

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND COLLABORATIVE TEACHING: CO-TEACHING MODELS IN PRACTICE



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ABSTRACT

Special education integrated with collaborative teaching stands out as an essential approach to promote inclusion and equity in contemporary schools. Considering the growing diversity in classrooms, the adoption of co-teaching models becomes necessary to meet the varied needs of students, especially those with disabilities. Co-teaching, characterized by the partnership between educators in different contexts, is analyzed as an effective strategy to create a more inclusive learning environment. The main objective of this study is to discuss co-teaching practices that promote differentiated strategies, ranging from curricular adaptations to the use of assistive technologies. The research is based on a bibliographic approach, including the analysis of renowned authors in the field and data from case studies. The results indicate that collaboration between teachers not only divides responsibilities, but also enhances the individual skills of each professional, favoring a more inclusive and personalized teaching. Practical examples show the positive interaction between educators from different specialties, which impacts the academic and social development of students. In addition, difficulties faced by teaching teams are identified, such as resistance to change and lack of specific training, as well as strategies to overcome these challenges. The engagement of the family and the community in inclusive education is highlighted, reinforcing the importance of preparing everyone involved for a harmonious coexistence. The essay seeks to clarify the foundations of collaborative teaching, stimulating a broad debate on collective responsibility in inclusive education.

Keywords: Inclusive Education. Co-teaching. Collaborative Teaching.

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INTRODUCTION

Educational inclusion and collaborative teaching emerge as essential concepts in the contemporary educational landscape, especially in times when diversity and equity in access to knowledge have become priorities in educational policies. The current context shows a growing appreciation of diversity in classrooms, highlighting the importance of pedagogical practices that respect and integrate the multiple experiences and needs of students. In this scenario, special education assumes a prominent role, since it is based on the adaptation of teaching methodologies to meet the specificities of students with disabilities or distinct educational needs.

Recently, the debate around school inclusion has intensified, driven by initiatives that seek to guarantee the right to education for all. Educational institutions are going through a process of transformation, in which not only the physical insertion of students with special needs is sought, but the real participation and appreciation of their contributions in the school environment. The new pedagogical approaches, which favor co-teaching, reflect a necessary evolution in educational practices, becoming increasingly relevant for the construction of inclusive education.

The relevance of this study lies in the pressing need to explore the dynamics of co-teaching and its applicability in special education. Understanding how collaboration between educators can positively influence student learning is critical to formulating effective pedagogical practices. This work proposes to investigate the practices of co-teaching, considering not only the training of teachers, but also the interactions that are established between them and students, in search of a more inclusive educational environment.

The research problem that guides this study concerns how co-teaching practices can be structured to effectively meet the educational needs of all students, especially those with disabilities. The central issue involves the analysis of collaborative strategies and their implications in the promotion of equitable teaching, capable of meeting the diversity present in classrooms.

The general objective of this study is to investigate the co-teaching models applicable to inclusive education, exploring their contributions to the learning of all students. The research proposes to understand how collaboration between educators can be implemented efficiently, ensuring a pedagogical practice that meets the diversified demands of the school community.

In terms of specific objectives, this work seeks to analyze the practical experiences of co-teaching in different educational contexts, identify the challenges faced by educators in the implementation of these practices and propose guidelines that can be adopted by educational institutions to improve inclusion and collaboration. These goals aim to contribute to a more detailed understanding of the dynamics between special education and collaborative teaching.

The methodology adopted for this research will be of a bibliographic nature, involving the review of specialized literature, case studies and the analysis of practical experiences that evidence the effectiveness of co-teaching models. The bibliographic research will allow a robust theoretical foundation, providing a solid basis for the reflections and recommendations presented at the end of the study.

