



Diversity and inclusion in continuing education of teachers: A qualitative study



<https://doi.org/10.56238/levv15n39-028>

Elivaldo Francisco dos Anjos¹, Adonias Soares da Silva Júnior², Cesar de Araújo Pires³, Angelo Mendes Ferreira⁴, Lucilene do Socorro Melo de Santana⁵, Neide Maria Fernandes Rodrigues de Sousa⁶, Livia Pérez da Silva Britto⁷, José Antonio da Silva⁸, Charles Portos Rodrigues⁹, Patrícia Maria Gomes de Andrade¹⁰.

ABSTRACT

The research on diversity and inclusion in continuing education of teachers aimed to analyze how these concepts are being integrated into pedagogical practice and the training of educators. Using an exploratory and qualitative approach, in-depth interviews were conducted with fifteen teachers from a Brazilian school, which allowed a detailed analysis of the experiences and challenges faced by

¹ Physical Education Graduate
Specialist in School Physical Education
Ceular - Claretian University Center
Email: elivaldofran@hotmail.com

² Master in Education from the Federal University of Rondônia (UNIR) and PhD student in Teaching from the Vale do Taquari University - UNIVATES
Email: adonias.silva@universo.univates.br

³ Master
FacMais
Email: cesardearaujopires@gmail.com

⁴ Doctoral student in Educational Sciences
Inter-American Faculty of Social Sciences (FICS)
Email: angelolge89@gmail.com

⁵ Master's student in Curriculum and Management of Basic Education, Postgraduate in Special Education with emphasis on inclusive education
E-mail: lucilene.santana@neb.ufpa.br

⁶ Doctor in Education from the Federal University of Pará, Brazil (2015)
Adjunct Professor at the Federal University of Pará, Brazil
E-mail: nmfrs@ufpa.br

⁷ Post-Graduation "Lato Sensu"
Candido Mendes University
E-mail: liviaperezdasilvabritto@gmail.com

⁸ Doctor in Education from the American University - FUUSA - Florida University
Member of the Management Council of the Severino Sombra Educational Foundation
Maintainer of the University of Vassouras
Judicial Mediator of the Court of Justice of the State of Rio de Janeiro. TJRJ
E-mail: janthonius@uol.com.br, Brazil
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9137-220X>

⁹ Graduated in Pedagogy, Master in Educational Sciences, PhD student in Educational Sciences
UNADES/CIA
E-mail: charlesportos@hotmail.com

¹⁰ Master's student in Educational Sciences
Linguistic Specialist Applied to Portuguese Language Teaching
Specialist in Educational Sciences
Graduated in Letters/English
E-mail: paty_educadora1975@yahoo.com.br



educators. The results revealed that, despite recognizing diversity as an enriching resource for learning, teachers face difficulties due to the lack of specific training and adequate resources. The research also pointed to the need for continuing education programs that are more contextualized and adapted to the concrete realities of teachers, in addition to a greater emphasis on emotional and cultural skills. The conclusion emphasizes that effective implementation of inclusive practices requires robust institutional support and policies that sustain these efforts in the long term. Therefore, it is essential to reassess and enhance continuing education to better meet the demands of a diverse educational environment and promote a more just and equitable education.

Keywords: Diversity, Inclusion, Continuing Education.



INTRODUCTION

Diversity and inclusion are fundamental concepts that have gained increasing relevance in the global educational context. In an increasingly interconnected and multicultural world, classrooms are becoming microcosms of the plural society that surrounds them. The continuing education of teachers, therefore, must reflect this reality and prepare educators to face the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities that arise with diversity. The role of teachers goes beyond the transmission of knowledge; they are responsible for creating inclusive learning environments that respect and value the differences between students (Bezerra, 2020).

Thus, integrating diversity and inclusion into continuing education is essential to ensure equitable and effective education. In the current scenario, classrooms are populated by a diverse range of students, with different cultural, economic, and social backgrounds, as well as varied abilities and needs. This diversity enriches the educational process, but also presents challenges for educators (Castro; Alves, 2018).

To address these issues, the continuing education of teachers must incorporate pedagogical strategies and practices that recognize and value individual differences. This not only promotes a fairer and more accessible learning environment, but also contributes to the development of students' social and emotional skills, preparing them to live in a plural society (Barbosa; Bezerra, 2021).

Continuing teacher education that focuses on diversity and inclusion is crucial to ensure that educators are prepared to meet the needs of all students. Training programs that address these topics empower teachers to recognize and overcome biases and stereotypes, implement inclusive pedagogical practices, and adapt their teaching approaches to better meet a wide range of learning styles. In addition, continuous training allows teachers to update themselves on best practices and recent research related to diversity and inclusion, ensuring that their educational strategies are aligned with the current needs of students (Mendonça; Silva, 2015).

