclusion process (Stafford, 2017).

Conversely, it is worth noting that the voice of students should be considered cautiously as Poretti (2019) forewarns, in her research about participatory spaces in Switzerland, that the voices of children may be distorted in the representation process according to the interest of the representative. The research did not concentrate on individuals with disabilities, highlighting an

additional consideration for practices involving students' voices, such as the proposed study. A second concern raised by Messiou et al. (2024) is the risk of tokenism in schools, which may result in student alienation when there is a lack of responsiveness to their expressions. More specifically, "A tokenistic approach is reflective of an authoritative culture where the desire for institutional control and managerial agenda is prevalent, students' participation is limited, students may be ascribed procedural roles and shared dialogues with students are restricted." (Messiou, 2024, p.3). These two situations (Poretti, 2019; Messiou, 2024) demonstrate that practices involving students' voices should thoughtfully contemplate methods to guarantee authentic expression and dialogue to avoid tokenism or misrepresentation. Moreover, students' voices should promote meaningful participation. Overall, these studies on students' voices not only illuminate the conception of self-advocacy in schools but also highlight possible blind spots for the work of teachers developing self-advocacy practices.

Self-Advocacy in the Functional Model of Self-determination Theory

A derivative of the SDT, the Functional Model of Self-Determination proposed by Wehmeyer (2004) referred to applications of the SDT to special education. Wehmeyer (2005) suggests that all individuals are autonomous regarding their self-regulation and self-direction, as well as their self-determination, to some extent. Henceforth, the schooling process has a major role in developing SA.

Moreover, although there is interest among teachers regarding SA skills, information on this theme in their training is vague (Abernathy & Taylor, 2009; Mason et al., 2004). Most of the research focuses on the transition from school to society; it reveals a gap in the literature concerning the early stages of schooling (Reusen, 1996; Roberts et al., 2016; Test et al., 2018). Studies on the development of SA skills are mainly concentrated on high-school period (Dryden

et al., 2017; Hammer, 2004); or in self-advocacy groups such as independent living centres (Anderson & Bigby, 2017a; Beart et al., 2004; Caldwell, 2010; Petri et al., 2020); college or university students (Brinckerhoff, 1994; Roer-Strier, 2002), or post-secondary settings (Skinner, 1998).

The relationship between self-determination and self-advocacy is explored in a qualitative study in which 10 self-advocates with ID were interviewed regarding their understanding of self-determination (Nonnemacher & Bambara, 2011). The findings showed that "speaking up", "knowing your rights", "being in charge", and "making decisions" were some of the most frequent experiences associated to self-determination. The participants identified the quality of interpersonal relationships with staff as a key factor influencing self-determination. These outcomes are connected to the literature that conceptualizes self-agency as a component of self-determination (Algozzine et al., 2001; Test, Fowler, Brewer, et al., 2005; Wehmeyer, 2003; Williams & Shoultz, 1982).

Test and colleagues (2005) conducted a literature review that included 26 different definitions of SA in which a conceptual framework of SA was proposed. The commonalities found in these definitions were gathered into four main components: knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, communication, and leadership. In a progressive level of complexity, there are four foundational components. The first component refers to knowledge *of self* which includes knowing your goals, strengths, preferences, responsibilities, and other personal characteristics, while the second component refers to *knowledge about rights*, such as accessibility rights, rights to education, community and personal rights. In the next level of complexity, there are the *communication* skills, such as being able to negotiate, persuade, communicate with body language, listen to others, express demands, and the capacity to deny

one's demand. The fourth component is *leadership* skills that result from the ability to communicate with others and understand others' needs. Test and colleagues (2005) note that "understanding one's role within a group of people with similar interests, needs, and strengths and having the ability to speak up within that group are leadership skills in the self-advocacy conceptual framework (p. 52)". It is worth mentioning that this conceptual framework can be taught to people across a range of disabilities or ages, and teachers may adapt the instructions according to their students' needs, rather than teaching the four components in a universal, rigid structure.

Petri and colleagues (2020) conducted a cross-country study on the definition of self-advocacy (SA) and found that 43 self-advocates characterized SA not only as the act of speaking up but also as "informing and being informed," "using media," "supporting each other," and "bureaucratic duties." The primary finding indicates that self-advocates must engage in various routine activities, including bureaucratic responsibilities associated with office administrative tasks, to effectively "speak up." These tasks may require knowledge or skills that are frequently not included in their educational paths. Acting as a self-advocate requires practical opportunities to develop self-determination skills throughout their educational process. In a longitudinal perspective, developing such skills during the first years of schooling process is pivotal for increasing individuals' SA skills. This study reinforces the purpose of this thesis to explore how self-advocacy in schools can be developed throughout one's development.

Self-Advocacy and the Social Model of Disability (an Interactional-Psychological view)

While there is existing research that frames SA as an individual skill, Goodley (1997) understands that SA should be considered within the threshold of the social model of disability as proposed by Oliver and Barnes (1998). The assumption of disabilities as individual

impairments denotes the role of a disabling society that imposes several barriers to individual

participation. This is strongly criticized by Goodley (1997), who considers self-advocacy an

emancipatory activity.

Consistent with the social model of disability, a literature review explored the

psychological outcomes of self-advocacy group membership in 12 SA qualitative studies (Fenn

& Scior, 2019). The findings showed that SA is related to better psychosocial outcomes, such as

empowerment, belonging, and more positive self-concepts. Empowerment, the most common

outcome observed in the studies, refers to multiple experiences of a self-advocate who

experienced personal economic growth and presented more engaged actions towards their

community, such as writing letters to the local authority or demanding better services. Simply

put, SA empowerment was associated with a better expression of one's needs. Moreover, 6 out

of the 12 studies reported the experience of belonging as a positive psychosocial outcome for

members of self-advocate groups. This experience of belonging was associated with the

development of confidence and an increase in social connections and relationships, thus resulting

in an increase in community participation. Accordingly, SA might be considered a relational

construct in the same way as relational autonomy is conceived (Carlson, 2010).

Conceiving self-advocacy as a relational construct corroborates with Davy's theoretical

contributions (2015) about relational autonomy, in which she interprets autonomy as an

interdependent relationship between individuals and their social and political spheres. In this

sense, SA is a way for an individual to develop autonomy while continually improving their

social interactions. This interdependent relationship brings into light the environmental

influences on individual SA; notably, when conceiving an intervention, cultural aspects should

be considered, and consequently, contextualizing the intervention according to the local settings

is crucial. Zhang et al. (2005) argue that one critical issue for implementing SA training is the multitude of cultural variables that exert a major influence on the operationalization of the SA construct. In Canada and the USA, SA tends to be related to individualistic development, such as self-knowledge and knowledge of rights (Test, 2005). In contrast, Indian culture tends to value the interdependence between individuals and their families and communities. Thus, SA in this context is more related to communication and negotiation skills than to the promotion of individual rights (Kallyanpur, 2009). Likewise, with due consideration of the problems in simplifying the discussion, Brazil rates low on individualism in comparison to Canada in a study on university students (Chirkov et al., 2005), and people with disabilities tend to remain close to relatives (Dantas, 2017). Unfortunately, research on SA is very North American-centric, and little is known about how cultural and political differences affect the teaching or retention of SA skills or how to train teachers to foster SA in students (Abernathy & Taylor, 2009).

Furthermore, the positive association between disability and poverty is striking: 80% of people with disabilities live in the Global South (Grech & Soldatic, 2016). This fact corroborates with the need to examine SA in the Brazilian context.

The Brazilian Context

The most recent school census (2024) revealed an increase in the number of students with disabilities and/or with high abilities in inclusive and special classrooms; there were 1.8 million students registered in 2023, an increase of 41.6% from 2019. It is important to mention that the percentage of students included in mainstream schools has also been increasing, from 92.7% in 2019 to 95% in 2023 (Brasil, 2024). These data show that the registration of students with disabilities in Brazilian schools is becoming more prevalent. Therefore, new pedagogical and social measures must be considered in order to correspond to this challenging reality.

Inclusive practices in schools may promote participatory and advocacy skills for students with disabilities; however, inclusive education is a construct in flux that differs around the globe. Being aware of the multiple and even contradictory conceptions of inclusive education is important for this study. The concept of inclusive education is consistent with the ideas Slee and Tait (2022) posit that "inclusive education refers to removing barriers to and within education to increase access, representation, participation, and success for all students " (p.8). These tenets could drive practices and reflections over the inclusiveness taking place in schools. Moreover, as the chosen approach of inclusive education for this research, we comprehend a theory with a social reform agenda of school-cultural changes on how children, curriculum, pedagogy, and school organizations are conceived (Slee, 2011). To establish an inclusive system, the mechanisms of student exclusion must be addressed appropriately. We briefly examine inclusive education within the Brazilian context, grounded in the principles of access, representation, and participation (Slee & Tait, 2022).

The current Brazilian educational system is organized according to inclusive guidelines based on the "Política Nacional de Educação Especial na Perspectiva da Educação Inclusiva" [Brazilian Special Education Policy in the Light of Inclusive Education] (Brasil, 2007), which was an important policy milestone for inclusive education in the country. This policy changed how gifted students, students with disabilities, or students with developmental disorders would be *served* from that date onwards. *Specialized Educational Services* (AEE) are a key component in this regard. Moreover, this policy continues to determine the organization of schools and the methods of working that are currently present in schools. The guideline defining the *multifunctional resource room for specialized educational service* consists of a space in regular schools where AEE is provided with equipment, furniture, accessibility resources, and didactic-

pedagogical materials to support schools. Multifunctional resource rooms can be implemented through federal programs or with resources from the education systems themselves. Furthermore, the AEE must be conducted by a teacher who has training in special education.

Therefore, studies about inclusive schooling show that Brazilian schools have developed different practices. For example, Silva and Leme (2009) studied the function of the school principal, who plays an important role in the implementation of an inclusive culture in schools by asking all faculty members to share this responsibility and not limiting decision-making regarding inclusion issues to the teacher or the school board. Briant and Oliver's (2012) study about different inclusive strategies adopted in the schools of São Paulo found that the multidisciplinary team and the school's support network are crucial when coping with the obstacles of school inclusion. Parents also exert an important role in the inclusion process as observed by Rosario and Silva (2016). Parents employed several strategies to promote inclusion success, including negotiating with schools for necessary accommodations, establishing a network among parents, and modifying their work routines to facilitate their children's access to school and therapies. Lopes et al. (2021) found that adolescents with cerebral palsy acknowledge that their social participation in school is enhanced by their parents' efforts to promote their autonomy. Moreover, it was understood that studies about the inclusion environment cannot only focus on one individual in the school but must consider the effect of inclusion on the different relationships among the people in the school (Sekkel et al., 2010).

Finally, the phenomenological study of Murahara et al. (2023) has examined the participation of students with ID in students' council, and the transformative process of becoming student representatives. This practice was considered a self-advocacy practice but did not focus on the self-advocacy development. Therefore, despite the fact these studies discussed

an interesting variety of practices that place participation as an important feature of inclusive education, more research is needed regarding specific self-advocacy practices that represent the Brazilian school environment and its socio-cultural particularities.

Thus, in response, this doctoral research examines the insufficient implementation of self-advocacy in Brazilian schools and the inclusive practices that promote participation. We developed a teacher training workshop to introduce fundamental concepts of self-advocacy, specifically tailored to the Brazilian educational context, informed by historical milestones and a theoretical framework, emphasizing Brazil's socio-cultural context. The workshop sought to provide teachers with a common vocabulary and essential skills to initiate self-advocacy practices for students with developmental disabilities.

1.6 Research questions

Research Question 1. How do Brazilian teachers, after participating in the training workshop, perceive the development of self-advocacy and its development among diverse students with developmental disabilities over a 2-month period?

Research question 2: How did Brazilian students experience self-advocacy during the two-month period when teachers developed self-advocacy practices?

Chapter 2: Method

The method chapter encompasses all methodological reflections and research procedures. We start with the presentation of 1) the research design, methodological approach and a timeline of the research plan, 2) the study participants and a detailed description of data collection and tools, 3) Procedures and data analysis procedures.

Research Design

The research design section incorporates the methodological approach and a timeline of the research procedures. Respectively, the research design section includes the methodological approach of emancipatory-participatory research (Barton & Houeye, 2022) and introduces the epistemological underpinnings of emancipatory research tenets within disability studies framework (Goodley, 2017), followed by the timeline of all the research procedures, which includes an overview of the strategies for data collection (including sampling choices).

The Methodological Approach to Self-Advocacy in Schools

The methodological approach for this research is based on the contributions from the *emancipatory participatory research* (Barton & Hayhoe, 2021) within the field of disability studies (Goodley, 2017). This approach provides epistemological and ontological frameworks to examine the disability experience in the schools while having emancipatory tenets as guidelines; therefore, the emancipatory-participatory research functions as a comprehensive methodological approach to the problem of this research. Moreover, according to Barton and Hayhoe (2021), the emancipatory quality in this approach distinguishes itself from other emancipatory approaches because it has been conceived as a paradigm. As such, the emancipatory paradigm is based on the contributions from the disability studies, drawing from the notion of emancipatory disability research of Barnes (2003) and the principles elaborated by Stone and Priestley (1996). Note that

this research is inspired by tenets of this approach as we adapt and incorporate aspects that are relevant and coherent with the purpose of examining the existing relationships in the school context of students with disabilities, teachers, and school systems.

Accordingly, in this section, we present a detailed list of the data collection methods and a description of the data analysis choices that align with this methodological approach.

Methodological Inspiration from Emancipatory Research Tenets

This section presents a description of the two references for the emancipatory quality of this research, followed by a description on how these references have been adapted and appropriated into the design of this research considering the school as the research context.

Firstly, emancipatory disability research according to Barnes (2003) presents the following key characteristics: 1) making persons with disabilities and organizations accountable in the research process; 2) utilizing the social model of disability as a referential framework in the sense of acknowledging the disabling process that takes place in society; 3) choosing methods (epistemologically) that recognize the historical, social, and cultural oppression to the persons with disabilities realities; and 4) stimulating social change. The goal of emancipatory research is to empower people with disabilities through the transformation of the relations between research and society. Moreover, the products from this research are purposely accessible, as it aims to remove societal barriers for people with disabilities (Barnes, 2003). Secondly, Stone and Priestley (1996) contribute with core principles of which we pinpoint two aligned principles for the present research: the first is "the ability to give voice to the personal while endeavouring to collect the commonalty of disabling experiences and barriers"; and the second is the adoption of a "plurality of methods for data collection"(Stone & Priestley, 1996), which is described in the instruments section. Thus, this research was designed to enable teachers

and students to reflect on their lived school experiences and voice their views on how to improve their school participation. Correspondingly, accommodations were offered to address possible communication and language barriers.

Furthermore, it is worth highlighting that these previously presented emancipatory aspects (Barton, 2003; Stone & Priestley, 1996) had disability organizations as the locus of research. As such, this framework required adaptation to the school reality. Hence, the school is understood as an institution with its own culture, environmental elements, and power dynamics. At this occasion it is worth returning to the contributions of the critical pedagogy, which also aligns with this modality of research by valuing the dialogue in research; Freire (2019) states that authentic praxis is only possible if dialogue with the oppressed occurs. In this context, the oppressed group consists of students with disabilities who were invited to reflect on self-advocacy experiences in the schools.

In addition, another important consideration of the emancipatory research consists of focusing on the ways in which exclusion is embedded in relationships. This aspect aligns with characteristics of the emancipatory research approach as described by Vehmas (2020).

> Is not centred on the experiences of individuals, groups of individuals, or the ways they behave. It is about the relationships between individuals and groups, as it seeks to unpack the relations of oppression and exclusion experienced by disabled people. (p. 151)

In order to unravel "the relations of oppression and exclusion" (Watson & Vehmas, 2020), this research design includes a variety of methods (to be described thoroughly in the instrument subsection) that embed emancipatory tenets and aim at the relationship between the students-teachers, students-school, teachers-school. Therefore, the relationships of students with

disabilities and teachers and the ways in which they interact are central in this research design, in

the sense that the teachers' perceptions of students are appreciated in the same way that students'

voices. Briefly, the data collection methods of this research consist of:

Table 1 Summary of methods

	Instruments
Teachers	*Teachers Self-Advocacy Assessment Protocol* (semi-structured interview) & *Support Intensity Scale for Children* (SIS-C): Advocacy section.
Students	Self-Advocacy Assessment Protocol (Focus groups)
School	Field notes & Governmental data description

It is worth highlighting that possible barriers to content accessibility with regards to the

disability experience of the students were taken into consideration since the design of the consent

forms. We planned to offer content accessibility through accessible language and usage of

images to represent the main concepts and procedures of the research (see Appendix C).

The methodological choice of focus group commits to the emancipation of students with

disabilities by problematizing the school's barriers to self-advocacy development and by

promoting awareness about agency to students and teachers. In addition, as Barnes (2003)

suggests that emancipatory disability research is transformative of the social relations in research

and "has a meaningful practical outcome for disabled people" (2003, p.12), this research aims to

provide a means for students to critically conceive the school environment *through collective*

discussion based on interviews protocols. The teacher and student protocols mobilize students

and teachers to analyze the functioning of their schools and its implications for possibly

disabling school experiences. Therefore, this methodological approach supports the first research

question of examining the teachers' perceptions of students, while the tenets related to voice

support the second research question related to the students' lived experiences of self-advocacy in the school.

Moreover, Barton and Hayhoe (2021) build on these premises by adding that the emancipatory-participatory research in education consists of:

> Research practice incorporates a plan to create tangible social change by making recommendations designed to improve the disability culture, policies, and practices of the educational institution that is the focus of the study. The researcher has a plan for distribution to the institution being researched, to increase the chance of action being taken, and to promote the voices of the participants. Emancipatory participatory research is concerned with hearing and promoting the voices of disabled people and includes a participant checking phase to ensure their representation is authentic.

The two premises of incorporating a social change plan and promoting students' voices are contemplated in this research as depicted in the following timeline section. However, the participant checking phase of the content was not included in the research process. Therefore, it is worth stating that the emancipatory participatory research is partially integrated in this research design which was inspired by the above presented premises. (Barton & Hayhoe, 2021, p8)

The Research Timeline

Figure 2 *Phases of the data collection*

April 2022 | September 2022 | October 2022 | December 2022

RECRUITMENT (6 months)

TRAINNING WORKSHOP (1 week duration)

TIMEPOINT 1 (DATA COLLECTION) (2 week duration)

TIMEPOINT 2 (DATA COLLECTION) (2 week duration)

2) Description of the workshop
2.1) Workshop
2.2) Self-advocacy activities booklet

4) School Visit 2
4.1) Focus group with students
4.2) Interview with teachers
4.3) SIS-C
4.4) Field Notes

1.1) Ethical Approvals
1.2) Recruitment (sampling):
Schools' Description
Teachers (n=7)
Students (n=25)

3) School visit 1
3.1) Focus group with students
3.2) Interview with teachers
3.3) SIS-C
3.4) Field Notes

Recruitment. The recruitment consists of ethical approval and recruitment overview.

Ethical approval. The research was designed with the goal to integrate both teachers' and students' perspectives of the school self-advocacy in the Brazilian context. Given the socio-cultural particularities of the Brazilian context the researcher complied with all the ethics approval demands (details in the next section), which initially entailed obtaining the approval of the McGill University ethics board in Canada (Appendix D) and later the approval of the University of São Paulo ethics committee board in Brazil (Appendix E). Furthermore, since this research consisted of multicentric research involving three municipalities in three different states in the south-eastern region of Brazil, the research was also submitted to the respective ethics committees of each school board for approval. Overall, five ethics boards approved the project.

Recruitment overview. After obtaining the three municipal ethical approvals[2], we followed a different protocol for each school board to *recruit the participants*. The sampling in this research occurred *purposefully (*Patton, 2015); more specifically, the teachers' participants were chosen according to their willingness to participate in the research and promote self-advocacy practices in the schools, and students were expected to present a developmental disability.

We decided to recruit schools in metropolitan centres and in suburban areas (suburbs) to include experiences of different socioeconomic contexts within Brazilian metropolises. As such, the purpose of choosing three different states was to examine possible variations in the organization of self-advocacy in major centres. Only one school participated in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

In Belo Horizonte city, the school board requested a brief introductory presentation of the research for all resource teachers during the school board's monthly meeting. Three teachers demonstrated interest and ultimately joined the research. In Sao Bernardo do Campo city, the presentation was held for the school board representatives who referred me to two schools. Finally, in Rio de Janeiro, the city ethics department approved the research project but did not request any presentation: the school was contacted directly through a teacher who had already demonstrated interest in participating in the research. This teacher was referred through an academic contact. Overall, seven teachers and 25 students agreed to participate in this research.

The training workshop. Given that the recruited teachers were not familiar with the topic of self-advocacy, the researchers prepared a workshop of 4 hours to introduce the main

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[2] In Brazil, schools can be part of municipal, state, or federal education systems. In this case, all schools belonged to the municipal systems.

aspects of self-advocacy and explain how the research would be conducted. The workshop

encompassed the history of social movements of persons with disabilities, the concept of self-

advocacy based on a summary of the literature review, an overview of inclusive education, and a

discussion on school practices of self-advocacy. The main purpose of this training workshop was

to guarantee that all participating teachers would join the research with a basic understanding of

self-advocacy and develop a common lexicon. Moreover, the second purpose of the workshop

entailed clearly outlining the teachers' role in the research.

The training workshop was designed as a remote interactive activity that integrated the

theoretical framework and practical activities. The workshop's learning goals consisted of 1)

recognizing the history of self-advocacy applied to school reality, 2) exploring self-advocacy

instructional strategies in the school setting, and 3) reflecting on the collaborative decision-

making process in students' self-advocacy development. The course methodology included a

video documentary on the history of the Brazilian social movement of persons with disabilities

(Junior, 2010), a lecture based on a literature review of self-advocacy studies (Algozzine et al.,

2001; Clough & Barton, 1998; Di Maggio et al., 2020; Fenn & Scior, 2019; Koca et al., 2023;

Logeswaran et al., 2019; Mitchell, 2006; Shogren & Raley, 2022; Test, Fowler, Brewer, et al.,

2005; Test, Fowler, Wood, et al., 2005), a group discussion, and guest lecturers who shared lived

experiences of self-advocacy. The workshop promoted interactive discussions in which teachers

shared and exchanged in-classroom experiences. For detailed information, the slides used for the

training workshop are available as Appendix B.

The workshop was offered two times based on teachers' availabilities; the workshop's

sessions occurred in period of one week. As for the purpose of explaining their participation in

the research, all teachers were requested to develop self-advocacy practices with their students,

which would be the grounding experience for this research. During the workshop, examples of

self-advocacy activities were discussed, and at the end of the course, all teachers had access to a

booklet with self-advocacy activities based on the literature review of the field (See Figure 3).

Figure 3 *Ten self-advocacy activities*

As a result of the literature review process on self-advocacy programs for this doctoral

research, the above activities were prepared, contextualized, and translated for the Brazilian

teachers. The 10 activities consisted of: 1) Suggestions of readings about self-advocacy, 2) Self-

knowledge activities, 3) Role play activities, 4) Instructions on how to apply self-advocacy in the

IEP, 5) Collective discussions on disability, 6) Anti-bullying activities (including anti-ableism),

7) Discussion on rights, 8) Suggestions on school participation, 9) An adaptation of the Self-

Determination Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI) program, and 10) Multi-component

activities (see Appendix B). Each activity was briefly introduced in the training program, and the

full description was made available through a link. Teachers were invited to access these

activities with instructions for use at their discretion. These activities were introduced as optional

strategies; teachers were also invited to create or look for other new activities.

It is noteworthy that during the workshop, teachers identified instructional practices that could be considered self-advocacy practices, such as participation in the student council and informational guidance on rights. The goal of identifying these school practices also helped teachers apply the new learning to their instructional repertoire.

The research was designed to examine the development of self-advocacy over time. Therefore, two timepoints were established to assess the development in the experiences of teachers and students. Each timepoint has particularities concerning the change in context.

Timepoint 1. After participating in the self-advocacy teacher training program, the first school visits were scheduled. When the main researcher visited the schools, the schools' principals usually introduced a brief history, mission, and current projects developed by the school. The reports from principals varied greatly; in some schools, principals would talk about the challenges faced in the Specialized Educational Service (AEE)[3] while others would just welcome the researcher without providing any information. Pictures of the schools were taken mostly during the first visit.

As a matter of ethical confidentiality, teacher and student participants were given pseudonyms. Schools were coded according to the city; there were two schools in São Bernardo do Campo in São Paulo state (SBC 1 and SBC 2), one school in Rio de Janeiro (RJ1), and two schools in Belo Horizonte in the state of Minas Gerais (BH1 and BH2). All data was de-identified.

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[3] Specialized educational services (SES) are pedagogical interventions aimed at enabling access to the curriculum by addressing the specific educational needs of students with disabilities, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and high abilities or giftedness, who are part of the special education population. The provision of these services must be included in the school's pedagogical plan (Decree No. 7.611/2011), at all stages and modalities of basic education. (MEC, Brasil)

In the first interviews with the groups, consent forms were signed by the students (see Appendix C) and their parents (see Appendix D), teachers (see Appendix E), and school principals (see Appendix F). The researcher provided instructions and explained all procedures that the interview process entailed. Students who could not write or communicate verbally were asked to provide their responses on accessible answer sheets. As mentioned previously, the researcher only moved to the following questions after the confirmation from all the participants that they had responded to the round question. In case students presented non-verbal responses, the researcher waited for the student to finalize their text, word writing, or drawing. Note that graphical responses were only considered for analysis if coherently related to the questions. Videos were also used to record the interviews, although gestural expressions were not analyzed. Teachers accompanied all interviews, while teaching assistants, caretakers, or peers were present during the interviews when needed as part of the accessibility strategy.

Timepoint 2. The seven teachers had approximately the same timeframe to develop their students' self-advocacy. Due to the organization of the data collection procedures, the number of weeks varied from 6 to 8. The last week of work was marked by the second visit to the school. It is worth noting that second visits occurred at the end of semester, Thus, some of the school's activity had already ceased, and students were on vacation, which caused absences of some student participants. Furthermore, teachers had less availability to participate in the research.

Data Collection

Schools Description

Based on field notes and statistical data collected from Brazilian research institutes, the schools were described to illustrate the participants' environments.

Field notes were included in the descriptions of each school, along with information collected during the visits. The pictures are important in illustrating the spaces, which the students referred to. Pictures represent the diversity of environments and how the school has administered these spaces to incorporate important information for the reader. We chose to depict important spaces such as the resource room, spaces of social interaction, accessibility resources for students, and the school surroundings. This information illustrates the way students use the spaces in the school; the pictures also depict the different spatial realities that students refer to during the focus groups (Banks, 2018).

