

SCHOOL INCLUSION OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER: CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

This chapter discusses the school inclusion of Indigenous children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), considering the challenges and possibilities involved in connecting special education, Indigenous school education, and interculturality. It begins by recognizing that, although Brazilian legislation guarantees the right to inclusive education and acknowledges the cultural specificities of Indigenous peoples, studies addressing this interface remain scarce. The objective is to reflect on the main challenges involved in implementing inclusive and intercultural pedagogical practices, highlighting theoretical contributions capable of supporting the development of an education committed to human and cultural diversity. The discussion is grounded in qualitative bibliographic research, drawing on academic publications, legal documents, and authors such as Maria Teresa Eglér Mantoan, Lev Vygotsky, Paulo Freire, Vera Maria Candau, Gersem José dos Santos Luciano (Baniwa), Daniel Munduruku, and Ailton Krenak. The reflections indicate that the inclusion of Indigenous children with ASD continues to face challenges related to teacher education, access to specialized services, the production of pedagogically contextualized materials, and the limited body of scientific literature on the subject. Conversely, important possibilities include strengthening continuing education, encouraging the participation of Indigenous families and communities, valuing traditional knowledge, and adopting pedagogical practices based on Universal Design for Learning and interculturality. It is concluded that the development of an

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inclusive intercultural education depends on coordination among schools, communities, and public policies, ensuring the right to learning and respect for cultural identities.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder, Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous School Education, Interculturality, Special Education.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has become established as a fundamental right and a commitment of Brazilian educational policies, particularly in view of the need to guarantee all students access, retention, participation, and learning. Nevertheless, the realization of this right remains challenging when it concerns groups that experience different forms of social, cultural, and educational exclusion. Among these groups are Indigenous children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), whose schooling requires dialogue between the principles of special education and the specific characteristics of Indigenous school education.

The 1988 Federal Constitution recognized Indigenous peoples' right to a specific, differentiated, bilingual, community-based, and intercultural education, ensuring respect for their languages, cultures, forms of social organization, and distinctive learning processes. Subsequently, policies such as the National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education (BRAZIL, 2008), Law No. 12,764/2012, which established the National Policy for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and the Brazilian Inclusion Law (Law No. 13,146/2015) strengthened the guarantee of the educational rights of persons with disabilities. Despite these legal advances, challenges persist in effectively guaranteeing these rights to Indigenous children with ASD, particularly in communities historically marked by invisibility and social inequality.

In this context, Indigenous school education occupies a strategic position in valuing the identities, traditional knowledge, and distinctive forms of organization of Indigenous peoples. More than a space devoted to the transmission of academic knowledge, the Indigenous school constitutes an environment for

strengthening culture, preserving collective memory, and affirming the rights of these peoples. Thus, discussing the inclusion of Indigenous students with ASD entails recognizing that their educational needs cannot be understood solely from a clinical perspective, but must also be considered in relation to the cultural, linguistic, and community contexts in which they live.

The contemporary understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) moves beyond exclusively biomedical approaches by recognizing that development and learning are influenced by social, cultural, and educational factors. In this regard, the school inclusion of Indigenous children requires pedagogical practices that consider both their educational needs and the cultural specificities of each Indigenous people, understanding that different forms of communication, learning, and participation cannot be interpreted solely through the lens of the disorder.

Accordingly, interculturality provides an important framework for understanding the interface between special education and Indigenous school education. By fostering dialogue among different knowledge systems, interculturality contributes to the development of pedagogical practices that value cultural diversity, respect traditional knowledge, and strengthen an education committed to equity and social justice. From this perspective, including Indigenous children with ASD means simultaneously recognizing their status as rights-bearing subjects and as members of peoples with their own histories, identities, and ways of understanding the world.

Despite legal advances, research connecting special education, Indigenous school education, and interculturality remains scarce, limiting both knowledge production and the development of pedagogical practices intended for Indigenous children with ASD.

In this context, it is essential to recognize that Indigenous children with ASD require accessible pedagogical strategies that do not disregard their cultural identity. School inclusion must therefore go beyond guaranteeing enrollment and ensure educational practices that value their language, culture, ancestry, and community belonging, regardless of the educational setting in which they are enrolled.

