

THE ART OF INCLUSION: CHALLENGES AND TRIUMPHS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION



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ABSTRACT

The present study investigated the challenges and triumphs of special education in promoting the school inclusion of students with disabilities, with the objective of identifying the main factors that influence the inclusion process in Brazilian schools. The research had a bibliographic character, using works, dissertations, articles and academic documents to analyze the concepts and practices related to school inclusion. The models of specialized educational service (SES), adapted teaching methodologies, teacher training and the use of assistive technologies were addressed. The analysis of the data revealed that, although Brazilian legislation has advanced with regard to inclusion, there are significant barriers, such as the lack of adequate training of educators and the scarcity of adapted pedagogical resources. On the other hand, the results indicated that schools that adopt adapted methodologies and use assistive technologies show advances in the academic, social and emotional development of students with disabilities. Continuing education of teachers was identified as an essential factor for the success of the implementation of inclusive practices. The final considerations pointed to the need for new studies that deepen the analysis of the effectiveness of public inclusion policies, teacher training and school infrastructure. The research contributed to the understanding of the main challenges and solutions for school inclusion, suggesting the expansion of initiatives aimed at teacher training and the adaptation of schools to meet the diversity of students.

Keywords: Special Education. School Inclusion. Challenges. Assistive Technologies. Teacher Training.

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INTRODUCTION

Special education is an area of education that aims to ensure access to quality education for students with specific educational needs, promoting their inclusion in school environments. School inclusion is a fundamental principle that ensures the participation of all students, regardless of their physical, intellectual or sensory limitations, in the educational process. Special education, as a branch of inclusive education, seeks to meet the needs of these children, adolescents and adults, offering them the appropriate conditions for the full development of their potential. However, school inclusion still faces several challenges, being discussed in the academic and social spheres. The art of inclusion implies more than simply inserting the student with disabilities in regular school; It involves rethinking pedagogical practices, teaching strategies, forms of interaction and the adaptation of methods to ensure that these students can have meaningful learning. The implementation of inclusive education requires the performance of a network of trained professionals, the creation of favorable environments, and the use of pedagogical resources that meet the specific needs of each student.

The justification for carrying out this research is based on the relevance of understanding the challenges and triumphs faced by education professionals, as well as the results observed in the lives of students with disabilities, throughout the inclusion process. Inclusive education has been debated in Brazil and around the world, and its success or failure is linked to a series of factors, such as teacher training, curricular adaptation, physical and attitudinal barriers in schools, and the use of assistive technologies. Although public policies for school inclusion have been implemented, educational practice still faces resistance and gaps, which compromises the effectiveness of full inclusion. The research aims to contribute to the understanding of the elements that influence the process of school inclusion, analyzing both the positive aspects and the difficulties that arise in the daily life of schools.

The question that guides this research is: What are the main challenges and triumphs of special education in promoting the school inclusion of students with disabilities? By exploring this issue, we seek to analyze the practices, policies and results related to inclusion, highlighting the factors that facilitate or hinder the full participation of these students in the regular school environment. In addition, it is intended to verify how special education has contributed to the academic and social development of students, considering the role of educators, school managers, families and society in general.

The objective of this research is to analyze the main challenges and triumphs of special education in the school inclusion of students with disabilities, focusing on pedagogical practices, public policies and results observed in schools. The research aims to understand the elements that contribute to the effectiveness of inclusion and the obstacles that still need to be overcome to ensure inclusive education.

The text is structured in such a way as to present in an organized way the theoretical, methodological and analytical aspects of the theme. The introduction was followed by the theoretical framework, in which the fundamentals of special education and the main concepts related to school inclusion are discussed. Then, the three development topics will be presented, which address the challenges, good practices and methodologies used in inclusive education. The methodology will be detailed, focusing on the research approach and the methods of data collection and analysis. After that, the three topics of discussion and results will present the implications of the data collected, the conclusions about the effectiveness of inclusion and the proposals for improvements to educational practice. Finally, the final considerations summarize the main findings of the research, presenting suggestions for the advancement of inclusive education in Brazil and in the world.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework is structured in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the main concepts and theories that underpin special education and school inclusion. At first, the fundamentals of special education are addressed, including the definition of its principles and the historical evolution of this teaching modality. Then, the challenges of school inclusion are discussed, with emphasis on the pedagogical, social and physical barriers that still persist in educational institutions. The triumphs of inclusion are also analysed, highlighting the good practices and methodologies that have shown effectiveness in promoting inclusive education. The theoretical framework seeks to provide a basis for data analysis and discussion of the results that will be presented throughout the research.