In addition to specific pedagogical skills, continuing education should also emphasize the development of emotional and cultural competencies in teachers. The capacity for empathy, cultural sensitivity and the willingness to critically reflect on one's own practices are essential aspects for the promotion of inclusive education. Training programs that integrate these dimensions help teachers build positive and respectful relationships with students, creating a learning environment in which everyone feels valued and motivated to participate (Modelski; Giraffa; Casartelli, 2019).

Finally, the effective implementation of continuing education programs focused on diversity and inclusion requires a robust institutional commitment and the involvement of all stakeholders in the education system. It is necessary that educational policies, resources and support are aligned with the promotion of inclusive practices. Only through an integrated and collaborative approach will it be possible to transform the theory of diversity and inclusion into effective practices that benefit all

students. Thus, the continuing education of teachers is not only a matter of professional training, but a fundamental step to build a fairer and more inclusive educational system (Barbosa; Bezerra, 2021).

In view of the above, the objective of this research was to analyze the integration of the concepts of diversity and inclusion in the continuing education of teachers and to evaluate how these elements are incorporated into pedagogical practice and in the training of educators.

METHODOLOGY

The research carried out is of the exploratory type, which is a method used to investigate areas in which there is little or no information available (Lima; Domingues Junior; Gomes, 2023). This type of research aims to identify and define problems, explore new ideas, and form hypotheses that can be studied more deeply in future research. The choice for exploratory research is justified by the need to better understand how diversity and inclusion are addressed in continuing education of teachers, a topic that is still under development and lacks a solid basis for studies. This type of research allows for a flexible and open approach, which is essential for capturing the nuances and emerging perspectives on pedagogical practice and the continuing education needs of teachers.

The approach adopted for the research is qualitative, which focuses on understanding the phenomena from the perspective of the participants and the analysis of their experiences and meanings. Unlike quantitative approaches, which seek to measure and quantify data, the qualitative approach investigates the complexities and contexts of situations, allowing for a deeper and more detailed view of the issues investigated. The choice for the qualitative approach was based on the need to capture the subjective experiences of teachers and explore their perceptions and practices in relation to diversity and inclusion. This method enables a rich and detailed analysis of the opinions and experiences of the participants, essential to understand the implementation and challenges related to these concepts in continuing education.

The research sample was composed of fifteen teachers from a Brazilian school, selected by convenience. Selection by convenience implies the choice of participants who are easily available and accessible to the researcher, without the application of strict criteria of probabilistic sampling. This approach was adopted due to its practicality and the availability of the participants, which facilitated the collection of data within the resources and time available. Although it does not allow generalizing the results to a larger universe, the chosen sample provides a detailed and rich view of teachers' practices and perceptions in a specific context, offering valuable insights for the research.

Data collection was carried out through the application of in-depth interviews, a qualitative technique that allows exploring in detail the experiences, opinions and perspectives of the participants. The interviews were conducted after an initial contact with the school manager, who facilitated access to the teachers and helped schedule the interviews. During the interviews, recorders



were used to record the conversations, ensuring accuracy in data collection. Participants were previously informed about the objectives of the research and gave their consent to be recorded. The interviews were conducted in a comfortable and uninterrupted environment to ensure the sincerity and depth of the answers.

For data analysis, the discourse analysis technique was used, which focuses on interpreting and understanding the meaning of the participants' words and narratives. This technique allows you to examine how teachers talk about diversity and inclusion, identifying patterns, themes, and underlying meanings in their responses. Discourse analysis is particularly suitable for this research, as it allows us to investigate how perceptions and practices related to diversity and inclusion are constructed and communicated by participants. Through this technique, the main themes and nuances in the responses were identified, providing an in-depth understanding of the challenges and strategies associated with the continuing education of teachers in this context.

RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The research revealed important insights into how diversity and inclusion are addressed in continuing teacher education. Through in-depth interviews with fifteen educators from a Brazilian school, several crucial issues related to pedagogical practice and institutional support were identified.

The participants' reports show a widespread perception that diversity in classrooms is an enriching reality, but also challenging. Respondent E7 noted that "diversity in the classroom is a reality that often challenges us, but also teaches us a lot. For example, we have students from different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, and this enriches the learning environment." This commentary reflects teachers' appreciation of diversity as a pedagogical resource, although the integration of different perspectives and needs still represents a significant challenge. Analysis of this report suggests that while educators recognize the benefits of diversity, the lack of specific training and adequate resources can hinder the effective implementation of inclusive strategies.

Another critical point raised by Respondent E2 was the limitation of the continuing education offered: "I feel that, despite the good intentions, the training we receive is not enough to deal with the complexity of the students' needs. Often, the material and training are generic and do not address specific situations that we encounter in the classroom." This report indicates that continuing education often lacks specificity and adaptability to the concrete realities of teachers. The analysis of this feedback points to an urgent need for more detailed and contextualized training programs, capable of offering practical solutions that are directly applicable to the situations faced by educators.