In this context, interculturality emerges as a principle capable of bringing together different ways of understanding human development and learning processes. As Candau (2012) emphasizes, intercultural education presupposes dialogue among cultures, the confrontation of inequalities, and the recognition of diversity as a constitutive principle of society. From this perspective, differences cease to be understood as obstacles and instead become opportunities for enriching educational practices.

This discussion is especially relevant in contexts such as the Dourados Indigenous Reserve, in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, where Guarani, Kaiowá, and Terena students live alongside one another and where different forms of social organization, educational practices, and conceptions of child development require culturally contextualized pedagogical approaches. This situation is compounded by the difficulty many families face in accessing diagnoses, specialized services, and information about ASD, reinforcing the need for dialogue between scientific knowledge and traditional ways of knowing.

Given this context, the following research question emerges: **“What are the challenges and possibilities for the school inclusion of Indigenous children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), considering the contributions of special education, Indigenous school education, and interculturality?”**

To answer this question, the general objective of this study is to reflect on the challenges and possibilities involved in the school inclusion of Indigenous children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in light of the contributions of special education, Indigenous school education, and interculturality. Its specific objectives are to understand the theoretical foundations of inclusive education and ASD; discuss the specific characteristics of Indigenous school education; analyze the main challenges identified in the scientific literature; reflect on inclusive and intercultural pedagogical practices; and highlight the importance of dialogue between special education and Indigenous school education in developing educational processes committed to valuing diversity.

This study is justified by the need to broaden discussions concerning the school inclusion of Indigenous children with ASD, a subject that remains underexplored in Brazilian scientific literature. Its academic and social relevance lies in its potential to support pedagogical practices, strengthen dialogue among schools, families, and communities, and contribute to the formulation of public policies committed to inclusive and intercultural education.

In addition to its academic contribution, this study has social relevance, particularly for professionals working in Indigenous schools, multifunctional resource rooms, and special education support services. The reflections presented are expected to support more inclusive pedagogical practices, promote dialogue among schools, families, and communities, and contribute to the development of public policies that take the cultural specificities of Indigenous peoples into account.

Methodologically, this is a qualitative study of a bibliographic nature, developed through the analysis of books, scientific articles, master's dissertations, doctoral theses, legal documents, and academic publications related to special education, Indigenous school education, interculturality, and Autism Spectrum Disorder. The investigation is grounded in an interpretive and reflective approach and seeks to understand how the scientific literature has discussed the challenges and possibilities involved in the school inclusion of Indigenous children with ASD, as well as the contributions these studies offer to the development of culturally contextualized pedagogical practices.

To support this analysis, the study engages with authors who discuss inclusive education, including Maria Teresa Eglér Mantoan, Lev Vygotsky, and Sadao Omote, as well as researchers addressing Indigenous school education and interculturality, such as Vera Maria Candau, Gersem José dos Santos Luciano (Baniwa), Daniel Munduruku, Ailton Krenak, Neusa Maria Mendes de Gusmão, and Paulo Freire. Bringing these theoretical frameworks together makes it possible to understand that school inclusion becomes a reality only when human and cultural diversity is recognized as a structuring principle of educational processes.

This study is organized into six chapters. Following this introduction, the theoretical framework is presented, discussing the principles of inclusive education, the specific characteristics of Indigenous school education, and the intersections among culture, Indigenous identity, and Autism Spectrum Disorder. The methodological procedures adopted in the study are then described, followed by the presentation of the results and discussions developed from the literature analyzed. Finally, the concluding considerations revisit the main findings of the investigation and identify possibilities for future research.

This study is expected to contribute to broadening discussions on the school inclusion of Indigenous children with ASD, strengthening inclusive and intercultural pedagogical practices, and reaffirming diversity as a fundamental principle of education. In this way, it seeks to contribute to the development of educational processes committed to human rights, equity, and recognition of the cultural identities of Indigenous peoples.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

INCLUSION AND AUTISM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF BASIC EDUCATION

Inclusive education constitutes one of the principal advances in contemporary educational policies by recognizing everyone's right to education, regardless of physical, intellectual, sensory, social, cultural, or linguistic characteristics. From this perspective, schools are responsible for reorganizing their spaces, curricula, methodologies, and pedagogical practices to guarantee the participation and learning of all students.

