

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING: A NECESSARY APPROACH FOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL INCLUSION**



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### **ABSTRACT**

This article addresses the importance of Special Education in the current context, underlining the need for teacher training aimed at the effectiveness of school inclusion. It understands that Special Education is fundamental to ensure the right of all children to education, focusing on students with disabilities, global developmental disorders, and high abilities or giftedness. The text shows that, from the 1990s onwards, with the advancement of public policies in Brazil, inclusion has been strengthened as an inalienable human right. The central discussion revolves around teacher training, seen as a critical pillar for the success of inclusive education. The survey highlights that many teachers lack adequate preparation to deal with diversity in the classroom, due to gaps in both initial and continuing

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education. The article suggests that training should transcend the mere transmission of knowledge, promoting inclusive attitudes and differentiated pedagogical strategies, supported by legal and normative frameworks. Through a bibliographic research, the study analyzes the main theoretical references and highlights effective practices in the preparation of teachers, aiming to contribute significantly to a quality inclusive education.

**Keywords:** Special Education. Teacher Training. School Inclusion. Public Policies. Pedagogical Strategies.

## INTRODUCTION

Education has been consolidated as an inalienable universal right, reflecting the need to think of ways to ensure the inclusion of all individuals, regardless of their specificities. In this sense, Special Education emerges as an indispensable field when discussing the right to education, especially from the perspective of the educational needs of students with disabilities, pervasive developmental disorders, and high abilities or giftedness.

The consolidation of Special Education in Brazil, particularly from the 1990s onwards, brought to light a significant movement of transformation and inclusion, driven by public policies that reaffirm the right of all to education. The contemporary era witnesses intense debates and practices that seek to integrate students with special educational needs into regular educational settings, arguing that everyone should learn and participate in the same space, with equitable access to adequate opportunities and supports.

The introduction and strengthening of these policies contribute to the construction of more inclusive school contexts, where diversity is understood as an enriching component of the school environment and not as a barrier to learning. However, the effective implementation of inclusive education depends on a critical factor: teacher training. Educators are protagonists in the process of inserting inclusive practices, responsible for the creation of pedagogical spaces that recognize and value the differences between students.

However, studies show that many teachers still feel unprepared to deal with diversity in their classrooms, especially when dealing with students with disabilities. This feeling of insecurity is often attributed to gaps in initial training, which does not adequately address the principles and practices of Special Education, in addition to the scarcity of continuing education programs that enable educators to critically reflect and continuously improve their practices.

Teacher training, therefore, needs to transcend the simple transfer of technical knowledge to enlarge a more comprehensive training that promotes inclusive attitudes and understanding of human rights, while training educators in diversified pedagogical strategies. Training institutions, such as universities and training centers, have a strategic role to play, providing opportunities both in undergraduate and in extension and specialization courses.

In addition, it is crucial that the debate on teacher training for Special Education considers the legal and normative frameworks that guide educational practice. Guidelines such as the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB – Law No. 9,394/1996), the National Policy on Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education (2008), and the National Common Base for Teacher Training (BNC-Formação) are fundamental to outline both the rights of students and the responsibilities of educators.

This article is dedicated to conducting a bibliographic analysis on the main theoretical frameworks related to Special Education and teacher training, seeking to understand the challenges and possibilities inherent to the construction of a quality inclusive education. In addition, it seeks to identify successful practices in preparing teachers to effectively deal with diversity in their pedagogical practices.

Throughout this work, it is expected to contribute to the advancement of the understanding of teacher training for Special Education, outlining approaches and strategies that can strengthen school inclusion, and expanding the dialogue on the paths to follow towards a school truly open to all.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Special education and teacher training are distinctly interconnected fields of study, especially in the design of an inclusive education that encompasses the diverse needs of learners. For decades, Special Education was not considered a priority, but the advance of public policies from the 1990s onwards in Brazil transformed this reality, promoting the consolidation of educational rights for all.