The analysis of inclusive practices also revealed the dedication of teachers to adapt their pedagogical approaches. Respondent E4 mentioned: "We have tried to adapt our practices to include all students, creating differentiated activities and offering individualized support. However, it is a



constant effort and requires much more than anticipated". This comment highlights the ongoing effort of teachers to create an inclusive environment, but also suggests that this work requires additional resources and support. The analysis of this report points to the need for more robust institutional support to facilitate the implementation of these practices.

The importance of cultural sensitivity was emphasized by Respondent E8, who stated: "Cultural sensitivity is crucial to understand students, but we do not have many opportunities to deepen this competence in continuing education". This feedback illustrates the need to include cultural sensitivity components in teacher training in order to improve the understanding and effectiveness of inclusive pedagogical practices. The analysis indicates that continuing education should cover these emotional and cultural skills, promoting a better adaptation to the diverse perspectives of students.

Finally, Respondent E6 highlighted the importance of institutional support: "For diversity and inclusion to be truly embedded, we need a clear commitment from school administration and policies that support these goals. Without this, any individual effort ends up being limited". This report highlights the need for a solid institutional commitment and policies that promote inclusion at all levels of the school. Analysis of this feedback reinforces the idea that management support is crucial to ensuring that inclusive practices are effectively implemented and sustained in the long term.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research on diversity and inclusion in the continuing education of teachers revealed a series of fundamental aspects that respond to the objective of understanding how these concepts are being integrated into pedagogical practice and educator training. The results obtained through interviews with fifteen teachers from a Brazilian school highlight both the advances and the gaps in this process.

First, the participants' reports demonstrate a clear appreciation of diversity in the classrooms. Teachers recognize that the presence of students with different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds enriches the learning environment, providing valuable opportunities for pedagogical and personal growth. However, it has also become evident that the effective integration of these diverse perspectives is still a significant challenge. The lack of specific training and adequate resources to deal with this diversity was pointed out as an important barrier, indicating that continuing education needs to be better structured to meet the concrete realities faced by educators.

In addition, the research revealed that despite teachers' efforts to create an inclusive environment through the adaptation of pedagogical practices and individualized support, these initiatives often lack robust institutional support. The commitment of the school administration and the presence of inclusive policies are seen as essential for inclusive pedagogical practices to be



sustainable and effective in the long term. Analysis of the data suggests that without consistent institutional support, individual teachers' efforts may be limited and less effective.

Another critical point raised by the teachers was the need for continuing education that is more contextualized and adapted to the specific needs of educators. The training offered is often perceived as generic and does not adequately address the complexities of the situations encountered in the classroom. Therefore, there is an urgent need for training programs that offer practical solutions that are directly applicable to the various situations faced by teachers.

The importance of integrating cultural sensitivity components into teacher training was also highlighted. The ability to understand and respect different cultural perspectives is crucial for developing inclusive pedagogical practices and building a learning environment in which all learners feel valued. The inclusion of these emotional and cultural skills in continuing education is essential to improve the effectiveness of pedagogical practices.

In summary, the research concludes that continuing teacher education needs to be reevaluated and improved to respond more effectively to the demands of a diverse and inclusive educational environment. The effective integration of diversity and inclusion in the training of educators requires not only a more specific and practical approach to training, but also an institutional commitment that supports and sustains these practices. Only with a coordinated effort and robust support will it be possible to transform the theory of diversity and inclusion into effective practices that benefit all students and promote a fairer and more equitable education.



REFERENCES

- Barbosa, A. K. G., & Bezerra, T. M. C. (2021). Educação inclusiva: Reflexões sobre a escola e a formação docente. *Ensino em Perspectivas*, 2(2).
- Bezerra, G. F. (2020). A Política Nacional de Educação Especial na perspectiva da educação inclusiva: A problemática do profissional de apoio à inclusão escolar como um de seus efeitos. *Revista Brasileira de Educação Especial*, 26(4), 673–688.
- Castro, P. A., & Alves, C. O. S. (2018). Formação docente e práticas pedagógicas inclusivas. *Revista Multidisciplinar de Ensino, Pesquisa, Extensão e Cultura do Instituto de Aplicação Fernando Rodrigues da Silveira*, 7(16).
- Mendonça, F. L. R., & Silva, D. N. H. (2015). A formação docente no contexto da inclusão: Para uma nova metodologia. *Cadernos de Pesquisa*, 45(157), 508–526.
- Modelski, D., Giraffa, L. M. M., & Casartelli, A. O. (2019). Tecnologias digitais, formação docente e práticas pedagógicas. *Educação e Pesquisa*, 45, e180201.