In the Brazilian context, the consolidation of inclusive education results from significant legal advances, such as the 1988 Federal Constitution, the Law of Guidelines and Foundations of National Education (Law No. 9,394/1996), and the National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education (Brazil, 2008). These instruments reaffirm the right of students who are the target population of special education to access, remain in, participate in, and learn within mainstream schools, while ensuring *Atendimento Educacional Especializado*—AEE [Specialized Educational Services (SES)]

as a complementary service. These transformations consolidated an understanding of diversity as a constitutive element of the educational process, requiring pedagogical practices capable of addressing different ways of learning.

These changes represent a significant transformation in the understanding of disability and human diversity. Inclusive education no longer regards difference as an obstacle to teaching but recognizes it as an inherent feature of educational environments. From this perspective, diversity becomes a structuring element of the pedagogical process, requiring practices that respect different ways of learning, participating, and constructing knowledge.

Maria Teresa Eglér Mantoan (2015) emphasizes that school inclusion does not consist merely of physically placing students in mainstream classrooms; rather, it requires the transformation of the school itself, encompassing the curriculum, assessment, pedagogical organization, and conceptions of difference. This perspective breaks with the integrationist logic according to which students were expected to adapt to the school, recognizing instead that barriers to learning are also embedded in the physical, pedagogical, attitudinal, and institutional structures of the school environment.

Along these lines, Mantoan (2003) argues that inclusive schools must recognize classroom heterogeneity and organize teaching in consideration of different learning rates, styles, and forms, thereby promoting more democratic pedagogical practices for all students.

The defense of an inclusive school is grounded in human rights principles and understands education as an instrument of social participation and citizenship. In the case of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), this entails recognizing different forms of communication, social interaction, and learning, while considering that each student has specific needs and potential.

The understanding of autism has also undergone significant changes over recent decades. Whereas an approach focused exclusively on clinical and diagnostic aspects previously predominated, a biopsychosocial perspective now prevails, according to which the development of persons with ASD results from the interaction of biological, social, cultural, and educational factors. This shift expands the

school's responsibility: rather than functioning solely as a place of schooling, it assumes a fundamental role in promoting participation, learning, and social inclusion.

In this context, Law No. 12,764/2012, known as the Berenice Piana Law, represented an important advance by recognizing persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder as persons with disabilities for all legal purposes, thereby guaranteeing their access to education, health care, employment, and other fundamental rights. Subsequently, the Brazilian Inclusion Law (Law No. 13,146/2015) reaffirmed these rights and strengthened the responsibility of educational systems to remove barriers that hinder the participation of students with disabilities.

Despite legal advances, the realization of these rights continues to face challenges related to teacher education, accessible pedagogical resources, specialized services, and attitudinal barriers within the school environment. In this context, children with ASD may require strategies addressing communication, social interaction, routine organization, and sensory processing—needs that can be met through curricular adaptations, accessibility resources, and appropriate pedagogical mediation.

Understanding autism from an educational perspective means recognizing each student as a rights-bearing subject capable of learning and participating in school life when provided with pedagogical conditions compatible with their needs and potential.

School inclusion entails a fundamental change and break with the school's organizational structure. The traditional school is laden with formalities and divided into teaching modalities, types of services, curricular levels, and various bureaucratic procedures. [...] Inclusion requires the elimination of exclusionary categorizations and oppositions, seeking coordination, flexibility, and interdependence among conflicting parts. (Mantoan, 2003, pp. 16–24)

Thus, discussing school inclusion entails recognizing that teachers' work extends beyond the transmission of content and involves a commitment to promoting equity, respecting differences, and valuing the potential of each student.

