




AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD) AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES TO MINIMIZE PREJUDICE IN SCHOOLS

 <https://doi.org/10.56238/levv15n41-055>

Submitted on: 16/09/2024

Publication date: 16/10/2024

Gabriel de Albuquerque Pedrosa¹, Waldyr Barcellos Junior², Luciana Maia Lavio Oliveira³, Marcelo Roberto Bruno Valio⁴, Charlyngton Fábio da Silva Rodrigues⁵, Anita Terezinha Scaranello dos Santos⁶, Carina Dorneles Gomes⁷, Adriane Aparecida de Souza Mahl Mangaroti⁸, Márcio Roberto Bezerra de Carvalho⁹, Selmileia Franciane de Andrade¹⁰, Cleidiane Pereira Santos Aguiar¹¹, Jessica Sabrinne Araújo Amaral Oliveira¹²

ABSTRACT

This research aimed to investigate and propose pedagogical strategies and practices to minimize prejudice in relation to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in schools, promoting an inclusive educational environment. The methodology adopted involved a review of the

¹ Graduating in Medicine

UNINTA

E-mail: gabrielpedrosa814@gmail.com

² UFF

³ Master's student in Science and Mathematics Teaching

Cruzeiro do Sul University

E-mail: luciana.lavio@gmail.com

⁴ Post-Doctorate in Law

UNIFACVEST

E-mail: brunovalio76@gmail.com

⁵ Post-Graduation in Higher Education

UNIBF

E-mail: fabio001358@gmail.com

⁶ School principal and maintainer

Western Paulista University

⁷ Specialist in Education for Diversity

UFRGS

LATTES: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/5310706154201568>

⁸ Master in Literature - UFGD

He is currently pursuing a doctorate in Language Studies at the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul - UFMS

⁹ Specialist in People Management by Competence

Must University

E-mail: marciorb@ufba.br

¹⁰ Master's student in Science

UFSJ

¹¹ Pedagogue

Faculty of Social Sciences of Marabá

E-mail: enaidielcaguiar@gmail.com

¹² Postgraduate in early childhood education and early years

Iguaçu College

E-mail: sabrinnej254@gmail.com



literature on inclusive education, ASD and successful experiences in educational institutions, as well as interviews with educators and experts in the field. The results revealed that the continuous training of teachers, the awareness of the school community and the implementation of adapted didactic resources are fundamental for the effective inclusion of students with ASD. The analysis demonstrated that, although challenges such as prejudice and lack of understanding persist, initiatives that promote empathy and cooperation can transform school culture, benefiting not only students with autism, but the entire community. In conclusion, the research emphasizes the importance of a joint effort between educators, families, and public policies to ensure that inclusion becomes a practical reality and that diversity is valued, contributing to the formation of a more just and welcoming society.

Keywords: Autism. Education. Inclusion.



INTRODUCTION

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects how a person perceives the world and interacts socially. Understood as a spectrum, ASD includes a wide range of manifestations and severities, which means that each individual has unique characteristics. This diversity makes it essential that educators, parents, and society in general understand the specificities of autism, promoting a school environment that values differences and seeks strategies that ensure the inclusion of all students (Lima; Matos, 2020).

Inclusive education has gained prominence in discussions about pedagogical practices, especially in relation to ASD. This educational model aims to provide all students, regardless of their particularities, with a learning space that respects their needs and potential. Inclusion is not limited to the physical presence of the student in the classroom, but involves a commitment to curricular, methodological and attitudinal adaptation, creating a welcoming environment that favors the development of social and academic skills (Nunes; Alves, 2022).

However, the inclusion of students with ASD in schools faces several challenges. Prejudice and lack of understanding about autism still permeate the school environment, making it difficult for students to accept and socialize. Often, the lack of knowledge about the disorder generates stigmas that manifest themselves in discriminatory attitudes, harming not only the development of the student with ASD, but also the learning environment as a whole (Santos; Leite, 2022).

