




PAULO FREIRE AND HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

 <https://doi.org/10.56238/levv16n44-010>

Submission date: 12/08/2024

Publication date: 01/08/2025

Mikel Eduardo de Mello¹, Thiago Pessanha Correa², Elenisio Rodrigues Barbosa Junior³, Rogério dos Santos Ferreira⁴, Thiago Lucas Lavander⁵, Fabricio Moraes Cunha⁶ and Fernanda Cristina Corrêa da Costa⁷

ABSTRACT

This research aimed to analyze Paulo Freire's contributions to the construction of inclusive education, exploring how his theories and pedagogical practices can be applied to promote the inclusion of students with different needs in the educational system. The methodology adopted was bibliographic, based on the analysis of Paulo Freire's works and other studies that discuss his influence on inclusive education. The results showed that Freire's pedagogy, with its emphasis on dialogue, awareness, and respect for diversity, offers a solid basis for the implementation of inclusive practices, highlighting the importance of an adaptable and welcoming learning environment. It was found that inclusive education, from Freire's perspective, goes beyond the simple presence of students in regular schools, involving the adaptation of teaching methods and the appreciation of students' experiences, ensuring equal access to knowledge. It is concluded that Paulo Freire's contributions are essential for the construction of a more just and equitable educational system, in which differences are respected and used as sources of enrichment for the educational process.

Keywords: Paulo Freire. Education. Inclusion.

¹ Doctor student in Ecology and Conservation. Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul
E-mail: mikeleduardo@yahoo.com.br

² Doctor in Education Sciences
EBWU - Emil Brunner World University
E-mail: thiopesscorr@gmail.com

³ Master in Teaching Musical Practices - PROEMUS
Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro
E-mail: elenisiopiano@gmail.com

⁴ Master in Education Sciences
Intercontinental Technological University - UTIC
E-mail: santosferreira20491@gmail.com

⁵ Specialization in Distance Learning Tutoring and Higher Education Teaching
Workplace: FACS SERVICOS EDUCACIONAIS LTDA
E-mail: thiagolucas04@gmail.com

⁶ Master in Education
UFES - Federal University of Espírito Santo
E-mail: contateme@gmail.com

⁷ Master in Administration
Unihorizontes University Center
E-mail: fernandacorrea-nanda@hotmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Paulo Freire was one of the most influential educators of the 20th century, known worldwide for his innovative pedagogical approach and his contributions to critical and popular education. Born in Brazil in 1921, Freire stood out for his theory of education, which values teaching as a dialogical and conscious process, where teachers and students share knowledge, question realities and seek social transformation. His fundamental work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, represents one of the foundations of contemporary educational thought, offering alternatives for an education that values freedom and the active participation of students (Santos, 2023). Paulo Freire's main proposal is an education that goes beyond the simple transmission of content, being a tool for social emancipation. He believes that education should be inclusive, in the sense of allowing all people, regardless of their social class, ethnicity, or physical or mental condition, to have access to knowledge and be able to actively engage in the construction of their reality. Thus, Freire brought fundamental elements to inclusive education, promoting an approach that aims to combat social exclusion and offer everyone the same learning opportunities. His educational theory, with its emphasis on dialogue and constructive criticism, represents a transformation of the traditional relationship between teacher and student, placing the student at the center of the educational process and respecting their experiences and life stories (Patrício et al., 2024).

In Freire's view, inclusive education materializes when learning spaces are adapted so that all individuals, with their differences and specific needs, can develop fully. In this context, the educator is seen not only as a transmitter of knowledge but as a mediator of the learning process, recognizing the different forms of knowledge that students bring to the classroom and valuing their active participation in the process. This vision of education broadened the horizons of traditional teaching and inspired educational policies and pedagogical practices that seek to ensure equity in access and permanence of all students in the educational system (Galiza; Mercês; Bentes, 2022).

The objective of this research was to analyze Paulo Freire's contributions to the construction of inclusive education, highlighting how his theories and pedagogical practices can be applied to promote the inclusion of students with different needs in the educational system. The research seeks to understand the relationship between Freire's philosophy and inclusion, in addition to exploring the implications of this approach for teacher training and the implementation of inclusive educational policies.

The methodology adopted for this research was characterized as bibliographic, based on the analysis of Paulo Freire's works and other studies that discuss his influence

on inclusive education. Books, academic articles, dissertations, and theses that address the relationship between Freire's pedagogy and inclusive practices were reviewed, to provide an in-depth understanding of the impact and possible applications of this approach in the contemporary educational scenario.