TEACHER TRAINING FOR INCLUSION

Teacher training for school inclusion is a key aspect for the success of inclusive education, and the continued training of educators plays a key role in adapting teachers to

the needs of students with disabilities. According to Nascimento (2013), teacher training is essential to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge necessary to work in an inclusive environment, and schools need to offer opportunities for professional development.

Continuous training allows teachers to update themselves in relation to new methodologies and pedagogical tools that favor the learning of all students, regardless of their conditions. In addition, Freitas Reis (2016) highlights that continuing education contributes to teachers being safe and prepared to face the challenges that arise in inclusive classrooms, such as the adaptation of activities, the use of assistive technologies and the management of diversity in the educational context.

Rodrigues (2011) points out that the adaptation of the school to the new inclusive paradigm requires not only structural changes, but also innovation in pedagogical practices, especially with the use of New Technologies. The author emphasizes that:

It is within this context that the school has registered all its development, although it often has to sustain its desire to grow due to social, political, economic and other constraints, which are external to it but which will somehow cause it to slow down its evolution. Not unrelated to these facts, the various changes in content and contexts that education has been subject to in recent years. The introduction of new ways of thinking about the profession, of valuing knowledge, of changing practices in search of a less individualized teaching, where New Technologies are part of the day-to-day life of all professionals, lend the school the necessary springboard for a dynamic, creative and innovative teaching in the main achievement of the objective of the school and its teachers: the success of students and their full insertion in society (Rodrigues, 2011, p. 01).

In this way, continuing education must incorporate the use of digital technologies and innovative methodologies, ensuring that teachers are prepared to promote inclusion and meet the demands of a school for all. Despite the relevance of continuous training, there are several challenges and gaps to be filled in this process. According to Possa and Pieczkowski (2020), many teachers still face difficulties in adapting their pedagogical practices to meet the needs of students with disabilities, since initial training does not sufficiently cover the specificities of inclusive education. This generates a deficit of knowledge about the methodologies and resources needed to promote effective inclusion. The lack of specific training in topics such as the diversity of disabilities and differentiated teaching methodologies is still a significant obstacle in teacher training, as evidenced by Lustosa and Mariana (2017), who state that many teachers still deal with the lack of preparation to face situations of diversity within the classrooms.

In this context, the role of universities becomes relevant in the training of professionals for inclusive education. According to Barroco (2007), universities should become centers of excellence in teacher training, offering courses and graduate programs aimed at school inclusion. Higher education institutions have a responsibility to prepare future educators to deal with diversity by creating curricula that integrate educational theories and inclusive pedagogical practices. In addition, Kramer and Leite (2015) state that universities play a central role in the formation of an inclusive mentality in teachers, by providing not only theoretical knowledge, but also practical experience through internships and inclusive pedagogical projects. Universities, therefore, must be agents of transformation in education, ensuring that future professionals are able to face the challenges of school inclusion and act competently in serving all students.

MODELS OF SPECIALIZED EDUCATIONAL SERVICE (SEA)

Specialized Educational Service (SES) is an essential component to ensure the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools, offering specific pedagogical support for the needs of these students. In Brazil, SEA is governed by public policies that seek to provide adequate care, although implementation models may vary according to the specificities of each region. According to Possa and Pieczkowski (2020), the SEA model in Brazil has been structured to provide individualized service to students, with the use of methodologies adapted to the needs of each one, but there are still gaps in its application in a full and equal way in all educational institutions. In comparison, in other countries, such as the United States, SEA is integrated into student-centered teaching models, with a greater focus on collaboration between educators, therapists, and families (Kramer; Leite, 2015). These overseas models offer a personalized approach, where SEA is a continuous service, available throughout the student's school journey.