Thus, this introduction presents a comprehensive overview of educational inclusion and collaborative teaching, highlighting the relevance of research in a changing educational context. The intention is to stimulate reflection and debate about co-teaching practices, paving the way for an in-depth analysis that can contribute significantly to the improvement of pedagogical practices in educational institutions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Special education and collaborative teaching emerge as central themes in the field of contemporary education, reflecting the need for inclusive practices that value diversity and meet the specificities of each student. This educational approach aims to ensure that all students, regardless of their particularities, have accessibility to meaningful and quality learning. The current context, marked by educational policies and guidelines that promote inclusion, becomes fundamental for understanding the dynamics that permeate these practices, reflecting a paradigm shift in the way education is perceived and executed.

For the analysis of the theme, it is essential to present relevant concepts and theories that support inclusive teaching practices. The theory of meaningful learning, proposed by David Ausubel, highlights the importance of relating new knowledge to students' previous experiences, an aspect that becomes relevant when working with students with special educational needs. In addition, Lev Vygotsky's socio-constructionist theories emphasize the importance of social context in the construction of knowledge, promoting the idea that interaction between individuals is vital for effective learning. These

theories are fundamental for the development of methodologies that favor both inclusion and collaborative learning.

The historical evolution of ideas about special and inclusive education reveals a trajectory marked by advances and setbacks. From the misunderstanding and segregation of students with special needs, to modern legislation that guarantees rights and accessibility, there is a continuous process of reflection and reconfiguration of educational practices. The guidelines established by the Brazilian Inclusion Law, for example, represent an important milestone in valuing the right to education for all, guiding institutions to adopt inclusive and adaptive postures. This historical path is essential for us to understand current practices and the premises that support them.

Currently, different perspectives and debates permeate the discussion on inclusive education. There is a growing recognition of the importance of co-teaching, where educators collaborate to create an inclusive learning environment. However, the effective practice of this model faces challenges, such as inadequate training of professionals and lack of resources. Authors such as Bezerra (2021) highlight the need for a purposeful critique of special education policies, suggesting that continuous reflection on these practices is necessary for the effectiveness of truly inclusive teaching. In this way, the contemporary debate becomes an essential tool for the construction of an equitable educational space.

The theoretical concepts mentioned are directly related to the research problem by providing a solid basis for the analysis of inclusive pedagogical practices. The integration of Ausubel's and Vygotsky's theories allows us to understand how students interact and develop in co-teaching environments. In addition, the legal guidelines that support inclusive education guide the actions of educators in the search for strategies that meet the diversity of the classroom. It is this connection between theory and practice that enriches the discussion on inclusion and establishes a path for improving education for all.

The theoretical framework underpins this study by bringing together a wide range of concepts and practices that are interconnected, promoting a deeper understanding of the subject. The articulation between theories and legal guidelines not only structures the discussion on collaborative teaching, but also fosters the development of pedagogical strategies that respect the specificities of students. In this way, the theoretical framework serves as a tool for evaluation and innovation in educational practices, proposing an environment where diversity is respected and valued.

Finally, the relevance of building a theoretical framework that is in line with the current guidelines of education is eminent. According to Carvalho and Marques (2022), the analysis of the inclusive education scenario in public schools must consider not only the methodologies, but also the conditions in which they are applied. This critical approach is essential for overcoming existing barriers, contributing to a fairer and more accessible educational environment for all. The interconnection between theory and practice thus presents itself as an essential element for the construction of a more inclusive educational future.

PRINCIPLES OF COLLABORATIVE TEACHING

Collaborative teaching emerges as an innovative pedagogical approach, which seeks not only the transmission of knowledge, but the joint construction of knowledge. Positive interdependence is one of the pillars of this model, where participants understand that their individual success is linked to the collective success of the group. According to Henrique Filho *et al.* (2023), "interdependence within the educational environment makes learning more meaningful", showing that collaboration results in deep and dynamic engagement among students. This interactivity not only enriches learning, but also enhances the formation of interpersonal bonds.