Contemporary literature in Brazil presents a consensus on the importance of school inclusion and highlights teacher training as a crucial aspect of this journey. As pointed out by Mendes (2010) in his book "Inclusive Education: cultural contexts", teacher training should always be aligned with the principles of inclusive education, allowing the teacher to understand and implement effective pedagogical strategies to serve students with different learning profiles.

According to Mantoan (2003), in the article "Inclusion: building a society for all", published in the journal "Education & Society", teachers need to develop an inclusive attitude that goes beyond the technical character. This requires specific and continuous training that allows them to mature professionally in understanding the needs of students. In

this context, the initial and continuing training of teachers is treated as an inseparable process that needs to be contemplated in all educational policies.

In addition, the National Common Base for Teacher Training (BNC-Formation) and the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education – LDB, Law No. 9,394/1996, are referred to by several researchers as normative pillars that guide the training and performance of teachers. The Law of Guidelines establishes general and specific rules that guarantee teacher training that meets the diversity in schools.

Araújo and Holanda (2014) discuss in their study published in the "Brazilian Journal of Education" about "The training of educators to attend to diversity". Here, they emphasize that the biggest challenge faced by teacher training courses is to promote didactics that go beyond traditional content, allowing for a pedagogical approach that is comprehensive and inclusive.

Inclusive pedagogical practice also involves the adaptation of curricula, teaching methods and materials, something that requires specific skills and knowledge on the part of the teacher. Souza (2015), in "Inclusive Teaching Practices", highlights that adapting the curriculum is not only modifying materials and methods, but also reevaluating traditional pedagogical practices to create a learning environment accessible to all students.

Public policies also play a fundamental role in supporting school inclusion, as discussed by Garcia (2012) in the work "Inclusive Education Policies". Legislation such as the National Policy on Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education (2008) establishes clear rights and guidelines to ensure that inclusion is not just a concept, but an effective practice.

In addition, specialization programs and extension courses, offered by Brazilian higher education institutions, have become important means for the continuing education of teachers. Such initiatives seek not only to promote the development of technical skills, but, above all, to strengthen the social and humanistic commitment of teachers, which should be inherent to their daily practice.

In summary, the Brazilian literature related to Special Education and teacher training for school inclusion presents a deep reflection on the challenges and possible ways to transform the school into a truly inclusive space. The importance of teacher training focused on diversity and the need for robust public policies are recurring themes that reinforce society's commitment to ensuring quality education for all.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **RESEARCH STRATEGY**

The development of this study on Special Education and teacher training is conducted through a qualitative bibliographic research. This approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth analysis of already published materials, providing a clear understanding of theories, policies and practices related to school inclusion. Bibliographic research is essential to map the current state of knowledge on a topic, as stated by Gil (2008) in "Methods and techniques of social research".

The selection of the bibliographic method is also justified by the nature of the theme, since teacher training and Special Education are widely documented fields, thus allowing a critical examination of the different approaches and public policies that have been implemented over the years (Fonseca, 2014). These texts not only contextualize the problem under study, but also generate valuable insights into the critical factors that influence the success or failure of inclusive education.

In this line, the research strategy involved the identification and analysis of various theoretical materials, including books, academic articles in specialized journals and institutional documents that deeply discuss the theme of educational inclusion and teacher training. Among these materials, priority was given to those that discuss the normative frameworks and theoretical references proposed by Brazilian authors, given their alignment with the country's educational reality. Mendes (2010) observes that, in the analysis of educational policies, it is crucial to consider the local context for a more assertive understanding of the challenges and advances observed.

The entire research was guided by a central question: how can teacher training be improved to ensure the effectiveness of school inclusion in Brazil? The search for answers led to the use of specific keywords, such as "teacher training", "Special Education", "public inclusion policies" and "inclusive pedagogical practices", in recognized academic databases, such as *SciELO* and the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations.