For inclusion to be effective, it is essential that there is a cultural change that promotes respect and appreciation of diversity. In this context, pedagogical practices play a crucial role. Strategies that promote empathy, cooperation, and awareness about autism can contribute significantly to minimizing prejudice. Projects that involve the entire school community, such as lectures, playful activities and continuing education for teachers, are essential to create a more welcoming and understanding environment. These initiatives not only benefit students with ASD, but also enrich everyone's learning, promoting a culture of respect and inclusion (Tavares; Santos; Freitas, 2016).

In addition to pedagogical practices, the role of the family and the community is equally important. The dialogue between school and home is essential for inclusion strategies to be effective. Parents, educators and health professionals must work together, sharing information and experiences that favor the integral development of students with ASD. This collaborative work can result in a support network that extends beyond the walls



of the school, strengthening inclusion and combating prejudice more broadly (Vieira; Pereira, 2020).

The objective of this research is to investigate and propose pedagogical strategies and practices that can be implemented in schools to minimize prejudice towards students with ASD. By analyzing different approaches and experiences, it seeks to understand how institutions can adapt to promote a more inclusive and respectful environment, benefiting both students with autism and their peers. This reflection is fundamental for the improvement of educational practices and for the formation of a more just and egalitarian society.

Conducting this research is extremely important, as it contributes to a deeper understanding of the needs of students with ASD and the promotion of an inclusive school environment. By addressing prejudice and its consequences, the research aims to offer subsidies for educators and managers to develop policies and practices that favor the acceptance of diversity. In this way, not only students with ASD, but the entire school community, benefits from a more welcoming and inclusive environment, where respect and harmonious coexistence are the norm.

DEVELOPMENT

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW IN BRAZIL

Inclusive education in Brazil is a topic that has evolved over the past few decades, reflecting social, political, and cultural changes. The process of inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools is a milestone in the fight for rights and equal opportunities. To understand this trajectory, it is essential to consider the historical context in which it is inserted, analyzing the public policies and social transformations that have shaped the Brazilian educational scenario (Lima; Matos, 2020).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Brazilian education was predominantly elitist and exclusionary, with little or no concern for the needs of children with disabilities. Educational institutions were mostly segregated, with special schools aimed exclusively at students with disabilities. This perspective reflects a medical model of disability, which saw these conditions as problems to be corrected or treated, and not as a matter of rights (Nunes; Alves, 2022).

The 1940s marked the beginning of a more structured movement in favor of the education of people with disabilities. Decree-Law No. 3,298 of 1999, which regulates the inclusion policy, is a milestone that began to change this reality, promoting the idea that everyone has the right to education. However, the implementation of effective policies was



still incipient, and inclusion was often seen only as a one-off solution, without a systematic approach. In the 1980s, Brazil went through a process of redemocratization that brought new perspectives and social demands (Santos; Leite, 2022).

During this period, the struggle for the rights of people with disabilities gained strength, influenced by social movements that defended inclusion and equal opportunities. The Statute of the Child and Adolescent, enacted in 1990, was a significant advance, guaranteeing the right to inclusive education as part of the fundamental rights of children and adolescents (Vieira; Pereira, 2020).

At the turn of the twenty-first century, inclusion in education gained new momentum with the enactment of the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB) in 1996, which recognized the need for an inclusive educational system. Since then, several public policies have been developed to promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools, such as the Pedagogical Monitoring Program and the National Pact for Literacy at the Right Age (Carlotto; Danelichem; Billerbeck, 2021).

The decisive moment for the effective inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools occurred with the signing of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006 and its ratification by Brazil in 2008. This convention brought about a new paradigm, emphasizing inclusion as a human right and a central aspect of social development. Based on this framework, Brazil committed to adopting measures that would ensure the inclusion and full participation of people with disabilities in society (Lima; Matos, 2020).

From 2010 onwards, the Brazilian government intensified its actions in favor of inclusive education. The National Education Plan (PNE) established specific goals for inclusion, providing for the continuing education of teachers and the creation of support structures in schools. In addition, the expansion of financial and material resources for schools was a priority, seeking to ensure that all children, regardless of their conditions, had access to quality education (Carlotto; Danelichem; Billerbeck, 2021).