Each school had different infrastructures and different socio-economic contexts within the same cities. For this reason, we present a brief description of the school including the number of overall students in the schools, students with disabilities, and accessibility resources/services offered at the school; these data were collected from the official governmental website of the National Institute of Education and Research (M. BRASIL, 2024). A second set of data collected from the National Human Development Index[4] (ATLAS BRASIL, 2024), which is a statistical measure composed of three dimensions: life expectancy, education, and income, based on the United Nations Index of Human development, demonstrates the level of development for each geographical area of the school adapted to the Brazilian reality. Presenting this information demonstrates a comparative view of the participants school' experiences according to metropolitan region within and between cities. Note that these tiers (raging from Very Low,

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[4] "The Atlas Brazil is the product of a partnership between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA), and the João Pinheiro Foundation (FJP). Conceived with the purpose of presenting the Municipal Human Development Index (MHDI), the Atlas now provides, in addition to the index, more than 330 indicators covering topics such as health, education, income and employment, housing, social vulnerability, environment, and political participation, for the 5,570 municipalities, five macro-regions, 27 Federation Units (UFs), 21 metropolitan regions (MRs), three integrated development regions (RIDEs), and approximately 17,000 human development units (HDUs) or 'neighborhoods,' the latter being the smallest territorial divisions in Brazil that directly relate to citizens' realities." ATLAS BRASIL. (2024). *Atlas do Desenvolvimento Humano no Brasil*. http://www.atlasbrasil.org.br/acervo/atlas

Low, Medium, High, and Very High) do not correspond to the United Nations' Global Human Development Index but are used for references to Brazil. Each school was rated with a score from 0 to 1. The closer the value is to 1, the higher the level of human development in a federative unit, municipality, or metropolitan region.

School 1: SBC1 Centre. The school has 517 students with 24 students with disabilities (M. BRASIL, 2024). It is located at the centre of the city of São Bernardo do Campo in a moderately rich neighbourhood according to the principal description of the school. The age range of these students was younger because this school only offers classes to the first years of elementary education[5].

The SES work is offered by two resource teachers, Robbie and Cindy, each of whom works different shifts (morning and afternoon). Four students joined the research. As for the accessibility of the school, data from Brazilian Education Ministry was consulted, which considered a school with accessibility with accessible facilities (classrooms and ramps). There were no accessible washrooms. Although there is no SES room registered in the governmental website, the school offers SES services in an adapted regular classroom (see Figure 6).

The school has received awards for the sustainability projects developed throughout the years. The garden of the school held several sustainability projects (see Figure 4).

The Municipal Human Development Index of this school was considered very high (0,911).

School 2: SBC2 Suburb. The second school in Sao Bernardo do Campo has 805 students (33 with disabilities).

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[5] In Brazil there are three years of pre-school, and nine years of – school are mandatory from 4 years old to 17 years old.

The Municipal Human Development Index of this school was considered high (0,755). However, according to the school principal, the location of the school is a suburban area of the city of São Bernardo do Campo considered a lower-income neighbourhood. This institution offers only the early years of elementary education and conducts adult education classes in the evening. The age range of students with disabilities at this school was lower than that of other schools.

The SES work is offered by two resource teachers as well, but only one teacher, Lucy, participated in the research. The second teacher demonstrated interest, but her students did not meet the inclusion criteria. Five students joined the research.

As for accessibility, according to the MEC, this school is considered accessible, with accessible facilities and washrooms. This school offers a resource room as stated on the website.

School 3: RJ1 Suburb. This school has 873 students, with 33 students with disabilities. The school is in the suburban region of Rio de Janeiro city. According to the teacher Julie, who participated in this research, this school used to serve as a public institution for public workers of a governmental institution before turning into a public city school; this fact was provided to explain why the school's name referred to an unrelated association. The school is located at least a 1-hour drive from the city centre and in a low-income suburban area of the city according to the teacher's report. However, the Municipal Human Development Index of this school was considered high (0,718).

Five students participated in the research. The age range of this school is from 10 to 14 years old, and the school only offers classes to the older grades of elementary education.

As for accessibility, the school has an accessible washroom, accessible classroom rooms, and a resource room.

The school had many spaces that seemed to require infrastructure renovation like the running lanes and the area in the back of the school.

School 4. BH1 Suburb. This school has 430 students[6] with 28 students with disabilities (out of which, six participated in the research). The school is in the suburban region of the city of Belo Horizonte; the neighbourhood has green areas around the school (see Figure 17). Commonly in Brazil, urban suburban areas may present low socio-economic status as reported by the only resource teacher at the school, Jessy. The Municipal Human Development Index of this school was considered medium (0,664) which is consistent with the teacher report.

While teacher Jessy introduced the school facilities, she reported having lived and studied at this school in the past. She stated that the school neighbourhood has been occupied in the past by the current residents. The school offers classes to first years of elementary school and offers classes for adults during the evenings. As for accessibility this school is considered a school with accessibility, with accessible facilities and accessible washrooms. The school also offers AEE and has a resource room.

School 5: BH2 Centre. In 2023, the school had 786 students, with 55 students with disabilities (out of which, 7 seven students joined the research). The school is in the central region of Belo Horizonte city. The region is considered a high-income area according to the teacher's reports; students' parents who work in the region use their work address to have their families registered at the school. The Municipal Human Development Index of this school was considered very high (0,929), which is consistent with teachers' descriptions.

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[6] Censo escolar 2024

The school used to serve the Italian community who lived in the area in the past decades before being integrated into the public municipal education system. The SES work is offered by two resource teachers, Marcy and Christy, each of whom works a different shift (morning and afternoon). This school is considered an accessible school with accessible facilities and washrooms and a multi-functional resource room.

Participants

The total sample of participants consisted of teachers (n=7) and their students with developmental disabilities (DD) (n=25). All teachers were women and had certificate licences to work in the resource rooms, which are the classrooms where the AEE is offered. The inclusion criteria for teachers consisted of being responsible for resource rooms or the school's AEE, agreeing to participate in the training program, and being committed to developing self-advocacy activities in the school.

The inclusion criteria for students (n=25, f=7, m=18) were having a developmental disability and being between 10 and 15 years old. Students were chosen by the teachers who decided to indicate students with the previous characteristics. Note that students with ASD were also included as having a developmental disability. Data from one student were excluded from the quantitative analyses due to missing T2 data.

Table 2 Students Participants Description

School	Name	Age	Gender	Disability
SBC1	Albert	9	M	Autism Spectrum Disorder
SBC1	Vincent	10	M	Autism Spectrum Disorder
SBC1	John	9	M	Developmental Disability
SBC1	Renata	12	F	Down Syndrome
SBC2	Julien	10	M	Intellectual Disability and Autism Spectrum Disorder
SBC2	Maria	10	F	Multiple disabilities
SBC2	Adriano	11	M	Learning disability

SBC2	Gustav	11	M	Intellectual Disability
SBC2	Luke	12	M	Autism Spectrum Disorder
RJ1	Peter	14	M	Learning disability
RJ1	Laura	14	F	Learning disability
RJ1	Louis	15	M	Learning disability
RJ1	Mariana	15	F	Learning disability
BH1	Andrea	12	F	Learning disability
BH1	Bruno	14	M	Cerebral Palsy and Learning disability
BH1	Ian	14	M	Cerebral Palsy and Learning disability
BH1	Esther	14	M	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
BH1	Thiago	15	M	Learning disability
BH2	Amanda	15	F	Physical Disability
BH2	Hector	11	M	Autism Spectrum Disorder
BH2	Guillaume	13	M	Learning disability
BH2	Octavio	13	M	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
BH2	Sammy	13	M	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
BH2	Willian	15	M	Cerebral Palsy
BH2	Mark	10	M	Developmental Disability

Teachers' Profile

Given that this research relied heavily on the teachers' commitment to develop self-advocacy in their schools, it is vital to present the teachers' profiles. All teachers who participated in the research had long professional trajectories and were qualified to work with students with disabilities (see Table 1). However, each teacher worked in different conditions. It is worth mentioning that the schools were intentionally chosen to represent different realities of the three Brazilian cities (Belo Horizonte [BH], Rio de Janeiro [RJ], and São Bernardo do Campo [SBC]); thus, within each city, the school's location referred to different socio-economic contexts with contrasting experiences. This information adds another layer to the teachers' work. Moreover, given that each municipality has the autonomy to adapt their own SES, the school board of each city has their specific services, which consequently defines the teachers' practices implementation. Lastly, the quality of teacher engagement was an important factor in the

development of students' self-advocacy; the engagement was based on teachers' descriptions of

their work. In the interviews, teachers presented different levels of commitment and delivered

instructions of different complexities. Some teachers demonstrated more enthusiasm and

innovation by creating elaborate instructional strategies. For instance, more engaged teachers

mentioned tailoring activities to their students' unique circumstances, while other teachers

complained about not having enough time and just used the activities from the booklet. More

detailed descriptions of practices were included in the subsection teachers' practices and

challenges.

Table 3 *Description of Teachers Professional Background*

School	Teacher	Professional background
SBC1	Cindy	Bachelor's degree in Pedagogy in 2009. Specialized in Special education and Intellectual Disability. <u>13 years of experience working in the resource room</u>. She works with ASD and ID, but the majority of students are on Autism Spectrum.
SBC1	Robbie	Robbie has a certificate in Special Education, she has 13 years of experience working in special school APAE, then moved to the prefecture where she worked since 2009 (13 years in the SBC school board.) She later specialized in psycho-pedagogy.
SBC2	Lucy	Lucy has 3 years of experience working in the SBC school board as a resource teacher; priorly, she worked as geography and history teacher in regular classroom. She has a certificate in inclusive education and psycho-pedagogy and psychomotricity specializations.
RJ1	Julie	Julie started working as an English teacher in regular settings. She has two bachelor's degrees in Letras (Literature and Languages) and Pedagogy. She is currently pursuing graduate studies, a master's degree in education. She studies democratic practices. She has 10 years of experience in the school, but she started as Spanish teacher, then, assumed the Resource room in the recent years.
BH1	Jessy	She has a bachelor in pedagogy and a licence to teach. Jessy has been working in the BH school board since 2011 - 11 years of experience. She has experience working as a school coordinator and extracurricular activities, but only recently started working with students with disabilities.

BH2	Christy	Christy has 26 years of experience. She has experience in regular classrooms and as a school coordinator. She has been working in the resource room for 7 years.
BH2	Marcy	Marcy has been working as a teacher since 1987. She works as resource teacher since 2016 -6 years in the resource room. She worked in different projects in literacy and school coordination.

Instruments:

For Teachers. Individual or pairs of *Teachers Self-Advocacy Assessment Protocol* (semi-structured interview) (see table 4)& *Support Intensity Scale for Children* (SIS-C): Advocacy section (Thompson et al., 2014).

The *Teachers Self-Advocacy Assessment Protocol* (semi-structured interviews) was designed for this research based on the research questions and literature review on self-advocacy to collect data from teachers at each school. Therefore, interviews were either conducted individually or in pairs according to the configuration of the SES in the schools. In schools where two teachers would work with the same cohort of students, teachers were interviewed in pairs such as the BH2. However, the SIS-C instrument was collected individually since it did not require any exchange of information between teachers.

 T1 and T2 time points; duration: 45 minutes.

Table 4 The Teachers' self-advocacy assessment protocol

T1 interview	T2 interview
1. Can you briefly describe your professional trajectory?	1. Can you briefly describe how these past months have been for you in terms of promoting self-advocacy?
2. What is self-advocacy to you?	2. After focusing on your students' self-advocacy over these past months, what does self-advocacy mean to you now?
3. Can you share an experience (practices) of self-advocacy or advocacy that already takes place in your school?	3. Did you incorporate new SA strategies to your work? What were they?
4. Can you provide an example of self-advocacy that you expect to find in the class (or school wide)?	4. Do you see any change in classroom (or in the school) as a result of your students' actions?

5. Do you work with IEPs in your school? Is self-advocacy contemplated in the IEP?	5. Did you notice any significant change in your students' behaviour? Social behaviour, academic, IEP, etc.?
6. What do you find (or expect to find) challenging when promoting your students' self-advocacy?	6. What were the main challenges you found? Were there any good surprises?
7. Do you have the support from school to develop your project?	7. Did you have any school support? How did they assist you? Which role did they assume?
8. How do other teachers (colleagues) support your students' self-advocacy?	8. How do other teachers (colleagues) support your students' self-advocacy?
9. What rights do you consider important for your students to know?	9. Did you discuss rights with your students? How did they respond to it?
10. How do your students take part in decision making processes of their learning?	10. How do your students take part in decision making processes of their learning?
11. Can you tell me about your plans on how to support your students' development of self-advocacy?	11. Do you intend to continue developing the SA of your students? Why?

These questions were designed to explore the teachers' experiences of implementing self-advocacy practices over the period of a school semester. The chosen themes for teacher's self-advocacy assessment protocol were based on self-advocacy and inclusive instructions. The first set of questions (T1 interview) focuses on exploring situations at the beginning of the work and considers the teacher's expectations and understanding of the training workshop. The second set of interview questions uses the same theme structure (thematic alignment of questions); however, it was designed to assess the development of teachers' understanding of school self-advocacy experiences after the research period in which teachers agreed to develop self-advocacy practices in their schools. Thus, the second period (T2) encompasses practical experiences of self-advocacy practices implementation. In other words, T1 aims for the teachers to learn about the course or their theoretical understanding, while T2 focuses on teachers' reflections on the implementation of self-advocacy pedagogical plans.

Support Intensity Scale for Children (SIS-C): Advocacy section. This is a section taken

from the assessment Support Intensity Scale for Children with IDD (Thompson et al., 2014),

which measures the kind of support a child requires to engage successfully in varied community

settings. For this research, only the Advocacy section of the assessment was selected, and it was

utilized as a way to assess the individual development of students through the teacher's

perceptions.

 The chosen advocacy section includes 9 subskills: 1) Expressing preferences, 2) Setting

personal goals, 3) Taking action and attaining goals, 4) Making choices and decisions, 5)

Advocating for and assisting others, 6) Learning and using self-advocacy, 7) Communicating

personal wants and needs, 8) Participation in educational decision-making, and 9) Learning and

using problem-solving and self-regulation strategies in the home and community.

The responses were divided into the kind of support needed by students. As for kinds of

support, the ratings consisted of: (0=none, 1=monitoring, 2=verbal/gestural prompting, 3=partial

physical assistance, 4=full physical assistance).

For Students. Focus groups were chosen with the purpose of exploring the students'

points of view on self-advocacy experiences in the school. This method is ideal because it

facilitates group discussions and provides the means of obtaining diverse opinions (Vaughn et al.

1996). Moreover, focus groups are known for "synergism (when a wider bank of data emerges

through the group interaction), snowballing (when the statements of one respondent initiate a

chain reaction of additional comments), stimulation (when the group discussion generates

excitement about a topic)" (Vaughn et al., 1996, p.14). An additional and relevant aspect of

group discussion in focus groups consists of shifting the focus on the researcher to the group

conversation, which may enable students to interact freely and reduce possible inhibition. These

features are coherent with the social aspect of self-advocacy as interaction among students is valued and expected.

This group method is also recommended for an improved depth of understanding in education and psychology studies (Vaughn et al, 1996). In this research, the focus group discussion followed the guiding questions from the student self-advocacy protocol that developed by the main researcher based on the literature review on self-advocacy studies.

The student Self-Advocacy Assessment Protocol group (see table 5) is used at the two time points; the duration is 50 minutes.

Table 5 Questions of the Student's self-advocacy protocol

The students' self-advocacy assessment protocol
Do you tell teachers, school staff, and your family what you like to do?
Can you share your strengths and weaknesses? Give examples.
Can you describe and talk about your disability?
Do you feel respected in the school?
Do you participate in decisions about your learning process?
Can you tell me a student right? For example, a right from the Brazilian law of Inclusion or the Statute of Child and Adolescent.
Can you share a situation of injustice in school, what can you do about it?
Do you ask for help when you need it?
Do you have a support group including family, friends to help you accomplish your goals?
Is there anything you would like to change in school? What would it be? List 3 things.

Each question was based on the literature review on self-advocacy, approaching the themes of self-knowledge, disability, school social experiences, decision-making, support network, and rights. The language used for the questions was adapted for a younger audience.

Unlike the teacher's protocol, the student's protocol consisted of a single set of questions. The reason for using the same set of questions was to compare the development of students' self-advocacy experiences over time, the protocol was applied at the beginning and end of the data collection process over a semester. Unlike the teacher's protocol, which encompassed two sets of questions developed for each specific demand of T1 and T2, the students' protocol was designed

to examine a more linear development of self-advocacy experiences. It is worth highlighting that

the main difference between the data collection procedures resided in teachers participating in

the training workshop, while students did not take part.

To improve the accessibility of the protocol, we designed an answer sheet with blank

spaces for writing or drawing; thus, students who required verbal communication support could

express themselves graphically (non-verbally). A second measure entailed iterative checking

(Trevisan, 2021), which implied checking in with students after each question. The researcher

was expected to verify if all students answered the question orally or graphically—instead of the

typical method of sharing transcripts after finalizing the focus group. Moreover, a third strategy

involved inviting familiar colleagues or staff who could facilitate the participation of the student

in the focus group (Trevisan, 2021).

For school**s**. The field notes, pictures (Appendix G), and governmental data were used to

describe the school contexts, which was part of the research procedures to contextualize the daily

experiences of the participants.

The field notes consisted of the observation of physical spaces and objects of the school

(Bailey, 2007) and a brief conversation with school principal or other administrative or

pedagogical staff. The observation took place mostly during the first timepoint, and it took into

consideration how the spaces were inhabited by its community members. During the visit,

usually the school principal would present the history of the school, their life trajectories in the

lived space, and other particular school's events. The researcher took notes about the spaces and

items observed during the visits, especially the objects that were connected to the SES.

As an additional layer of contextual information, pictures were taken of the visits and

were used also to illustrate these schools' spaces and objects. Although the usage of images can

be a powerful of analytical instrument, in this research, they were used to illustrate and contextualize the spaces and register significant objects related to accessibility and student participation (Banks, 2018).

Data analysis

Procedures

After the theme's introduction (self-advocacy teacher training program), a first round of school visits was scheduled with teachers to initiate the data collection. First, teachers were interviewed about their understanding of self-advocacy practices in schools. Then, students were grouped into different groups according to their availability. Both teachers and students were interviewed at two time points within approximately two months.

Fourteen focus groups were conducted with students (seven at each time point); two students were interviewed individually in T2 due to availability restrictions. As for the teachers, 12 interviews were conducted; all teachers were interviewed individually except for teachers Marcy and Christy from BH2. Only one interview was conducted online due to the end of the school semester in Brazil.

Data Analysis Description

All focus groups and interviews were conducted and transcribed in Portuguese. In case of specific expressions requiring extended cultural contextualization, explanations were included as footnotes.

The data were organized and prepared for the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) with the usage of the software NVivo. The data organization followed core perspective of each research questions: the first data set focused on the teachers' experiences, and the second set of data represented the students' experiences of self-advocacy at the school.

After the preparation of the data, a content analysis was conducted to facilitate the organization of the data. In this phase of the data analysis, complimentary contextual data such as information on teachers' profiles and students' individual development material were organized and presented as part of the description of the participants. Moreover, at this stage, the word count resource from NVivo was used to facilitate mapping the most frequent words. On some occasions, this information is introduced with the purpose of contextualizing the most cited words, which were analysed in depth through the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2020).

Secondly, the initial data preparation set the stage for the thematic analysis procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2020). The first phase consisted of a thematic analysis of the teachers' and students' group interviews. The analysis of the process respected the following procedures: 1) the familiarization of the content; 2) an inductively coding process, which was translated into English; 3) the creation of candidate's themes, which entailed proposing shared meaning among the set of codes; 4) a review of the initial themes and coded extracts; 5) a refining of the themes as the central organizing aspect was identified, during which the final titles for each theme were defined, and 6) the writing of the report (Braun & Clarke, 2022). All procedures were conducted using NVivo. Moreover, a key aspect of the coding process encompassed an inductive approach (Maxwell, 2009) of the data which implied understanding the meaning of the teachers' and students' experiences of self-advocacy without pre-established categories.

Given the nature of the research questions, teachers' and students' data were analyzed separately. First, in the teacher's analysis, each interview was coded and analyzed separately. It is worth noting that the first set of questions represented theoretical comprehensions of self-advocacy practices since teachers relied mainly on their understanding of training workshop and expectations. The second timepoint reflected the reports and insights on factual experiences.

After organizing the themes according to the timepoints, the themes from T1 and T2 were paired and analyzed comparatively. In other words, since the research questions aimed at understanding their perceptions of self-advocacy over the period of approximately two months of work, the themes were created as a result of the comparison between the two interviews of each teacher. Therefore, the final themes represent the comparison of the first impressions and the nuances of practical experiences. This is explicitly noted in the presentation of the findings in the results section.

The student interviews had more procedure layers of analysis. At first, the data analysis process followed the same order of data analysis as the teachers' analysis did; each focus group set was analyzed separately (T1 and T2), followed by the comparative analysis of T1 and T2. However, the second research question focused on the student's voices, which implied an interactive perspective of data contemplation. Put differently, the students' experiences included their expressions of their daily lives in the school and teachers' impressions of their development. For the analysis of the students, the answers of the teacher's rating on their self-advocacy skills development are included as a second procedure of the student's analysis. It is worth noting that this measure enables us to compare the students' voices with the teacher's perceptions.

Moreover, the focus groups with the students aimed to address the essential experiences of the students in the school while stimulating critical reflections about their identities. Thus, the students' interactions are also analyzed in this process; salient students' interactions are showcased in the presentation of the findings and represent the exchanges and impact of students on each other's experiences. This can be considered a third analysis procedure concerning the

students' experiences. The triangulation of these two sources of data is presented in the discussion.

The collected data from teachers and students were analyzed separately, according to the time point of their experiences: time point 1 (T1) represented the beginning of the teacher's work, and time point 2 (T2) demonstrated the insights and work developed at the end of the two months.

Figure 4 *Description of the Data Analysis Process*
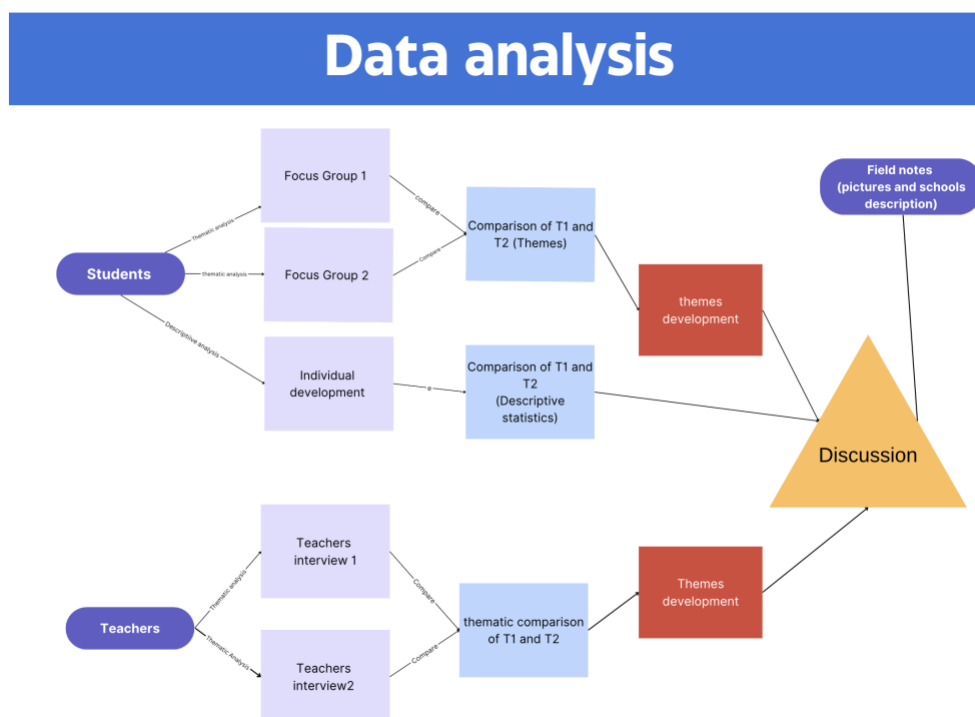
Considerations on Validity and Credibility

All the steps mentioned above in the data analysis process were guided by the purpose of enhancing the credibility of the process. The first step was the translation process. The data was analyzed in Portuguese, and the final report was created in English. To guarantee the accuracy of the Portuguese translation of the used codes and excerpts, a second doctoral student who is also a

native Portuguese speaker and fluent in English conducted a second translation of the content. Both translations were compared, and any inaccuracies were discussed. However, no significant inaccuracies were detected. This step also had the purpose to check the coding scheme and to identify any possible thematic mismatch. As a second translation step, all translated excerpts used for the thesis were read by a graduate student from the McGill Writing Centre to guarantee the trustworthiness of the English translation regarding the original Portuguese meaning. Both steps functioned as a first discussion over the content; notes were taken and used in the coding process.

As for the credibility of the data analysis process, we remark that triangulation was the leading resource for guaranteeing the rigour of the data analysis process. The triangulation (Patton, 2016) in this research occurred as a dual process that contemplated 1) a multiplicity of data collection methods as previously presented and 2) the theory triangulation (Patton, 2016), which consisted of the discussion on self-advocacy experiences from the two distinct theoretical perspectives of CP and SDT. The latter triangulation procedure occurred during the discussion of the findings.

First, the triangulation of the data (Patton, 2015) relied on multiple sources of qualitative data collection, collected through (semi-structured interviews, focus groups, field notes, and descriptive data); we also collected quantitative data through the questionnaire (SIS-C). Despite having collected a source of quantitative data, the analytical process does not entail a mixed-method research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2023) per se because the data were mainly analyzed descriptively. However, the questionnaires (SIS-C) held at two-time points enabled us to analyze students' individual development through teachers' perceptions. They provided an overview of teachers' perceptions of the students as groups. These diversified forms (qualitative

and descriptive analysis of the questionnaires) enabled us to integrate and triangulate the multiple perspectives of the lived experiences of teachers and students. Moreover, the same experiences of self-advocacy practices were also analyzed by comparing the experiences of teachers and the experiences of students of the same lived experiences.

Furthermore, the global indicators and official governmental report data (presented in the schools' descriptions section) add another layer that enables comparison of experiences of the lived spaces (teachers' and students') as well as reports of macro perspectives regarding accessibility in schools, socio-economic status, and human development index of the schools and geographical location. For instance, students' experience with possible school changes, such as having an accessible washroom, can be compared to the accessibility information collected from the official governmental report. These possibly contrasting perspectives provided elements to increase confidence in the elaborated themes from the thematic analysis by exploring the possible inconsistencies in the findings (Patton, 2015).

Patton (2015) also suggests that another way to enhance the credibility of the analytical process is through theory triangulation: "the point of theory triangulation is to understand how differing assumptions and premises affect findings and interpretations." (p. 673). This second form of triangulation aligns with the proposed theoretical framework for Critical Pedagogy and Self-Determination Theory. These distinct perspectives approach the same experience from different perspectives that enable examining the same phenomenon of self-advocacy school experiences from distinct epistemological and pragmatical standpoints—creating questions and providing elements to reflect on the findings and methods used for this research since each theory "can cast the same findings in different-based lights" (Patton, 2015, p. 674).

