



## Continuing education of teachers: Perspectives for diversity and inclusion in the school environment



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### ABSTRACT

The research aimed to analyze the perspectives of continuing teacher education for inclusion and diversity in schools, highlighting the importance of adapting these programs to meet the needs of a diverse educational environment. The methodology adopted was a bibliographic research, which involved a review of the existing literature on the subject. The results indicated that many continuing education programs are generic and do not adequately address the complexities of diversity and inclusion in classrooms. The analysis revealed the need for a more targeted and practical approach,

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which includes specific strategies to address diversity and promote inclusion. In addition, the importance of institutional support to ensure the effective implementation of inclusive practices was emphasized. The conclusion reinforces that continuing education must evolve to incorporate concrete and contextual inclusion and diversity practices, promoting a fairer and more equitable education, and that a robust institutional commitment is essential to transform these guidelines into effective practices.

**Keywords:** Continuing Education, Diversity, Inclusion.



## INTRODUCTION

Continuing education for teachers has been consolidated as an essential component in the evolution of pedagogical practice and in the adaptation of educators to new educational demands. This continuous process of professional improvement aims to update and expand the competencies of teachers throughout their career, ensuring that they are prepared to face the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities offered by an educational environment in constant transformation. Continuing education goes beyond initial qualifications, providing educators with up-to-date tools and knowledge to improve the quality of teaching and respond effectively to the needs of students (Bezerra; Pantoni, 2022).

However, the effectiveness of continuing education is often questioned, especially when it comes to its ability to comprehensively and specifically address contemporary challenges that arise in classrooms. Often, training programs are not sufficiently adapted to the realities and complexities of current pedagogical practices, resulting in training that can be considered generic or inadequate to meet the various situations that teachers encounter in their daily lives. This highlights the need for a more targeted and contextualized focus on continuing education initiatives (Damasceno; Cruz, 2021).

Diversity and inclusion have become increasingly central themes in the educational field, reflecting the growing plurality of classrooms and the need to create learning environments that respect and value individual differences. The presence of students with varied cultural, economic and social backgrounds, as well as with different abilities and needs, demands pedagogical practices that recognize and integrate these differences effectively. The promotion of inclusion is not limited to superficial aspects, but involves a deep commitment to building an equitable and accessible educational environment for all (Bezerra, 2020).

The integration of diversity and inclusion in continuing teacher education is therefore crucial to prepare educators to deal with the complexity of contemporary classroom dynamics. Training programs that address these issues allow teachers to develop skills to create more inclusive learning environments, overcome biases, and adapt their pedagogical practices to the specific needs of their students. This focus contributes not only to a fairer education, but also to the development of competencies that are essential for effective pedagogical practice (Furlan et al., 2020).

In addition, continuing education that incorporates diversity and inclusion must be supported by institutional policies and adequate resources to ensure that the principles learned are effectively applied in the school context. Without robust institutional support and a real commitment to the implementation of inclusive practices, continuing education efforts may prove limited. Therefore, it is essential that continuous training not only prepares teachers to deal with diversity and inclusion, but also receives the necessary support to transform these guidelines into concrete and sustainable pedagogical practices (Mendonça; Silva, 2015).

In view of the above, the objective of this research was to analyze the perspectives of continuing education of teachers for inclusion and diversity in schools. The rationale for conducting this research lies in the importance of understanding how formative practices can be improved to better meet the needs of an increasingly diverse and inclusive educational environment. The research seeks to identify the existing gaps in continuing education programs and propose solutions that can contribute to the effectiveness of training processes, ensuring that teachers are truly trained to face challenges and promote equitable education for all students.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Conducting the research on continuing teacher education in the context of diversity and inclusion involved a detailed and rigorous methodological approach to ensure that relevant and up-to-date information was obtained. Initially, it was decided to carry out a bibliographic research, a type of research that focuses on the review and analysis of existing literature on a given topic. The choice for this method was motivated by the need to build a solid base of knowledge on how continuing education for teachers has addressed diversity and inclusion, in addition to identifying gaps and challenges in current practice.

For this literature search, a comprehensive survey was conducted across several reputable academic platforms and databases. The sources consulted included platforms such as Scielo, Scopus, and Google Scholar, as well as specialized Brazilian repositories. These sources were chosen for their credibility and the wealth of relevant articles and studies available. The use of these platforms has made it possible to access a wide range of publications, from recent research to classic studies on the subject, ensuring a comprehensive and up-to-date view of the state of continuing education in relation to diversity and inclusion.

The research process involved floating readings, a technique that allows a preliminary analysis of the texts to quickly identify the most pertinent themes and concepts. This approach facilitated the initial screening of materials and the selection of relevant documents for further analysis. The floating readings helped filter the literature and direct the research to sources that offered meaningful insights directly related to the focus of the investigation.