However, the implementation of inclusive education still faces significant challenges. The lack of specific training for educators, the scarcity of resources and the resistance of some institutions are barriers that need to be overcome. Many schools are still not prepared to adequately serve students with disabilities, resulting in practices that often perpetuate exclusion. In addition, inclusion should not be seen only as a matter of enrollment in regular schools, but as a process that involves the transformation of school culture (Tavares; Santos; Freitas, 2016).



The coexistence between students with and without disabilities can contribute to the construction of a more respectful and supportive environment. This change in mentality is crucial for the effectiveness of inclusion and the minimization of the prejudice that still persists in schools. Successful experiences of inclusion in some Brazilian schools demonstrate that, when well implemented, inclusive practices can benefit not only students with disabilities, but the entire school community. Students without disabilities become more empathetic and supportive, learning to respect differences and value diversity. This dynamic enriches the teaching-learning process and strengthens social coexistence (Galvão; Ricarte, 2019).

In recent years, assistive technologies have also played a crucial role in educational inclusion. The use of technological resources can facilitate communication and learning for students with disabilities, providing them with opportunities that were not possible before. The training of teachers for the use of these technologies is an urgent need, aiming to ensure that all students have access to the same learning opportunities (Carlotto; Danelichem; Billerbeck, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought new challenges to inclusive education, highlighting the importance of adapted and accessible education for all. The suspension of face-to-face classes and the migration to remote learning have highlighted existing inequalities, disproportionately affecting students with disabilities. This situation reinforced the urgency of rethinking and restructuring educational practices, ensuring that inclusion is not just a goal, but a tangible reality (Matias; Probst, 2018).

The future of inclusive education in Brazil depends on the continuity of public policies and the mobilization of civil society. It is essential that the inclusion of students with disabilities becomes a priority in educational agendas, with investment in teacher training, development of accessible teaching materials and promotion of awareness campaigns. Change requires a joint effort from all sectors of society, aiming to build a truly inclusive school environment (Souza; Edges; Santos, 2014; Weizenmann; Pezzi; Zanon, 2020).

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that impacts how a person perceives and interacts with the world around them. The term "spectrum" refers to the wide range of characteristics and abilities that may be exhibited by individuals with autism, ranging from mild to severe. Although ASD is often diagnosed in childhood, its manifestations can last throughout life, affecting several areas, such as communication, social interaction, and behavior (Santos, 2020).

The symptoms of ASD can vary considerably between individuals. Among the most common characteristics, difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, challenges in social interactions, and repetitive or restricted behaviors stand out. Many people with ASD find it difficult to understand social norms, recognize facial expressions, and hold a conversation. In addition, many individuals may develop intense interests in specific themes, manifesting themselves in activities of deep exploration (Cardozo; Santos, 2020).

The diagnosis of ASD is carried out by qualified professionals, such as psychologists or psychiatrists, who use criteria established in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5). Generally, the diagnosis is based on observations of the child's behavior, interviews with parents, and developmental analysis. Early diagnosis is essential, as it can facilitate appropriate intervention and the implementation of strategies that promote the child's development (Nunes; Alves, 2022).

The causes of ASD are not yet completely understood, but studies suggest that a combination of genetic and environmental factors may contribute to the development of the disorder. Genetic predisposition plays a significant role, with a higher risk of autism in families that already have a history of the condition. Environmental factors, such as exposure to toxins during pregnancy, complications during childbirth, and infections, have also been investigated as possible influencers of ASD (Lima; Matos, 2020).

Treatment for ASD is individualized and may include a combination of therapies, special education, and psychosocial support. Behavioral interventions, such as Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), are widely used and have been shown to be effective in promoting communication and social interaction skills. In addition, occupational and speech therapy therapies can help in the development of functional skills and improve communication (Cardozo; Santos, 2020).

The inclusion of students with ASD in the school environment is a crucial topic, as inclusive education not only benefits students with autism but also promotes a culture of respect and empathy among all students. To ensure this inclusion, it is necessary for schools to adopt adaptive pedagogical practices and offer continuing education for educators, preparing them to meet the specific needs of these students (Limeira et al., 2022).