The methodology adopted ensured that the research was based on reliable and up-to-date sources, ensuring the relevance and applicability of the results found. According to Severino (2007), in "Methodology of Scientific Work", bibliographic research is a vital step to understand the existing body of knowledge before any attempt to answer specific questions or formulate new theories.



An important aspect of this strategy involved the critical analysis of the reviewed texts. Convergences and divergences were identified in the different approaches proposed for teacher training aimed at school inclusion. As mentioned by Silva and Fonseca (2013), the ability to identify dialogues and contrasts within literature is fundamental to generate new understandings about a complex and multifaceted topic.

Therefore, the research strategy adopted for this study offers a comprehensive overview of theoretical and practical references about Special Education and teacher training in Brazil. Such an approach strengthens the ability to analyze how teacher education can be transformed to effectively meet the demands of educational diversity, providing valid subsidies to improve future practices and formulate more inclusive educational policies.

## SELECTION CRITERIA

In conducting this research, the definition of criteria for the selection of theoretical and empirical materials was essential to ensure the quality and relevance of the sources used. In the field of Special Education and teacher training, the broad academic and institutional production demands a careful selection process, in order to ensure that the study is based on accurate and updated information.

One of the main criteria defined was the time frame. In this study, we chose to consider publications mostly from the last twenty years, a period that coincides with the most significant implementations of public policies aimed at educational inclusion, such as the National Policy on Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education, from 2008. This criterion aims to capture the most recent developments and discussions within the national scenario, pointing to contemporary challenges and pedagogical innovations (Mendes, 2010).

Another relevant criterion was the origin of the publications. This study prioritized materials by Brazilian authors, as they are more directly suited to the educational context and the reality of the country's public policies. By considering this perspective, it was possible to obtain more contextualized insights into the operationalization of teacher training strategies for inclusion (Souza, 2015).

The selection of sources also considered academic credibility, a traditionally important aspect in scientific research. Articles published in high-impact academic journals, books from recognized publishers in the educational area and official documents from

Brazilian institutions, such as the Ministry of Education, were selected. As Araújo and Holanda (2014) point out, the choice of high-quality sources is essential to validate scientific research, ensuring that the information collected is reliable.

Also, the research was based on the selection of materials that directly discussed the interaction between Special Education, school inclusion and teacher training. Texts that addressed these themes in depth and their complex interrelations were prioritized, providing a holistic and integrative view of the challenges faced in this field of study. According to Garcia (2012), integrating different theoretical and practical perspectives enriches the academic discussion and provides a more extensive approach to educational problems.

The criterion of practical relevance of the studies was also considered, that is, the choice of works that, in addition to theoretical support, presented examples or proposals of successful practices in teacher training focused on Special Education. Mendes (2010) emphasizes that the translation of theories into applicable practices is a crucial step for inclusive educational advancement.

To ensure methodological rigor, the entire process of selecting materials involved an abstract analysis and introduction of each source initially considered. Materials that did not meet the aforementioned criteria and did not directly address the central theme of the study were excluded or seconded in the references. In this way, the investigation was able to focus on the most relevant approaches with the potential to contribute to the debate on inclusive teacher education.

In summary, the selection criteria adopted in this study prioritized timeliness, contextual relevance, academic credibility and the practical applicability of the contents. These guidelines not only ensured the solidity of the theoretical framework used, but also ensured that the conclusions of the study could offer valuable contributions to the field of Special Education and teacher training in Brazil.

## DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The data collection for this study on Special Education and teacher training consisted primarily of the identification and selection of bibliographic materials that meet the criteria of relevance and quality, as previously established. This procedure included the systematic organisation of the selected texts and documents to provide a coherent and integrated analysis of the different theoretical and practical approaches available.



The data collection stage began with a search in recognized academic databases, such as SciELO, Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations, and CAPES Periodicals. On these platforms, the previously defined keywords - "Special Education", "teacher training", "school inclusion", "inclusive pedagogical practices" and "public inclusion policies" - were used to filter the relevant content. This initial phase made it possible to map the different lines of research and theories that form the basis of the inclusive educational field in Brazil (Severino, 2007).