DEVELOPMENT

PAULO FREIRE AND HIS EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY: PRINCIPLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Paulo Freire developed a pedagogical approach that stands out for valuing the active participation of students in the teaching and learning process. For him, education cannot be a unilateral process, in which the teacher only transmits content to students. On the contrary, teaching must be a constant exchange of knowledge, where both parties involved (educator and student) influence and build on each other. Freire called this approach "dialogical education", in which dialogue is the foundation that allows the construction of knowledge. Thus, the educational process takes place in an environment where knowledge is shared, questioned, and reconstructed by all participants (Patrício et al., 2024).

Freire's conception contrasts with traditional pedagogy, which often reduces the student to a passive receptacle of information. For him, education should be an act of freedom, where students become subjects of their learning. In this sense, he argued that school should not be a space for simple adaptation to social and economic reality, but rather an environment of awareness and transformation. For him, students should learn to reflect on the world, identify injustices and inequalities, to become agents of social change (Santos, 2023). Freire also conceived of education as an instrument of liberation, especially for the oppressed. He believed that true education should not reproduce the inequalities that exist in society, but, on the contrary, should be a mechanism for overcoming these inequalities. The objective of education, according to Freire, The goal is to create a space where students can perceive reality critically and, with that, can act on it to transform it. Therefore, teaching must provide a deep understanding of reality and awaken in students the ability to act on it autonomously and consciously (Galiza; Mercês; Bentes, 2022).

One of the pillars of Freire's thinking is the idea of "problem-posing education", which involves the construction of knowledge through the problematization of the reality experienced by students. For Freire, knowledge is not something that is transmitted linearly and statically, but rather something that must be problematized and questioned. The teacher, in this model, is not the holder of knowledge, but a facilitator of the process, guiding students in the search for a critical understanding of their reality. He proposed that

the content taught in schools should have a direct relationship with the students' lives, to make it more meaningful and relevant (Patrício et al., 2024).

Freire also argued that the school curriculum should not be an imposition of pre-established content, but rather a reflection of the student's reality. He believed that knowledge should be contextualized and dialogue with the students' lived experiences. This implies the need for a pedagogy that is sensitive to local realities and that takes into account the diverse cultural and social experiences of students. Freire's pedagogical practice, therefore, is not limited to the classroom but involves a deep understanding of the context and needs of students (Santos, 2023).

Furthermore, Paulo Freire emphasized that education should be a process of emancipation, where students develop their ability to think critically and make informed decisions. He saw education as a way to make individuals more autonomous, capable of analyzing their reality and positioning themselves in the face of social, political, and economic issues that affect them. Emancipation, for Freire, goes beyond the acquisition of technical knowledge; It involves the development of critical consciousness, which allows the individual to transform his or her reality and actively act in society (Silva et al., 2021).

Another central aspect of Freire's philosophy is the notion of "conscientization". Freire believed that, for students to be able to transform their reality, they needed to become aware of their situation as oppressed people, of their social and economic conditions. He proposed that education should be a process that allows students to perceive their living conditions and, from this awareness, engage in the struggle for change. Conscientization is, therefore, the first step towards liberation, as it is through it that individuals become aware of their potential to transform the world. Freire's proposal for a dialogical and liberating education also reflects a critical view of the role of school in society. He criticized traditional educational institutions for their tendency to reproduce existing social inequalities (Freire, 2016; Freire, 2018).

Education, in this model, ended up consolidating hierarchy and inequality, instead of promoting a more just society. Freire saw the school as a potential space for transformation, where the status quo could be questioned and solutions to social problems sought. In this sense, the school should not only be a place for transmitting knowledge, but a space for contestation and critical reflection on the world (Silva et al., 2021). Freire also proposed that teachers play the role of mediators, facilitating the student's learning process. His vision of the teacher is not that of a transmitter of content, but rather that of a facilitator of critical thinking. The Freirean educator must be able to encourage students to reflect, question, and, above all, actively engage in the process of constructing knowledge. To do this, the

educator needs to create an environment of trust and respect, where students feel free to express their ideas and doubts (Oliveira; Azevedo; Santos, 2013). Finally, Paulo Freire's educational philosophy has profoundly influenced pedagogical practices around the world. His emphasis on dialogue, problematization of reality, and awareness-raising has had a significant impact, especially on the popular education movement and critical pedagogy. Freire's ideas continue to be a fundamental reference for educators seeking to promote transformative education that respects student autonomy and seeks social justice (Santos, 2023).