After selecting the relevant documents, a detailed analysis of the texts was carried out. This stage involved the critical interpretation of the information, identification of recurring patterns and themes, and evaluation of the specific contributions of each study to the understanding of continuing education of teachers in the context of diversity and inclusion. The thorough analysis made it possible to map the practices, strategies, and challenges highlighted in the literature, as well as offer insight into how continuing education can be improved to better meet the needs of educators and students.



## RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

### INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education is a concept that has evolved significantly throughout history, reflecting profound changes in social attitudes and educational policies. Initially, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, education for people with disabilities was largely segregated, with specific institutions dedicated to these individuals. This approach resulted in a limited education that was isolated from conventional educational practices, which believed that the presence of students with disabilities should be restricted to separate environments for adequate instruction (Bezerra, 2020).

In the 1960s, the scenario began to change with the emergence of movements that challenged segregation. Influenced by the civil rights movements and the growing awareness of human rights and equality, initiatives began to emerge that promoted the integration of students with disabilities into mainstream schools. The Declaration of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1975, was an important milestone that emphasized the need to ensure access to education for all (Damasceno; Cruz, 2021).

During the 1980s, the idea of "integration" rose to prominence, advocating for the physical presence of students with disabilities in regular classrooms. However, this approach often lacked curricular adaptations and adequate support. It was only in the early 1990s that legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in the United States and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted in 2006 by the UN, consolidated the idea of full inclusion, affirming the right to inclusive education and the elimination of physical and attitudinal barriers (Furlan et al., 2020).

With the advent of the twenty-first century, inclusive education has become a fundamental principle in global educational policies. Inclusion is understood not only as the physical presence of students with disabilities in regular classrooms, but as the implementation of adapted pedagogical and curricular practices that meet the needs of all students. Advances in assistive technology, differentiated pedagogical practices, and individualized teaching strategies have been crucial for this implementation (Bezerra, 2020).

In addition, continuous teacher training and collaboration between education professionals, parents, and communities are essential to ensure effective support for all students. Despite the advances, inclusive education still faces challenges, such as funding issues, the need for adequate training for teachers, and the availability of resources. The journey towards the full realization of the principles of inclusion continues to require persistent efforts and the overcoming of complex obstacles (Rodrigues et al., 2022)



The historical evolution of inclusive education demonstrates a growing movement towards equity and equal access, but the path to true and complete inclusion still requires a continuous and adaptive commitment (Damasceno; Cruz, 2021).

Inclusive education is an educational principle that seeks to ensure that all students, regardless of their personal characteristics, abilities, or special needs, have access to the same quality education in a common school setting. The concept goes beyond the mere physical presence of students with disabilities in regular classrooms and emphasizes the need to adapt pedagogical, curricular, and environmental practices to meet the diverse needs of all students (Bezerra, 2020).

Inclusive education is based on the idea that each student has the right to an education that values their individualities and promotes their integral development. This means creating a learning environment that not only accepts but celebrates diversity and ensures that all students can actively participate and reach their full potential. For this, differentiated pedagogical practices are necessary, such as the modification of teaching strategies, the use of assistive resources and technologies, and the development of assessment methods that recognize and value the various forms of learning (Bezerra, 2020).

In addition to meeting educational needs, inclusive education also promotes the social and emotional development of students. It fosters a culture of respect and empathy, helping to build a school environment where all students feel valued and included, regardless of their differences. Through inclusive education, the aim is to build a more just and equitable society, where diversity is seen as a wealth and not as a barrier (Rodrigues et al., 2022)

To implement inclusive education effectively, it is critical that there is an institutional commitment to policies and practices that support this approach. This includes ongoing teacher training, the development of adaptive curricula, the provision of adequate resources, and collaboration between educators, families, and the community. With these elements, inclusive education not only promotes equity in access to education, but also contributes to the formation of a more inclusive and respectful society (Santana; Costa, 2020).

## CONTINUING EDUCATION OF TEACHERS

Continuing teacher education refers to the continuous process of professional development that educators carry out after the initial completion of their academic training. This type of training aims to improve the skills and knowledge of teachers throughout their career, adapting them to changes in the educational context, new student demands and pedagogical innovations (Bezerra; Pantoni, 2022).

Continuing education is essential to ensure that teachers are up-to-date with best teaching practices, emerging educational theories, and technological advancements. It provides opportunities



for educators to explore new methodologies, strategies, and approaches that can enrich the teaching-learning process and respond more effectively to the needs of a diverse classroom (Damasceno; Cruz, 2021).

This process can include a variety of activities, such as refresher courses, workshops, seminars, study groups, and collaboration with colleagues. Continuing education can be formal, such as academic programs or certificates offered by educational institutions, or informal, involving self-study and participation in communities of practice. The integration of different training formats allows teachers to choose the options that best suit their needs and learning styles (Rodrigues et al., 2022)

In addition to updating knowledge and pedagogical techniques, continuing education also seeks to develop additional skills, such as classroom management skills, emotional and cultural skills, and strategies to deal with diversity. This is crucial in an ever-evolving educational environment, where student challenges and demands can vary significantly (Bezerra; Pantoni, 2022).