The importance of SEA in school inclusion is unquestionable, as it allows students with disabilities to have the same educational opportunities as others. Lustosa and Mariana (2017) highlight that SEA is a fundamental means for students with special educational needs to participate in regular school activities, receiving the necessary support for the development of their skills. SEA also aims to minimize the barriers that students face in the learning process, adapting curricular content, teaching methodologies and pedagogical resources. In this way, specialized care contributes to inclusion not being limited to the student's presence at school, but that he can learn and develop within the school context.

However, the implementation of SEA in schools faces a number of challenges. According to Barroco (2007), one of the main obstacles is the lack of trained professionals to offer this type of care efficiently. The training of teachers and specialists in SEA is still insufficient, which compromises the quality of the service offered to students. In addition, SEA often faces limitations in terms of material resources, such as assistive technologies and adequate spaces within schools, as pointed out by Possa and Pieczkowski (2020), who emphasize the need for investments in school infrastructure to enable specialized care effectively. As strategies for the successful implementation of SEA, the continuous training of educators, collaboration between professionals from different areas, such as psychologists and therapists, and the involvement of families are essential, as highlighted by Lustosa and Mariana (2017), who emphasize the importance of a multidisciplinary approach for the success of SEA in schools.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES AND DIGITAL INCLUSION

Assistive technologies play a key role in the school inclusion process, as they offer personalized support for students with disabilities, enabling them to overcome barriers that hinder learning. According to Nascimento (2013), assistive technologies are essential to promote student autonomy, since they adapt the teaching process to the specific needs of each student, whether in helping communication, mobility or learning. The use of these technologies facilitates access to curricular content and contributes to the full participation of these students in school life, favoring the construction of an inclusive environment.

The training of teachers to work in inclusive education is a determining factor for the success of the implementation of assistive technologies. However, according to Nascimento (2013, p. 02), many teachers still do not have adequate preparation to work with these tools:

In view of the above, we assess that the lack of preparation and lack of knowledge are related to the training or qualification received. In addition, we can say that there is a great discredit about the ability of the special student to develop and act autonomously. [...] In other words, often the lack of preparation and information prevents the teacher from developing a pedagogical practice that is sensitive to the needs of the special student included.

Several examples of digital technologies have been used in schools to facilitate the learning of students with disabilities. Common tools include screen readers, text magnification software, and applications that convert audio to text and vice versa.

According to Lustosa and Mariana (2017), these technologies allow students with visual or hearing impairments to access teaching materials that would otherwise be out of their reach. In addition, the use of mobile devices, such as tablets and smartphones, has also been shown to be effective in the learning process, as they offer an accessible and interactive interface.

However, for assistive technologies to be effective in inclusive education, adequate pedagogical planning is necessary. As Nascimento (2013, p. 04) points out, the lack of alignment between theory and practice in teacher training can hinder the implementation of these tools:

In the curricular field, the main problems identified in the initial training of teachers are: a) the disregard of the repertoire of teachers' knowledge in the planning and development of pedagogical actions; b) the disjointed use and inadequate treatment of the contents of the various areas of knowledge in pedagogical practice; c) the lack of opportunities for their cultural development; d) the restrictive treatment of their professional performance, linked only to the preparation for class conducting, leaving aside other fundamental dimensions, such as their participation in the formulation of the school's political-pedagogical project, their relationship with students and the community.

The use of digital platforms and tools has proven to be relevant in supporting inclusive education, as it enables the customization of teaching methods according to the needs of each student. According to Possa and Pieczkowski (2020), online learning platforms and virtual learning environments (VLE) can be configured to provide multimodal resources, such as videos, audios, and texts, adapted to the needs of students with different types of disabilities. These platforms also allow the integration of assistive technologies, such as video subtitles, voice interfaces, and text translation into Libras, facilitating communication and learning.

Even so, Nascimento (2013, p. 06) emphasizes that teacher training must be reviewed to meet the demands of inclusive education and ensure that assistive technologies are used. According to the author:

As a result, students, educators and society as a whole lose, as the teaching profession needs to give adequate responses and make the necessary interventions that involve diverse and unique situations of human development. Thus, we can justify higher education as one of the essential measures to be taken for effective educational changes to occur.