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FROM PAULO FREIRE'S PERSPECTIVE

Inclusive education, from Paulo Freire's perspective, is a pedagogical approach that seeks to ensure that all students, regardless of their differences, have access to a quality education. For Freire, inclusion is not limited to simply allowing students with disabilities to participate in the education process, but rather to the inclusion of students with disabilities. It does not allow students with disabilities or special needs to attend regular schools, but it involves adapting the school environment and teaching methods so that all students, with their diverse characteristics and needs, can learn and develop fully (Galiza; Mercês; Bentes, 2022).

In the Freirean model, inclusion goes beyond the mere integration of students with disabilities. Freire understood that true inclusion involves valuing differences, whether about social class, ethnicity, gender, or physical and mental conditions. Instead of trying to make students fit into a rigid and homogeneous education system, Freirean inclusive education proposes that the educational system be flexible and adaptable, respecting the individual needs of each student and promoting learning that is based on their life experiences (Santos, 2023).

A fundamental aspect of Freire's vision of inclusive education is respect for diversity. He believed that schools should not be spaces where differences are suppressed or ignored, but rather places where students' diverse cultural, social, and individual identities are recognized and valued. This means that the curriculum should be designed to include students' experiences and knowledge, making the learning process more meaningful and relevant to their realities (Patrício et al., 2024). Freire also advocated the idea that education should be accessible to all, especially marginalized populations. For him, education cannot be a privilege of the few, but rather a universal right. He saw educational exclusion as one of the cruelest forms of oppression, as it prevents individuals and social groups from becoming aware of their capabilities and their potential to transform the world

(Galiza; Mercês; Bentes, 2022). Inclusive education, then, is a means of combating social exclusion and ensuring that all students, regardless of their conditions, can develop their skills and talents. Freirean pedagogy, therefore, offers a solid foundation for implementing inclusive practices in schools. For Freire, the educator must be a facilitator of the learning process, recognizing the differences between students and adapting their teaching methodologies to meet the needs of all. This implies a constant reflection on the part of the teacher, who must always be attentive to the needs of students and willing to modify their pedagogical approaches to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to learn in a meaningful way (Santos, 2023). Freire also believed that inclusive education should involve not only adapting teaching methods but also building a learning environment that is welcoming and respectful for all students. This means creating an atmosphere of mutual respect, where differences are seen as sources of wealth and not as obstacles to be overcome. Inclusion, therefore, becomes a process of transforming relationships within the school, promoting solidarity and understanding among students (Silva et al., 2021). Another important point is that inclusive education, in Freire's view, is not limited to the classroom. It involves the transformation of the school as a whole, including administration, material resources, and pedagogical practices. Freire believed that the school should be a space for social justice, where all students, regardless of their conditions, could exercise their rights and develop their potential (Silva et al., 2021). Inclusion is also directly related to Freire's concept of awareness. For him, education is a means of awakening students' awareness of their social and political situation, so that they can act on it in a critical and transformative way. Inclusive education, therefore, is not just about providing access to knowledge, but about offering students the necessary tools to question and transform the reality that surrounds them (Galiza; Mercês; Bentes, 2022). Freire proposed that education should be a space for dialogue and collective construction, where students would be encouraged to share their experiences and learn from each other. This process of mutual exchange is especially important in inclusive education, as it allows students to develop a deeper understanding of differences and learn to respect them. The school, then, becomes a place of formation for citizenship, where students learn to live together in a harmonious and supportive way, respecting diversity (Alves; Almeida; Santos, 2021).

IMPACT OF FREIRE'S PEDAGOGY ON TEACHER TRAINING AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

Paulo Freire's pedagogy has had a significant impact on teacher training, especially about inclusion. By adopting an approach that emphasizes critical reflection and

pedagogical adaptation to the needs of students, Freire inspired the creation of teacher training courses and programs that seek to train educators to work with diversity in the classroom. Instead of seeing student differences as obstacles to be overcome, Freirean training prepares teachers to recognize them as opportunities for learning and enrichment for all (Patrício et al., 2024). For Freire, teacher training should be an ongoing and reflective process, in which educators see themselves as learners alongside their students. He believed that teachers should always be willing to question their practices and seek new ways of teaching, to meet the needs of all students, including those with some type of disability or learning difficulty. The teacher should be seen as a mediator of the learning process, not as a transmitter of knowledge (Santos, 2023). In addition, Freire's ideas influenced the formulation of inclusive educational policies in several countries. His proposal for a democratic and accessible education for all was an inspiration for the creation of laws and guidelines that seek to guarantee access to regular education for students with special needs. Such policies recognize the importance of a flexible curriculum that can be adapted to meet the diverse needs of students, and the need to train teachers capable of dealing with this diversity (Alves; Almeida; Santos, 2021).