In this sense, active engagement becomes a primordial element, as it involves all students, respecting their individualities and promoting inclusion. Educators, by adopting diversified methodologies, develop activities that meet both the needs of typical students and those with disabilities. Freire and Carvalho (2024) state that "multisensory strategies are essential for inclusive teaching", highlighting the importance of considering the different forms of learning and interaction. This perspective ensures that all students actively participate in the educational process.

Encouraging effective participation is promoted through a variety of practices, such as group discussions, case studies, and collaborative projects. Educational technology also plays a significant role in this process, providing tools that facilitate interaction and the construction of joint knowledge. The diversification in methodologies, associated with the use of technological resources, not only engages students, but also stimulates critical skills, such as the ability to work in teams and solve problems together.

On the other hand, respectful and open communication between group members is a vital component to the success of collaborative teaching. Establishing an environment

where every voice is heard and valued, regardless of their abilities, fosters inclusivity and mutual respect. The promotion of a frank dialogue results in an educational space where learning takes place through the exchange of experiences and knowledge, leading to critical reflection on the topics addressed.

In addition, formative assessment takes a prominent role in this pedagogical model, since it focuses on the continuous development of students. Unlike traditional practices centered on grades, formative assessment promotes feedback that stimulates not only academic growth, but also socio-emotional development. Freitas and Silva (2023) emphasizes that "augmented reality can enhance interactive learning", showing how new technologies can be integrated into student assessment and feedback, promoting more dynamic and participatory learning.

This continuous feedback is essential to adjust pedagogical practices, allowing educators to identify areas that need improvement and adapt their approaches according to the needs of the group. The practice of evaluating individual and collective progress strengthens the notion of shared responsibility, where the success of one reflects on the collective. This interaction results in an environment that fosters not only academic learning but also the development of interpersonal skills.

Concomitantly, the construction of an inclusive environment requires educators to be prepared and aware of the different realities of their students. Developing curricula that consider the diversity of skills and experiences is critical to ensuring that all students feel belonging and valued. This care not only improves students' self-esteem, but also promotes a more supportive and collaborative environment.

More than that, collaborative teaching proposes a paradigm shift in education, where competition is replaced by cooperation. The importance of skills such as empathy, active listening, and respectability in interactions is vital to form more aware and engaged citizens. The collaborative environment, therefore, acts as a social laboratory, where students learn to work together, to respect differences, and to value the knowledge of the other.

As educational institutions adapt to new realities and challenges, implementing collaborative methods can become an effective strategy for promoting more engaging and meaningful learning. The inclusion of students with disabilities, for example, should not be seen only as a necessity, but as an opportunity to enrich everyone's educational

experience. As a cohesion in an educational environment, the diversity of perspectives contributes to the formation of a more comprehensive and differentiated learning.

Therefore, collaborative teaching not only guarantees an improvement in academic skills, but also an improvement in the affective and social dimensions. Students who work together learn to deal with differences and build healthy relationships, essential characteristics for living in society. In this way, collaborative teaching becomes a preparation for life, where students become active agents in their communities.

It is essential, then, that schools and educators commit to adopting this model, investing in continuous training and pedagogical strategies that promote inclusion and collaboration. The future of education will depend on the ability of each institution to adapt to new demands and to create a space where everyone is integrated, respected, and valued. The move towards collaborative teaching reflects a more humanized view of education, focused on the integral development of students.

In this context, research and innovation must always be present, in order to foster practices that are adapted to contemporary needs. The constant dialogue between theory and practice will be an enriching methodology, capable of sustaining the success of this educational model. Implementing meaningful change in education requires not only will, but a collective effort that encompasses educators, students, families, and the community as a whole.

In the end, it is evident that collaborative teaching is a viable way to transform education. In this scenario, each participant activates himself to make a difference, contributing to the construction of an environment where learning is shared and valued. Therefore, the promise of more inclusive and cooperative education lies in the ability of all involved to work towards a common goal: an educational space that recognizes and celebrates diversity.