INDIGENOUS SCHOOL EDUCATION AND ITS CULTURAL SPECIFICITIES

Indigenous school education constitutes an important achievement of Brazil's Indigenous peoples, resulting from a long struggle for recognition of their cultural, linguistic, territorial, and educational rights. Unlike the school model introduced during the colonial period, which sought cultural assimilation, contemporary Indigenous school education is grounded in respect for the specific characteristics of each people and recognizes diversity as the guiding principle of educational practices. The 1988 Federal Constitution consolidated this process by guaranteeing Indigenous peoples the right to a specific, differentiated, bilingual, intercultural, and community-based education. This right was subsequently strengthened by Brazilian educational legislation, which came to recognize Indigenous schools as spaces for valuing Indigenous languages, traditional knowledge, distinctive forms of social organization, and the strengthening of Indigenous identities.

In this context, interculturality constitutes one of the principal foundations of Indigenous school education. More than simply facilitating encounters among different cultures, it presupposes relationships based on dialogue, mutual respect, and appreciation for diverse ways of producing knowledge. According to Candau (2012), critical interculturality seeks to overcome historically unequal relationships by recognizing that cultural differences are not obstacles to the educational process, but opportunities to build a more democratic and socially committed form of education.

These principles are especially relevant in the Dourados Indigenous Reserve, located in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, where the Guarani, Kaiowá, and Terena peoples live alongside one another. Although they share the same territory, these communities preserve their own histories, languages, traditions, and ways of understanding the world, all of which must be considered when planning pedagogical practices in Indigenous schools. In this setting, the school performs a role that extends beyond the transmission of systematized knowledge, becoming a space for strengthening cultural identity, collective memory, and community participation.

Nevertheless, the social transformations of recent decades have also produced significant changes in the realities of these communities. In many Indigenous families, the everyday use of Indigenous languages has declined, particularly among younger generations, leading to increased use of Portuguese in school and community settings. Although this reality may facilitate certain communication processes between students and teachers, it also highlights challenges related to preserving the linguistic and cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples, reinforcing the need for pedagogical practices committed to valuing Indigenous languages.

Teachers from the Guarani, Kaiowá, and Terena peoples work in Indigenous schools in the Dourados Reserve, alongside non-Indigenous teachers, particularly in Specialized Educational Services (SES) and pedagogical support. The presence of Indigenous teachers strengthens intercultural education by bringing academic knowledge into closer dialogue with the communities' traditional knowledge. At the same time, it highlights the need to expand preservice and continuing teacher education policies, particularly in special and inclusive education.

In this regard, particular attention should be given to the competitive civil-service recruitment examination conducted by the municipality of Dourados through Public Notice No. 01/2023/PMD, administered by SELECON, which included vacancies for Pedagogical Support Teachers that were also open to Indigenous professionals. The requirement of the Administrative Registry of Indigenous Birth (*Registro Administrativo de Nascimento Indígena—RANI*) as proof of ethnic belonging demonstrates recognition of the importance of Indigenous teachers' participation in developing culturally contextualized pedagogical practices. In addition to increasing the representation of these professionals in schools, this initiative contributes to strengthening educational policies committed to the specific characteristics of Indigenous communities and to implementing inclusive education in intercultural contexts.

In discussing Indigenous school education, Gersem José dos Santos Luciano (Baniwa, 2020) argues that schools must be committed to the communities' life projects, strengthening their political,

cultural, and educational autonomy. From this perspective, education serves as an instrument for valuing traditional knowledge and strengthening Indigenous citizenship through curricula developed with community participation and recognition of their distinctive teaching and learning processes. Likewise, learning in Indigenous communities occurs beyond the school and is constructed through social interaction, oral traditions, observation, participation in collective activities, and the transmission of knowledge by elders. As Daniel Munduruku (2012) emphasizes, this knowledge is produced through experience and relationships with the community and territory, reaffirming the need for schools to foster dialogue between scientific knowledge and ancestral knowledge without establishing relations of superiority between them.

From this perspective, interculturality goes beyond the mere coexistence of cultures and entails a commitment to recognizing diversity and valuing different ways of producing knowledge, as advocated by Candau (2012). In this context, teacher education is essential to consolidating intercultural and inclusive pedagogical practices, requiring professionals who are capable of understanding the cultural specificities of Indigenous communities and connecting the principles of special education with the particular characteristics of Indigenous school education, thereby promoting educational practices committed to respect for diversity and the learning of all students.