Ensuring validity and credibility through careful reflection on the translation process, followed by the two forms of triangulation (multiplicity of methods and theory), enhanced the rigour of the present research. The following section represents the findings of this research, which are the result of this rigorous process of comparative procedures.

Chapter 3: Results

From the individual interviews, focus groups, and advocacy questionnaires, the findings represent the themes that arose from teachers' and students' reflections on their lived experiences of self-advocacy in Brazilian schools. The results section is organized according to the two research questions and the themes obtained from the data analysis procedures (thematic analysis)—representing the teachers' perspective and students' experiences. Respectively, the research questions are: 1) How do Brazilian teachers, after participating in the training workshop, perceive self-advocacy and its development among diverse students with developmental disabilities over a two-month period? and 2) How did Brazilian students experience self-advocacy during the two months teachers developed self-advocacy practices? The findings related to the teachers' perceptions contemplate 1) The Transition from Theoretical Perception to its Practical Implication, 2) Rights as a Self-Advocacy Component, 3) The Interactional Elements of School Self-Advocacy, 3) Teacher's Strategies and Challenges, and 4) Teacher's perception of individual development of students. While the students' experiences are organized into the following themes: 1) General description of students' perceptions related to self-advocacy, 2) School changes, 3) Sense of Justice—Starting a Discussion on Rights, 4) The Role of the Support Network in Self-advocacy Development, and 5) Disability identity and collectivity in schools.

Research question 1: How do Brazilian teachers, after participating in the training workshop, perceive self-advocacy and its development among diverse students with developmental disabilities over two months?

The first part of the results section encompasses two sets of data: the findings from the thematic analysis and the descriptive data collected from the quantitative data on the teachers' perceptions of students' individual development.

It is worth emphasizing that none of the teachers had heard about the term "self-advocacy" before participating in this research; therefore, teachers were offered introductory training in which we introduced the purpose of the research and explained the terms of participation, which required teachers to engage in the development of self-advocacy practices over a period of two months. In addition, the training workshop introduced basic concepts of self-advocacy, including historical development, challenges in the field, and current school practices for self-advocacy promotion. First, we highlight the teachers' interview analysis indicated that the way each teacher understood self-advocacy varied considerably according to their professional background and environmental conditions. Furthermore, the effects of the workshop are subject to analysis.

A second critical note about the teachers' interview findings refers to the difference in the quality of the reports at the two-time points. The first impressions (T1) showed teachers learning about the course or their theoretical understanding. The second round of interviews (T2) depicted the teachers' reflections on implementing self-advocacy pedagogical plans; at T2, teachers presented a more comprehensive and practical understanding of self-advocacy based on their school experience throughout the 6 to 8 weeks of work.

First, the findings are organized based on the themes; second, the comparison of T1 and T2 is presented within each theme. The main themes associated with self-advocacy school

practices referred to 1) the complexity of the self-advocacy polysemy for teachers, 2) rights as a

self-advocacy component, 3) the interactional elements of school self-advocacy, and 4) teachers'

strategies and challenges in implementing self-advocacy. The latter subsection describes the

most relevant strategies to assess the pros and cons of each instructional activity.

The Transition from Theoretical Perception to Its Practical Implication

In this opening results subsection, the first findings encompass the varied meanings

teachers attributed to self-advocacy. It is salient to state that teachers' understanding concerning

self-advocacy experiences in school was intertwined, unveiling the complexity of self-advocacy.

For this reason, some elements presented here will be later described in their respective sections,

such as rights or teachers' practices. More specifically, this initial section described the transition

from the theoretical experiences based on the training workshop and past teachers' experiences

regarding self-advocacy topics.

In the first interview round, almost all teachers —Cindy, Christy, Lucy, Marcy, and

Jessy–reported that rights were a component of self-advocacy. They mentioned that **rights were**

the goal of self-advocacy, as represented by Lucy's report from her first interview:

> Giving space to these children. They have the knowledge, so they should have
>
> a voice, have their turn, *know their rights as the name suggests*, self-advocacy,
>
> giving visibility to these children, *giving them a voice so they can know their*
>
> *rights.* (Lucy, 2022, interview 1)

By describing self-advocacy as students knowing their rights, Lucy understood that

providing opportunities for students to speak may lead them to develop self-advocacy as they

learn about rights. In the second interview, Lucy continued to develop her comprehension of self-advocacy after working with her students:

> [Self-advocacy is] about rights, you know, **it is organizing spaces, the schedule, materials** so that these people with disabilities or developmental disorders can have opportunities to express themselves, to have a voice, to know their rights, and also their duties as citizens with rights and responsibilities. (...) So, like the students with whom we could carry out the activities, they supported it and thought it was cool. They were already working on some issues of respect and bullying, so I believe self-advocacy came to (...) **englobe everything**. (Lucy, 2022, interview 2)

Building on her initial understanding, we highlight that Lucy included practical examples such as organizing physical spaces, creating schedules, and providing pedagogical resources for students to voice their views, thus enabling participation in the school and developing self-advocacy skills. Other teachers have stated similar points of view. Likewise, at the second time point, teachers considered different aspects of self-advocacy that were not initially mentioned. Jessy also pointed out self-advocacy in school as providing resources for students to reach their goals and stand for their rights. Her opinion also evolved from a theoretical view to an understanding that contemplates practical elements. In the first interview, she defined self-advocacy as:

> I think it is a way of presenting oneself to the world, knowing your rights and role, acting in different spaces, and expressing your will, desires, needs, and opinions. It is about having the capacity to handle these situations in life, both

in the school environment and social spaces, in different contexts. (Jessy, 2022,

interview 1)

In comparison, in the second interview, she stated:

Self-advocacy is having knowledge of rights and responsibilities; it is about

knowing where and how to search for this positionality and how to speak of

these tools. What I understand about self-advocacy is acquiring **these**

resources (...) to make a stand and get your rights. (Jessy, 2022, interview

2)

Jessy's quote reinforces the teacher's practice of self-advocacy as making tools/resources

available for students to access their rights. This transition from theory to practice is well

described by Robbie, who says self-advocacy "is a concept; I mean, it is not exactly a concept, it

is an action" (2022). She states that *self-advocacy requires real action*, an effort to understand

students' interests.

Unlike other teachers who started defining self-advocacy as a right at T1, Julie

understood self-advocacy as an avenue for making youth agency accessible to students. On a

similar note, at T1, Marcy understood that self-advocacy is about autonomy and giving voice to

students with disabilities rather than speaking on their behalf. However, at T2, Marcy highlighted

the importance of self-knowledge and awareness of collective activities in the school to nurture

students' self-advocacy. In T2, when asked about the meaning of self-advocacy after having

developed self-advocacy practices over these past months, she replied: "I think that is exactly it:

knowledge, self-awareness, awareness of the space you are in, collective awareness as well, and

awareness in the sense of capability—what I can do, what I cannot do, and growth." (Marcy,

2022. Interview 2). After working with students, she realized that the first steps to self-advocacy are based on students' self-knowledge and recognition of the school as a space for collective work. In her response, Marcy indicated a connection between individual and collective awareness in the students' interactional experiences.

As for collective interactions, Cindy highlighted the importance of respect in the interaction of students with disabilities with those without disabilities.

> When we observe children with disabilities or a child who has a difference, it does not have to be a disability, a child with a physical disability – we notice that they stand out from the norm. We see that this respect is not reciprocal. So, I also think of self-advocacy as a matter of respect for others and respect for differences, but I'm not sure if that is (entirely) it. (Cindy, 2022, interview 1)

Cindy defined self-advocacy as students learning how to respect differences or disabilities. She later developed this reflection by affirming:

> I believe that self-advocacy is really about giving a voice to children with disabilities, for them to initially understand that they are different, especially when we think about them having a disability. They need to be heard. They need to be recognized for their rights, respected for their abilities, and respected when they cannot achieve a desired goal. So, I think it is really about listening to them, listening to them individually, in their essence (Cindy, 2022, interview 2)

In the second interview, Cindy understood self-advocacy as self-knowledge, similar to Marcy; however, in contrast to Marcy, she emphasized disability awareness as part of developing students' mutual respect. The comparison of the two-time points demonstrated that she started from the conceptual idea of respect but, after working with the students, added the importance of students understanding their disabilities. She also added listening to students as part of her experience, which will be later presented in a specific results subsection.

A last consideration includes recognizing practices and values already in place but has yet to be recognized as self-advocacy. Christy posits: "now it is about formalizing it, because before we were doing it without even knowing we were doing it. When we started talking about self-advocacy, you said, 'I was already doing it and didn't realize it'" (Christy, 2022, interview 1). Finally, when Christy was asked if identifying these practices as self-advocacy would have any impact on her work. She replied:

> It changes a lot! It changes because it already takes on a scientific approach. I already know where to look, how self-advocacy works. I know there's a team that can help, that can create a self-advocacy community, just like APAE has; SES can also create that community. Now, with the name, the whole perspective changes. Because before, I did it intuitively, but it was not intuition; it was doing it as a duty, it is their right: "Look, you have this right! Go there and talk to the principal; I'm watching you." However, that is it, we have more authority. I think self-advocacy gives us more authority to speak about the issue of being able to defend oneself, to be autonomous. (Christy, 2022, interview 2)

Christy states that learning about self-advocacy as a theoretical framework helped her organize and guide her pedagogical planning. A fact worth noting was the usage of the word "authority to speak", which may be interpreted as the teacher becoming empowered and feeling legitimate to address discussions related to self-advocacy theme after developing practices over the research period. Thus, the meaning attributed to self-advocacy in school refers to a theoretical framework that introduces certain practices that may help teachers in their work when developing the autonomy and self-advocacy related skills. The nuances of these practices will be examined in detail in the subsection on teachers' strategies and challenges in implementing self-advocacy.

This results subsection illustrates how teachers' understanding of self-advocacy reflects the shift from theoretical perception to practical application. The initial theme exploration establishes a framework for comprehending the subsequent themes associated with self-advocacy development observed during the implementation of self-advocacy practices. These include rights as a component of self-advocacy, the collective or social dimension of self-advocacy, and the importance of listening to students' voices, which will be examined in detail in the following subsections.

Rights as a Self-Advocacy Component

The concept of rights as a component of school self-advocacy was nearly universally recognized in the initial round of interviews. In the word frequency count, "rights" was among the most frequently mentioned terms by teachers (N=160), whereas "self-advocacy" was mentioned more often (N=199). All teachers identified rights as a central aspect of their understanding of self-advocacy in either T1 or T2. In T1, teachers were queried regarding the

rights they deemed most essential for their students to understand (see Table 5). All teachers had

access to a few resources (manuals) on rights in the school. However, the way each teacher

approached this theme was discussed in T2. Note that the practices implemented will be explored

in the subsection on teachers' strategies and challenges. In this subsection, we present how

teachers comprehended the concept of rights in the school context.

Table 5 *Descriptions of Teachers about Rights*

Teachers	T1 (Rights considered important)	T2 (How were rights approached)
Cindy	Right to self-advocacy, right to be respected	Rights and responsibilities
Robbie	Rights and responsibilities, rights to expression, right to be respected	Rights and responsibilities, right to be respected
Lucy	Right to participate, right to voice, right to make decisions	Rights and responsibilities,
Julie	Right to education, right to individualized education, right to be respected, right to have rights.	Subject of a right
Christy	Right to accessibility, right to autonomy, right to be at school, right to be recognized as a subject, right to participation	Right to pedagogical resources (accessibility), right to education
Marcy	Right to accessibility, right to autonomy	Rights and responsibilities, specific disability rights
Jessy	Right to be heard, right to education, right to accessibility (participation)	How to access rights, student's rights.

1) Rights and Responsibilities. It is worth mentioning that the most common association

of the rights concept was the idea of responsibilities. Teaching rights was associated to the

teaching of responsibilities, in both T1 and T2. Four teachers – Cindy, Robbie, Lucy, and Marcy

– have associated rights with responsibilities. In T1, Marcy adds "we live in a society that is

ruled by laws, rights, and responsibilities as well" (Marcy, Interview 1). When asked about the

rights that she considers important for their students to know, Robbie, similarly to Marcy, made the same association of the purpose of rights and responsibilities in a societal organization:

> The rights that they have in society, the rights that they have in school, the
> rights and **responsibilities as well**; these are very important, so things don't
> turn into a "big party" (…) In society I consider these are very important,
> because things are getting out of control – and (important) for their future work
> and careers, right? (Robbie, interview 1)

Robbie emphasized that rights and responsibilities establish an order, in contrast to reckless behavior, which is essential for the functioning of society, including workplace environments. Marcy adds to this discussion by affirming "They must know themselves, reflect about themselves, and learn what they can and cannot do, the responsibilities, rights, and what protects them. From these learnings, they will be able to claim things" (Marcy, interview 1). The self-knowledge aspects such as personal characteristics and capabilities were also considered important by Marcy as the basis for claiming rights. Both teachers associated this notion that rights do not solely serve the protection of the individual but also imply a commitment to the social space where individuals find themselves, in this case, the schools. In T2, Marcy describes a conversation between two students, in which the student Hector corrects Sammy reckless misbehaviour in the classroom:

> Sammy said something, then Hector responded: "You have to pay attention
> **too**, because you can't say everything, do everything, and want everything.
> You're going to make a mess and then expect the teacher to give you a grade?".

So, there is a balance between rights and duties (responsibilities), I found it

interesting. (Marcy, interview 2)

Although the quote does not present a drastic change of meaning from T1 to T2, Marcy

identified a student interaction in which a student reminds his colleague about the responsibilities

required for the due functioning of a classroom. The meaning of rights and responsibilities

continues to imply a notion of order and expected behaviours at certain spaces. Thus, in order to

have rights, the teachers indicated a relation between following the rules and certain social

expectations. In other words, having rights entails a conditional situation in which one abides by

a norm. Interestingly, the teachers (Marcy, Robbie, Cindy, and Lucy) who associated rights to

responsibilities were responsible for younger students (9-12 years old).

It is important to note that the responsibility and rights discussed in these reports pertain

to a conception of rights that must be earned, which may present a caveat from a critical

standpoint. There is a lack of willingness to interrogate the significance of the rules or

"responsibilities" deemed necessary for the attainment of a right. The inability to question

established rules may impede changes within schools and, on a broader scale, obstruct any

potential social transformation.

2) Pedagogical Aspects of Teaching Rights. Another aspect of rights as a core element of

self-advocacy refers to the Julie's understanding of rights in her school. In T1 Julie compiled a

list of rights that she considered important for students: "the right to education, the right to an

individualized education, the right to having their particularities respected…being treated

equally, and the right to have rights, and becoming entitled of these rights" (Julie, Interview 1).

In the first interview, Julie presented her view on rights; however, when asked for the second

time regarding the development of her rights' work with her students in T2, she shared:

> When I came across the issue that they (students) do not even have the basic
> knowledge on rights, I thought, "how come they're going to articulate
> themselves in this space?" For me, today, that is it. It would be the student's
> right to know and play a leading role." (Julie, interview 2)

At first, Julie was stunned with her students' limitation of knowledge on rights. The unexpected realization of the lack of students' knowledge on rights provoked reflections about the challenge to implement rights in her school context.

> At this school, specifically, it was quite difficult to incorporate practices. I
> think it's for the same reason I mentioned: seeing oneself **as a subject of a**
> **right**. If I am not even a subject, how can I be a **subject of a rights**? If I don't
> even know who I am. I only come here because I need to come here. In the
> students' comments, you will end up hearing things like: "Why do I have to do
> this?", "But why, then?"... This is quite unfortunate, especially in public
> schools. They see their school journey as just an obligatory moment: "I am
> obliged to fulfill this stage of life, which is the school stage", "I am obliged to
> fulfill this stage of life because my mother tells me to, my father tells me to",
> "I go there, I eat and play with my friends", "I study when I can, how I can or
> when I want to", and most of them are like: "When I want to". (Julie, interview
> 2)

Julie also associated the challenge of teaching rights with the fact that her students perceive coming to school as an obligation. She argued that if students are not intentionally interested in

their own learning trajectory, teaching about rights becomes more difficult. Moreover, she introduced the idea that in order for someone to be entitled to their rights (subject of a right), first they need to be self-aware of their own individuality. This aligns with the previous comments on self-knowledge as part of self-advocacy.

Conversely, Robbie describes her strategy of introducing rights to students with the age range of 9-11 years old in SBC school. The following description refers to a collaborative activity developed in a regular classroom with students with and without disabilities.

> (I'm) not pointing out anything too serious, something that actually has a law. But like this, in situations, problems, they would point out, "but my dad does this, but my neighbor acts differently, throws everything into the yard next door," for example. So, I think it was really through conversation, with group activities, with conversation, we see the students' perspectives, **what they think is right, what they think is wrong, what they've never heard of before**...Because I think it's important for everyone to know their rights, their duties, to express their ideas respectfully. (Robbie, interview 2)

Robbie demonstrated how she approached rights with her students in a regular classroom. She started by explaining that she avoided the conceptual discussion of rights, such as mentioning a specific right or legislation; instead, Robbie discussed daily life situations and the corresponding behavioral expectation for the situation – like the above mentioned (parents' and neighbours' behaviour). She reported that students were engaged in a common situation, presenting various perspectives on how to address a problematic scenario through the lens of rights discussion. The teacher's activity focused on discussing the concepts of right and wrong.

Younger students (9-11 years old) exhibited a positive response to the simplified concept of rights. It is important to note that the meaning of "right" in this context differs from its definition within legislative frameworks. This activity considers rights as a form of moral conduct, akin to the previous section where rights were associated with responsibilities and rules. The activity did not simplify the concept of rights; rather, it utilized an alternative interpretation of right, defined here as correct moral conduct, contrasting with the expected civil behavior deemed "wrong." Overall, Robbie's activity presents two contributions to teaching rights in schools: first is that her students of age range 9-11 years old respond well to concrete situations; second is that the meaning of rights must be predetermined (conceived) to have clear instructional goals.

3) Raising Awareness of Rights. In addition, Jessy, like the other teachers, shared their views of rights that she considered necessary. The first right she highlighted was the right to be heard; secondly, she described a situation that led her to suggest the subsequent right:

> Another important right is the **right to be in school and access knowledge.** It did not take place here, but I once heard a teacher saying, "This student should not be here because of their disability." The legislation states that they have the right to be here**. They [students] need to understand, know, and be aware of this right, and when it is somehow denied, they should speak up.** (Jessy, interview 1)

Jessy's statement corroborates Julie's view that an awareness of rights is needed. In the previous situation, an ableist comment from a colleague about the right to be in school provoked/motivated her to state that students with disabilities have the right to be in regular schools. In the second interview, when asked about developing discussions on rights with her

students, Jessy shared an activity of researching laws in response to situations of injustice that students may encounter. She posited that starting to discuss rights with her students introduced nuanced discussions/reflections for students' simplistic solutions, for instance:

> I talked about the issue of legality: if there is a law (we did some research), what to do when a situation occurs, how to report it on the website, and then I pointed out some paths that exist. We researched and thought about some things to shift away from the mindset of "I stay silent" or "I react aggressively." (Jessy, interview 2)

Jessy indicated that the discourse on rights enabled her to engage her students in more complex strategies for addressing issues typically associated with non-responsiveness or aggressive reactions. This behaviour of being silent is one of the most mentioned behaviours observed by teachers:

> "This issue of initiative. I think it's a challenge for me that my student with a disability has the initiative; despite our efforts to guide them, it is hard for them to understand and become entitled to the idea that 'it is my right, and the other person cannot do this to me.'" (Christy, Interview 1)

Christy furthered this argument by stating that students have the right to the resource of content accessibility:

> The most important thing is for him to understand that he has the right to this resource. When he is in the classroom and the teacher is teaching a subject, he

says, "But I don't understand," and he says, "Teacher, where is my activity

with images?" (Christy, interview 2)

In the hypothetical situation suggested by Christy, instead of being silent, students would

request accessibility in class whenever they cannot follow the class due to the lack of content

accessibility. For Christy, the most crucial student rights were accessibility, autonomy, being at

the school, and participation in their own educational process. In the second time point:

We talked, discussed, and then this demand always comes up: "They don't

listen to me," "I know it's my right, but when we speak, they don't care, they

don't give any feedback." We advise: "You have to insist, you have to talk to

your mother. If you ask once or twice, choose a trusted teacher to go with you

to the administration and choose a coordinator to talk to until you reach the

administration. Let's start here. Let's not skip steps. Which teacher do you trust

the most, whom you like and know will speak up and help you? Then ask this

teacher to act as a bridge to facilitate the communication until you reach the

administration." (Christy, interview 2)

Christy illustrated a situation in which she talks to students. Christy and Marcy, who

worked at the same school, were engaged in implementing self-advocacy practices. However,

they acknowledged that despite students' efforts to speak up, there was no correspondence

(response) on the school's side. For this reason, they instructed students to talk to their parents,

look for a teacher whom they trust, and talk to the school coordinator. They reinforced that

students should persist in their claims. Speaking up is essential to self-advocacy; nonetheless, as

indicated here, it requires an interlocutor who would listen to students' claims.

The findings in this session demonstrated the link between speaking up and rights. Teachers' efforts to raise awareness were connected to experiences obtaining knowledge on rights that could occur through discussing unjust situations and familiarizing them with protective rights and laws. The second step of raising awareness on rights is raising their voices and speaking up, which entails identifying support in their social network who would listen to their demands.

The Interactional Elements of School Self-Advocacy

According to teachers' experiences, another core element of self-advocacy refers to the interaction between students and other stakeholders in the school, in the sense of the school listening to students and giving opportunities for students to voice their experiences. Teachers' reports showed that listening to students' voices implicates different levels of the school organization regarding human relationships/social interactions. In this subsection, the interactional elements of "listening to students' voices" consider the following organization: 1) the relationship between the teacher and students, 2) the teacher and their peers, and 3) the school culture and the formal resources for students' expression [forms of school participation].

1) **Trustful Relationships Between Teacher and Students as the Basis for Self-Advocacy**. The first aspect of listening to students' voices in schools refers to the relationship between teachers and students. As many teachers have previously mentioned, rights, such as the right to be heard at the school or related rights (participation, expression, accessibility), imply some obligation to the school's counterpart. In this sense, Marcy elucidates that listening

applied to the school context would be about providing opportunities for students to share

their school's experiences:

> What I find interesting about self-advocacy is that it gives voice to people with
>
> disabilities because we often speak for them or their families. In the case of
>
> individuals with disabilities, giving them a voice enables them to understand
>
> their rights, advocate for themselves, speak about their values, and
>
> independently try advocating for themselves and become authors of their own
>
> lives. (Marcy, interview 1)

Therefore, the practice of self-advocacy in schools for Marcy involves giving voice to

students with disabilities to speak up instead of speaking on their behalf. In other words, giving

voice refers to providing opportunities for students to express their personal views and

experiences of the world, enabling students to tell their own stories. Moreover, Lucy highlighted

in both time points that listening to students is a priority for her when it comes to self-advocacy.

At first, she highlighted that: "First of all, I believe that it's about listening, right? Giving space

to these children. They have knowledge, and they should have a voice, have a turn" (Lucy

interview 1).

Later in the second time point, she raises an important aspect of listening to students, the

observation:

> Here in the AEE, we rely on something other than medical reports, and we do
>
> not need a diagnosis to understand what the child needs. We start from
>
> knowledge, so much so that our first approach is observation. We observe the
>
> students, and they provide us with much information as we watch and see them

> (...) It's helpful to know about their disabilities because it helps identify their needs... but we value the prior knowledge that the child brings. (Marcy, interview 2)

Marcy explains in the second time point that part of understanding the student's individuality requires observing them: it goes beyond reading the medical report or the disability definition. Marcy posits that she does not ignore the information on disabilities, which provides essential information on student's needs; however, she highlights the importance of having a holistic view of the child. Observation is considered a valuable tool for understanding the child. This approach taken by Marcy is a form of obtaining information and an opportunity for her to build a trusting relationship with students.

Christy presents another aspect of listening to students' voices:

> Self-advocacy only comes when you trust the teacher, the school, and the faculty; it's when the student loses the fear of saying what they are feeling. Most of the time, what they say is ignored. You have seen them say: "Oh, but it is no use talking; no one does anything." Other times, what they say even comes back as retaliation: "Oh, but you did this." One said, "But the blame always falls on me..." When they lose this fear and know…that the person will listen, even if I am skeptical of them, I will listen, investigate, and consider the other side. Then, self-advocacy begins to flow. (Christy, interview 2)

It is worth noting that, in her experience, self-advocacy development requires a trustful relationship between students and teachers. She affirmed that self-advocacy starts to flow when students trust their teachers; therefore, they share their experiences. Christy also cites common

phrases that she heard of students' disbelief that the school would not do anything regarding their demands, which causes students to give up on insisting on communicating, as already mentioned.

Jessy added that after she started to focus on the student's demands, she noticed a change in the student's interest:

> I've noticed that it brought me closer to them; now, they are sharing more personal things spontaneously, without any effort on my end. They became more engaged and more excited. Some students wanted to leave the resource room and are now excited to come. (Jessy, interview 2)

Jessy reported active listening to her students changed their interests and improved communication. Therefore, self-advocacy requires teachers to reflect on their interactions with students in order to build trust in the relationship. However, not only is communication with students relevant, but clear communication and collaboration with other teachers are also pivotal for an effective listening practice.

2) **Collaborative Relationships with Other Teachers**. In T2, Lucy emphasized that collaborating with the regular classroom teacher was a way to listen to students effectively. First, she shared a successful intervention with a student that she developed in collaboration with the teacher of the regular classroom:

> Wow, yes, there has been significant progress. It is, yes, the teacher, right? The teacher has been helping a lot. And the classmates too. Lucio was a child who didn't communicate; his case was selective mutism. Today, he communicates a lot, plays, interacts. He talks to everyone practically. It was something he did not do last year. (Lucy, interview 2)

Lucy recognized that the regular teacher of the indicated student was beneficial. She later raised the idea that students often interact with their teachers, especially at the school where she works (age range of 8 – 11 years old). Moreover:

> I believe the first thing is listening, right? Also, I am understanding the child, what they are thinking, and what their opinion is, right? Talking to the teacher, too, right? Because they have more daily interaction with them, right? So, talking, establishing this partnership. So, I am following up on what is needed. (Lucy, interview 2)

Lucy also mentioned how establishing a partnership with regular classroom teachers was relevant to the efficacy of their work. The regular teachers for this age range spend a lot of time working directly with the students, unlike the SES teacher, who works only for a limited time. Note that in the SBC school board, collaborative actions between resource teachers and regular classroom teachers are expected to take place weekly. Therefore, establishing collaborative partnerships with other teachers is the basis for successful work, especially when developing self-advocacy.