The understanding and acceptance of ASD is constantly evolving. Awareness of the condition has grown, leading to a greater appreciation of diversity and inclusion in various contexts. However, there are still challenges to be faced, such as the need for more robust public policies and adequate resources to meet the demands of people with ASD (Neto et al., 2018).



PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES FOR MINIMIZING PREJUDICE IN SCHOOLS IN RELATION TO AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)

Minimizing prejudice towards Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in schools is essential to promote an inclusive and welcoming educational environment. To achieve this goal, several pedagogical strategies and practices can be implemented. The continuing education of educators is one of the most important steps. Training programs that address ASD, its specific characteristics and needs help teachers to better understand the disorder, developing skills to identify signs of autism and apply inclusive practices (Carlotto; Danelichem; Billerbeck, 2021).

In addition, it is essential to promote awareness campaigns that inform the school community about ASD, demystifying prejudices. Lectures, workshops, and events that involve students, parents, and teachers can create an environment of empathy and understanding. Another important aspect is the realization of integration activities, which offer opportunities for students with and without ASD to interact. Group projects, games, and sporting events facilitate socializing and promote empathy, helping to break stigmas and develop healthy relationships (Galvão; Ricarte, 2019).

The use of adapted teaching resources and assistive technologies can also facilitate the inclusion of students with ASD. Visual materials such as pictograms and apps help with communication and learning, while adapting the curriculum to individual needs ensures that all students have access to the content. Creating welcoming environments in schools is another crucial strategy. Spaces that respect diversity, with inclusive décor and support areas for moments of sensory overload, help all students feel safe and valued (Limeira et al., 2022).

The involvement of parents in the educational process is equally important. Promoting meetings and support groups for families of students with ASD can create a network of support and exchange of experiences, aligning expectations and practices between home and school. In addition, educators must be role models of inclusive behavior. Demonstrating attitudes of respect and acceptance and encouraging students to do the same help to cultivate a positive school climate (Magalhães; Aciolli, 2020).

Open discussions about differences and inclusion in class are effective ways to address the topic. Implementing differentiated teaching methods that consider the various forms of student learning is another beneficial practice. Personalization of pedagogical approaches, adapting tasks and assessments to individual needs, is key to promoting inclusion. Continuously monitoring and evaluating inclusive practices and school dynamics allows you to identify areas that need adjustments. Periodic evaluations with students and



parents can provide valuable feedback on the school environment and help implement improvements (Cardozo; Santos, 2020).

Finally, fostering positive relationships among students is crucial. Mentorship or partnership programs, where older or non-disabled students support peers with ASD, can be effective in strengthening bonds and creating a mutually supportive environment. The implementation of these pedagogical strategies and practices is essential to minimize prejudice towards ASD in schools. By promoting an inclusive, welcoming and respectful environment, we not only benefit students with autism, but also contribute to the formation of a more just and empathetic society, where diversity is valued and respected (Galvão; Ricarte, 2019).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The realization of this research on Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and inclusive education reveals the importance of promoting a welcoming and respectful school environment. ASD, being a complex neurodevelopmental condition, requires a deep understanding and an individualized approach so that the specific needs of each student are met. Inclusion is not just a matter of enrollment, but a continuous commitment to curricular, methodological and attitudinal adaptation, which must involve the entire school community.

The challenges faced for the inclusion of students with ASD in schools are significant, from prejudice and lack of understanding to resistance on the part of some educators and institutions. However, promoting effective pedagogical strategies, such as continuing teacher training, awareness-raising campaigns, and creating a welcoming environment, can help overcome these barriers.

By fostering empathy and cooperation, schools have the potential to transform school culture, benefiting not only students with ASD but the entire educational community. In addition, the role of families and the community is vital in this process. Constant dialogue between parents, educators, and health professionals should be encouraged, creating a support network that extends beyond the classroom. This collaboration not only strengthens inclusivity but also combats bias more broadly, creating an environment where diversity is recognized and celebrated.