Educational policies inspired by Freire also highlight the importance of a welcoming and inclusive learning environment. The implementation of pedagogical practices that respect differences and promote the active participation of all students is seen as essential to guarantee equity in education. This includes the adaptation of teaching materials, the use of assistive technologies and the formation of multidisciplinary teams in schools (Oliveira; Azevedo; Santos, 2013).

Finally, Paulo Freire's legacy continues to influence not only pedagogical practice but also educational policies in Brazil and other countries. His ideas on inclusive education are still fundamental to building a fairer educational system that respects differences and guarantees all students the same opportunities for learning and development (Silva et al., 2021).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research aimed to analyze Paulo Freire's contributions to the construction of inclusive education, highlighting how his theories and pedagogical practices can be applied to promote the inclusion of students with different needs in the educational system. Throughout the analysis, it was possible to perceive that Freire's educational philosophy, with its emphasis on dialogue, awareness, and valuing the student's experience, offers a

solid foundation for the implementation of inclusive practices in different educational contexts.

Freire proposed an education that goes beyond the simple transmission of knowledge, proposing a dynamic and transformative pedagogical process, in which teachers and students act as partners in the learning process. His vision of critical education, which respects social, cultural, and individual diversity, is directly aligned with the principles of inclusive education, which seeks to ensure that all students, regardless of their conditions and characteristics, have access to quality education. Paulo Freire's ideas indicate that true inclusion does not only occur through the physical presence of students in regular schools, but through the adaptation of pedagogical practices, the creation of a welcoming and respectful learning environment, and the development of critical consciousness in students.

Inclusive education, from Freire's perspective, is a process that goes beyond simple integration, involving a transformation of practices and relationships within the school environment. Teacher training and the implementation of educational policies that value diversity and promote the active participation of all students are essential for the construction of a truly inclusive education.

Thus, the research found that Paulo Freire's legacy continues to be fundamental for the construction of a more equitable educational system that respects and celebrates differences. Their contributions to inclusive education are not only relevant but essential for the development of an education that meets the needs of all students, promoting a more just and egalitarian society. The application of Freirean principles in pedagogical practices and educational policies contributes to the transformation of schools into more inclusive spaces, where diversity is not only accepted but valued as an enriching element for the educational process.

REFERENCES

1. ALVES, D. O.; ALMEIDA, M. Z. C. M.; SANTOS, W. B. Paulo Freire e Michel Foucault: uma conversa sobre educação inclusiva. Humanidades & Tecnologia, 2021.
2. FREIRE, P. Pedagogia da Indignação. Cartas pedagógicas e outros escritos. (3a ed.), Paz e Terra, 2016.
3. FREIRE, P. Pedagogia da Tolerância. (6a ed.), Editora Paz e Terra, 2018.
4. GALIZA, A. B. .; MERCÊS, R. S. das .; BENTES, J. A. de O. . Inclusive education in the Freirean perspective. Research, Society, and Development, [S. l.], v. 11, n. 9, p. e25711931971, 2022.
5. OLIVEIRA, I. A.; AZEVEDO, A. D. M.; SANTOS, T. R. L.. A PRESENÇA DE PAULO FREIRE NA EDUCAÇÃO INCLUSIVA DA ESCOLA CABANA NO PERÍODO DE 1997 A 2004. Educação Online, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil, n. 14, p. 54–70, 2013.
6. PATRÍCIO, C. O. C. et al. THEORIES OF LEARNING AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: APPROXIMATIONS OF PAULO FREIRE AND PIERRE BOURDIEU'S THEORY. ARACÊ, [S. l.], v. 6, n. 3, p. 9235–9250, 2024.
7. SANTOS, D. M. A. A. P. INTERSECCIONALIDADES NA VOZ DE PAULO FREIRE NA EDUCAÇÃO INCLUSIVA DO ALUNO COM TRANSTORNO DO ESPECTRO AUTISTA. Humanidades & Inovação, 2023.
8. SILVA, L. F. et al. EDUCAÇÃO INCLUSIVA EM UMA PERSPECTIVA FREIRIANA. Criar educação, v. 10, n. 2, 2021.