Conversely, Julie, whose school is located in Rio de Janeiro, shares her perception of her teacher's peers:

> I see that some of them have resistance. Many give [opportunities for students to] voice. When we listened to the students, we realized that they do not feel at ease because it isn't common, but I also believe it's due to the work structure provided [by the school administration]. (Julie, interview 1)

The school's pedagogical structure in Rio de Janeiro does not include collaborative actions, as in the proposed work of the SBC school board. When Julie was asked about the development of work:

> We need a workspace that involves the entire school to speak in unison. Then, yes, I think it would work. Working in unison is difficult because here I have the privilege of having a few students in the classroom, while there they (other teachers) have many more...The school and the teachers chose traditionalism, a traditional method, so it is very much opposed to what you talk about in self-advocacy, where the student has their turn, the student participates... so it was a choice made by the head teachers. (Julie, Interview 2)

In this quote taken from T2, Julie criticized the traditional school model in which teachers, presumably, are the holders of knowledge and students must only adhere to the teacher's lectures. She classifies the school model as a traditional school. Most importantly, unison refers to teachers collaborating to establish a common goal. These two contrasting realities of the schools in SBC, where collaborative work is part of the program and RJ, where, according to the teacher, has a more traditional model of education, have demonstrated that the school organization exerts a significant influence in the development of the self-advocacy – defining the communication flow in schools, which is essential to practice of listening to the students.

3) **School Culture of Listening**. A first consideration of the school culture of listening to students referred to the multiple characteristics of students' voices. Robbie posited that voices are plural and diverse:

> There is a classroom with 22 students. There are 22 different responses to that
>
> topic, to that idea. To what you are advocating for. That you presented to them.
>
> Alternatively, that you believe is right. However, fifth- and third-grade
>
> students show you another way of thinking, another interpretation of it.
>
> Therefore, it opened my eyes to see what others think and then to accept it as
>
> well, right? (Robby, Interview 2)

Robbie introduced the idea that students' voices are not organized at first. When presenting a debate activity, she considered that there might be a diversity of views. A single classroom can represent diverse experiences, requiring practices that correspond with its plurality.

Conversely, the school or student councils represent organized and formal venues for students to participate in the school. These might be resources for self-advocacy of student's experiences. Jessy described how the student councils at her school function:

> At our school, they started the movement in the third cycle with a class
>
> representative. I find this very positive because it gives a voice to the students.
>
> The representative listens to the class, observes what is happening and what is
>
> needed, and takes it to the coordination and the principal. I believe this falls
>
> within the concept of self-advocacy because the school gives a voice to the
>
> student, and the student exercises the right to speak to communicate with the
>
> school. (Jessy, interview 1)

Lucy and Julie also reported experiences with student councils at their schools. Lucy highlighted that some students with disabilities joined the school council but had difficulties participating effectively. Lucy explains: "They do participate, but they do not have an understanding. Some students are able to participate and interact, while others, depending on the

complexity, cannot. (interview 1)". Lucy mentions that due to the complexity of the level of support needed, students cannot participate. This fact shows that participation in school councils, which is a space where students voice their experiences, requires examination. In addition, Julie mentions that some of her students attend the school council as representatives of the resource room. These examples show how schools can listen to students' experiences and provide decision-making power to influence school directions. This is an example of the development of a school culture in which listening is a component of their daily lives. However, the report from Lucy demonstrated that access to a school council needs to be provided to make it accessible for all students with varying needs.

In timepoint 2, Jessy realized that her students' participation in the school council was not as effective as she had expected: "I remember you asked me if they participated in any student council or group at school, and I see that they are always in supporting roles. So, I wanted to put them in leading roles." (Jessy, Interview 2). These two experiences revealed that despite participating in councils, students still required more support or resources to participate actively or improve their participation quality.

In conclusion, fostering a culture of listening in educational settings reveals that, due to the diverse nature of students' voices, there exists not a singular voice but rather a pluralistic experience among students. Teachers' reports on student participation in councils indicate that, despite their formal role in voicing student demands, there is a need to reflect on how to enhance participation accessibility for students with disabilities. Thus, fostering a culture of school listening involves pluralistic experiences and providing inclusive access to formal participation methods, such as the school council.

Teacher's Strategies

This last subsection of teachers' findings depicts teachers' strategies for self-advocacy implementation and their challenges during the work period. Teachers' reflections about their work and encountered challenges are presented, as well as a comparison of the work developed at the two time points (see Table 6). In this context, T1 refers to practices identified by teachers as self-advocacy strategies that they have already developed; T2 reflects the implementation of the practices. In this subsection, teachers' reflections on their strategies and the encountered challenges are presented.

Table 6 *Description of duration and Teachers Self-Advocacy Practices*

Teacher	Weeks of work	Engagement quality	T1 Practices already developed before the research	T2 Practices implemented during the research period
Cindy	6	Low engagement	1) Agreements with students, 2) Illustrative videos to provoke discussions.	1) Self-knowledge activities: I "like" and "dislike" activity (Manual)* + Instagram activity*, 2) Collaborative activities in regular classrooms: communication with students with disabilities.
Robbie	6	Highly engaged	1) Collaborative activities, 2) Conflict resolution discussion, 3) Group discussion.	1) Collaborative activities, 2) Games, 3) Interactive discussion in class to discuss rights (Conflict resolution – Right or wrong).
Lucy	6	Low engagement	1) Student council, 2) Collaborative activities, 3) Collective debates, 3) Agreements with students, 4) Active listening to students.	1) Parents' engagement activities, 2) Collaborative activities.
Julie	7	Moderately Engaged	1) Participation in students' council, 2) focal point, 3) Accessibility plan for school.	1) Self-knowledge activities "what's your colour", 2) Black awareness discussion 3) Texts and books to discuss disabilities.
Christy	8	Highly engaged	1) IEP, 2) "It's your right" activity, 3) Individual orientation.	1) Books, 2) Collective discussion*, 3) SDLMI[7] with a student*, 4) Self-knowledge activities*, 5) Individual orientation.
Marcy	8	Moderately Engaged	1) Rights information sessions, 2) IEP, 3) Group discussions.	1) Collective discussion*, 2) Individual orientation.
Jessy	8	Highly engaged	1) School council participation of students, 2) Family engagement, 3) Group discussion (session).	1) School council orientation, 2) Black awareness exhibition, 3) Collective discussion, 4) Research about rights, 5) Family engagement.

T1 activities were strategies already used by teachers that were reidentified as self-advocacy activities, including the participation of students in school or student councils. In T2

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[7] SDLMI stands for Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction developed by Shogren et al. (2017).

some activities that were already planned before the start of the project were integrated into their practices of self-advocacy—T2 reflects new implemented activities alongside with the activities already in place.

As mentioned previously, teachers had access to a booklet with ten topics/activities of self-advocacy promotion. The activities were offered as starting points for teachers to develop their work. All activities that were incorporated into their plans have a star sign (*) (see figure 25). Out of the ten activities, only two activities have not been utilized by teachers (see figure 2 and 25); role play and multi-components activities. Cindy mentioned being interested in the role-play activity, but did not have time to implement it.

The focus groups as impactful self-advocacy experiences. At first, some notes on the impact of the focus groups that were conducted in two timepoints. Teachers mentioned that the students' focus group had an interesting impact on the students as they observed that most students were very engaged during both interviews. It is worth mentioning that these activities were more effective with older students (ages 12-14 years old) as observed in the participation of students' interaction during the focus group. Note that most of the content presented in the results originated from the exchanges of older students. The majority of younger (ages 10-11 years old) students did not participate or present clearly coherent response (for pictural examples see figure 27 and 28)

Teachers noted on various occasions that the focus groups demonstrated students' ability to engage in dialogue, which surprised some educators. Two contrasting examples exist. Initially, as noted earlier, Julie was surprised by the significantly limited understanding of rights among her students, as revealed by the focus group. In contrast, Jessy, Marcy, and Christy expressed satisfaction with their students' interactions, prompting them to integrate more collective

discussions into their planning. This activity is the most frequently cited by teachers in T2 (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 Frequency of Teachers Self-Advocacy Teachers' Strategies

Teachers' strategies and practices

- Group discussion/session (6X)*
- Texts, books, or videos discussion (4X)*
- Involvement of students in student/school council (3X)*
- Collaborative activities in regular classrooms (3X)
- Self-knowledge activities (3X)*
- IEPs (3X)*
- Agreements with students (2X)
- Rights information sessions/research (2X)
- Cultural exhibition (2X)
- SDMLI strategy (1X)*
- Family Engagement strategy (1X)
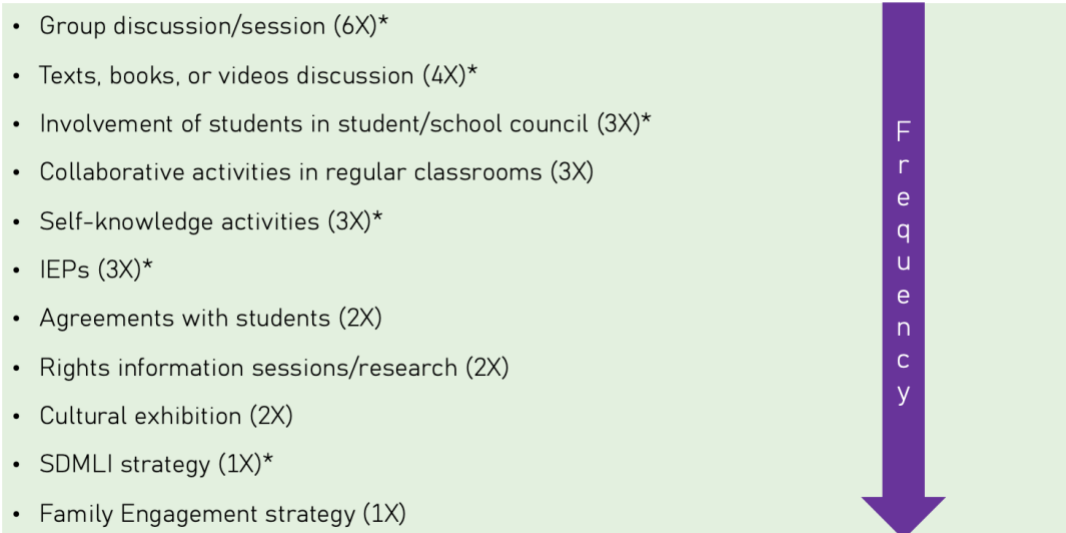
Frequency

* Activities based on the SA course handbook

Description of activities. The description will follow the frequency and relevance of the practices:

Collective Discussion (Discussion Circle). The students' collective discussions were promoted initially by the focus groups (conducted by the main researcher as previously mentioned) in which some teachers were surprised by the sophistication of the students' discussion. This collective discussion activity description encompasses a form of students' discussion promoted by teachers in the resource room.

Although 6 teachers have mentioned developing collective discussions, the teachers: Christy, Marcy, Robbie, and Jessy highlighted the impact of collective exchanges for students. Jessy's report illustrates how this collective discussion has been innovative in her work:

> I don't know if I fully grasped the proposal because of the time, but I noticed
>
> that since my work has always been individual. With you (researcher), there
>
> comes a proposal for group sessions. I understood that they needed this,
>
> probably because of their age, right? (...) I talked to them after you came, and I
>
> said, "I will schedule some group sessions," because I saw that this approach
>
> worked [referring to focus groups]. (Jessy, interview 2)

She further described her experience. However, it is worth remarking that before the beginning of this research, the focus of Jessy's work has been individual. Therefore, including collective discussion represented adopting a new practice that would combine goals for different students.

> If my goals with them were too different, I wouldn't be able to work this way,
>
> but since I have similar goals, it worked out...In the activities I did with them, I
>
> was able to lead them to reflect a bit, both on what they see, what they
>
> perceive, and also on what they do, how they react, how they defend
>
> themselves in the face of criticism or bullying...I think this made them reflect
>
> on a lot of things…Applying this into a real situation, how would they react,
>
> whether at their daily life at school or at home (Jessy, interview 2)

In the previous quotes, Jessy reported the realization of the impact of promoting collective discussions. She reported the importance to use this strategy to promote reflection and discussion about different topics while addressing student's goals collectively. The change in focus from individual to collective goals was a significant change in her perception.

Christy shared an anecdote on how they approached this activity at her school: "We worked based on group discussion and stories told to the group, but each person brought their own demand. We did this work, and Hugo had this demand, like he was giving a testimony to everyone" (Christy, interview 2). Christy explained that Hugo had come to the resource room acting strangely as if something had happened; when asked, he refused to share with the teachers (Christy and Marcy) directly. However, as the group discussion started and his peers shared their demands, he decided to share with the whole group that an aggressive episode had occurred in the classroom. Christy realized that without the group discussion, this event may have passed unnoticed.

Furthermore, Marcy who works closely to Christy shared in T1:

> I think it's important to raise this awareness with the students, listen to them, have this group discussion, listen to the conflicts, and let them express their positions. Even having them engage in a certain debate among themselves, provoking them, and from there, we'll see how we can provoke them to respond to certain situations.

In T2, after reviewing the work conducted during the 8-week period, she observed:

> Yes, I think these discussion circles with them are important. These conversations help them realize where they are, why they are there, how they are, under what conditions, and what can be done about it. I think we had a lot of exchanges with them.

She reported that students became more aware of many aspects of the school realities. Similarly to Jessy's experience, this activity raises awareness of many aspects of the students'

daily lives at the school. Since it has a lateral interaction with other peer students, it enables them to explore different points of view that could pass unnoticed due to a possible inhibition in the teacher-student interaction. It is worth highlighting that the age range of the students in this activity was on the higher end (12-14 years old).

The work with self-advocacy enabled students to reflect on numerous aspects of their identities as students, including their disabilities, which is an aspect commonly disregarded in the school curriculum. According to teachers, the practice of group discussion promoted critical opportunities for students to reflect upon their disabilities and other situations in the school. Marcy shared an anecdote of repercussions from these dialogues:

> It was so surprising what happened to Mark. His mother sent me a voice message. It truly surprised me! She was talking to him, and they are evangelical. During prayers, she said to him, "Look, my son, God can do anything, including healing you from autism." Then, she said that he looked at her quickly and said, "No, Mom, I do not want to be cured of autism. I understand what autism is, and today I can talk to my classmates." (Marcy)

Pedagogical Resources Including Books and Videos. The following quote depicts an example of how Julie developed an activity with books.

> What we discuss here is always influenced by something bigger. I come twice a week, and if I prepare something, like working on one of these little books— these little books talk about children with disabilities—I will say, "Do you know all your rights as a person with a disability?" "Your rights at school?" Some of them know very well, like LG, but others not so much. When we talk,

it's a matter of reinforcing, reinforcing, and reinforcing. So, I worked with the

storybook, textually, in a reading. (Julie, Interview 2)

Julie used storybooks about disabilities to discuss rights with some of her students. Other teachers such as Cindy also mentioned books as a form to explore self-advocacy with her students.

Student Council. This activity has already been mentioned previously. However, at this occasion, we analyse this activity thoroughly. Student and/or school councils are expected to take place at Brazilian schools (Brasil, 1994). However, not all schools use this resource.

In the first interview, Jessy reported that the student council at her school was active, but she did not know much about it because she had only recently started working at the school. After the 8-week period, she shared:

I remember you asked me if they participated in any student council or group

at school, and I see that they always end up in supporting roles. So, I wanted to

make them the main actors. I think there's a bit of a lack of that, you know?

But it's not due to unwillingness. I think there's a lack of reflection, a lack of

thinking, discussing, and coming up with some methodologies, some strategies

that indeed make them the protagonists [agents]...Like that training you did

with us, with the boys who participate in the project giving testimonies,

speaking. It's important for their recognition. They remain very isolated; it

seems like they are the "ugly ducklings" in a universe very different from

theirs. When someone gives a testimony, talks about what they have done, how

the experience was, I think it's important, and it's a resource that would make a

huge difference. (Jessy, interview 2)

This quote highlights two key aspects: first, the involvement of students with disabilities in

supportive roles within the student council, and second, the importance of representation through

individuals with disabilities voicing their perspectives. Both aspects pertain to the disability

dimension. The initial aspect highlights that, despite students' involvement in the student council,

their level of agency falls short of Jessy's expectations, which became a subsequent objective for

her students. The second aspect pertained to the testimonies of adults with disabilities during the

training workshop. This experience influenced her comprehension of self-advocacy, which

resonated with her and motivated her to enhance her academic work. Jessy's impressions of the

testimonies did not translate directly into practices; however, this experience appeared to

influence her understanding of self-advocacy.

Collaborative Activities in the Classroom. The activities occurred within the SBC school

board, with the three teachers, Robbie, Cindy, and Lucy, serving as resource teachers. The

activities involved collaboration between regular and resource teachers within the regular

classrooms. Therefore, both parties should collaboratively plan and develop these activities.

Robbie employed a collaborative activity to explore the concept of "right or wrong," while

Cindy designed self-knowledge activities. These activities specifically aim to engage both

students with and without disabilities, a distinction absent in all other activities.

Self-Knowledge Activities. The self-knowledge activities were specially chosen by teachers who worked with younger students. Cindy reported:

> It was a collaborative action. I went to their classroom, talked a little with the teacher, and then took the material you had shared. We discussed the topic, explained to them what the self-advocacy proposal is, and did that activity you suggested about what they like and do and what they don't like and do. We also did another one that included a section about an Instagram profile. They incorporated a bit of that.

> So, on the day we talked, they were very excited, and they enjoyed doing the activities. It might have been even better for them if we had more time, but I noticed it was a very gratifying moment. They interacted, talking about the things they like to do and don't like to do. There was an activity where you asked about things that stick in their heads, and they mentioned music and games. This broadened the conversation more, making that day very gratifying.

The activity was held as part of the collaborative action, which took place in the regular classroom in SBC1. From all the activities available in the self-advocacy booklet, she chose first to develop self-knowledge aspects of the students. The choice for this activity was based on the student's age range. Cindy reported that students had more difficulty following the activity but participated in the classroom.

> Yes, we did talk about values and how they will grow up knowing to respect diversity, respect others, and understand that some children have disabilities, which sometimes means restricted communication. It's important to know that

agreed-upon rules must be respected. This was very interesting, and we
discussed this a bit in Vincent's classroom. (Cindy, interview 2)

During the activity, Cindy also decided to approach topics of respect for diversity, including a discussion on how to respect students with disabilities when they present communication restrictions. The activities were simple and aimed at individual features such as personal interests and social interaction.

Individual Educational Plan (IEP). This practice was mentioned by teachers Marcy and Christy. Christy defined the Individual educational plan as:

We work with the IEP, and I believe self-advocacy is addressed when we focus
on autonomy. One of the goals we set for all of them is autonomy, so when we
work on autonomy, self-advocacy is directly linked as one of the objectives.
(Interview 1)

This quote illustrates the relationship between autonomy and self-advocacy as articulated by Christy. She recognizes that self-advocacy can be integrated into the autonomy goal previously established with her students. Autonomy serves as a central category encompassing self-advocacy, as self-advocacy entails the development of specific aspects of autonomy as guided by the teacher. The teachers acknowledged that self-advocacy could be incorporated into Individualized Education Plans and indicated their intention to include it in future planning.

Right Information Sessions. Like Julie, Jessy suggested a "rights" research project in which she tackled the question of legality and how laws might serve as a framework for talking about challenges in everyday life (as highlighted in the section on increasing awareness of rights). Jessy directed her students to conduct online research on legislation that supports

protective rights, including laws addressing hate crimes. She indicated that this activity fostered

a more sophisticated approach to addressing unjust situations. Furthermore, Jessy added

additional information about this activity:

> We looked at it and discussed: "Everyone has the right to be respected, the
>
> right to religious freedom," so I talked about the rights and the steps to take
>
> when something like this happens when such violence occurs...First, work on
>
> identity for them to know who they are, their potential, and their type of
>
> disability because even knowing what type of disability they have is vital for
>
> them to assert themselves when they are attacked, questioned, or even put to
>
> the test. (Jessy, interview 2)

In this activity, Jessy's students actively searched the Internet for rights and laws that

related to the right to be respected in school. The student-led research initiated a discussion on

students' rights that was facilitated by the teacher. It included different interpretations of respect,

including religious respect, and how to react in situations in which they might be victims of

violence.

In the second part of the report, Jessy mentioned that the work on their identity was an

initial element in discussing their rights. Since the activity involved addressing unjust situations,

she realized that to discuss rights in response to ableist situations, students should reflect priorly

on their own disabilities. Therefore, in this context, disability self-knowledge is related to

learning about rights.

Cultural Exhibition. Julie and Jessy have linked self-advocacy practices to various school

activities. Schools in Brazil implement activities associated with Black Awareness Day

throughout November, as mandated by the national curriculum. Julie reported considering it highly relevant to discuss this theme given the demographic characteristics of the school:

> Last month, we had Black Consciousness Day, right? On the 20th, here in Brazil, I'm not sure if it's international. So, it's an issue specific to Brazil. We have a school that is 90% Black, but they don't see themselves that way. In our work, I saw the need for them to find themselves first *and, by seeing themselves within this intersectionality*, intersected by various problems of a prejudiced country, to see themselves as advocates for their rights. Not just as students but also as individuals. So, we worked a bit on these questions: "Who are you?", "What is the colour of your hair?" "What is the colour of your family?". We had many surprises here, like not seeing themselves. All this, with a game of questions and answers. Many are Black children, but they do not see themselves and don't see their family. It is not very easy for them to advocate for themselves within a Black school because they don't see themselves as students; they don't see themselves as anything. It's a foundational construction. (Julie, interview 2)

Julie linked self-advocacy and disability awareness to the discourse on racial awareness, a pertinent issue in Brazil. She introduced the concept of intersectionality, which denotes the various identity dimensions that a student may embody. In this instance, she is linking race and disability. She emphasized the significance of recognizing racial identity within the educational environment. Jessy worked differently:

> The school organized an activity, and I participated with them. Since this exhibit came up and November's theme was about racism and Black Awareness, I wanted to bring some of that into it to focus a little on racism. I wanted to address the issue of disability, but I thought it was too soon because they don't talk much about their disabilities. I did work a bit with them on identity, for them to introduce themselves and say who they are, and none of them mentioned their disabilities. I want to work with them on their rights and what happens to them. I saw this as an opportunity to start this work...They experience hate speech firsthand, not just because of their disabilities, but for other reasons too, even for being Black, right? That is part of their experience as well. (Jessy, interview 2)

Similar to Julie, Jessy linked disability to race; however, she noted that addressing disability issues involves greater complexity. She developed an interactive cultural exhibition and invited her students, who participated with enthusiasm. This activity allowed her to engage with the topic of rights and address the experiences of hate speech encountered by her students.

Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI). This activity was developed by Karrie Shogren and collaborators in 2017 to enhance self-determination. The initiative aims to enhance self-advocacy by achieving specific objectives (Shogren et al., 2012). Christy regarded the activity as complex and noted that she used it exclusively with one student, Amanda. Amanda exhibited significant determination in pursuing her goals, and the activity supported her planning efforts.

Teachers' Challenges

Julie highlighted in her presentation of the RJ School that there are structural issues, including inadequate basic hygiene conditions. At RJ1 school, teachers purchased specific materials due to the school board's failure to supply essential items, such as toilet paper. Teacher July expressed concerns regarding the indirect effects of these challenges on the overall functioning of the school. Additionally, teachers commonly recognized that institutional barriers, such as negligent principals or disengaged peer teachers, could impede the development of self-advocacy.

As noted previously, the limited time for teachers to develop their activities was a significant obstacle to implementing plans to promote students' self-advocacy. In addition, we may consider that the complex nature of the self-advocacy construct—which encompasses skill development, disability culture, and rights knowledge—requires a more protracted process of teacher formation. Despite the solid professional background of the participating teachers, all reported having their first contact with the construct in this research. Many teachers reported that they needed more time to study and research.

> We managed to do one of those activities. The contact with them was shorter than perhaps anticipated; it would have been beneficial if we had more time to talk and study a bit more. (Cindy, interview 2)

Cindy and other teachers reported that if they had more time, they would have yielded more positive results. Due to the late beginning of the project, which was initially designed to last 4 months, teachers had a shorter period to develop their practices. Some of them had to conciliate the self-advocacy with other school schedules, which led them to develop only a few activities, such as Cindy. However, Robbie, who worked in the same school and had the same 6 weeks as Cindy, reported developing several activities (see Table 6).

Christy also reported that self-advocacy work has limitations:

> Christy: I realize self-advocacy works only up to a certain degree of disability. That is precisely what Marcy said: self-advocacy is extremely important and valid, but the student needs to have a certain level of understanding because it won't work, and depending on the degree, it won't work. It won't work for Mark, for example.
> I think it's related to the cognitive level. It's about the issue of knowledge, being able to make inferences, seeking out... I see that in our study, they struggle with articulation, advocating for themselves, and saying, "I exist; respect my space." If it's going to work, it will. However, I do not see it working for everyone. (Christy, interview 2)

Later, she elaborated on intellectual disabilities:

> That is what I am saying. Intellectual disability, no matter how much we have worked on it, sat down, and had discussion circles with them; in this second interview, I saw that the focus returned to violence; it did not go to "I exist," "Everything about me, without me." I do not know to what extent intellectual disability interferes so that they cannot grasp the issue of advocating in self-advocacy (Christy, interview 2)

According to Christy, some students with intellectual disabilities have cognitive limitations that hinder their capacity to infer or analyze specific situations. She reported having a limitation but could not define a clear pedagogical boundary.

Teacher's Perception of the Individual Development of Students

Individual development is structured by schools and their respective teachers, as the

interaction within each group significantly contributed to the research. Teachers perceive

students' individual development through the lens of changes in self-advocacy skills, noting

increases or decreases. The nine skills consist of 1) expressing preferences, 2) establishing goals,

3) attaining goals (persistence), 4) making decisions, 5) advocating for others, 6) learning self-

advocacy abilities, 7) communication, 8) participation, and 9) self-regulation. The increase or

decrease of the kind of support needed for self-advocacy development was noted in their

individual profiles.

The following tables present each student's individual development. They are organized

by two aspects: context (school and teacher) and teachers' perceptions (self-advocacy skills and

T1-T2 comparison). The last column shows whether self-advocacy skills increased or decreased

in T2 according to the teacher's perception (see Table 7). Increases in T2 are highlighted in

green.