The effectiveness of continuing education depends on several factors, including the relevance of the content offered, the quality of the trainers, and the institutional support. For this training to be truly effective, it is important that there is an alignment between the needs of teachers and the objectives of professional development programs. In addition, continuous support and practical application of the knowledge acquired are essential to ensure that teachers can implement the new strategies and practices in their classrooms (Damasceno; Cruz, 2021).

In short, the continuing education of teachers is a crucial component for the continuous improvement of education. By providing opportunities for learning and development throughout their careers, it contributes to the formation of educators who are more qualified, engaged, and prepared to face the challenges of modern education (Rodrigues et al., 2022)

## CONTINUING EDUCATION OF TEACHERS: PERSPECTIVES FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

The continuing education of teachers is an essential process for the updating and constant improvement of educators throughout their careers. In the school context, this process goes beyond the simple updating of pedagogical and methodological knowledge; It should also incorporate perspectives and practices that promote diversity and inclusion. This is particularly relevant in an increasingly plural educational environment, where the presence of students with different cultural backgrounds, abilities, and needs requires a pedagogical approach that is both adaptive and sensitive to the varied realities of students (Mendonça; Silva, 2015).

Historically, the continuing education of teachers began as a practice aimed at technical and methodological updating, focusing on the introduction of new content and pedagogical techniques.



However, with the increase in demands for a more inclusive and diverse education, continuing education has evolved to incorporate these dimensions into its scope. Current perspectives recognize that preparing teachers to address the challenges of diversity and promote an inclusive school environment is an integral part of continuing professional development (Bezerra; Pantoni, 2022).

To effectively address diversity and inclusion, continuing education needs to go beyond traditional methods and include specific strategies to address a diverse range of needs and contexts. This entails empowering teachers with skills ranging from managing diverse classrooms to creating curricula that respect and value cultural, social, and individual differences. Pedagogical practices should be designed to ensure that all students, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities, have equitable opportunities for learning and success (Bezerra; Pantoni, 2022).

Within the framework of continuing education, this translates into professional development programs that not only update teachers on pedagogical best practices, but also equip them with skills and knowledge to implement inclusive practices effectively. This includes the development of emotional skills, such as empathy and cultural sensitivity, as well as practical strategies to adapt teaching to the specific needs of students (Damasceno; Cruz, 2021).

The effectiveness of these continuing education programs depends on several factors, including the relevance of the content offered, the adequacy of teaching strategies, and institutional support. Continuing education should be seen as a continuous and integrated effort, where the theory of diversity and inclusion is transformed into concrete practices within the classrooms. With a clear commitment from educational institutions and a collaborative approach, it is possible to create a learning environment where all students feel valued and have the opportunity to reach their full potential (Rodrigues et al., 2022)

Continuing teacher education, by incorporating perspectives for diversity and inclusion, plays a crucial role in creating a more just and equitable education system. By preparing educators to face the complexities and opportunities offered by a diverse school environment, these initiatives promote a more inclusive and effective education for all students (Rodrigues et al., 2022)

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The analysis of the perspectives of continuing education of teachers in the context of diversity and inclusion revealed the importance of integrating pedagogical practices adapted to the varied realities of students. The objective of this research was to clarify how continuing education programs can be improved to better meet the needs of a diverse school environment, and the results indicate that there is a significant path to be taken to achieve this goal.

First, it became evident that continuing education, in its current form, often lacks a specific and deep focus on diversity and inclusion issues. Existing, often generic, programs do not adequately





address the complexities and nuances that arise in a classroom with a wide range of cultural backgrounds, abilities, and needs. The research pointed to the need for a more contextualized and targeted approach, which goes beyond mere technical and methodological updating, incorporating practices that promote equity and inclusion in a concrete way.

The data obtained demonstrated that continuing education should include specific strategies to deal with diversity, such as the adaptation of curricula and teaching methods that respect and value the differences between students. In addition, it is crucial that training programs not only offer theoretical knowledge but also provide practical tools and resources so that teachers can implement these practices in their classrooms. The ability of teachers to create inclusive learning environments that are tailored to the individual needs of learners is key to ensuring the effectiveness of inclusive education.

Another important point identified is the need for robust institutional support. Continuing education must be accompanied by institutional policies that encourage and facilitate the application of the knowledge acquired. Without adequate support, teachers' efforts to implement inclusive practices can be limited and, in many cases, ineffective. Therefore, it is essential that there is a real commitment from educational institutions to support continuing education with resources and policies that promote inclusion.

Finally, the research reaffirms that continuing education is an essential component for improving the quality of education and promoting a fairer and more equitable school environment. The integration of diversity and inclusion perspectives in the continuous education of teachers not only contributes to pedagogical effectiveness, but also to the construction of a more inclusive and respectful society. Therefore, it is critical that educational institutions and policymakers prioritize and support the evolution of continuing education programs to meet contemporary demands and ensure that all students have the opportunity to reach their full potential.



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