In this context, Specialized Educational Services (SES) must be developed in coordination with the Indigenous school's pedagogical proposal, taking students' sociocultural specificities into account and avoiding the reproduction of decontextualized models. To this end, pedagogical planning must involve mainstream classroom teachers, SES professionals, families, community leaders, and other participants in school life. Although special education and Indigenous school education have advanced in guaranteeing rights, research and practical experiences discussing the inclusion of Indigenous students with disabilities from an intercultural perspective remain scarce. In the case of Indigenous children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), it is essential to consider such aspects as their heritage language, forms of communication, traditional knowledge, family participation, and the community's cultural values. The

development of an inclusive school therefore depends on recognizing diversity as an educational principle and coordinating special education, Indigenous school education, and interculturality, thereby ensuring pedagogical practices that respect these students' potential, cultural identities, and right to learn.

Accordingly, defending the school inclusion of Indigenous children with ASD means reaffirming these students' right to learn in a school that recognizes their potential, respects their cultural identities, and promotes pedagogical practices committed to equity, social justice, and the appreciation of diversity. From this perspective, Indigenous school education is strengthened as a space for producing knowledge, preserving culture, and guaranteeing rights, contributing to the development of individuals capable of moving between different cultural worlds without relinquishing their identity or collective belonging.

INTERSECTIONS AMONG CULTURE, INCLUSION, AND INDIGENOUS IDENTITY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF AUTISM

Developing a genuinely inclusive education requires recognition that human differences are not obstacles to the educational process but elements that enrich learning and strengthen democratic coexistence. In the context of Indigenous schools, this challenge becomes even more complex because school inclusion must simultaneously consider disability-related specificities and the cultural, linguistic, and historical particularities of each Indigenous people. It is therefore essential to establish dialogue among the principles of special education, Indigenous school education, and interculturality, understanding that these fields are not mutually exclusive but complementary in guaranteeing the right to education.

Developing an inclusive education requires recognition that human differences enrich the educational process and strengthen democratic coexistence. In Indigenous schools, this challenge is broadened by the need to connect special education, Indigenous school education, and interculturality. Historically, both Indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities have experienced processes of

exclusion and denial of rights. Consequently, both fields share a commitment to ensuring an education that recognizes cultural identities, respects differences, and promotes the participation of all students.

In discussing school inclusion, Mantoan (2003) argues that schools must overcome homogenizing practices and recognize diversity as an organizing principle of the educational process. This perspective aligns with the contributions of Gersem José dos Santos Luciano (Baniwa, 2020), who argues that Indigenous school education should strengthen communities' life projects and engage with their traditional knowledge. The inclusion of Indigenous children with disabilities therefore requires both the removal of pedagogical barriers and the recognition of the cultural identities present in the school environment.

Nevertheless, when this discussion is situated within Indigenous contexts, it becomes clear that school inclusion must broaden its perspective. It is not enough to consider only disability-related adaptations; it is equally necessary to recognize that students belong to communities with their own histories, values, languages, and knowledge. In this regard, Gersem José dos Santos Luciano (Baniwa, 2020) emphasizes that Indigenous school education must strengthen Indigenous peoples' life projects by promoting an education committed to autonomy, cultural preservation, and community agency.

Although they begin from different theoretical frameworks, Mantoan and Baniwa converge in advocating an education that respects differences and recognizes students as rights-bearing subjects. Whereas Mantoan challenges the traditional organization of schools and proposes an education designed for everyone, Baniwa demonstrates that this principle becomes a reality only when educational practices engage with the knowledge produced by Indigenous communities themselves. Thus, considering the school inclusion of Indigenous children with disabilities entails connecting these two perspectives and understanding that transforming schools depends both on removing pedagogical barriers and on recognizing the cultural identities present in educational settings.

This understanding also engages with Paulo Freire (1996), who advocates an education grounded in dialogue, respect for different forms of knowledge, and the collective construction of knowledge. From

this perspective, interculturality, as discussed by Candau (2012), extends beyond valuing cultural diversity and seeks to promote relationships based on recognition of difference and the overcoming of inequalities, thereby strengthening the connection between special education and Indigenous school education.