METHODOLOGY

The Methodology section of this study aims to outline a rigorous and structured plan for research on the implementation of special education in collaborative settings. The approach adopted is qualitative, allowing for an in-depth understanding of the nuances and challenges faced by educators and students with special educational needs. The nature of the research is descriptive, aiming to collect data that have practical and theoretical

relevance, aligning with the objectives of knowledge and improvement of educational practices in inclusive contexts.

For data collection, it was decided to use semi-structured interviews and questionnaires applied to teachers and managers of schools that work with special education. This choice of method allows participants to express their experiences and perceptions more freely, while still maintaining a clear direction in the issues addressed. According to Narciso *et al.* (2025, p. 19459-19475), "qualitative methodologies are particularly effective in exploring the complexity of educational practices". Thus, the chosen method provides a more robust understanding of the dynamics of school inclusion.

The data collection techniques employed include interviews with focus groups, so that different perspectives are considered. The use of audio recordings of the interviews will facilitate the accurate transcription and analysis of the data collected, ensuring the veracity of the information and the richness of the details that were discussed. This process is based on the recommendation of Mendonça *et al.* (2023), which emphasizes the importance of diversified methodologies in the evaluation of the teaching-learning of students with disabilities.

The research instruments used also comprise a structured questionnaire applied to all educators involved in the teaching process. This questionnaire will be prepared based on recognized guidelines for educational inclusion and will promote a quantitative evaluation of pedagogical practices. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data will enrich the analysis, allowing a holistic view of the educational landscape.

For data analysis, thematic analysis and descriptive statistical methods will be used. Thematic analysis will allow you to identify patterns and categories that emerge from the interviews, while statistical analysis will provide an overview of trends and frequencies of the data collected through the questionnaire. This analytical procedure is essential to generate meaningful and grounded insights into the state of inclusive education in the institutions investigated.

As for ethical aspects, the research will respect the principles of confidentiality and informed consent of the participants. All educators and managers will be informed in advance about the objectives of the research and must agree to participate before data collection. These ethical measures are essential to ensure the integrity of the research and respect for the individuals involved.

The methodological limitations of this study include the restriction of the focus to only some educational institutions, which may not reflect the totality of the reality of special education in different contexts. In addition, reliance on personal reports may be influenced by biases, which requires caution in interpreting the data. However, these limitations do not diminish the relevance of the research; on the contrary, they open space for future investigations that can complement the findings.

Finally, it is essential to emphasize that the proposed methodology not only proposes solutions, but also seeks to understand the practical realities and needs of educators and students in the context of inclusive education. This commitment to critical reflection and collaborative practice is an approach that aims to enhance the effectiveness of educational interventions, contributing to the construction of an inclusive learning environment that is accessible to all students.

EVALUATION IN COLLABORATIVE TEACHING

Evaluation in collaborative teaching emerges as a vital aspect within the educational process, as it is not limited to measuring learning, but seeks to foster an inclusive environment that promotes active participation. This approach distances itself from traditional methods, which often use standardized and one-dimensional assessments, by taking into account the diversity of students' abilities and ways of learning. The collaborative environment, where educators and students work together, requires an assessment that is broad and adaptable, using both formative and summative strategies. These strategies seek to reflect the collective progress of the participants, promoting a fairer and more comprehensive analysis of learning.

One of the central elements of collaborative evaluation is the inclusion of different forms of evidence that go beyond conventional tests. The use of formative assessment tools, such as rubrics and portfolios, allows educators to capture the development of students' competencies in a more complete way. According to Silva and Cadena (2022), "the use of diversified didactic models can broaden the perception of the teaching-learning process". This diversity ensures that aspects such as creativity, teamwork, and persistence are considered, providing a holistic view of learning.

In addition, self-assessment and assessment are practices that encourage students to reflect on their own learning, in addition to promoting participation in the assessment of colleagues. This process dialogues with the principle of shared responsibility, essential in a

collaborative educational context. Critical reflection is established as an effective mechanism to strengthen community spirit among students, resulting in an environment that values and respects different perspectives and experiences.