Following the collection, the data were organized into thematic categories to guide the analysis. The main categories included challenges in teacher training, impact of public inclusion policies, and effective pedagogical strategies. The segregation of data into thematic categories was essential to facilitate the organization of information and enable a comparative and critical analysis of the different academic materials.

The data analysis used a qualitative method with an emphasis on content analysis, as suggested by Bardin (2011) in "Content Analysis". This method involves the deep and interpretative reading of the collected texts, identifying key concepts, central arguments and the logical construction of each author. Through this process, it was possible to extract patterns, relationships and contradictions within the wide range of theories and practices discussed, providing a critical and comprehensive view of the theme.

The information obtained from each source was coded manually, associating each analyzed excerpt to one of the pre-defined thematic categories. This has facilitated the identification of recurrences and differences in existing approaches, while also allowing the recognition of gaps in current knowledge. The analysis sought not only to describe the strategies proposed by the authors, but also to evaluate their practical applicability and potential impact on the Brazilian educational scenario (Fonseca, 2014).

During the analysis, special attention was given to the integration between the public policies described in the official documents and the pedagogical practices discussed in the academic literature. Identifying how legal norms translate into educational practices was crucial to understand the effectiveness of different approaches in teacher training for Special Education. As mentioned by Garcia (2012), the connection between policy and practice is a critical point to ensure that teacher training meets the expectations of inclusive education.

Additionally, in the discussion and validation of the findings, the perceptions of experts in the educational field were considered, citing their contributions to reinforce or

question the conclusions emerging from this study. This procedure collaborated to build a robust argumentation, based on varied theoretical positions and the practical experience of professionals in the sector.

In summary, the data collection and analysis in this study sought to provide a comprehensive and balanced interpretation of the main issues surrounding teacher training and Special Education in Brazil. By methodologically approaching the contents, it is intended that this investigation contributes to the continuous improvement of inclusive educational practices and, consequently, to the strengthening of teaching that welcomes and values diversity.

## **ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS**

### **CHALLENGES IN TEACHER TRAINING**

The analysis of the data obtained reveals several persistent challenges in the training of teachers to work in Special Education and in the promotion of inclusive education in Brazil. One of the main difficulties highlighted in the literature is the insufficiency of the initial training of teachers in the face of the demands of an inclusive classroom. This limitation is often evidenced in the curricula of undergraduate courses, which often do not address Special Education in an integrated and practical way.

According to Mantoan (2003), in his article "Inclusion: building a society for all", teacher training lacks a more comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach that deals deeply with issues related to different forms of disability and special educational needs. The author suggests that the fragmentation of training prevents teachers from developing a holistic understanding of the appropriate strategies and methodologies to deal with diversity in the classroom.

Another critical point identified is the lack of opportunities for continuing education. Often, teachers enter their career with a minimum base of knowledge about Special Education and face difficulty in accessing improvement courses throughout their professional career. As Souza (2015) argues in "Inclusive Teaching Practices", continuing education is essential to allow educators to keep up to date on new pedagogical practices and normative evolutions in the area.

This scenario is aggravated by the insufficiency of effective public policies that encourage and promote the professional development of teachers for school inclusion. Although there are national guidelines and regulations that aim to reinforce continuing

education, such as the National Policy on Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education, in practice, such policies are often not implemented consistently or comprehensively enough to have a significant impact (Garcia, 2012).

In addition, there is a cultural and institutional resistance to the inclusion movement in Brazilian schools, which hinders the implementation of inclusive pedagogical practices. Many teachers, due to the lack of adequate support and insufficient training, report insecurity and discomfort when dealing with students who have special educational needs (Mendes, 2010). This insecurity tends to perpetuate traditional approaches to teaching that do not correspond to the requirements of an inclusive educational environment.