Vygotsky's (1997) cultural-historical theory understands human development as the result of social and cultural interactions, making it possible to recognize that the potential of Indigenous children with ASD is directly related to the experiences they have within their families, communities, and schools. In Indigenous communities, learning occurs through oral traditions, social interaction, and participation in cultural practices, aspects that must guide the planning of inclusive pedagogical practices.

This understanding reinforces the need for flexible pedagogical practices developed through dialogue among teachers, families, community leaders, and special education professionals, simultaneously respecting students' educational needs and the knowledge produced by Indigenous communities. Accordingly, connecting special education, Indigenous school education, and interculturality strengthens an education committed to social justice, equity, and recognition of diversity as a fundamental principle of the educational process.

CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES FOR THE INCLUSION OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN WITH ASD IN SCHOOL

The school inclusion of Indigenous children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) represents one of the principal challenges of contemporary education because it requires coordination among special education, Indigenous school education, and interculturality. Despite advances in public policies, research on this subject remains scarce, hindering the development of pedagogical practices and educational strategies appropriate to the cultural specificities of Indigenous communities.

Another challenge concerns teacher education, which must connect knowledge of inclusive education, Autism Spectrum Disorder, interculturality, and Indigenous school education. As Mantoan

(2003) and Candau (2012) emphasize, developing an inclusive school requires recognition of diversity and dialogue among different forms of knowledge, with differences being understood as constitutive elements of pedagogical practice.

Within Indigenous school education, the challenges also include access to specialized services, early diagnosis, and Specialized Educational Services (SES), particularly in communities located far from urban centers. In addition, different cultural conceptions of child development must be understood, thereby strengthening dialogue between scientific knowledge and traditional ways of knowing.

In discussing Indigenous education, Gersem José dos Santos Luciano (Baniwa, 2020) emphasizes that strengthening the autonomy of Indigenous peoples depends on recognition of their knowledge and distinctive forms of organization, as well as on the effective participation of communities in the development of educational policies. This understanding must also guide initiatives related to school inclusion, given that no pedagogical proposal can be genuinely inclusive if it disregards the participation of families, leaders, and the other individuals who constitute community life.

In this context, the teacher's work assumes a fundamental role. More than adapting activities or using differentiated resources, teachers must develop pedagogical practices that value students' potential, respect their learning pace, and promote opportunities for effective participation in everyday school life. This work requires planning, dialogue among school professionals, and a willingness to learn continually from the community in which the school is situated.

Possibilities for strengthening school inclusion include expanding preservice and continuing teacher education, strengthening Specialized Educational Services, producing culturally contextualized pedagogical materials, encouraging research, and consolidating public policies connecting special education and Indigenous school education. The agency of Indigenous communities should also be highlighted, since their participation supports the development of pedagogical practices committed to cultural diversity, equity, and guaranteeing the right of Indigenous children with ASD to learn.

Accordingly, the inclusion of Indigenous children with Autism Spectrum Disorder must be understood as a collective commitment grounded in the defense of human rights, appreciation of cultural diversity, and recognition of each student's potential. Developing an intercultural and inclusive school requires overcoming standardized practices, strengthening dialogue among different forms of knowledge, and recognizing that learning occurs when differences cease to be viewed as limitations and instead become opportunities for growth for the entire educational community.

Thus, connecting special education, Indigenous school education, and interculturality represents a concrete opportunity to develop a more democratic, humanizing school committed to social justice—one that recognizes Indigenous children with ASD as rights-bearing subjects capable of learning, participating, and contributing to their communities.

Universal Design for Learning as a possibility for the inclusion of indigenous children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Reflecting on the school inclusion of Indigenous children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) entails developing pedagogical practices designed from the outset to address student diversity. In this context, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) constitutes an important approach because it proposes flexible, accessible curricula and recognizes both that students learn in different ways and that teaching should be organized from the planning stage to accommodate this diversity.