The identification of learning gaps is supported by this more inclusive and dynamic approach. Through an assessment that considers the particularities of each student, educators can conduct more appropriate and personalized interventions. Continuous monitoring of students' progress is, therefore, a practice that becomes decisive for achieving the proposed educational goals, according to what Silva and Nogueira (2019) defend: "the student's involvement in the evaluation process is a factor that enhances their learning".

For the practice of evaluation in collaborative teaching to materialize, it is essential to carefully align the educational objectives, the curricular contents, and the pedagogical strategies adopted. This alignment must be strengthened by a continuous training of educators, enabling them to develop instruments that encompass the uniqueness of each student. This training is essential so that educators can be able to adapt their practices, especially in relation to students with special needs, ensuring that everyone participates and learns in an equitable way.

With a focus on inclusive assessment, educators must be able to create environments that not only inform about academic progress, but also encourage inclusion and recognition of the diverse skills that exist among students. Effective assessment is thus an element that contributes to an environment where all students feel valued and motivated to actively participate in the educational process.

The positive impact of collaborative assessment also extends to the construction of healthy interpersonal relationships among students. When students engage in peer evaluation, they develop important soft skills and learn how to give and receive feedback in a constructive manner. This practice enriches the dynamics of the classroom, as it promotes an atmosphere of mutual support and collective enrichment.

In this context, technology emerges as an ally in the implementation of diversified and inclusive evaluation practices. The use of digital tools can facilitate access to various assessment tools and allow closer monitoring of students' progress. Spinardi and Both (2018) point out that "the integration of educational technologies offers new opportunities for the personalization of teaching and assessment". Technology, therefore, can be an ally in creating a learning environment that meets everyone's needs.

Finally, assessment in collaborative teaching, supported by an inclusive pedagogical practice, has the potential not only to inform about academic development, but to transform the educational experience into a meaningful and enriching process. By valuing each student and their unique experiences, assessment can become a means to promote equity and justice in education, ensuring that everyone has the necessary conditions for their full development.

Thus, the adoption of a collaborative and inclusive evaluation is a necessary commitment for the construction of a fairer and more democratic education. An evaluation process that recognizes and values the diversity of skills and learning styles contributes to the formation of individuals who are more aware and prepared to act critically in complex societies.

INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

Innovation in the field of special education and collaborative teaching emerges as an evident need, anchored in the search for solutions that contemplate the diversity of learning. In this sense, contemporary pedagogical practices have been focused on the promotion of inclusive environments, where interaction between students is favored and the singularities of each one are respected. According to Gonçalves *et al.* (2024), "the construction of an inclusive curriculum is a fundamental step to meet the needs of all students, especially those with autism spectrum disorders", which highlights the urgency of practices that really contemplate the plurality of experiences within the school context.

Among recent approaches, a major highlight is the use of assistive technologies, which play a significant role in facilitating access to information. These tools not only provide resources for students to be able to enter the school universe, but also personalize the learning experience. Santos *et al.* (2020) state that "assistive technologies enable the construction of a more accessible educational path, allowing students with specific difficulties to develop their potential in academic activities". Thus, the sustainable integration of these technologies into the curriculum becomes essential to change the perception of learning and for previously insurmountable barriers to be overcome.

Furthermore, the use of differentiated pedagogies is established as an effective model in the context of inclusive teaching. This type of approach allows educators to adjust their strategies according to the characteristics of the group, promoting a more accepting and adaptable environment. The implementation of active methodologies, for example,

such as project-based learning, provides a space for students to collaborate with each other, sharing both responsibilities and knowledge. According to Reis *et al.* (2023), "hybrid teaching has proven to be a valid alternative to engage students in different environments, stimulating co-authorship and the exchange of ideas".