Table 7 *Teacher's Perceptions of Students' Individual Development*

Context		Teachers' perceptions									
School	Teacher	Name	Express pref.	Est. Goals	Attain. Goals	Make Decision	Adv. others	Learn SA	Commu.	Participation	Self-regula	Increase or decrease
SBC1	Cindy	Albert	2	-1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	Increase
SBC1	Cindy	Vincent	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	Increase
SBC1	Robbie	John	0	-2	0	0	-1	-1	0	0	-2	Decrease
SBC1	Robbie	Renata	-1	-1	-1	0	0	0	0	0	-1	Decrease
SBC2	Lucy	Julien	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Increase
SBC2	Lucy	Maria	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	Increase
SBC2	Lucy	Adriano	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	Increase
SBC2	Lucy	Gustav	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	Increase
SBC2	Lucy	Luke	-1	-1	-1	0	0	0	0	0	-1	Decrease
RJ1	Julie	Peter	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	2	Increase
RJ1	Julie	Laura	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	Increase

RJ1	Julie	Louis	1	0	1	-1	0	1	0	0	3	Increase
RJ1	Julie	Mariana	1	0	-1	1	0	-1	0	-2	0	Decrease
BH1	Jessy	Andrea	1	0	0	0	-1	0	-1	0	0	Decrease
BH1	Jessy	Bruno	0	0	0	-1	-1	-2	0	-1	0	Decrease
BH1	Jessy	Ian	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Increase
BH1	Jessy	Esther	0	0	0	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	0	Decrease
BH1	Jessy	Thiago	0	0	-2	-1	-1	-2	-1	-1	0	Decrease
BH2	Christy	Amanda	-1	0	0	0	0	-1	-1	0	0	Decrease
BH2	Christy	Hector	-1	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	Increase
BH2	Christy	Guillaume	-1	1	0	-1	0	-1	0	0	0	Decrease
BH2	Christy	Octavio	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	Increase
BH2	Christy	Sammy	0	0	-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	Decrease
BH2	Christy	Willian	-1	1	1	-1	0	-1	0	-1	-1	Decrease
BH2	Marcy	Mark	0	0	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	Decrease

The variation in teachers' perceptions of the support required for students' self-advocacy skills indicated that ratings from the same teacher either consistently decreased or increased. Teachers exhibiting high engagement perceived a decline in their students' self-advocacy, whereas those implementing fewer activities noted an increase in these skills. This trend reflects teachers' perceptions informed by their factual experiences during the research period.

Teachers Cindy and Lucy may have perceived an increase in autonomy regarding the kind of support during the research period. Six out of seven students increased their autonomy regarding needing self-advocacy support.

Notably, the highly engaged teachers (Robbie, Jessy, and Christy) demonstrated that their students exhibited reduced autonomy and advocacy skills, indicating a need for support. Teachers' evaluations indicate that, of 14 students, only three exhibited increased autonomy. This

information suggests that these teachers developed a greater awareness of the necessity for

students to acquire advocacy skills.

Research Question 2: How did Brazilian students experience self-advocacy during the two months when teachers developed self-advocacy practices?

The students' experiences of self-advocacy are discussed from their own experiences.

The primary data source is the students' reports of their self-advocacy experiences, which

resulted from group discussions and insights into their practical involvement in the school.

This section analyzes students' group interview experiences at the first time point (T1),

focusing on their perspectives regarding themes related to self-advocacy prior to the initiation of

self-advocacy development by their teachers. The focus in T2 was on the changes in students,

emphasizing the objective of ensuring their voices were heard during the implementation of self-

advocacy practices. Student voices encompass all forms of student expression, including both

graphical and verbal manifestations. These expressions are analyzed alongside teachers'

perceptions of their development. The students' data are presented in various formats based on

the content.

General Description of Students' Perceptions Related to Self-advocacy

Table 8 *General Description of Students' Perception*

Context		Students background			Students' perceptions	
School	Teacher	Name	Age	Disability	Type of school change	Rights
SBC1	Cindy	Albert	9	ASD	Pedagogical	No rights mentioned
SBC1	Cindy	Vincent	10	ASD	Well-being, Pedagogical	No rights mentioned
SBC1	Robbie	John	9	Developmental Disability	Well-being	No rights mentioned
SBC1	Robbie	Renata	12	Down Syndrome	Well-being, Pedagogical	No rights mentioned

SBC2	Lucy	Julien	10	ID and ASD	No change mentioned	No rights mentioned
SBC2	Lucy	Maria	10	Multiple disabilities	No change mentioned	No rights mentioned
SBC2	Lucy	Adriano	11	Learning disability	No change mentioned	No rights mentioned
SBC2	Lucy	Gustav	11	ID	No change mentioned	No rights mentioned
SBC2	Lucy	Luke	12	ASD	Pedagogical, Infrastructure renovation, Human resources	No rights mentioned
RJ1	Julie	Peter	14	Learning disability	Pedagogical, Well-being, Infrastructure Renovation	No rights mentioned
RJ1	Julie	Laura	14	Learning disability	Social interaction	Right to be respected, Right as law
RJ1	Julie	Louis	15	Learning disability	Social interaction. Well-being, Pedagogical	No rights mentioned
RJ1	Julie	Mariana	15	Learning disability	Social interaction, Human resources, well-being.	Equal gender rights
BH1	Jessy	Andrea	12	Learning disability	Pedagogical Resources; Well-being; Infrastructure Renovation	No rights mentioned
BH1	Jessy	Bruno	14	CP and learning disability	Well-being	No rights mentioned
BH1	Jessy	Ian	14	CP and learning disability	Infrastructure Renovation, Well-being; Pedagogical	right is a law, human rights
BH1	Jessy	Esther	14	ADHD	Pedagogical; Infrastructure renovation and Well-being	No rights mentioned
BH1	Jessy	Thiago	15	Learning disability	Pedagogical resources, Well-being.	No rights mentioned
BH2	Christy	Amanda	15	CP	Infrastructure renovation, Well-being	right to accessibility
BH2	Christy	Hector	11	ASD	Well-being.	No rights mentioned
BH2	Christy	Guillaume	13	Learning disability	Basic conditions, Infrastructure renovation	right to study and work, right to go the bathroom
BH2	Christy	Octavio	13	ADHD	Social interaction; Infrastructure Renovation, basic conditions.	Right to do activities; Right to bathroom.
BH2	Christy	Sammy	13	ADHD	Pedagogical; Infrastructure Renovation well-being, Basic conditions	Right to drink water
BH2	Christy	Willian	15	CP	Human Resources, Infrastructure Renovation, Well-being.	Right to be respected by teachers
BH2	Marcy	Mark	10	DD	Infrastructure Renovation; Basic conditions.	No rights mentioned

Nineteen of the twenty-five student participants provided coherent responses concerning the school changes. We focused on coherent responses regarding potential changes rather than incoherent ones. Four students from SBC 2 (Julien, Maria, Adriano, Gustav) provided responses that were either irrelevant to the topic of school change or were unable to respond due to insufficient communication accessibility. Two responses were excluded because of technical problems with the interview recording (BH2). Consequently, only 19 responses concerning changes in the school were incorporated into the results.

The distribution and sophistication of responses correlated with age range; specifically, schools SBC1 and SBC2, which served a younger population, exhibited significantly lower participation and less elaborated responses compared to older students. Only one student from SBC2 contributed suggestions for change.

Furthermore, the sort of disability also played an essential role in this case, as students with intellectual disability or non-specific developmental disabilities presented more limited responses. Therefore, age and disability were essential aspects to be considered. Young students, mainly from SBC 2, such as Julien (10 years old) with ID and ASD, Maria (10 years old) with multiple disabilities, Adriano (11 years old) with learning disabilities, and Gustav (11 years old) with an intellectual disability participated in the interviews by drawing their responses at the same time as they received support from educators. Despite their participation efforts, several drawings do not explicitly express any coherent response (see Figure 6 and 7). This information is relevant as it indicates the need to examine attentively the developmental aspects of self-advocacy.

Figure 6 Ineligible responses

Figure 7 Ineligible Responses of School Changes

Nine out of 26 students provided responses, while no students from SBC 1 or SBC 2 contributed any responses. The age range in schools SBC 1 and SBC 2 was 9 to 12 years old. These schools provided education exclusively for elementary grades, specifically from 1st to 5th grade. The data suggest that age should be considered in the development of self-advocacy research practices. Despite the provision of support from educators and graphical resources, students were still required to engage in the focus groups.

Additionally, the interviews with younger students revealed significantly lower levels of peer exchanges; these students were unable to articulate changes or reference any rights. Only students older than 13 demonstrated knowledge of rights, as indicated in light blue. No students below the age of 13 acknowledged any rights in T1 or T2. The changes in the school and the corresponding rights will be presented in the subsequent subsections based on the thematic analysis.

School changes

This subsection consists of school changes suggested by students who expressed their views on improving their respective schools. Here is a summary of the changes suggested by students and the types of changes (see Table 9). Only responses with at least one identifiable content were included in this list.

Table 9 *Description of Students' Profile and Suggested Changes.*

School	Student name	Age	T1 changes	T2 changes	Type of changes
SBC1	Albert	9	engaging classes, non-complicated lessons, no corona virus (see figure w)	absent	T1: Pedagogical
SBC1	John	9	Dinosaur, Food (pizza) (see figure w)	Unidentifiable (see figure w)	T1: Well-being

SBC1	Renata	12	social activities, singing classes, movie in school	singing classes, movie in school, unidentifiable drawing (see figure w)	T1 & T2: well-being, pedagogical
SBC2	Luke	**12**	**change the teacher**, Infrastructure change, New reading resources	change the school staff	T1: Pedagogical, Infrastructure renovation, T1 & T2: Human resources
RJ	Peter	14	study conditions, food, respect from peers	Infrastructure renovation, the classroom (study conditions), more physical activities	T1: Social Interaction. T1 & T2: Pedagogical, Well-being, T2: Infrastructure Renovation
RJ	Laura	14	equal rights, school uniform	blank	T1: Social interaction
RJ	Louis	15	food, personal fun, rule changes, boys and girls playing sports together.	food, study conditions (silence), more leisure and sports	T1: Social interaction. T1 & T2: Well-being, Pedagogical
RJ	Mariana	15	**Student's behaviour (more respect)**, food, teacher respect.	absent	T1: Social interaction, Human resources, well-being.
BH1	Andrea	12	food, **pedagogical resources,** social activities	food, Infrastructure renovation, social activities	T1: Pedagogical Resources; T1 & T2: Well-being; T2: Infrastructure Renovation
BH1	Bruno	14	cultural activities, sports activities, vacation, and social activities	leisure activities, more vacation, social activities	T1 & T2: Well-being
BH1	Ian	14	Infrastructure renovation, food, personal fun, social condition/interaction	Infrastructure renovation, food, new chairs and whiteboard	T1 & T2: Infrastructure Renovation, Well-being, T2: Pedagogical
BH1	Esther	14	Infrastructure renovation, **study conditions**, food, social activity	food, Infrastructure renovation, social activities	T1: Pedagogical; T1 & T2: Infrastructure renovation and well-being
BH1	Thiago	15	social activities, personal fun, food, pedagogical resources	food, leisure activity, social activities	T1: Pedagogical resources, T1 & T2: Well-being.
BH2	Amanda	15	Accessibility, adapted places for students with physical needs, personal fun	absent	T1: Infrastructure renovation, well-being
BH2	Hector	11	no data	Personal fun, physical activities, social activities	T2: Well-being.
BH2	Guillaume	13	basic conditions, Infrastructure renovation	basic conditions, more sports activities,	T1 & T2: basic conditions, T2: Infrastructure Renovation

				Infrastructure renovation	
BH2	Octavio	13	Changing rules (behavioural changes), borrowing school resources, Infrastructure renovation, basic conditions	Infrastructure renovation, basic conditions.	T1: Social interaction; T1 & T2: Infrastructure Renovation, basic conditions.
BH2	Mark	10	basic conditions, Infrastructure renovation,	absent	T1: Infrastructure Renovation, basic conditions.
BH2	Sammy	13	Infrastructure renovation, food, more technology	Infrastructure renovation, food, basic condition	T1: pedagogical T1 & T2: Infrastructure Renovation, Well-being, T2: Basic conditions
BH2	Willian	15	no data	**teachers**, Infrastructure renovation, food	T2: Human Resources, Infrastructure Renovation, Well-being.

The changes were classified into six categories/types: 1) *Well-being (N=14)*: improvements related to food, more social activities, leisure, and sports; 2) *Pedagogical (N=10)* changes in study conditions or any aspect related to the improvement of learning; 3) *Infrastructure renovation (N=10)*: improvements of the school's infrastructure (physical space); 4) *Social Interactions (N=6)*: school rules and students' interactions with peers or staff, including requests for more respect; 5) *Basic conditions (N=4)* improvements in structural issues such as the lack of access to bathrooms, lack of toilet paper. 6) *Human resources (N=3):* changes in school staff, educators, and teachers.

No significant changes in content were observed between T1 and T2. The brief research period may have limited the potential for changes, particularly regarding the required types, such as infrastructure renovations or pedagogical adjustments. Furthermore, the absence of five students may have influenced the outcome. Upon comparison of the time points, it was observed that students exhibited more homogeneous responses within their groups. For instance, when students interacted during the group interviews, their responses seemed to converge, as observed

in the schools BH1 and BH2 (see T2 column in Table 7). It may indicate that students have

listened to each other and presented a more cohesive group response. Nonetheless, when asked

about their individual opinions during the focus group, the understanding of the changes varied –

showing the students' individual voices.

It is important to restate that this example of interaction of students occurred mainly from

students between the ages of 12 to 14 years. Thus, most of the discussion of changes only

represents the school changes or opinions of older students. Nevertheless, a few younger students

have responded to this question (Albert and Mark). See examples of graphical responses.

Figure 8 *School changes as Drawings*
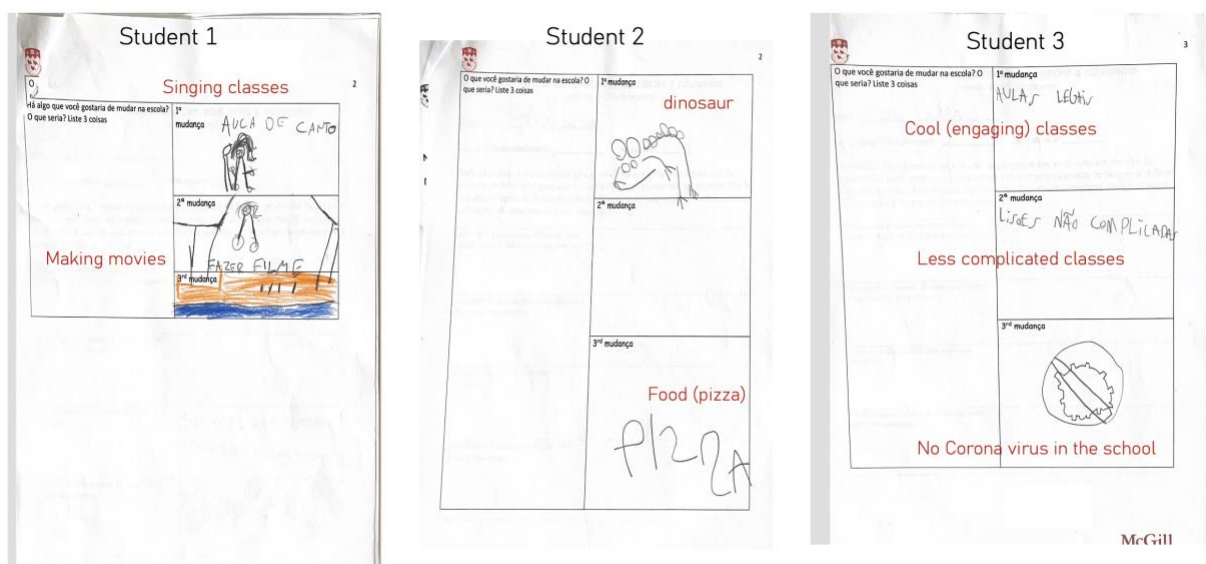
SCHOOL CHANGES alternative communication examples

Concerning any effective school changes, it is important to emphasize that school

improvements require more time than the research period; also, implementing the changes may

involve different stakeholders in the school. Therefore, concrete change requires more than just

sharing students' experiences with their resource teachers. The changes suggested by students

indicated that they were aware of the school's reality since their demands revealed different aspects that required improvements.

The predominant change suggestions pertained to the well-being of students (N=14), particularly among significantly younger students. This category of responses encompassed expectations for positive experiences in school, including improved food quality, increased opportunities for sports, and more social events. These activities relate to their primary experiences within the school environment. Bruno has indicated the necessity for his school to enhance cultural and physical activities. The BH2 school hosted a social event on the data collection day (see Figure 23). A significant number of students have expressed a desire for improved food quality.

The *pedagogical* aspect (N=10) was the second most mentioned type of change requested. It includes any response related to their learning process. For example, Esther complained about the classroom conditions, BH1₁:

> Because, like, our classroom is small. And when there are a lot of people, it
> gets stuffy. People already feel like that, but it's stuffy. So, there could be more
> space in the classroom. The fan does not work. There is a broken window in
> the small room. (Esther, BH1, Interview 1)

In this situation, Esther showed a clear example of changes that could be applied to improve the classroom conditions. The weather conditions in Brazil, especially in this Brazilian region of Belo Horizonte, may reach high temperatures, creating a challenging environment for students to concentrate in class. Esther also mentioned the lack of space and the room's size as improvement factors. In her answer sheet, she drew the school spaces. The second time, she maintained her complaint about the fan and complained about the study conditions in the school.

She shows a clear understanding of a lack of school conditions for learning. In addition, Louis from RJ1 complained that the classroom is too noisy, and he would like a quieter classroom.

Andrea first complained about not having any technological resources to assist in following along in classes. In Brazil, it is common for students to use their phones to access the school's online activities. She mentions that a change would be for the school to provide phones to students in a system of loans for them to have access to the school content.

Willian, who has a cerebral palsy and learning disability, mentioned that he would like to have calmer teachers. This response is interesting as indicator that teachers may not have patience with him and shows his capacity to voice his self-awareness of his own pace of learning. Albert of 9 years old asked for more "cool classes" as one of his demands for change in his school.

Another aspect came from Thiago who mentioned expecting more teachers in the classroom: "I want three teachers in my classroom." Having three teachers or in this case, he was probably referring to the educators who often work with teacher in the classroom indicated his acknowledgment of the having more pedagogical support.

Infrastructure (N = 10): Students mentioned this component almost as often as they did pedagogical demands; students were very clear about the lack of maintenance of schools. Guillaume stated:

> I want a renovation like this: in the gymnasium, because when it's raining, we can't have physical education. It starts leaking there. And then we can't have physical education, and I think that would be a renovation. (Guillaume, school BH2, interview 2)

Complaints regarding infrastructure were reported across all schools, indicating that students recognize the neglect in the environments where they spend most of their time. The demands are interconnected with pedagogical requirements, particularly when infrastructure issues, such as the broken window in the classroom mentioned by Esther, impact the learning environment. Additionally, numerous complaints pertained to the inadequate conditions of the washrooms and the absence of fundamental privacy measures, which will be addressed subsequently in the section on basic conditions. Additional demands encompassed the need for more accessible locations within the school, which will be addressed subsequently in the rights section.

Social interaction was the fourth most frequent demand, with a total of 6 instances (N = 6). This category encompasses two types of student interactions: 1) Social gathering; 2) Receiving respect. Students have requested increased opportunities for social events at the school. In BH1, students frequently requested that the school facilitate social events during the summer vacation, such as organizing a Christmas party for all students. The second request for change referred to a different aspect of social interaction, Peter from RJ1 asked for more respect from his peers. Thus, this request for social interaction also intersects with the experience of respectful interaction in the school.

The fifth aspect consisted of changes in *basic conditions* (N = 4). Most of these requests involved the basic usage of washrooms as described in the following dialogue:

> Teacher Marcy: Is there toilet paper?
>
> Mark: No, there isn't.
>
> Guillaume: Yeah... regarding the issue, I wanted to talk about the bathroom.
>
> The bathroom doesn't have toilet paper. There's rarely any soap. And... I don't

know if the girls' bathroom has it, but there's no door.

Flavio: There's no door?

Guillaume: No.

Octavio: Not on the outside.

Guillaume: There's no door on the outside, only on the inside. And... about the bathroom issue, regarding the outside, I would also fix the roofs because they leak a lot, especially in the gymnasium. And another thing, I would provide more markers for the teachers because they always run out, and we always have to replace the refills.

Amanda: Another thing I would also like to change, which isn't here, and the assistants [inaudible] is that sometimes there isn't anything to change the kids.

Amanda: Yeah, I think there might be, but it must be very bad. I don't usually go to the part where they...

Teacher Marcy: Do you mean a changing table?

Flavio: Oh, some kids use diapers.

Teacher Marcy: Yeah, she does.

Amanda: Mary does too. (Students BH2, Interview 1)

This dialogue exemplified a student interaction, and how each contributed in different ways to the discussion on the bathroom condition in school BH2. Guillaume introduced the need for fixing the door in the bathroom, which often lacks toilet paper, according to Mark; then, Amanda, who is a wheelchair user and requires support for her hygiene needs, mentioned that the bathroom is not adapted for the students who require specialized support. In sum, the

discussion on infrastructure renovation offers different insights according to each student's experience.

The bathroom was mentioned by all students in both interviews (T1 and T2). Students revisited this topic in the second interview, also pointing out the *basic conditions* that needed improvement:

> The first change is the bathroom door. Over there, there isn't a door. And it's difficult to do anything because the boys keep messing around. I've never done anything like that. I mean, I've peed and all, but I've never done number 2. (Guillaume, interview 2)

This change request demonstrates the limitations placed on students' use of the school facilities. The basic conditions outlined by Amanda and Guillaume must be fulfilled. The governmental data on accessibility indicates that the BH2 school has an accessible washroom. This issue will be addressed in the discussion section. Furthermore, Octavio, in expressing his dissatisfaction with the washroom, asserted that the school should revise its regulations. These students have not only requested specific changes to materials but have also critically examined the regulations.

Another change suggested by Mariana and Luke consisted of requests to change *human resources* (N =3) in the school. This category included students' expressions to replace teachers or administrative staff with whom students had personal conflicts. The reasons for each of these claims were not explored in depth.

A final consideration on the theme of changes includes a spontaneous remark from Thiago regarding his views on the role of politicians. This observation reflects his understanding that politicians possess the power to effect change.

Thiago: Wow, if I were a politician here, I would change everything. This

room would be bigger, the food much better. You can work here whenever you

want.

Flavio: What do you mean, wait a minute, what do you mean "if I were a

politician here"? At the school?

Thiago: Everyday, I come to this school, and it seems like nothing has changed. It looks

like an old school.

Flavio: Hmm, so politicians change things, is that it?

Thiago: yes, Politicians change... president, yeah, president, you know,

president has to change things.

Soon after, Thiago, in conversation with teacher Jessy, noted that there had been a

student election at the school two years prior, during which the elected candidates had promised

changes; however, no changes had occurred in the school. He asserted that "They altered it

independently, without soliciting our input." Thiago's comment, stemming from the discussion

on the role of politicians, addresses the prevalent notion that politicians fail to effect change

despite their responsibilities to the community. He notes his visits to the school, observing a lack

of changes, and highlights that elected students have implemented changes without prior

consultation. This subsection on school changes indicates that students possess a critical

perspective on their educational environment. The range of changes proposed by students

encompassed various demands, including not only well-being (or individualistic) concerns but

also pedagogical improvements, infrastructure renovation, and enhancements in human resources

that serve the public interest in school improvement. Their views are grounded in their school

experiences and might indicate real possibilities of self-advocacy development. However, in the

timeframe of the research (6-8 weeks), there was no significant change in the type of suggestions; also, age and disability were factors that clearly distinguished the level of elaboration of the responses and discussion.

Sense of Justice – Starting a Discussion on Rights

The second student's theme consisted of discussions on rights applied to the school daily context. To start, we examine the number of responses presented by students regarding rights that students recognized at the school. Except for a few students such as Amanda or Laura who pointed out the right to accessibility in the school or the right to be respected, the majority had difficulties understanding the concept of rights individually (see table 6): only 8 out of 25 students were able to identify a right. In this occasion again, the 8 students who identified rights were in the older age range tier ($M = 14$, $SD = 1$) of the total age range ($N = 25$, $M = 12$, $SD = 2$). The first findings about the understanding of students about rights demonstrate that age is a developmental factor to be considered.

The students' interviews were more interactive due to the form of group discussion. Although some students occasionally did not reply directly to the questions, the dynamics of the group discussion facilitated their dialogue. For instance, a student would introduce a right, and other students would comment and start a discussion on the theme. The findings from students represent this interaction of students as they reflect on a specific theme. When asked about the changes in school, Laura suggested the following:

Laura: Equal rights for boys and girls.

Flavio: Equal rights? Very well. Do you think there are different rights here?

Laura: No.

Mariana: In the courtyard, boys can play soccer, and we cannot. (Students RJ,

Interview 1)

When the students mentioned rights, they referred to unjust situations in the school. In the

above example, Laura introduced the discussion on gender inequality applied to a daily sport

activity, and Mariana responded. Similarly, Bruno captured the idea of injustice when he

questioned: "if there are human rights, why are there people on the streets? If there are human

rights, why...there are people on the streets, right?" (Bruno, BH1, interview 2). Bruno showed an

understanding that human rights refer to all human beings having access to fairness and dignity,

despite presenting a different response in the answer sheet. Another discussion started when

Sammy mentioned the issue that students cannot access the washroom during the entry period.

Another student added:

Willian: Some teachers should respect the students more. If a student asks to

go to the bathroom or do something, such as drinking water, these things, the

teacher should say, you can go. No, but the guy...

Flavio: Respect to be able to leave the classroom?

Willian: Olivia, she is very nice. Because she says, yeah, you can go. Do you

want to go to the bathroom? Go ahead.

From the discussion if they should have access to washrooms before the beginning of class

to teachers allowing students to go to washrooms during class time; students discussed the

intricacies of using washrooms in schools experience. A restriction to accessing the washroom

was created because some students vandalized the space during the entry period. Guillaume complained that this punitive measure was unfair and questioned why all students should be punished for an individual's behaviour. This is another example of how broaching the topic of rights generated reflective discussion about the school routine. The discussion of student rights promoted reflections upon daily challenges, which allowed students to examine school rules and other institutional mechanisms.

An interesting contribution occurred when Amanda, a wheelchair user with learning disabilities, contributed with a clear notion of rights applied to the school infrastructure:

> Amanda: Yes. I think people who need inclusion, I think they have every right, and, how do you say, if a person needs help, you understand? And there are some children who study in certain schools that do not have, I think there should be... It is fair enough...I think people with disabilities, like me, for example, I think that in school, they should have a more stable place in the school for people with disabilities.

> Flavio: What do you mean by a "more stable place"?

> Amanda: I mean, in the sense of having more ramps or having an elevator.

The student's claims referred to the specific rights of students with physical disabilities and introduced the notion of accessibility rights. Her contribution to the discussion on rights was distinct from that of other students.

These excerpts indicate that students have engaged in collective discussions regarding daily situations. The students have articulated strong arguments rooted in a sense of justice,

addressing both routine matters, such as the use of school washrooms, and more complex issues, including facility adaptations, ramps, and the right to inclusion.