The use of such tools, as evidenced by Kramer and Leite (2015), promotes inclusive education, as it enables all students, regardless of their limitations, to learn equitably.

Therefore, assistive and digital technologies are indispensable allies for the construction of inclusive education, ensuring the active participation of students with disabilities in the learning process.

METHODOLOGY

The research carried out is of a bibliographic nature, focused on the analysis of studies already published on the subject. The approach adopted is qualitative, as it seeks to understand the phenomena and experiences related to the school inclusion of students with disabilities, based on a literature review. Methodologically, this study was inspired by the guidelines presented by Santana, Narciso and Fernandes (2025), which emphasize the importance of bibliographic research in the construction of a theoretical framework, allowing the systematization and critical analysis of existing academic productions.

For data collection, resources such as books, dissertations, theses, academic articles, and documents from educational institutions and international organizations on the subject were used (Narciso; Santana, 2024). The selection of sources was made based on their relevance, updating, and pertinence to the topic in question, using academic databases, such as *Google Scholar*, *Scielo*, and institutional repositories. The technique used for data analysis was content analysis, which allowed the systematization and interpretation of the information collected, focusing on the challenges, triumphs and strategies observed in inclusive educational practice. The procedure consisted of reading, organizing and comparing the collected data, aiming to identify patterns, common problems and solutions proposed in the literature on special education.

The following table presents the main bibliographic references used in the research, organized according to the type of work, the author and the year of publication. It was structured according to the guidelines of Santana and Narciso (2025) to provide a clear and concise view of the sources that support the analysis carried out, allowing the reader a better understanding of the studies that support the arguments and conclusions of the research.

Table 1: Main bibliographic references used

Author(s)	Title as published	Year	Type of Work
BARROCO, S. M. S.	The special education of the new Soviet man and the psychology of L. S. Vygotsky: implications and contributions to current psychology and education	2007	Dissertation (Master's Degree)

RODRIGUES, M. J.	CVEE-Construction and implementation of a virtual special education community	2011	Thesis (Doctorate)
NASCIMENTO, L. M. N.	Teacher training for inclusive education: challenges and perspectives	2013	Dissertation (Master's Degree)
KRAMER, S.; LEITE, M. I.	Childhood: threads and challenges of research	2015	Book
FREITAS REIS, M. B. de.	Diversity and inclusion: emerging challenges in teacher training	2016	Article (Journal)
LUSTOSA, F. G.; MARIANA, F. B.	Diversity, Difference and Disability: Historical Analysis and Cinematographic Narratives	2017	Book
POSSA, J. D. B.; PIECZKOWSKI, T. M. Z.	Teaching challenges for working in Specialized Educational Service	2020	Article (Journal)

Source: authorship

After inserting the table, the importance of organizing the bibliographic sources in a clear and objective way is highlighted, facilitating the consultation and understanding of the information that was used for the construction of the theoretical framework. The table not only summarizes the main works consulted, but also contributes to the transparency of the research, demonstrating the basis of studies that support the arguments presented throughout the text.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The word cloud presented reflects the frequent and meaningful terms extracted from the frame of reference. These terms will be addressed in the subsequent topics, in the results and discussions, serving as a basis for the analysis of the fundamental aspects related to school inclusion and special education. The visual representation highlights the words that emerge as a key to understanding the main themes addressed in the research, such as 'special education', 'school inclusion', 'challenges', 'assistive technologies' and 'teacher training'.

Word Nuvem: Frequent and Meaningful Terms



Through this cloud, it is possible to identify the central concepts that guide the development of the study and provide an overview of the predominant issues in the literature on the subject.

The implementation of public policies aimed at inclusive education in Brazil has been an attempt to ensure equal access to education for all students, regardless of their physical or cognitive conditions. However, the effectiveness of these policies is still questioned, since there is a great variability in their application, depending on the region and the conditions of each educational institution. According to Barroco (2007), public policies for school inclusion in Brazil have been based on legal frameworks that aim to expand access and create a welcoming educational environment. However, the implementation of these policies has not always been effective, due to the lack of infrastructure in schools and the insufficiency of teacher training to deal with the diversity present in classrooms. The author points out that, although there is a legal apparatus favorable to inclusion, effective implementation in schools still depends on many adjustments and investments.