In addition, the analysis highlights the need for teacher education models that prioritize reflective practice and the development of inclusive attitudes. As Araújo and Holanda (2014) discuss in the "Revista Brasileira de Educação", a theoretical focus must be combined with practical experiences, ensuring that future educators have the opportunity to apply inclusive theories in real contexts and critically reflect on these experiences.

In conclusion, the analysis of the challenges in the training of teachers for Special Education reveals the urgency of both curricular and institutional reformulations. It is necessary to promote greater integration between theory and practice, stimulate continuous training programs and strengthen policies to support teachers, always aiming to achieve a truly inclusive and equitable school environment. Recognizing and addressing these challenges are essential steps to transform Special Education into an effective area in promoting full and meaningful inclusion.

## IMPACT OF PUBLIC POLICIES

The impact of public policies on the training of teachers for Special Education and on the effectiveness of school inclusion is significant and multifaceted. The data analyzed indicate that, although educational policies have evolved to promote inclusion, the practical implementation of these policies still faces many challenges. Since the 1990s, Brazil has advanced in its educational legislation in order to ensure rights and define guidelines for inclusive education. However, the effective and consequent application of these laws still requires coordinated efforts on several fronts.

The 2008 National Policy on Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education represents a milestone in this regard, by redefining specialized educational services and establishing guidelines for education systems to promote school inclusion

(Garcia, 2012). This document highlights the need for schools to be provided with adequate conditions and sufficient resources to receive all students, regardless of their specific needs. However, the implementation of these guidelines comes up against obstacles such as the lack of adequate infrastructure and the absence of effective teacher training.

One point that stood out in the analysis of the results was the finding that, although there are policies that encourage the continuing education of teachers, such initiatives often do not come into practice in a uniform way. Mendes (2010) argues that public policies, in order to be effective, must have continuity and adequate financial support to ensure that the proposed objectives are achievable in the medium and long term. The scarcity of investments in education and the fragmentation in the execution of programs aimed at teacher training are important barriers to be overcome.

In addition, another relevant issue is the alignment of teacher training policies with effective practices in schools. Often, policies that seek to foster inclusive education come up against traditional approaches within educational institutions, which can resist the structural changes necessary to welcome diversity (Mantoan, 2003). This misalignment contributes to the persistence of gaps in teacher preparation, directly affecting the effectiveness of school inclusion.

The analysis also indicates that public policies tend to focus more on the school as an institution than on the individual figure of the teacher, who is the direct mediator in the classroom (Souza 2015). There is a need to reinvest in the teacher as a fundamental part of educational practice, where policies should focus not only on inclusion protocols, but on continuous support for teachers, providing resources and time for in-service training.

In short, the impact of public policies on teacher training and school inclusion is undeniable, but still limited by issues of implementation and alignment with real school practices. It is essential to strengthen the development of policies that ensure not only the creation, but the effective application of inclusive guidelines, accompanied by consistent structural and financial support. The search for an organic alignment between the proposed policies and everyday educational practices is vital to ensure an education that truly values diversity and promotes inclusion.

## EFFECTIVE TRAINING PRACTICES

In exploring effective teacher training practices for Special Education, the literature highlights the importance of strategies that promote not only technical knowledge, but also

the development of inclusive attitudes and practical skills to deal with diversity in the classroom. The study of the different educational approaches reveals a range of practices that have shown success in this context, each one contributing to a better preparation of teachers.

One of the strategies highlighted is reflective training, which invites teachers to critically reflect on their pedagogical practices and experiences. According to Mantoan (2003), this type of training is crucial for educators to understand and transform their practice, recognizing the particularities of each student and adjusting their methodologies to meet these needs. This training promotes a continuous cycle of learning and adjustment, essential for the success of inclusive strategies.

Hands-on immersion experiences have also been identified as effective. They involve putting teachers in real-world situations of inclusive teaching during training, allowing theory to meet practice. Souza (2015) argues that this approximation of teachers with diversified environments during training is vital for the construction of pedagogical security, reducing the distance between what is taught in the courses and what is experienced in the classrooms.