The Role of the Support Network in Self-advocacy Development

Given that self-advocacy may be a complex behaviour in terms of psychological skill development, students with disabilities require pedagogical opportunities and a supportive network to develop this behaviour. The response from Amanda, in which she claims that students with disabilities should have more accessibility in schools, such as architectural adaptation, propelled us to wonder what factors contribute to a better understanding of rights appropriation. In her case, she mentioned receiving not only support from school staff but also solid family support:

> My family also supports me a lot in my goals, especially my parents and grandparents. In fact, I do not know if this is related, but in one of the competitions I participated in here at SUPERAR, my mother and parents helped me a lot to compete and try to win. Even though I did not win, at least they were by my side, providing emotional support and encouragement throughout the process. (Amanda, interview 1)

Amanda's report illustrates the assistance provided by family members during a sporting competition. This student articulated significant experiences related to the development of self-advocacy and its association with a supportive network. Several students, including Laura, Guillaume, Octavio, Sammy, Thiago, Esther, Mariana, and Peter, identified family members as their primary source of support when needed. Students primarily identified educators as the main source of school support, referring to them by their first names. Their support consists of in-

class activities: "I ask [for help] during the test and activities…It is like he explains it to me thoroughly." *Educators are pivotal in explaining lessons and creating bridges between regular and resource teachers.* Moreover, they also support any sort of need, such as taking students to washrooms, sports activities, etc.

Teachers were the second most common point of contact regarding school support, but this view was not unanimous. The students Esther and Thiago mentioned not trusting regular teachers because they could share important information with others or would establish a unilateral relationship of authority in which teachers do not ask about the student's views. As described by Thiago, "because teachers are all X9[8]. They only say, 'You need to study a lot so you can become a better student.'"

Nonetheless, other students share that they have excellent relationships with teachers. In the following extract, the student Wesley shares that teachers are important points of trust in the school.

> If everyone has blank, somewhat sad face, she notices that something
>
> happened; there's no one normal here. Therefore, she asks. However, now, if
>
> someone hits me, I look for her and talk to her. It is the same with Cristy too.
>
> Cristy says if someone hits me, does something to me, I do not know. Hits me,
>
> kicks me, something like that, I can tell anyone who knows me that she will
>
> take care of it for me. (Wesley, interview 2)

What stands out in this case is the possibility of sharing vulnerabilities with teachers who will listen and protect them in the school environment. Not only teachers and educators but also

---

[8] X9 is a prison expression that refers to people who divulge secrets: a colleague who cannot be trusted. This expression is commonly used in the daily conversation of young people to refer to snitching.

other school professionals, such as principals or school coordinators. These reports were often associated with unjust school situations in which students searched for support within schools.

School Episodes of (dis)Respect and (un)Safety. Students reported troubling incidents when questioned about their routines and experiences of injustice in school. The socioeconomic contexts of the individual schools created distinct conditions, with reports of bullying being prevalent across all student accounts. The severity of each situation differed significantly; beyond name-calling, the issues encompassed bullying, racism, theft, and drug trafficking. The questions about whether students felt respected or safe in schools invited students to reflect and share about bullying experiences at school. It is alarming that the reports of bullying were consistent throughout all interviews. One of the most frequent issues referred to students calling other students pejorative names often related to their disabilities. As Gabriel shares:

> Many people also do not care, like: "That boy over there, I do not like him, and I will not play with him because he's dumb." Currently, I have also experienced bullying in the classroom, where the boys called me dumb behind my back. Another friend of mine, Gabriel, went through it too. They are very intelligent, you know? And with intelligence in math, you know how it is, they feel superior. Therefore, they say things like: "Oh, that one is dumb," or "I will not invite him to the group." (Gabriel, interview 2)

Direct verbal aggression is linked to exclusion from group activities. Such situations were common, with numerous students reporting similar experiences, such as having their belongings taken without consent:

> They take my things, and I do not like it. They do not ask. If they take my
>
> things, they do not ask for anything anymore; now they take them, and
>
> then...I'm in the same class as her, and the boys tease her and me. (Laura,
>
> interview 1)

These reports illustrate common and recurring incidents encountered by students in educational settings. Conversely, there were more serious incidents where students observed drug trafficking on campus, experienced theft of their school supplies, or racist situations. While these concerning events may not be limited to individuals' disability conditions, disability remains a significant factor as we validate findings related to disability identity.

Disability Identity and Collectivity in Schools

The responses regarding students' understanding of their own disabilities exhibited similar patterns of denial as those observed when they were initially questioned about their rights. Following the initiation of dialogue by a student, additional participants contributed, leading to generative discussions regarding their disability identity within the focus groups. The identification of disabilities among students was often inaccurate; some reported issues that did not align with their actual disabilities. For example, Bryan reported a problem with his tongue but did not reference his learning disability. Discussing their disability openly necessitates addressing specific elements of their self-perception. Teacher Jessy added:

> I wanted to address the issue of disability, but I found it was too early because
>
> they do not talk much about their disabilities. I even worked a bit with them on
>
> identity, having them introduce themselves and say who they are, and none of
>
> them touched on the issue of disability. (Jessy, interview 2)

Despite this report, one of her students presented a different relationship with her disability:

> My difficulty is learning, especially in what we already know. I do not learn much, but I am not ashamed because I have already talked to my friends. I do not mind if people comment because I know I struggle with this. Therefore, I will make more effort to learn. The more I strive, the more I will learn about this. (Mariana, interview 2)

Feelings of Shame and Embarrassment. Mariana recognizes that she can currently talk about her learning disability without any shame. She implies that she felt ashamed before, but now she shares with her colleagues. The students' reports often mentioned or implied feelings of shame and embarrassment—Gabriel stated, "I don't tell anyone; no one knows." In a similar situation:

> Flavio: Do you talk to your friends about your disability?

> Renata: No.

> Flavio: No? Why?

> Renata: Because I am embarrassed.

The feeling of embarrassment was a frequent response when students talked about their disabilities. Students like Thiago also answered, "I feel embarrassed" when asked about his disability. Gabriel explains that he does not reach out to teachers for explanations because of feelings of shame or embarrassment. It is important to recognize that these feelings might be associated with disabling experiences and affect their school academic and social participation.

These numerous reports of shame and embarrassment indicate that the schools' environments could provide better inclusive resources to tackle these harmful experiences.

Mariana's account of her shame experience suggests a collective aspect associated with her disability. In BH1 school, students engaged in an organic discussion regarding various school issues, including their disabilities and treatment, which surprised some teachers. The collective opportunities facilitated lateral discussions among students, grounded in their shared everyday experiences. This approach effectively aids in the development of communication skills and addresses feelings of shame associated with their disabilities.

The reports from students show that they have critical impressions of school life and would like to see changes in the school. Their reports of the changes did not vary significantly in T2 as the students were asked about the desired changes:

> Sammy: My change is also to renovate the school because on rainy days when
>
> there was a strong storm, water started pouring from the ceiling. In the
>
> computer lab, it soaked the Wi-Fi box. So, the water started pouring, and all
>
> the classrooms started pouring.

Twenty students said that they would like to see changes in the school's physical spaces, especially in the food choices. They also requested more leisure activities and outdoor excursions. These requests show that students are aware of the school conditions. The requests did not focus on disability issues but showed that many improvements are needed.

Students did not mention any perceived changes in teachers' approach but seemed to have indirectly incorporated some of the work. For instance, in T2, the students from BH1 presented a discussion on racism, one of the themes that Jessy had introduced through a school event. The teacher asked them if they were interested, and the students surprised her with their

engagement. Jessy shared that she thought students would not be interested in her proposed activity because, before the collective activities, students would not demonstrate interest. Therefore, the change in her proposed work had an interesting impact on the students' collective discussion. Similarly, teacher Marcy mentioned that after introducing the disability topic, students looked for her and asked about their disabilities.

Students' voices encompass diverse and complex experiences. The reports indicate a response to diverse lived experiences in schools, with all participants appearing to benefit from the collective discussion. These discussions highlighted the necessity for schools to provide opportunities for students to engage in open dialogue regarding disability, enabling them to comprehend potential barriers to their development.

Closing Remarks on the Findings

The chapter concludes with an exploration of students' voices and teachers' perceptions, offering a comprehensive understanding of self-advocacy within the school context. Teachers' perceptions of students, along with their self-assessment of developed practices and encountered challenges, illustrated a complex experience that highlighted the essential components of self-advocacy in schools within this socioeconomic context. This includes the interactional aspects of self-advocacy and the intricacies involved in educating about rights. In contrast, most students expressed their expectations for changes in the school. The authors presented an alternative perspective on the discourse surrounding rights, linking it to personal experiences of injustice in educational settings characterized by disrespect and ableism. Students' perspectives on rights and experiences in school serve as a foundation for a critical understanding of the school's reality. So far, the perspectives of teachers and students have been examined separately; in the following

section, these complementary viewpoints will be integrated and analyzed in conjunction with the

previously discussed theoretical frameworks.

Chapter 4: Discussion

This discussion examines how the primary findings address the two research questions in relation to the theoretical framework. This study examines teachers' perceptions of self-advocacy and its development in students with developmental disabilities in Brazil, as well as the students' experiences of self-advocacy within school settings. The school experiences inform a detailed discussion on the complexities of implementing self-advocacy practices in schools in the Global South. The experiences of teachers and students, previously presented separately in the results section, are now integrated in accordance with the primary findings from both perspectives of school self-advocacy.

Contributions to Building a Self-advocacy Theoretical Framework

As previously seen in the results section, teachers have defined the development of self-advocacy in terms of its theoretical and practical experiences, rights as a self-advocacy component, socio-interactional components, and teaching strategies and challenges. These findings explored the meanings attributed to teachers, which provided elements to conceptualize a framework for self-advocacy practices in Brazilian schools. Notably, these teachers' experiences correspond to the socio-cultural reality of the participating schools. For this reason, this discussion revisits the theoretical contributions from critical pedagogy to address the implications of the socio-political-cultural aspects of self-advocacy in the Brazilian educational system (school structure and rights-based framework). Furthermore, we gradually transition to the research questions by examining the practical implications of self-advocacy in-school experiences of students with disabilities. The main findings (individual development, school changes and rights, disability identity, and the role of support networks in self-advocacy development) from students are now discussed within the theoretical perspective of the self-

determination theory and relevant literature. Ultimately, we present the limitations and future directions for self-advocacy studies and practices in schools.

Before discussing the practical experiences related to teachers' and students' self-advocacy, broad considerations of the theoretical framework of the school structure are presented.

The School Structure and Critical Considerations on Self-advocacy.

As for institutional support at the education system level, we may highlight that school boards with more solid inclusive systems provided more opportunities to develop self-advocacy. By inclusive systems, we mean any educational system based on accessibility, representation, and participation in which all students have opportunities to succeed (Slee, 2022). For instance, the collaborative work that is part of the SBC school board inclusive education proposal provided opportunities for more interaction between peers with and without disabilities. At the same time, the weekly formation of teachers in the prefecture of Belo Horizonte promoted their continuous development. These institutional designs (institutional structure) facilitated self-advocacy development from an educational systemic view.

Conversely, the school in Rio de Janeiro faced dire systemic issues, such as the lack of basic hygiene materials, which indicated an institutional barrier to the development of self-advocacy work. Therefore, we understand that inclusive systems with collaborative and formative resources provided by school boards are relevant to self-advocacy development because they promote richer social settings for interaction that surpass teachers' decision-making power. Notably, all teachers had solid professional backgrounds and were qualified to develop the work, which reinforces that institutional support played a salient role in self-advocacy experiences in this research context.

The proposal of self-advocacy requires an education system that opposes the principles of a banking education in which students are treated as depositories of knowledge (Freire, 2018a), as indicated by teacher Julie, who framed her school in *the traditional school model*. She criticized her school for prioritizing the transmission of knowledge instead of promoting dialogical practices that would strengthen the development of self-advocacy-related experiences. For instance, the practice of student group discussion (discussion circles) has shown to be a crucial dialogical aspect of the self-advocacy experience in schools. This is coherent with liberatory pedagogical actions (Freire, 2018; Liasidou, 2015) that empower equity-seeking groups such as students with disabilities in unfavourable socio-economic contexts. The critical pedagogy lens serves as an essential framework for disability studies (Erevelles, 2000; Liasidou, 2015), particularly regarding self-advocacy in educational settings. It addresses the political and social dimensions of education, highlighting themes pertinent to the self-advocacy experiences of participants in schools.

Self-advocacy, in political terms, pertains to lived experiences within the social context of schools. It reflects the unique realities of individual schools, as evidenced by infrastructure changes and well-being improvements proposed by students. The students' reports of their daily school experiences indicated elements connected to their socio-cultural realities, particularly the inequality present in the Brazilian education system, which has been extensively discussed (Freire, 2018) and continues to influence the identity formation and worldview of this generation of students. For example, the work on black awareness day promoted by teachers Jessy and Julie, represents liberatory actions (Freire, 2018) that provoked critical reflections for students about their racial identities, as some mentioned in the second time point. The impact of self-advocacy on students' identities is discussed later in this section.

The question about changes triggered a valuable reflection on the idea of politicians' promises of change, as mentioned by Thiago. He added that the student council was elected but did not deliver the promised changes. These two situations bring to light common sense in Brazilian culture, where people do not believe in politicians or might even equate politicians' promises with plans that will not be fulfilled. Whereas, taking into consideration the educational aspect of self-advocacy, the actions of the school can either affirm the common sense that voices can be heard by effectively delivering the plans, or the school may reinforce the idea that politicians do not deliver what they promised, which can be an issue when considering the formative aspect of these school experiences.

This research offers foundational elements for developing a practical and theoretical framework of self-advocacy within an inclusive education paradigm, addressing both progress and challenges in its implementation. A second theoretical consideration concerning self-advocacy pertains to the rights-based framework for education.

A Rights-Based Framework for Education to Inform Self-Advocacy Practices

The notion of rights was a core element raised by the teachers and students concerning self-advocacy development in schools. For teachers, self-advocacy is comprised of understanding and creating strategies to teach rights to students with disabilities. In the teachers' reports, students had no background knowledge of rights or were too young to grasp the complexity of the topic. In fact, except for a few students who pointed out the right to accessibility in the school or the right to be respected, the majority had difficulties identifying rights individually (see table 6). Thus, incorporating the rights component of self-advocacy was challenging for teachers. From the comparison of the two-time points, we can see that teachers moved from a more idealistic point of view on rights to a more concrete perception (see Table 5)

when they faced the challenge of teaching rights during the research period. The most common

understanding of teachers about rights refers to associating *rights with*

responsibilities/obligations. According to teachers, students would easily mistake having rights

for acting without accountability or responsibility; therefore, in the pedagogical context, they

paired teaching rights with discussing responsibilities. Through an analysis of this teacher's

understanding of rights as illustrated in the examples, we contend that reducing the concept of

rights to mere moral conduct—defining what is "right or wrong"—reveals a significant

limitation, as it fails to consider the agency of students. This approach to rights is pertinent in

addressing student accountability; however, without critical reflection on the evolution of student

rights awareness, discussions of rights and responsibilities may merely reinforce the existing

school status quo.

Moreover, the activity of the "rights information session" conducted by teacher Jessy

presented a way to address rights based on responses to unjust situations. By identifying the

issues and searching for the corresponding rights, she provided means for students to develop

"knowledge on rights" skills (Test, Fowler, Wood, et al., 2005). This approach aligns with the

promotion of self-advocacy. Overall, teachers' challenges in addressing rights in schools

demonstrated the importance of providing tailored resources to advance this complex educational

discussion.

A second observed change in the two time points showed that despite the limited

background on rights knowledge of students, as they discussed the school's daily life challenges

collectively during the focus groups and other interactional activities, they demonstrated the

capacity to problematize unjust situations in the school. This is congruous with the Child Rights

Code's participation principle, which emphasizes student participation as students' voices

(Tobin, 2011). Unlike welfare-based rights that exclude the direct participation of children in their formulation, in the experiences of the teachers and students, school self-advocacy involves participation (through the student's voice) as a core component. Therefore, we identify similarities in the formulation of self-advocacy participatory practices in schools and the human rights-based approach (Tobin, 2011). Although this approach refers mainly to creating rights for children, there is a commonality in the process of collective discussion in the observed school experiences. The students debated the schools' conditions and numerous injustices in their lived context and critically examined possible resolutions to the issues encountered. In addition, teachers' efforts to introduce rights to students reinforce the purpose of a rights-based approach in schools. This is aligned with teacher Christy's report of how having a self-advocacy framework as a reference facilitated her work.

The valuable critical reflection on the role of critical pedagogy Giroux (2020) aligns with the practice of teaching rights; the following quote summarizes important aspects presented in this discussion:

> Rather than viewing teaching as a technical practice, radical pedagogy, in the broadest terms, is a moral and political practice premised on the assumption that learning is not about processing received knowledge but *about transforming it as part of a more expansive struggle for individual rights and social justice.* This implies that any viable notion of pedagogy and resistance should illustrate how knowledge, values, desires, and social relations are always implicated in relations of power. (Giroux, 2020, p. 83)

Giroux (2020) touches on the transformative role of education in promoting individual rights and social justice, which aligns with the main discussion teachers and students face when

approaching rights. The author emphasizes the assumption that learning is about striving to guarantee individual rights as opposed to developing a technical practice; this idea reinforces the argument that teachers should approach rights not in a framework of charity (Tobin, 2011) or simple moral conduct to be reproduced indistinctively ("right or wrong"). Thus far, the first unfolding of the discussion approached a theoretical framework for the work of self-advocacy by integrating the discussion of the school structure through the critical pedagogy lens and the exploration of a rights-based framework for self-advocacy practices in education.

The second part of Giroux's aforementioned quote (2020) highlights the relations of power and the implications of knowledge, values, desires (intentionality), and, most importantly, social relations in schools. The following section of the discussion explores these aspects, examining the in-school self-advocacy experiences of teachers and students.

The Students' and Teachers' Experiences of Self-advocacy

In this second section of the discussion, we return to the implementation of self-advocacy practices in the school and how students experienced self-advocacy during the approximately two-month period of the research. Having presented the theoretical aspects of self-advocacy in schools, we explore the ground-level experiences of self-advocacy in schools from the relational perspective of psychology and pedagogy.

Students' Voices

First, to appropriately respond to how students experience self-advocacy, we must return to the definition of voice. Messiou et al. (2024) summarize varied interpretations of student's voice: it encompasses a dynamic nature and the idea of multiplicity. In other words, there is no single voice but a multiplicity of voices in schools that should be considered to represent the diversity of experiences—similar to Robbie's quote on having 22 different voices in a classroom.

Students' voices include presence, verbal or non-verbal expressions of students' experiences in the school, and opportunities for dialogues over students' interests and decision-making in the school setting (Messiou, 2024). Students' voices are a foundational component of the self-advocacy experience in the school as its definitions align with the practice of students speaking up and expressing their views on the school. The teachers reported that the students' voices (perspectives) were integrated into their practices; at first, the teachers were surprised with the students' capacity to problematize the school changes and the richness of their interaction, which was noticed from the collective interactions among students. This is significant and signals how teachers' perceptions of their students have changed. Moreover, on the teachers' end, there is a clear perception that they recognize the multiplicity of voices.

While individual development assessments did not indicate significant overall progress in decreasing the type and frequency of support during the period, the relationship between teachers and students has qualitatively improved. The two-month data collection period limited teachers' ability to perceive individual skills development; nonetheless, they acknowledged the significance of fostering trustful relationships. Jessy observed an increase in her students' motivation and interest in attending the resource room following the integration of collective discussions into her practices. Overall, we may affirm that teachers have changed their practices and demonstrated different active listening situations to the diversity of students' experiences shared during the research period. This finding aligns with Messiou's (2024) study on teachers encouraging participation as part of students' voices practices in schools.

The student discussions were more nuanced. During the research period, there were no drastic changes concerning their views of the schools, but the students showed—in different ways—a critical understanding of the school's reality. In line with Barton's (1998) notion of

voice as the denunciation of structural and attitudinal barriers, the collective exchanges of the students about the rights and school's changes within the school showcased the barriers faced in daily school lives grounded on their unique lived experience perspectives. Analyzing the proposed school changes, we noted that students voiced their expected improvements and personal views of being in the school. These students' remarks demonstrated their disposition to develop their self-advocacy because they presented critical thinking, a pivotal element of these self-advocacy experiences. This aligns with Giroux's conception of critical thinking (2020), which states that individuals understand the complexities of their own social realities. Hence, the self-advocacy experiences of the student participants revealed the complexity embedded in the connection between students' voices and critical thinking. Self-advocacy involves more than expressing concerns; it requires a critical examination of the social inequalities inherent in the educational system (Freire, 2018). This process includes open discussions about students' lived experiences and the necessary improvements, such as infrastructure and well-being, highlighted in their demands for change in schools. Students' perspectives in these school experiences indicated social interactions across multiple dimensions: student-to-student, student-to-teacher, and student-to-school. The subsequent section examines these interactions.

The Social Elements of Student's Self-Advocacy

The psychological aspects of autonomy previously presented *in self-determination theory* (Sands & Wehmeyer, 1996; Wehmeyer, 2007) conceived self-advocacy as a relational construct, which entails distinguishing the term autonomy from the independence of other people. When applied to educational settings—teaching students how to become autonomous essentially refers to providing the proper opportunities for students to thrive, which is the same relation found in self-advocacy applied to schools. Self-advocacy has been identified as a collective action and not

as an individual deed of one acting independently, despite the "self" in self-advocacy. It is worth remarking that the importance of the prefix "self" comes from the historical achievement of the groups of adults with intellectual disabilities who organized for *themselves* the first group of former residents of segregated institutions. The "self" alludes to making decisions without external (or institutional) volition/intention. Therefore, the prefix "self" may be misinterpreted without its historical context. This argument emphasizes the relational nature of self-advocacy, which implies that the terms "Self-advocacy" and "advocacy" present a false dichotomy.

The interactions among students indicated the emergence of a sense of belonging within the groups, evidenced by shared experiences such as incidents of drug possession in the BH school and episodes of disrespect in the BH2 and RJ schools. Despite the negative connotations of these experiences, students were able to formulate constructive arguments and provide mutual support. The experiences align with the sense of belonging observed in self-advocate groups; membership as a self-advocate correlates with empowerment derived from shared experiences and collaborative efforts (Anderson & Bigby, 2017; Beart et al., 2004). This research highlights the significance of teacher engagement in group dynamics and the establishment of trusting teacher-student relationships. Additionally, it emphasizes the necessity of fostering student interactions, as peer relationships facilitate the sharing of personal experiences. Hence, the students' collective discussion was a central element of school self-advocacy—representing the possibility of students reflecting on and exchanging their experiences—turning the plurality of voices into a unison. As seen in the changes proposed by students in the second time point (*see Table Q*), the demands for change tended to synchronize in schools with stronger student interactions. Despite the short duration of the research, the collective experiences of students' interactions promoted a sense of belonging and enabled real experiences and exchanges.

The Development of Disability Identity

A second consideration of the psychological aspects of self-advocacy concerns the development of a disability identity, which is a salient contribution of the self-advocacy experience in the schools. In the reports of teachers comparing T1 and T2, teachers initially seemed to mainly address the "deficits" or the learning issue/barrier. However, they would not address the student's disability as a grounding aspect of students' formation. The experimentation with self-advocacy practices provided opportunities for reflection and insights into the disability identity for both teachers and students. This is exemplified by Marcy's observation of a student correcting his mother about autism not being a disease. This exemplifies how school experiences can influence students' perceptions of their own disabilities. It is essential to recognize the complexities of these processes, as teachers and students have encountered diverse experiences, highlighting the necessity for additional discourse on the topic.

At this stage of the discussion, we may identify similarities in Caldwell's (2011) research about the formation of disability identity of self-advocate leaders, in which the author presents a dual dimension process where internal self-identification and social perception interact. In Caldwell's study, becoming a self-advocate leader is comprised of five aspects: 1) claiming personhood and voice, 2) connection with disability community, 3) reclaiming disability and personal information, 4) interconnection with broader disability rights movement, and 5) bond with social justice and interdependency. In the present study, teachers and students reported having approached this disability identity process regarding at least the three first stages: 1) 20 out of 25 students have demonstrated to voice their claims on how to improve the school; 2) By interacting with other students with disabilities, students discussed publicly different aspects of the disability in the school, which could be harder to relate with others without a disability. It is

worth noting the reports of shame and fear that permeate their school experience when disclosing their disabilities or vulnerabilities. Despite the sensitive subject, the exchanges with other peers with disabilities initiated a sense of connection with a disability community within the school; as mentioned previously as the sense of belonging (Anderson & Bigby, 2017b; Beart et al., 2004), 3) some students have claimed that they would like to be respected as one of the changes in the schools; this type of claim shows students' awareness of their disability condition; 4 and 5) these two aspects were not identified in this research. However, we identified that students indicated a sense of justice when interacting and pondering their subjectivities and school realities. Overall, at varying levels, they demonstrated possibilities for developing leadership, self-knowledge, and knowledge of rights, as seen in the research conducted by Test (2005).

Ideally, when students develop their disability identities, they can recognize ableist situations and counteract them. In a study described by Campbell and Oliver (1996) about disabled activists, once one develops a disability consciousness, they undergo a transformative process of re-interpreting their past ableist lived experiences. In this case, a disabled person, before achieving a self-identification as a valued individual, passes gradually through a process of first understanding their disabilities as a personal tragedy and problem denial, to later transforming this personal consciousness *into a political view of disability*. Hence, individuals recognize the disabling system that influenced their self-identification. This transformative process represents a transition from negative self-perception to recognizing positive facets of their identities, also known as empowerment (Fenn & Scior, 2019). This research showed that only some students started to recognize their disability identity. Although it has not been achieved due to time constraints, the student's development demonstrated a valuable reference for developing goals for self-advocacy.

It is worth noting that disability identity in the school context should not be discussed separately from other dimensions of one's identity. The following discussion segment tackles the usage of intersectional lenses in self-advocacy schoolwork, as noted in teachers' and students' experiences.

Intersectionality as a Practical Discussion is Based on Reality-Grounded Experiences

The example of black awareness day has similarities with the discussion of disability awareness regarding historical recovery. The history of the self-advocacy movement, as previously explored in the historical section, showed the progressive empowerment process of adults with intellectual disabilities, which could be a formative reference for children with disabilities who are still in the schooling process. However, the findings of this research showed that despite students' interest in exploring the disability topic, approaching students' disability identity was a practice not yet explored by the resource teachers until the first contact with self-advocacy within the research context. Subsequently, following the implementation of self-advocacy practices, disability identity was regarded as a secondary focus after addressing broader identity aspects like race. Both teachers, Julie and Jessy, initially concentrated on the racial categories of their students' identities and noted that disability was more complex, necessitating additional time for exploration. The emphasis on race over disability may be attributed to teachers possessing greater pedagogical resources for facilitating discussions on race. Black awareness is incorporated into the school curriculum, thus requiring teachers to integrate this topic into their activities. Secondly, at the outset of the research, the teachers exhibited limited understanding of disability culture, aside from the remedial-pedagogical dimensions of disability.

Consequently, teachers would start working on the topic with which they have more familiarity (in this case, race)—leaving disability as the second priority. Although these intersectional experiences were not at the centre of the self-advocacy experiences in schools, it is noteworthy that the teachers identified the connections between these two dimensions (race and disability) in their practices. Returning to Erevelles's contribution (2011) regarding intersectionality in the context of disabilities, it can be asserted that, irrespective of the emphasis placed on race or disability in teachers' experiences, intersectionality serves as an analytical lens that integrates both identity dimensions as inseparable aspects of these students' identities.