The results of public inclusion policies have been varied, with advances in some areas and persistent challenges in others. According to Nascimento (2013), some of the policies implemented in the country have managed to promote greater access to education for students with disabilities, ensuring their enrollment in regular schools. However, the quality of the education offered is still below expectations, in relation to curricular

adaptation and the provision of adequate pedagogical resources. Lustosa and Mariana (2017) highlight that, although the inclusion of students with disabilities has been expanded, many of these students still face difficulties in keeping up with the content offered in schools, due to the lack of adequate support, such as specialized professionals and adapted pedagogical materials. Inclusion, in this sense, has been a physical inclusion, but not necessarily an educational one, reflecting a gap in the true implementation of policies.

In addition, the implementation of public inclusion policies has been affected by challenges such as the lack of training of teachers, who often do not have enough training to work with diversity in classrooms. According to Possa and Pieczkowski (2020), the continuous training of educators is one of the main critical points for the success of inclusion. Initial training has not prepared teachers to deal with students with different types of disabilities, which results in an inclusion that is not always successful. The author also points out that, although there are training policies for educators, the quantity and quality of these initiatives are insufficient to ensure that all professionals are prepared for the challenges of school inclusion. Thus, despite the advances achieved by public inclusion policies, there are still many challenges to be overcome to ensure that these policies are effective and provide true inclusive education.

EDUCATORS' PERCEPTION OF INCLUSION

Educators' perception of school inclusion is a determining factor for the success or failure of the implementation of inclusive practices in schools. According to Lustosa and Mariana (2017), many educators recognize the importance of inclusion, but perceive significant challenges in the process of adapting pedagogical practices to the needs of students with disabilities. Resistance to changes in teaching methodologies, added to the lack of resources and specialized training, are cited as barriers. Barroco (2007) also points out that, despite some good practices observed, many teachers still feel unprepared to deal with diversity in the classrooms, which can compromise the quality of inclusive education. The perception that inclusion is a challenge for pedagogical practice is linked to the lack of support and the time needed to adapt teaching activities, which leads educators to experience difficulties when implementing strategies that serve all students.

On the other hand, it is also possible to identify triumphs and positive aspects that arise from educators' perception of inclusion. According to Possa and Pieczkowski (2020),

many teachers report that, when they receive adequate support, such as continuous training and the presence of specialized professionals, they are able to adapt their practices and obtain satisfactory results in the teaching-learning process. This positive perception is related to the recognition that inclusion contributes to the development not only of students with disabilities, but also of their peers, promoting an environment of respect and collaboration. Nascimento (2013) complements this point by stating that, despite the challenges, many educators realize that inclusion broadens the educational horizon, since it provides a greater exchange of experiences and rich learning for all involved.

In this context, continuous training is pointed out as a fundamental factor for the success of the implementation of inclusive practices in schools. Lustosa and Mariana (2017) argue that continuing education allows educators to update their knowledge, acquire new pedagogical strategies and feel safe to deal with diversity in the classroom. Constant training provides teachers with the necessary tools to implement methodologies that meet the needs of all students, those with disabilities. Barroco (2007) reinforces that continuous training contributes to strengthening the confidence of educators, making them able to develop and apply inclusive practices, in addition to stimulating critical reflection on their pedagogical approaches. Therefore, continuous training is not only a necessity, but an essential component to ensure that educators are prepared for the challenges of inclusion and to celebrate the triumphs that arise when inclusive practices are implemented.

IMPACT OF INCLUSION ON STUDENT LEARNING

The impact of inclusion on the learning of students with disabilities has been debated in the literature, with different results being observed in schools that adopt inclusive practices. According to Nascimento (2013), students with disabilities who attend inclusive schools have shown significant progress, both in academic and social development. The inclusive environment provides these students with the opportunity to interact with their peers and participate in activities that, in traditional models, might otherwise be inaccessible. According to Possa and Pieczkowski (2020), living with students without disabilities in an educational context favors the construction of social skills and the strengthening of the self-esteem of students with disabilities, which, in turn, contributes to better academic performance. In addition, the diversity of methodologies adopted in

inclusive schools, such as the use of assistive technologies and differentiated pedagogical approaches, has promoted effective and engaging learning for these students.