The survey also emphasizes the importance of robust public policies and the need for adequate resources to ensure that schools can meet the demands of students with ASD. The training of teachers in the use of assistive technologies and the adaptation of teaching materials are fundamental steps for inclusion to become a reality. The COVID-19 pandemic,



by exposing existing inequalities, has reinforced the urgency of rethinking and restructuring educational practices, ensuring that inclusion is not just a goal, but a daily practice.

In short, pedagogical practices that aim to minimize prejudice in relation to ASD are essential for building an inclusive and respectful school environment. The implementation of these strategies requires a joint effort by all those involved in the educational process. By working towards inclusion, we contribute to the formation of a more just and egalitarian society, where all individuals, regardless of their particularities, have the opportunity to fully develop.

Therefore, the importance of this research lies in its ability to provide a deeper understanding of the needs of students with ASD and to suggest ways to create an educational environment that not only welcomes, but values diversity. By focusing on minimizing prejudice and promoting inclusive practices, we are not only meeting an educational demand, but also contributing to building a more empathetic and respectful future for all.



REFERENCES

1. Cardozo, P. R., & Santos, A. M. (2020). A criança com TEA: o ingresso no ensino fundamental em meio a pandemia. **Brazilian Journal of Development**, 6(7), 46193–46201.
2. Carlotto, S., Danelichem, M. R. A., & Billerbeck, G. C. (2021). A inclusão do aluno autista na escola comum: desafios e possibilidades. **Revista Ibero-Americana de Humanidades, Ciências e Educação**, 7(10).
3. Galvão, M. C. B., & Ricarte, I. L. M. (2019). Revisão sistemática da literatura: conceituação, produção e publicação. **Logeion: Filosofia da Informação**, 6(1), 57–73.
4. Lima, M. T. P., & Matos, E. O. F. (2020). Autismo e escola: os desafios e a necessidade de inclusão. **Revista Educação & Ensino**, 4(1).
5. Limeira, M. S., et al. (2022). Relatos do processo de alfabetização e letramento do ensino infantil ao fundamental maior de alunos com Transtorno do Espectro Autista (TEA) da rede municipal de ensino em Altamira: das alegrias às frustrações. **Revista Ibero-Americana de Humanidades, Ciências e Educação**, 8(10).
6. Magalhães, M. S., & Aciolli, A. C. (2020). O professor e a inclusão de crianças com Transtorno do Espectro Autista (TEA) nas salas de educação infantil do município de Arapiraca/AL. **Educação e (Trans)formação**, 20–35.
7. Neto, A. O. S., et al. (2018). Educação inclusiva: uma escola para todos. **Revista Educação Especial**, 31(60), 81–92.
8. Nunes, J. C. S., & Alves, F. I. B. M. (2022). Inclusão de criança com autismo em sala de aula. **Revista de Psicologia**, 16(63).
9. Santos, A. A. S., & Leite, D. S. (2022). Inclusão de alunos com autismo no ensino regular: análise de uma escola de ensino fundamental. **SciELO Preprints**.
10. Santos, R. V. (2020). A formação docente: a importância da proficiência lúdica para o desenvolvimento do autismo. **Revista científica Cognitionis**, 3(2).
11. Souza, R. C. S., Bordas, M. A. G., & Santos, C. S. (2014). **Formação de Professores e Cultura Inclusiva**. Aracaju: Editora UFS.
12. Matias, H. B. R., & Probst, M. (2018). A criança com Transtorno do Espectro Autista, a escola e o professor: algumas reflexões. **Revista Profissão Docente**, 18(38), 158–170.
13. Tavares, L. M. F. L., Santos, L. M. M., & Freitas, M. N. C. (2016). A Educação inclusiva: um estudo sobre a formação docente. **Revista Brasileira de Educação Especial**, 22(4), 527–542.
14. Vieira, J. N., & Pereira, M. P. M. (2020). A inclusão escolar do aluno autista: algumas considerações. **Ciência: Gerenciais Em Foco**, 11(9).
15. Weizenmann, L. S., Pezzi, F. A. S., & Zanon, R. B. (2020). Inclusão escolar e autismo: sentimentos e práticas docentes. **Psicologia Escolar e Educacional**, 24.