The Representational Aspect of Self-advocacy

The historical recovery of self-advocates' achievements may serve as a foundational step in establishing critical components for educators and learners. Historical recovery for educators involves acquiring knowledge about the historical achievements of individuals with disabilities. For students, it entails recognizing successful models of how individuals with disabilities have thrived in recent decades and understanding the significance of positive representation.

Another aspect of representation is the formal participation when students assume representative roles in school or student councils. It can be an empowering and formative practice for students with disabilities who may develop a leadership role in their lives for the first time (Murahara et al., 2023). Nonetheless, Jessy's report mentioned that despite her students' participation in the student council, they were left to supporting roles compared to other students. Lucy also mentioned that her students had joined the student council but lacked the communication skills to engage actively in a student representative's expected actions. These experiences demonstrated that simply participating in student councils did not promote self-advocacy development; thus, we may understand that this activity demands a tailored preparation

with accommodations to properly access these students until they effectively participate in the council. It is worth mentioning that in the study of Murahara et al. (2023) in a Brazilian school of student representatives, the reported empowerment was associated with the process of being elected by one's peers in the resource room; becoming a representative was empowering due to embodied representation of other students and the public exposition in a leadership role within the school environment.

The Socio-Economic Aspects. The intersectionality discussion highlighted that student participants recognized the necessity for improvements in the school's infrastructure, suggesting issues related to poor administration or insufficient resources for proper maintenance. This conjecture suggests that the socio-economic factors of lived experiences in these schools are a crucial aspect of the disability experience in Brazilian public schools. It is important to note that these schools were situated in the school boards with the largest budgets in the country and exhibited a high municipal human development index. Consequently, the circumstances in other Brazilian cities may have yielded different results regarding these self-advocacy experiences.

Teaching self-advocacy

As for the pedagogical considerations of self-advocacy, we reframe the concepts of liberatory pedagogical actions and intentionality as applied to the findings of this research while also elaborating on whether the students' voices were heard and/or amplified during the process. We consider three aspects of the findings: *self-advocacy adaptability according to school contexts and students' individual development, hindrances to self-advocacy implementation, and the concept of student's voice as participation*.

The findings have shown that teachers approached self-advocacy differently, as seen in the practices implemented (see Table Z). As previously presented, each school presented

different structures; thus, based on this context, we identified a progression according to the

demands of the students' characteristics and the school context. The teachers who worked with

younger students developed self-knowledge practices (Cindy and Lucy) and simplified ways to

discuss rights (Robbie), such as the discussion of right or wrong. With older students (an age

range of 12-14 years old), the level of proficiency and sophistication of students' arguments

became more elaborate. Therefore, the activities corresponded to the capacity of the students.

Self-advocacy practices were adapted to the contextual features of the school and students.

The selected practices examined the students' daily lives, providing opportunities for

critical analysis of specific situations. The binary discussion of right versus wrong serves as an

initial step toward addressing more complex issues, such as researching rights, organizing black

awareness exhibitions, and engaging in collective discussions on disability. The initial aspect

relates to intentionality in critical pedagogy, suggesting that individuals maintain awareness of

their surroundings (Freire, 2018); students demonstrate an understanding of their context, as

evidenced by group interviews conducted at various levels. Therefore, critical thinking can be

tailored to their developmental stages. Self-advocacy practices are conceptualized as liberatory

pedagogical actions (Liasidou, 2015) when students acquire the ability to "read" their

environments and actively participate in decision-making processes within the school. This

includes effective involvement in school/student councils with appropriate accommodations and

contributing to the development of their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

Despite the effort to accommodate and create adaptations, there were pedagogical

hindrances that need to be considered when developing self-advocacy practices: 1) the level of

support needed, as mentioned by Christy as a possible limitation to teaching self-advocacy; she

stated that students with intellectual disabilities might not learn how to self-advocate due to the

incapacity of making inferences but could not precisely identify the pedagogical boundaries. 2) The complexity of the self-advocacy construct: Cindy mentioned needing more information on how to implement self-advocacy activities in her school. She complained about not having enough time to work with her students and needing more time to plan a self-advocacy activity. Given that the research began at the end of the semester, teachers had more obligations, such as exams and other school activities. Teachers who already had more experience were able to handle the time limitation with more ease. Thus, the teacher's experience and knowledge of participatory methodologies can promote more autonomy for students. The research conducted by Wehmeyer (2005) and Stefánsdóttir, Björnsdóttir, and Stefánsdóttir (2018) is noteworthy. Both studies explored the implications of higher support needs on the promotion of autonomy. The findings revealed that individuals with higher support demands require more external or environmental resources to foster autonomous behavior compared to those with low support needs. Applying these arguments to this research context necessitates additional reflection and planning to identify how pedagogical strategies can adapt to support students' self-advocacy needs. The intensity of support needs and the lack of knowledge regarding self-advocacy practices are two critical factors influencing self-advocacy limitations. These issues can be mitigated through targeted training and the provision of adequate institutional support, including collaborative resources.

A final pedagogical aspect of self-advocacy pertains to the student's voice as a form of participation (Messiou, 2019). This indicates that students have articulated their experiences in school through various means, and that teachers have acknowledged these perspectives, incorporating self-advocacy as an objective for their students. Students demonstrated critical thinking and a sense of justice by proposing various improvements for the school, beginning

with individual benefits and progressing to changes that would yield social advantages in both pedagogical and infrastructural aspects. This research demonstrates that students' experiences varied and that their voices were acknowledged due to the establishment of open communication in schools, facilitating opportunities for expression.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This doctoral thesis investigates the self-advocacy experiences of teachers and students with developmental disabilities across five Brazilian schools. This study explored teachers' perceptions of student development and the implications for schools concerning the implementation of self-advocacy practices. This study investigated students' experiences of self-advocacy in the context of teachers implementing self-advocacy practices. The investigation of teachers' experiences with the implementation of self-advocacy practices revealed that their experiences varied significantly. Consequently, multiple interpretations were assigned to self-advocacy. Key experiences highlighted that self-advocacy within these socio-economic contexts involved prevalent perceptions structured around essential elements for self-advocacy in Brazilian schools: rights, social components, and instructional strategies. The experiences included reflections on practical challenges in implementing self-advocacy, with teachers providing insights into school practices that altered their perceptions of students. Teachers exhibited increased sensitivity to the disability experiences of their students, employing various practices to foster self-advocacy and maintaining motivation to persist in their efforts despite time constraints. The initial experience of the training workshop has influenced their practices and altered teachers' perceptions of their relationships with students. The group discussion with students was the most important practice, as most activities had individual objectives. Self-advocacy practices are characterized by their collective element, linking to the membership experiences of self-advocacy groups, as indicated by current and historical data.

Teachers believed that self-advocacy was a complicated concept that needed more study and time to develop. A rights-based framework might be an appropriate method to give teachers the conceptual framework for creating self-advocacy practices in this situation, as the rights-

related experiences showed that teaching self-advocacy required a critical framework. Depending on the age range of the kids and the degree of support they need, teachers also believed that school self-advocacy initiatives had a limited reach. All things considered, over the little time of this study, important experiences have improved teachers' opinions of students; nonetheless, drawbacks were also noted.

Students shown greater involvement with topics connected to self-advocacy. Through the discussion of school reforms and rights, they have demonstrated a critical grasp of their educational contexts. These early conversations suggested that they would grow to have a sense of fairness, which is a cornerstone of their critical thinking. Surprisingly, the conversation about their experiences with disabilities in schools, which included instances of disrespect, including ableism, has given students the chance to laterally discuss and form critical reflections about their experiences with disabilities in schools, allowing them to take the initial steps toward an empowered disability identity. *The primary contribution of this study on the effects of self-advocacy in schools is the experiences of these pupils, which also offers the potential to offer a preliminary framework of practices and theoretical principles*.

Although preliminary, this research has indicated opportunities for school practices to increase the representation of students with disabilities in the decision-making process for school changes, which is in line with target 16.7, "Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels" of goal 16, "Peace, Justice and Strong institutions" of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Limitations of the Study

There are several restrictions on the study's data collection period. Instructors said they didn't have enough time to completely develop self-advocacy techniques. They would have had more

time to examine students' growth and investigate a greater range of self-advocacy techniques if the semester had run as originally scheduled. Unfortunately, the development of this research was affected by the lengthy ethical approval process, stringent recruitment processes, and restricted funding. The study would have benefited from more tailored data collection tools to reach younger students who did not participate in the research as much as older participants, even though the methodological design had considered various modes of expression.

Original Contributions and Future Directions

This research explores self-advocacy in Brazilian schools from the dual perspectives of teachers and students. It contributes to the fields of human development and educational psychology and is applied to the Global South context. The contributions consist of 1) field contribution by examining the particularities of the historical development of the self-advocacy movement in Brazil. This *historical investigation* contextualizes the development of self-advocacy in Brazil as a social movement and how the construct has been used in the educational context; 2) *theoretically*, this thesis contributes with an original conceptual discussion on autonomy and self-advocacy while interlacing two distinct theories (Critical Pedagogy and Self-Determination Theory); 3) most significantly, this thesis explores *teachers' and students' experiences* of self-advocacy practices in the Global South, specifically in Brazilian schools. This exploration led to reflections on educational practices, that have so far been restricted to adult self-advocacy groups, and their application to the context of Brazilian schools with a younger population.

Although this study has shed light on instructors' and students with disabilities' experiences with self-advocacy in Brazilian schools, several issues need more research to fully comprehend self-advocacy in the setting of the Global South. Future research could also examine

other subtleties of self-advocacy, such as in Latin American nations or Brazilian regions not included in this study. The historical analysis and the recent rise of neurodivergent groups in academic environments point to yet another type of self-advocacy that may spark conversation about modern disability advocacy strategies.

Considering critical pedagogy and self-determination theory, this study has investigated a rights-based strategy for self-advocacy in educational environments. Nonetheless, an additional theoretical endeavor might investigate the ways in which a disability justice framework would influence the idea of self-advocacy. The disability justice framework's ten principles (Berne et al., 2018) may indicate new conversations about self-advocacy and a more modern approach to this conversation in schools, covering subjects like intersectionality and interdependency that were first covered in this thesis. Although this thesis has mostly focused on developmental disabilities, the disability justice framework could also examine viewpoints of other disabling experiences by providing a critical framework beyond the rights-based conception that may disregard the complexity and intersectional experiences of individuals with disabilities in Global South contexts (Puar, 2017).Furthermore, future research could explore the developmental psychology of moral growth and the experiences of learning about rights, taking into account the experiences of people with disabilities, while examining the theoretical approaches to self-advocacy.

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Appendix A Review method for theoretical framework

The review consisted of systematically consulting three search engines: ERIC, APA

PSYCH NET, and Scielo. Other sources such as books and selected journals were included for

this literature review. The searches were conducted in English, and Portuguese and utilized four

main descriptors (and their related terms): 1) autonomy, 2) intellectual disabilities, 3) students,

and 4) critical pedagogy and/or SDT (See Appendix A for precise descriptors).

Inclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria (Field & Gillett, 2010) consisted of selecting studies that focused on ID in

the context of educational settings, which excluded health or other possible contexts. As for the

methodological quality and outcome measures of the articles, wide-ranging methodologies were

found due to the epistemological dissimilarities in these theoretical approaches; this was not

considered an excluding criterion.

Figure 1: *Description of identification, screening, eligibility and inclusion procedures*
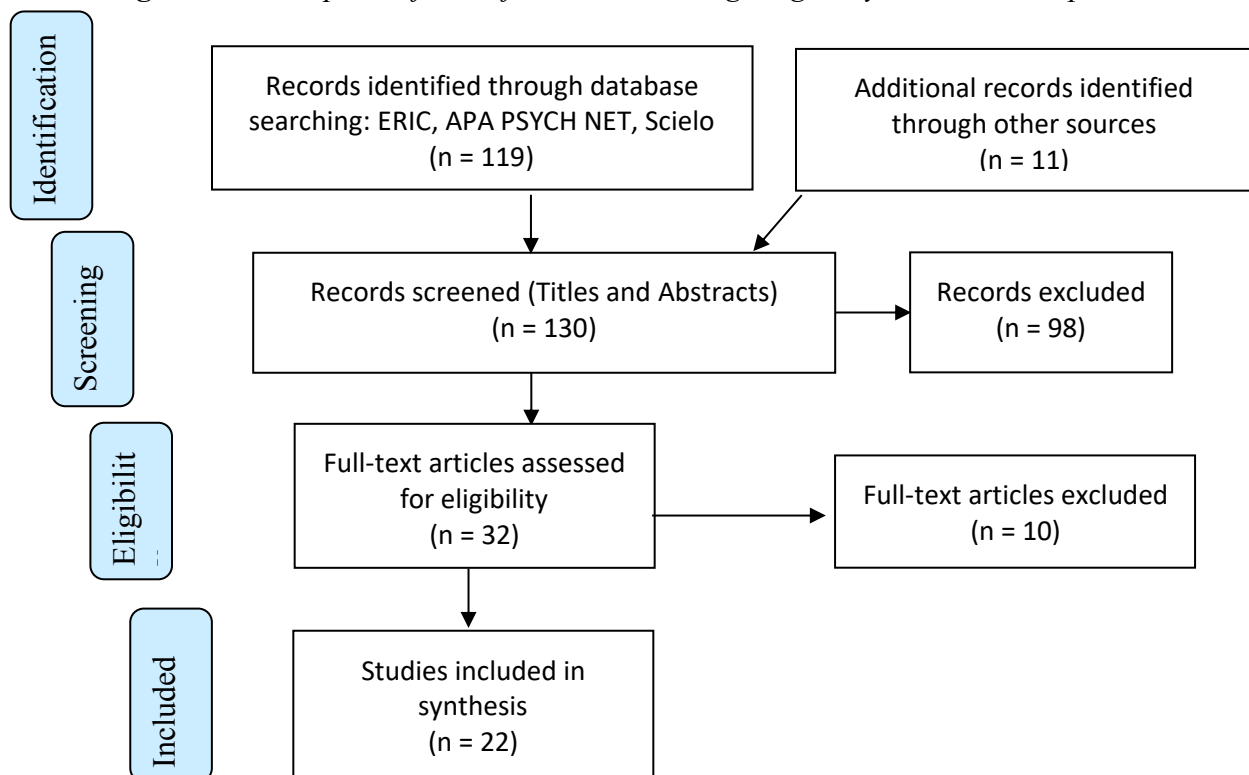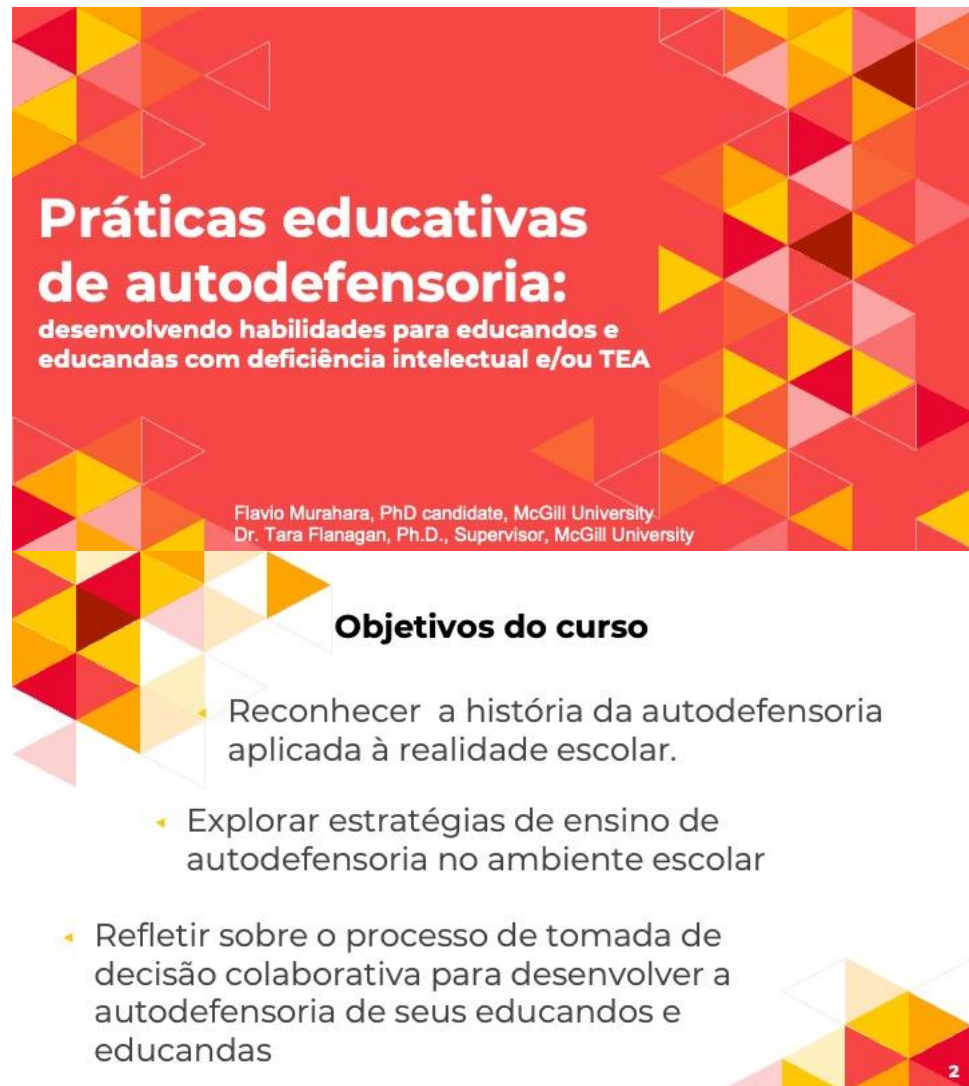
Description of identification, screening, eligibility and inclusion procedures

The first search with all four descriptors presented zero results, because no studies simultaneously referred to both theories. However, when the fourth descriptor (Critical Pedagogy/Self-determination Theory) was considered optional ("OR"), 119 studies were identified.

In the screening phase, no duplicates were found, the titles and abstracts of the 119 articles were read. Another 11 studies were added to the list based on the article references and other sources. From this selection of 130 articles, 32 studies were chosen to have the abstract read. The exclusion criteria were first based on the forms of the studies: books reviews, complete books or dissertations were not selected to be screened; also, validation of questionnaires, or articles that did not explicitly refer to autonomy in educational or related settings were also excluded.

In the eligibility phase, after reading the 32 articles, 10 more articles were excluded because autonomy or intellectual disability were not specifically examined. From the 22 remaining studies, only 9 studies referred to interventional studies (See Appendix B), other studies were of theoretical or philosophical nature. All studies were described and organized according to the theoretical frameworks. Moreover, other relevant theoretical studies were added to enrich the comparative conceptual analysis of autonomy.

Appendix B *Self-Advocacy Training Workshop*

Itinerário

Introdução	Conceito de autodefensoria	Relatos e Práticas de autodefensoria
Trajetórias profissionais	História da autodefensoria	Relatos de autodefensores
Tornar-se um representante	O conceito de self-advocacy	Reflexão sobre práticas de autodefensoria
Roda de apresentação	A relação entre deficiência e autodefensoria	Introdução ao banco de atividades
	Autodefensoria nas escolas	

1.

Introdução

Vamos pensar sobre autodefesensoria

Tornando-se representantes de educandos com deficiência

◄ Processo transformativo de educandos

◄ Noção de direitos

◄ Desenvolvimento de ambiente inclusivo

Murahara, F., et al. (2022). Becoming a representative student in Brazil: a phenomenological study of students with intellectual disabilities. *CHILDRENS GEOGRAPHIES*.

Apresentação

Eu gostaria que cada uma se apresentasse:

1) Nome?
2) Anos de profissão?
3) Uma palavra para definir educação especial,
4) Uma palavra para definir educação inclusiva,
5) Uma palavra para definir autodefensoria.

> O importante não é o que fizerem à nós, mas o que nós mesmos fazemos daquilo que fizeram à nós.

Jean Paul Sartre, 1946

Murahara. F. (2022) Curso sobre autodefensoria.

> O importante não é o que fizeram à você, mas como você reage."
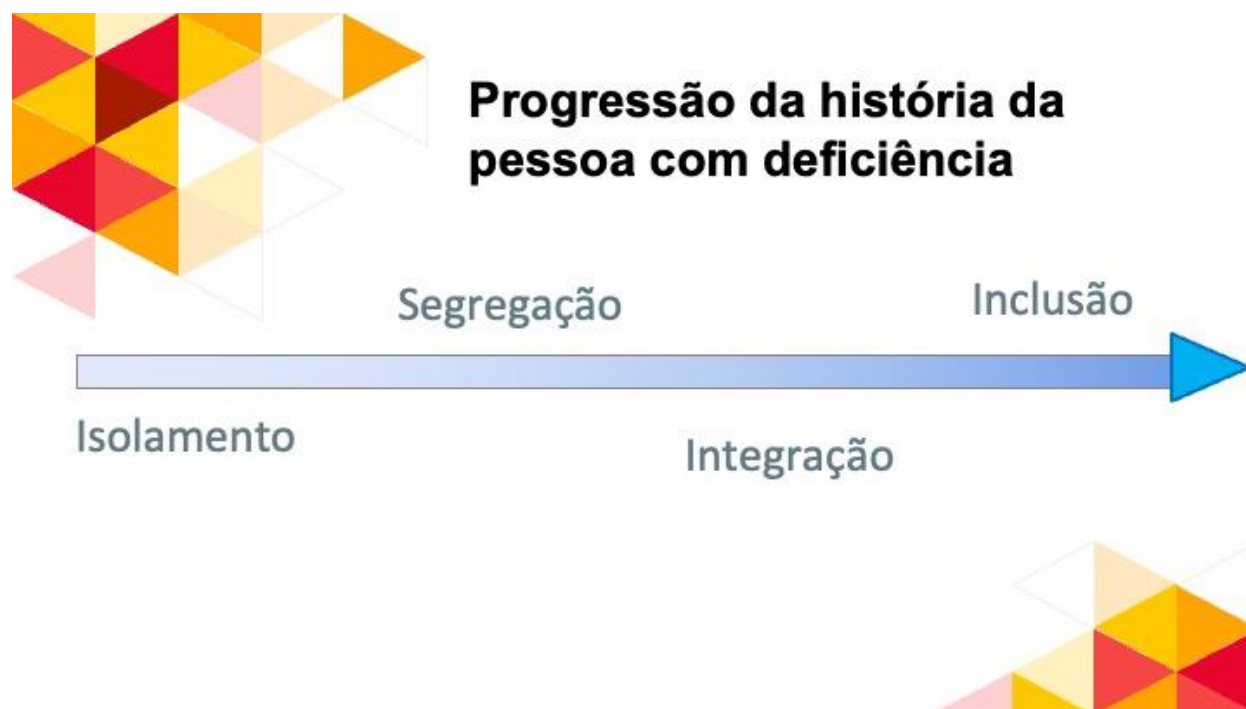
(Versão acessível por Luis Fernando.)

Reflexão

◄ Pense em um uma história de superação que você presenciou na sua sala de aula.
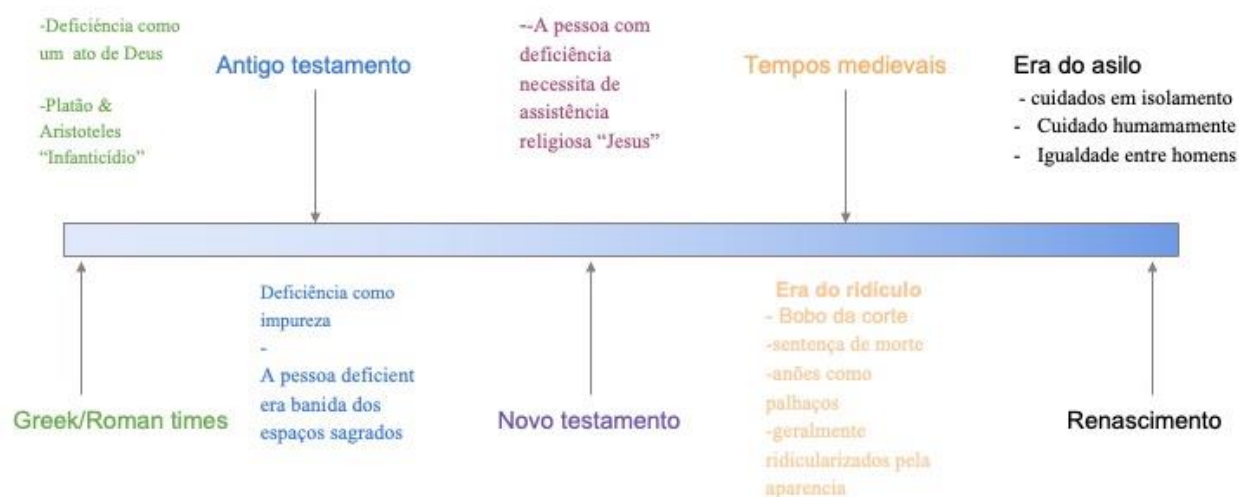
◄ Compartilhe quando estiver pronta.

2.
História
Principais marcos históricos da autodefensoria

Progressão da história da pessoa com deficiência

Segregação

Inclusão

Isolamento

Integração

História ocidental (Isolamento)

-Deficiência como um ato de Deus

-Platão & Aristoteles "Infanticídio"

Antigo testamento

--A pessoa com deficiência necessita de assistência religiosa "Jesus"

Tempos medievais

Era do asilo
- cuidados em isolamento
- Cuidado humamamente
- Igualdade entre homens

Greek/Roman times

Deficiência como impureza
-
A pessoa deficient era banida dos espaços sagrados

Novo testamento

Era do ridículo
- Bobo da corte
-sentença de morte
-anões como palhaços
-geralmente ridicularizados pela aparencia

Renascimento

Tremblay, P., & Tivat, M. (2007). Special needs education basis: Historical and conceptual approach. *Retrieved from* http://www.ibe.unesco.org/cops/workshops/montenegro/History_Inclusive_Education.pdf

Tempos recentes

1. Profissionalismo
2. Pais (ex. APAEs)
3. Pessoas com deficiência (self-advocacy/autodefensoria)

   "nada sobre nós, sem nós"

   Instituições <u>DE</u> e **não** <u>PARA</u> a PcD.

14
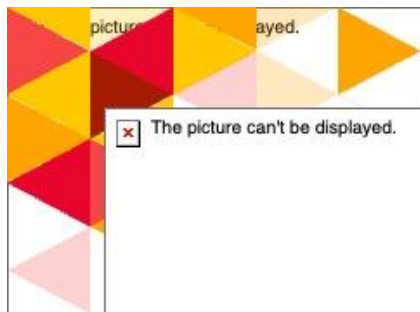
História das pessoas com deficiência
Movimento político no Brasil.

The picture can't be displayed.

S.P.A.R.C.

15

Recapitulando

1) Qual foi o momento mais importante para você? Por que?

2) Algum fato te fez lembrar de alguma situação na escola?

S.P.A.R.C.
Social Policy, Advocacy,
Research, Community.