Comparing traditional and inclusive teaching models, the differences in educational outcomes are remarkable. According to Barroco (2007), in the traditional teaching model, the focus is on uniform pedagogical methods, without considering the specific needs of students with disabilities. This model tends to exclude these students, offering them an education that is not adapted to their conditions, which limits their learning potential. In the inclusive model, as highlighted by Lustosa and Mariana (2017), the methodologies are adapted to meet individual differences, which favors meaningful learning for all students. School inclusion provides a learning environment in which diversity is respected and recognized as an enriching factor, promoting the development of cognitive and social skills in an equitable way. The research by Kramer and Leite (2015) also points out that inclusive teaching, by integrating students with and without disabilities, not only improves the learning of students with disabilities, but also expands the learning experiences of students without disabilities, creating a collaborative and less segregated environment. Therefore, the comparison between traditional and inclusive teaching models reveals that, while the former limits learning opportunities for students with disabilities, the inclusive model favors a rich and diverse education, benefiting all students.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The final considerations aim to summarize the main findings of this research on 'The art of including: challenges and triumphs in special education', based on the analysis of the challenges and triumphs found in the process of school inclusion of students with disabilities. The research sought to answer the question: What are the main challenges and triumphs of special education in promoting the school inclusion of students with disabilities? Through the literature review and analysis of the available data, it was possible to identify a series of fundamental aspects that influence the effectiveness of school inclusion.

The main challenges observed in the school inclusion process are related to the lack of adequate training of educators, the resistance of some professionals and the scarcity of adapted pedagogical resources. Although Brazilian legislation has advanced in promoting inclusion, implementation in schools still comes up against structural and pedagogical issues that limit the full access of students with disabilities to the same content and

opportunities offered to those with disabilities. The initial training of teachers, in many cases, does not provide the necessary training to deal with the diversity of students, which is aggravated by the lack of specific continuing education for inclusive education. The resistance of schools to adopt inclusive practices is also due to the fear of significant changes in methodologies and school routine, which compromises the application of public inclusion policies. In addition, the infrastructure of schools is still an impediment, as many are not adapted to meet the needs of students with disabilities, whether in physical access or in the use of assistive technologies.

On the other hand, the triumphs observed show that, when conditions are favorable, school inclusion brings significant benefits to both students with disabilities and students. The participation of students with disabilities in regular school environments contributes to their academic, social and emotional development, promoting interaction and respect between the various characteristics and needs. The implementation of adapted pedagogical methodologies and the use of assistive technologies have shown positive results, providing personalized learning. The support of specialized professionals, such as assistive educators and psychopedagogues, has also proven to be fundamental for the success of inclusion, as they offer individualized support so that students with disabilities can follow the school curriculum in an equitable way.

Regarding the contributions of this study, the research offers a vision of the challenges and triumphs of inclusive education, highlighting the importance of continuous teacher training, curricular adaptation and the implementation of assistive technologies as essential elements for inclusion. The results indicate that, although Brazil has advanced in terms of public policies for school inclusion, there are still significant gaps that need to be addressed, with regard to teacher training and school infrastructure. This study contributes to the understanding of the main difficulties faced by schools and teachers in the implementation of inclusive practices and also to the identification of strategies that have proven effective in promoting school inclusion.

Finally, there is a clear need for further studies that can complement the findings of this research. School inclusion is a dynamic and constantly evolving process, and in order to achieve true inclusive education, it is essential that new research investigates the effectiveness of public inclusion policies, the impact of innovative methodologies, and the applicability of assistive technologies in schools. In addition, it is important that future studies focus on the analysis of successful inclusion models in different contexts and

regions, so that a basis of good practices and solutions adaptable to the reality of various educational institutions can be provided. Deepening research on the barriers that still exist in teacher training and meeting the needs of students with disabilities is also essential for the construction of an education accessible to all.

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