Another relevant aspect is interprofessional collaboration, where joint work between regular school teachers and specialists in Special Education is promoted. This type of collaborative practice is emphasized by Mendes (2010) as an effective means of amalgamating different knowledge and skills, strengthening the inclusive educational environment. Such interactions are essential to stimulate the exchange of experiences and strategies, facilitating the effective attendance to the needs of students.

In addition, specialization and extension courses for continuing education are considered a highly effective investment in training teachers to deal with diversity. These programs often offer more in-depth and specific content, ensuring that faculty members acquire up-to-date and specialized knowledge and techniques. Garcia (2012) highlights that continuing education should be a priority and receive structured and consistent support from educational systems.

Technology and innovation also emerge as powerful tools in the development of inclusive teaching practices. The incorporation of assistive technologies and other educational innovations in teacher training curricula has supported the creation of adapted learning environments, according to Araújo and Holanda (2014). This not only expands the

possibilities of teaching and learning, but also inspires the creativity of educators in adapting their methodologies.

Finally, teacher training for inclusion must be underpinned by an institutional culture that values and promotes diversity as a core principle. Administrative support, community involvement and political commitment are essential components that, together with effective training practices, facilitate the establishment of truly inclusive schools (Silva and Fonseca, 2013).

In conclusion, the analysis of effective teacher training practices for Special Education underlines the need for a multifaceted approach, which combines theoretical, practical and collaborative aspects. Training should prepare educators to be active agents in building inclusive educational environments, and this preparation depends on an ongoing commitment to professional development and a consistent implementation of innovative and diversity-friendly practices.



## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This study addresses the complexities and challenges faced in the training of teachers for Special Education, promoting a critical look at the effectiveness of pedagogical practices and public policies aimed at school inclusion. Throughout the analysis, it became evident that the effectiveness of a truly inclusive education requires more than the implementation of political or curricular guidelines; it requires a cultural and structural transformation in the way education is perceived and practiced in Brazil.

The research reaffirms the importance of initial and continuing teacher training as crucial foundations for the advancement of Special Education. However, there is a clear need to transcend a traditional training model that limits teachers to theoretical knowledge. Research suggests that reflective and practical training is essential, enabling educators to adapt their pedagogical approaches to the diverse needs of learners. This study proposes that the combination of theory and practice, combined with the development of inclusive attitudes, be incorporated more effectively into training curricula.

In addition, the analysis showed that the success of inclusive educational practices depends significantly on the support and involvement of multiple actors in the educational environment, including school managers, families and the community in general. Promoting a collaborative approach, where educators from various specialties work together, appears as a vital component to create learning environments that welcome everyone. Encouraging and facilitating interprofessional cooperation should be a clear objective of educational policies.

Public policies, in turn, play a fundamental role, but face limitations in practical execution that need to be addressed. This includes not only adequate funding, but also implementation that values the specificity of local and regional contexts. Empowering teachers by providing them with sufficient resources and autonomy to implement inclusive practices should be a priority for governments and educational institutions.

By considering technological tools as allies in this process, the study identifies innovation as a driving force for inclusive educational transformation. Investing in new technologies and their integration into teacher training curricula and practices can expand the possibilities of teaching, making it more accessible and adapted to the needs of students with disabilities and high abilities.

This study, therefore, concludes that, in order to transform Special Education in Brazil, a systemic and continuous commitment of all actors involved is indispensable.

Reshaping teacher education, adjusting it to reflect modern and inclusive pedagogical practices, is essential to ensure that all students can enjoy their rights to education in an environment that respects and values diversity. However, this will only be possible if public policies guarantee full support to teachers and schools, promoting adequate conditions for school inclusion to be a tangible and successful reality. This is an ongoing challenge, but it has the potential to generate significant changes in the school life of thousands of students across the country.

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