16

3.
Autodefensoria
Conceitos

Self-advocacy (SA) nas escolas

Comunicação

Ser capaz de de negociar, persuadir, comunicar-se atraves de linguagem corporal, escutar os outros, expressar demandas, e tambem a capacidade negar uma demanda

Liderança

Habilidade de se comunicar com outros e entender as necessidades dos outros

Autoconhecimento

Conhecer seus objetivos, qualidades, preferências, responsabilidades, e outras características pessoais.

Conhecimento de direitos

Direitos de Accessibilidade, direitos à educação, direitos pessoais e da comunidade

S.P.A.R.C.
Social Policy, Advocacy, Research, Community

Murahara. F. (2022) Apresentação de divulgação da pesquisa autodefensoria/self-advocacy.

(Test et al, 2005) 18

Self-advocacy: pesquisas recentes

Speaking up

Utilização de mídias sociais

Empoderamento e pertencimento

S.P.A.R.C.
Social Policy, Advocacy, Research, Community

(Fenn & Scior, 2019; Petri, Beadle-Brown, and Bradshaw, 2020)

19

A voz "nos alerta para as várias barreiras estruturais, institucionais e atitudinais à participacao; incluindo o impacto da impotência adquirida, e socializacao em um papel de dependência."
Len Barton, 1994

Autodefensoria na escola

1) Conjunto de habilidades que refletem um processo de reflexão do educando que reconhece seu papel enquanto indivíduo atuante no ambiente escolar.

2) Ao atuar na escola o estudante manifesta sua visão de mundo através de sua voz. e tomadas decisões..

Relatos e propostas (resumo)

Direitos .

Direito à educação
Direito ao trabalho
Direito de escolha
Direito de acessibilidade

Deficiência

Capacitismo

Bullying

https://diversa.org.br/artigos/o-direito-a-educacao-inclusiva-segundo-a-onu/

Rodas de conversa

Propor discussões sobre deficiencia

Atividades coletivas

24

Capacitismo

25

Direitos das pessoas com deficiência

Estatuto da Criança e do adolescente – ECA (1990)

Convenção dos Direitos das Pessoas com Deficiência (2005)

LBI - Lei Brasileira da Inclusão (2015)

5.

Práticas de autodefensoria na escola

Reflexões e Banco de atividades

26

decisões

1) Em que momento os seus estudantes tomam decisões sobre o próprio processo de aprendizagem?

2) O que voce pode fazer para aumentar as tomadas de decisões de seus estudantes enquanto professora do AEE?

28

participação escolar

1) Em que momento os seus estudantes participam da escola de forma ativa?

2) O que voce pode fazer enquanto professora do AEE?

29

rodas de conversa

1) Você costuma fazer rodas de conversa sobre a deficiência?

2) 2) O que voce pode fazer enquanto professora do AEE?

10 Atividades de autodefensoria para a escola

01 Leitura de textos que abordam o tema

02 Atividades de autoconhecimento

03 Role Play (Encenação)

04 Desenvolvimento de PEI

05 Rodas de conversas sobre deficiência

06 Atividades anti-bullying (anti-capacitismo)

07 Discussão sobre direitos

08 Participação escolar

09 Programa SDMLI

10 Multi componentes

Acesse as atividades aqui

https://drive.google.com/drive/fol ders/1GlOekWGocjvVsGapcQ2lSH hL9JRqOAjV?usp=sharing

flavio.murahara@McGill.ca

flavio.murahara@McGill.ca

Próximos passos:

1. Visita 1 (Outubro)
2. Breve conversas quinzenais (20 minutos)
3. Visita 2 (Dezembro)

Appendix C *Certificate of Ethics Approval*

McGill University
Research Ethics Board Office
www.mcgill.ca/research/research/compliance/human

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS APPROVAL

REB File Number:	22-04-042
Project Title:	Developing self-advocacy teacher's practices in Brazil: students with developmental disabilities and teachers' perspectives
Student Principal Investigator:	Flavio Murahara
Department:	Educational & Counselling Psychology
Supervisor Name:	
Sponsor/Funding Agency (if applicable):	McGill University
Research Team (if applicable):	

Name	**Affiliation**
Marie Claire Sekkel	University of São Paulo

Approval Period:

FROM	TO
09-Feb-2023	08-Feb-2024

The *REB-3* reviewed and approved this project by Delegated review in accordance with the requirements of the McGill University Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Participants and the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct For Research Involving Humans.

* Approval is granted only for the research and purposes described.
* The PI must inform the REB if there is a termination or interruption of their affiliation with the University. The McGill REB approval is no longer valid once the PI is no longer a student or employee.
* An **Amendment** form must be used to submit any proposed modifications to the approved research. Modifications to the approved research must be reviewed and approved by the REB before they can be implemented. Changes to funding or adding new funding to a previously unfunded study must be submitted as an Amendment.
* A **Continuing Review** form must be submitted before the above expiry date. Research cannot be conducted without a current ethics approval. Submit 2-3 weeks ahead of the expiry date.
A total of 5 renewals are permitted after which time a new application will need to be submitted.
* A **Termination** form must be submitted to inform the REB when a project has been completed or terminated.
* A **Reportable New Information** form must be submitted to report any unanticipated issues that may increase the risk level to participants or that may have other ethical implications or to report any protocol deviations that did not receive prior REB approval.
* The REB must be promptly notified of any new information that may affect the welfare or consent of participants.
* The REB must be notified of any suspension or cancellation imposed by a funding agency or regulatory body that is related to this study.
* The REB must be notified of any findings that may have ethical implications or may affect the decision of the REB.

Appendix D Assent term for students (accessible version)

Assent term for students (accessible version

Developing self-advocacy teacher's practices in Brazil: students with developmental disabilities and teachers' perspectives

Principal investigator
Flavio Murahara, Ph.D. Candidate, Educational and Counselling Psychology department
McGill University

Research supervisor
Dr. Tara Flanagan, Ph.D., Educational and Counselling Psychology department

1. Introduction
Hi, my name is Flavio, I am a researcher, and I would like to invite you be part of my research on self-advocacy.
I would like to hear about the things you like or dislike. Your opinion really matters to me.
So, I want to talk to you and your colleagues.

Let's talk about self-advocacy and children's rights?

To start, self-advocacy can be:

The goal of my research is to know your opinion and what you understand about self-advocacy.

2. The research procedures (The steps)
If you agree to participate, I will visit your school two times. The first time in October and the second time in December 2022.
In the first visit we will talk about self-advocacy. I will make some questions to you and your colleagues. After a few months, in the second talk we will continue our conversation.
Each talk will be video-recorded, and you will have the option to write or draw your answers. Each talk will last for about an hour.

3. **It's up to you to participate (voluntary participation):**

You decide if you want to join the research or not.

There will be no problem if you decide to leave the research, even after you decide to take part in the research.

This is not a schoolwork, so, if you decide to leave the research, there won't be any consequences in the school.

You have the chance to ask any question before deciding to join the research.

4. **Benefits**

By participating in this research, you will:

1) help more people understand more about self-advocacy in the school in a South American context.

2) help develop a teacher program that has the goal to make schools more inclusive.

5. **Risks and possible unpleasant feelings**

If you have any bad feeling caused by something we have discussed. You can contact the main researcher, and we will talk, and possibly refer you to a psychological clinic. The list of psychological services is available at the end of this term.

6. **Compensation**

There will be no remuneration when you participate in this research. But any costs associated to this research that you may have will be covered by the researcher.

7. **Confidentiality**

When you participate in this research, your name and other information will be protected.

Only me and my research colleagues will have access to the shared information.

All information will be protected with a password and all signed papers will be kept in a locked storage.

All data with information about you, like your name or age, will be destroyed 5 years after the end of the study.

8. **Research results**

At the end of the research, we will talk to more people about the things we learned about self-advocacy. I will present our talks in scientific conferences and publish the results on journals. Please, note that all information like your name, school's name, and history won't be shared with anyone.

9. **Contacts:**

If you have any questions, you can contact:

Flavio Murahara
telefone: +1 438-926-8927

Email: Flavio.murahara@mail.mcgill.ca
Or

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation in this study, and want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the Associate Director, Research Ethics at 514-398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca citing REB file number _____'

Or the:
Dr. Helena Rinaldi, from the Institute of Psychology, University of São Paulo, Research ethics committee.
Av. Prof. Mello Moraes, 1.721, Bloco G, 2º Andar, sala 27
Cidade Universitária – São Paulo/SP – 05508-030
Telephone: 3091-4182, email: cep.ip@usp.br

10. Assent
I have no more questions.
The assent term was explained to me.
I agree to participate in this research.
I received a signed copy of this document.

By signing this paper, I don't renounce to any of my legal rights.

Participant name: _____
Participant signature: _____
Date and location: _____

Researcher name: Flavio Kenji Murahara

Researcher signature: _____

Date and location:_____

Lista de Assistência psicológica gratuita ou de baixo custo em organizações de:

Em São Paulo.

   1) Clínica Psicológica "Ana Maria Poppovic" do Curso de Psicologia PUC-SP
Fone : (11) 3862-6070
Site: http://www.pucsp.br/clinica/

   2) Clínica Psicológica do Instituto Sedes Sapientiae
Rua Ministro Godói, 1484 – Perdizes – Oeste - SP

Fone: (11) 3866-2735
Atendimento: De 2a a 6a feira das 08h00 às 21h00 e aos sábados das 08h00 às 12h00.
Site: http://sedes.org.br/site/clinica-psicologica/atendimento/

   3) UNINOVE - Universidade Nove de Julho
Rua Vergueiro 235/249 - Liberdade São Paulo
Ambulatório Integrado de Saúde (AIS)
Fone(11) 2633-9000; 3385-9046; 3385-9144
Triagem Segunda-feira das 08:00 às 19:00 e Sábado das 08:00 às 11:00h.
Não é necessário agendamento prévio

Em Belo Horizonte:

1) Coordenações dos cursos das áreas de Ciências Biológicas e da Saúde (Ciências Biológicas, Educação Física – bacharelado, Educação Física – licenciatura, Enfermagem, Fisioterapia e Psicologia):
   (37) 3229-3576
   biosaude.divinopolis@uemg.br

2) Uni-BH
Atende com psicoterapia Infantil, adolescente e adulto
Inscrições: a pessoa interessada no atendimento pelo Setor de Psicologia deverá comparecer à Clínica Integrada da Saúde de terça a quinta-feira, entre 13h e 19h, e passará por um processo de triagem. Após este momento, será encaminhado para atendimento na modalidade de psicoterapia na própria clínica. Caso o atendimento necessário não esteja disponível na clínica, um encaminhamento externo poderá ser feito.

3) Ambulatório Carmo-Sion
Marcação de segunda a sexta, apenas presencial
Horários: das 8h às 11h e das 14h às 16h
Local de atendimento: Av. Nossa Senhora do Carmo, 463 - Sion
Contato: 31-3225-7934

    No Rio de Janeiro:

1) UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO RIO DE JANEIRO (UFRJ):
   Av. Pasteur, 250 – Botafogo
   Atendimento: de segunda à quinta, das 8h às 20h e sexta, das 8h às 19h
   (21) 2295-8113

2) SOCIEDADE BRASILEIRA DE PSICANÁLISE DO RIO DE JANEIRO:
   A inscrição é paga e não há lista de espera.
   (21) 2537-1333

http://sbprj.org.br

3) CÍRCULO PSICANALÍTICO DO RIO DE JANEIRO:
   Rua David Campista, 170 – Botafogo
   (21) 2286-6922/(21) 2286-6812
   biblio@cprj.com.br

4) SERVIÇO DE PSICOLOGIA APLICADA – SANTA ÚRSULA:
   Atendimento: de segunda à sexta, das 13:00 às 18:00h
   (21) 99411-9681

5) PONTIFÍCIA UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA DO RIO DE JANEIRO:
   Rua Marquês de São Vicente, 225 – Gávea
   (21) 3114-1001
   webmaste@rdc.puc-rio.br

Consent Form – Students

Developing self-advocacy teacher's practices in Brazil: students with developmental disabilities and teachers' perspectives

Principal Investigator
Flavio Murahara, Ph.D. Candidate, Educational and Counselling Psychology department
McGill University

Research Supervisor
Dr. Tara Flanagan, Ph.D., Educational and Counselling Psychology department
Quebec, Canada
tara.flanagan@mcgill.ca

1. Introduction

Developing self-advocacy is pivotal for persons with intellectual disabilities because it promotes essential skills for daily life and more significant participation to society. The right to participation in society and to access to inclusive education has been guaranteed by the latest Brazilian policies (2015). However, it is not clear how self-advocacy skills can be developed in Brazilian schools.

Based on the construct of self-advocacy, understood as the skills of self-knowledge, knowledge of rights, communication and leadership (Test, 2007), this research proposes to examine students' voices during their teachers' participation in a elf-advocacy training program by comparing a pre and post group interviews. In order words, the goal of this research is to understand if the students' voices are being heard throughout the second semester of the 2022 school year.

The students' voices will be examined through group interviews with a semi-structured script and the evaluation of student's advocacy in school.

2. Study procedures

This study involves 6 elementary public schools located in different cities in the southeast region of Brazil.

The principal investigator will visit each school at the beginning and at the end of the second term of 2022 to interview students about self-advocacy in the school.

In the first week after the teacher training program all students will be interviewed in a school-field visit. This procedure will be videorecorded. A semi-structured group interview and a questionnaire will be used to examine the self-advocacy of students. Note that all images and videos will be collected only for research purposes.

At the fourth month after the first visit to all schools, a second school-field visit will take place to collect the data about the development of students' self-advocacy development. All procedures of data collection from first visit will be repeated at the second interview.

3. Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this research is completely voluntary.

Any questions you may have about the study will be answered before you make the decision to participate. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time, and this will not affect your status at your school. *If you choose to withdraw before completing the study, all information obtained up until that point will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. However, once the data has been de-identified or combined for publication, it may not be possible to withdraw the data in its entirety. We can only remove the data from further analysis and from use in future publications. All identifiable data will be destroyed 5 years after the conclusion of the study.*

4. Benefits

By participating in this research, you will:
1) contribute to the advancement on the scholarship of self-advocacy in a South American context,
2) contribute to the development of a teacher training program that may contribute to the improvement of inclusive schools in the future.

5. Risks and inconveniences

There are no physical, social, economic, political, or legal implications associated to the participation in this research. However, given that the data collection method includes online recordings there are risks of data being lost or shared due to the server problem.

Although all reasonable precautions are taken, there is always the possibility of third-party interception when using communications through the internet.

Note that all information will be coded and protected on computers with passwords

In the event of negative experiences arising from the discussion of self-advocacy in schools, we will provide a list of local resources for psychological support.

See attached file with list of accessible psychological support in your city.

6. Compensation

No further compensation is available for this study.

7. Confidentiality

Names and other identifying information will be kept confidential. Participants will be assigned a participant number, which is used in all records and analyses of the data. Records with identifying information will be kept in a locked file cabinet in our research laboratory (paper records), or in a password protected file on a password-protected computer. Coded data will be kept on password-protected computers or external drives in our lab. To access the data, we will use computers requiring passwords, running firewalls and anti-virus software, and use encrypted wi-fi or university ethernet connections. *All identifiable data will be destroyed 5 years after the conclusion of the study.*

8. Dissemination of results

We expect our results to be presented at conferences and in research articles, while always maintaining the confidentiality of the individuals who participated.

9. Contact

If you would like to obtain further information, you can contact the researcher, Flavio Murahara, by using the information below.

Flavio Murahara
Phone: 438-926-8927
Email: Flavio.murahara@mail.mcgill.ca

 or

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation in this study, and want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the Associate Director, Research Ethics at 514-398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca citing REB file number _____'
Or the:
Dr. Helena Rinaldi, from the Institute of Psychology, University of São Paulo, Research ethics committee.
Av. Prof. Mello Moraes, 1.721, Bloco G, 2º Andar, sala 27
Cidade Universitária – São Paulo/SP – 05508-030
Telephone: 3091-4182, email: cep.ip@usp.br

10. Agreement of participation

The study has been explained to me. My questions have been fully answered to my satisfaction. I have been offered a copy of this form.

I agree to participate in the study. I do not waive any of my legal rights by signing this consent form.

Participant name: _____
Parent or legal guardian name: _____

Parent or legal guardian Signature: _____
Date: _____

Researcher name: Flavio Kenji Murahara

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F Consent term teachers

Consent Form – Teachers
Developing self-advocacy teacher's practices in Brazil: students with developmental disabilities and teachers' perspectives

Principal Investigator
Flavio Murahara, Ph.D. Candidate, Educational and Counselling Psychology department
McGill University

Research Supervisor
Dr. Tara Flanagan, Ph.D., Educational and Counselling Psychology department
Quebec, Canada
tara.flanagan@mcgill.ca

11. Introduction

Developing self-advocacy (SA) is pivotal for persons with intellectual disabilities because it promotes essential skills for daily life and more significant participation to society. The right to participation in society and to access to inclusive education has been guaranteed by the latest Brazilian policies (2015). However, it is not clear how self-advocacy skills can be developed in Brazilian schools. Moreover, although there is interest of teachers on learning how to develop self-advocacy skills for students with disabilities, information on this theme in their training is vague or non-existent (Abernathy & Taylor, 2009; Mason, Field, & Sawilowsky, 2004).

Therefore, consistent with the construct of self-advocacy defined as the skills of self-knowledge, knowledge of rights, communication and leadership (Test, 2007), this research proposes to examine teacher's practices of self-advocacy for students with DD in public Brazilian schools through an introduction of a SA Teacher training program and SA assessment protocol tool.

Self-advocacy teacher's practices will be examined through pre and post semi-structured interviews and monthly check-in interviews. The interviews will be held in-person in the schools at the two time points, first at the beginning, and second at the end of the school term of 2022.

12. Study procedures

This study involves 6 elementary public schools located in different cities in the southeast region of Brazil (São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Belo Horizonte).

The training program will consist of 4-hour teacher training program about self-advocacy for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. More information about the structure of the course can be found in the attached Appendix. The teacher training program will be conducted online with the group of participants teachers at the beginning of the second school semester of 2022. The training will be conducted using the Microsoft Team software.

Before the self-advocacy teacher training program, all teachers will be individually interviewed online. After the training program which will take place in August 2022, a school

visit will occur in which students will be interviewed in groups.

In the following two months after the school visit, two short interviews will be conducted with teachers to follow-up the training development.

At the end of November or beginning of December 2022, a second school-field visit will take place to collect the data about the development of self-advocacy practices. All procedures of data collection from the first visit will be repeated at the second visit. Note that the second individual interview will take place during the second visit.

This procedure will be audio-recorded, and images or short videos of the school environment will be collected only for research purposes. Video recording is optional.

13. Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this research is voluntary.

Any questions you may have about the study will be answered before you make the decision to participate. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time, and this will not affect your status at your school.

If you choose to withdraw before completing the study, all information obtained up until that point will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. However, once the data has been de-identified or combined for publication, it may not be possible to withdraw the data in its entirety. We can only remove the data from further analysis and from use in future publications. Identifiable data will be destroyed 5 years after the conclusion of the study.

14. Benefits

By participating in this research, you will:
1) contribute to the advancement on the scholarship of self-advocacy in a South American context, and
2) contribute to the validation of a teacher training program that may contribute to the improvement of inclusive schools in the future.

15. Risks and inconveniences

There are no physical, social, economic, political, or legal implications associated to the participation in this research. However, given that the data collection method includes online recordings there are risks of data being lost or shared due to the server problem.

Although all reasonable precautions are taken, there is always the possibility of third-party interception when using communications through the internet.

Note that all information will be coded and protected on computers with passwords.

16. Compensation

No further compensation is available for this study.

17. Confidentiality

Names and other identifying information will be kept confidential. Participants will be assigned a participant number, which is used in all records and analyses of the data. Records with identifying information will be kept in a locked file cabinet in our research laboratory (paper records), or in a password protected file on a password-protected computer. Coded data will be kept on password-protected computers or external drives in our lab. To access the data, we will use computers requiring passwords, running firewalls and anti-virus software, and use encrypted

wi-fi or university ethernet connections. All identifiable destroyed 5 years after the conclusion of the study.

18. Dissemination of results
We expect our results to be presented at conferences and in research articles, while always maintaining the confidentiality of the individuals who participated.

19. Contact
If you would like to obtain further information, you can contact the researcher, Flavio Murahara, by using the information below.

Flavio Murahara
Phone: 438-926-8927
Email: Flavio.murahara@mail.mcgill.ca

 or

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation in this study, and want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the Associate Director, Research Ethics at 514-398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca citing REB file number _____'

Or the:
Dr. Helena Rinaldi, from the Institute of Psychology, University of São Paulo, Research ethics committee.
Av. Prof. Mello Moraes, 1.721, Bloco G, 2º Andar, sala 27
Cidade Universitária – São Paulo/SP – 05508-030
Telephone: 3091-4182, email: cep.ip@usp.br

20. Agreement of participation

The study has been explained to me. My questions have been fully answered to my satisfaction. I have been offered a copy of this form.

I agree to participate in the study. I do not waive any of my legal rights by signing this consent form.

I agree that my interviews are video recorded, please select one the following options:
__ Yes or __ NO.

Participant name: _____
Signature: _____
Date: _____

Researcher name: Flavio Kenji Murahara
Signature: _____
Date: _____

21. Agreement to be contacted regarding follow-up or other future studies
In the future, we may conduct a longer-term follow up study (e.g., 1 or 2 years later) about the client you have referred for this project. There may be also be additional studies in which you could participate.

Please indicate your preference below:

☐ I would like to be contacted to learn about follow up studies

☐ I do not want to be contacted in the future

Letter of agreement for Schools
Developing self-advocacy teacher's practices in Brazil: students with developmental disabilities and teachers' perspectives

Principal Investigator
Flavio Murahara, Ph.D. Candidate, Educational and Counselling Psychology department
McGill University

Research Supervisor
Dr. Tara Flanagan, Ph.D., Educational and Counselling Psychology department
Quebec, Canada
tara.flanagan@mcgill.ca

1. Introduction
Developing self-advocacy is pivotal for persons with developmental disabilities because it promotes essential skills for daily life and more significant participation to society. The right to participation in society and to access to inclusive education has been guaranteed by the latest Brazilian policies (2015). However, it is not clear how self-advocacy skills can be developed in Brazilian schools. Moreover, although there is interest of teachers on learning how to develop self-advocacy skills for students with disabilities, information on this theme in their training is vague or non-existent (Abernathy & Taylor, 2009; Mason, Field, & Sawilowsky, 2004).

Based on the construct of self-advocacy, which may be defined as the skills of self-knowledge, knowledge of rights, communication and leadership (Test, 2007), this research proposes to examine teacher's practices of self-advocacy for students with DD in public Brazilian schools through an introduction of a SA Teacher training program and SA assessment protocol tool.

Moreover, understanding the environment where the teaching takes place has an important role in this research. This study involves 6 elementary public schools located in three different cities in the southeast region of Brazil.

This research will examine teacher's practices of self-advocacy by examining teachers and students' perspectives in their school environment. Therefore, besides the teachers and students' interviews, field notes, image and video recordings of the school environment will also be documented.

2. Study procedures (the use of images and videos)
This study involves 6 elementary public schools located in different cities in the southeast region of Brazil.

The principal investigator will visit each school at the beginning and at the end of the second term of 2022 to interview teachers and students about self-advocacy's practices in the school. Images and short videos might be recorded to document the school environment. Note that all images and videos will be collected only for research purposes.

3. **Voluntary Participation***:*

Any questions you may have about the study will be answered before you make the decision to allow the research to take place or not at the school. Participation is voluntary.

4. **Benefits**

By agreeing to enable the research to take place in the school, you will:
1) contribute to the advancement on the scholarship of self-advocacy in a South American context, and
2) contribute to the validation of a teacher training program that may contribute to the improvement of inclusive schools in the future.

5. **Risks and inconveniences**

There are no physical, social, economic, political, or legal implications associated to this research. However, given that the data collection method also includes online recordings, there are risks of data being lost or shared due to the server's problem. Note that all information will be encrypted and protected on computers with passwords.

6. **Compensation**

No compensation is available for this study.

7. **Confidentiality**

Names and other identifying information will be kept confidential. Participants will be assigned a participant number, which is used in all records and analyses of the data. Records with identifying information will be kept in a locked file cabinet in our research laboratory (paper records), or in a password protected file on a password-protected computer. To access the data we will use computers requiring passwords, running firewalls and anti-virus software, and use encrypted wi-fi or university ethernet connections. **All identifiable data will be destroyed 5 years after the conclusion of the study.**

8. **Dissemination of results**

We expect our results to be presented at conferences and in research articles, while always maintaining the confidentiality of the individuals who participated.

9. **Contact**

If you would like to obtain further information, you can contact the researcher, Flavio Murahara, by using the information below.

Flavio Murahara
Phone: 438-926-8927
Email: Flavio.murahara@mail.mcgill.ca

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation in this study, and want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the Associate

Director, Research Ethics at 514-398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca citing REB file number _____'

Or the:
Dr. Helena Rinaldi, from the Institute of Psychology, University of São Paulo, Research ethics committee.
Av. Prof. Mello Moraes, 1.721, Bloco G, 2º Andar, sala 27
Cidade Universitária – São Paulo/SP – 05508-030
Telephone: 3091-4182, email: cep.ip@usp.br

10. Agreement of participation

The study has been explained to me. My questions have been fully answered to my satisfaction. I have been offered a copy of this form.

I agree to enable this study to take place at this school. I do not waive any of my legal rights by signing this consent form.

School's name: _____
School Principal: _____
Signature: _____
Date: _____

Researcher name: Flavio Kenji Murahara
Signature: _____
Date: _____

Appendix H *Pictures*

Figure 4
School SBC 1 Admin Entrance

Figure 5
SBC 1Sustaibility Project

Figure 6
SBC 1: Hall and Cafeteria

Figure 7
SBC 1: Resource Room & 3D printer

Figure 8
SBC 2: Student entrance

Figure 9
SBC 2 Back view of the school and parking lot for school staff

Figure 10
SBC 2: Regular classroom

Figure 11
SBC 2: Resource room

Figure 12
SBC 2: External Area

Figure 13
RJ1 Student Entrance and Back of the School

Figure 14
RJ 1 Hall

Figure 15
RJ 1: Resource Room

Figure 16
RJ 1: Running Track and External Social Area

Figure 17
BH1 School Entrance and Street View

Note: On the sidewalk, there is an accessible track for the blind

Figure 18
BH1 School Hall with an External View

Figure 19
BH1: Resource Room

Note. The external ramp is not covered.

Figure 20
BH2 School Main Entrance and Side View of the School

Note. Top panel: The school's main entrance has a very long staircase.

Figure *21*
BH2: Hall and Library

Figure 22
BH2: Resource Room

Figure 23
BH2: Outside Ramp & Sports Court 1

Note. The ramp to access the second floor of the building is not covered.

Figure 24 BH2: Running lane and sports court 2, and School event and buildings in the back

Appendix I *Conceptual map of Theme analysis for teachers and students*