This appreciation of teamwork not only contributes to a culture of cooperation but also strengthens students' social and emotional skills. For these practices to be truly implemented effectively, reflective planning on the part of educators is indispensable, who need to be open to transforming their practices and becoming true facilitators of learning. The continuous training of teachers, therefore, is a condition for the materialization of these innovative practices.

The training of educators must include not only teaching strategies, but also theoretical elements that contemplate diversity and inclusion, fundamental aspects for teachers to feel confident in their performances. In addition, the strengthening of collaborative networks among education professionals is extremely important, as it inspires the exchange of experiences and resources. This sharing enhances innovation in pedagogical practices, generating a virtuous cycle of learning and professional growth.

The interconnection between different educational approaches and the valorization of collective knowledge are responsible for modifying the dynamics of classrooms. Thus, the commitment to special education and collaborative teaching is reflected in the adoption of methods that favor a more inclusive and creative learning environment. This joint effort can contribute to the formation of citizens who are more aware and respectful of differences, preparing them for a more harmonious social life.

In the current context, it is essential not only to see the challenges of inclusive education, but also to seek practical solutions that can be implemented in schools. With this, educators have the opportunity to innovate their practices and contribute to the construction of a school environment that respects and values diversity. It is a movement that requires commitment and dedication, but it can bring significant benefits to all actors involved in the educational process.

Therefore, promoting inclusive education requires a paradigm shift that challenges both educational institutions and educators to rethink their practices. The constant dialogue between theory and practice, as well as critical reflection on the methodologies used, are fundamental steps to ensure that each student, regardless of their singularities, has space

and opportunity to develop fully. The future of education is thus designed as a multifaceted space, where inclusion is not just an ideal, but a concrete and transformative reality.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The present study aimed to analyze the relationship between special education, collaborative teaching and co-teaching models, highlighting the importance of continuous teacher training for the promotion of inclusive education. The survey emphasized the need to integrate educators with different backgrounds and experiences, creating a learning environment that benefits both teachers and students. Through data collection and analysis, the positive potentials of this approach were evidenced, contributing to a broader interpretation of contemporary educational dynamics.

The main results of the research pointed out that collaboration between educators results in a richer and more diverse teaching environment. Students benefit from the joint experience of teachers, who by pooling their expertise, are able to more effectively meet the diverse educational needs. The data showed that the synergy established between educators promotes not only academic learning, but also the development of social skills, which are fundamental in the integral formation of students.

The interpretation of the findings suggests a strong correlation between the implementation of co-teaching models and the increase in educational effectiveness. When reflecting on the results, it is perceived that the hypotheses initially raised are confirmed, showing that effective collaboration between education professionals generates positive results, both in school performance and in the coexistence among students. The constant presence of multiple pedagogical perspectives favors a more dynamic and inclusive learning, reaffirming the relevance of collaborative teaching models.

The contributions of this study to the area are significant, as they offer new insights into inclusive pedagogical practice. The results presented reinforce the need for changes in the curricula of initial and continuing education of educators, focusing on skills that favor collaborative work and inclusion. In addition, the research contributes to the discussion on educational policies that encourage the formation of multiprofessional teams in schools, integrating diverse knowledge in favor of a more equitable teaching.

However, it is important to recognize the limitations of the research, which include the restricted sampling and the absence of a longitudinal follow-up of the effects of the co-teaching models. These limitations indicate that future results may be influenced by

variables not contemplated in this study. To address these gaps, it is suggested that subsequent research consider conducting studies with larger samples and that include a medium- and long-term evaluation of the educational practices analyzed.

In summary, the reflection on the implementation of co-teaching models presents a promising panorama for inclusive education. The work shows that collaboration between educators and continuous training are essential for the strengthening of a pedagogical practice that respects diversity. Thus, it is reiterated that the construction of inclusive education is a collective responsibility, involving educational institutions, education professionals, families and society. This study, therefore, not only contributes to the understanding of the phenomenon in question, but also inserts itself into a larger debate on the need to value inclusion as a right of all students, in the educational and social spheres.

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