According to Zerbato and Mendes (2021), UDL expands learning opportunities by making objectives, methods, resources, and forms of assessment more flexible. It is grounded in the CAST principles of providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression. These principles engage directly with Indigenous school education and interculturality by recognizing different ways of producing knowledge, communicating experiences, and learning.

For Indigenous children with ASD, UDL facilitates the planning of varied activities involving visual resources, concrete materials, oral narratives, elements of local culture, games, and assistive

technologies. These resources broaden students' opportunities for participation and respect their different forms of communication and learning. UDL also encourages student agency by allowing students to express their knowledge through different means, in accordance with the principles of inclusive education advocated by Mantoan (2003).

Despite its potential, implementing UDL in Indigenous schools continues to face challenges related to teacher education, the production of contextualized pedagogical materials, and the strengthening of public policies directed toward inclusive education in intercultural contexts. More than a set of methodological strategies, UDL represents a pedagogical conception committed to equity and contributes to developing school environments that are accessible, inclusive, and responsive to human and cultural diversity.

Continuing teacher education for inclusive and intercultural education

The effective school inclusion of Indigenous children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) depends on educating teachers who are capable of connecting the principles of inclusive education, Indigenous school education, and interculturality. Beyond technical knowledge of ASD and inclusive methodologies, this education must encompass the history, culture, languages, forms of social organization, and traditional knowledge of Indigenous peoples, thereby promoting pedagogical practices committed to equity and respect for diversity.

Freire (1996) argues that teaching requires research, dialogue, respect for students' knowledge, and an ongoing commitment to learning. This perspective aligns with Mantoan's (2003) contributions by recognizing that all students have the potential to learn when provided with opportunities suited to their needs and characteristics—a principle that becomes even more relevant in the context of Indigenous school education.

Despite advances in public policies, many teachers continue to report uncertainty when serving students with ASD, particularly in Indigenous schools, due to the scarcity of educational programs

connecting special education, interculturality, and Indigenous school education. It is therefore essential to expand continuing education policies developed in partnership with Indigenous communities, while valuing the agency of Indigenous teachers, community leaders, and higher education institutions.

Continuing education must also strengthen collaborative work among mainstream classroom teachers, Specialized Educational Services professionals, school leadership teams, families, and the community, recognizing school inclusion as a shared responsibility. In addition to broadening technical knowledge, this process promotes critical reflection on pedagogical practice and the development of inclusive, culturally contextualized strategies committed to every student's right to learn.

Investing in teachers' continuing education therefore means strengthening an education committed to social transformation. More than broadening technical knowledge, educational processes contribute to developing inclusive, culturally contextualized pedagogical practices grounded in respect for the rights of Indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities. Teacher education is thus consolidated as one of the principal pathways toward developing a school capable of welcoming diversity, promoting learning, and ensuring that Indigenous children with ASD have access to high-quality education developed in dialogue with their culture, community, and identity.

Participation of indigenous families and communities in the inclusion process

The school inclusion of Indigenous children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) does not depend exclusively on teachers' work or public education policies. It is a collective process involving the participation of families, Indigenous communities, traditional leaders, and the different professionals working in schools. When these stakeholders establish relationships based on dialogue and shared responsibility, the possibilities expand for developing pedagogical practices that are more responsive to students' needs and to the cultural specificities of each Indigenous people.

In Indigenous communities, education extends beyond the boundaries of the school. Learning occurs through everyday social interaction, family relationships, oral traditions, participation in collective

activities, and the transmission of knowledge by elders. Elders play a fundamental role in preserving the memory, language, cultural values, and traditions that strengthen the identity of Indigenous peoples. In this context, the school does not replace community educational processes but engages in dialogue with them, recognizing that children's education occurs in different settings and through multiple experiences.

In this context, families play a fundamental role by sharing knowledge about children's development, interests, and forms of communication, thereby contributing to the development of more meaningful pedagogical strategies. According to Freire (1996), dialogue constitutes an essential principle of educational practice, strengthening families' participation not only in monitoring school progress but also in developing culturally contextualized pedagogical proposals.

In discussing Indigenous school education, Gersem José dos Santos Luciano (Baniwa, 2020) emphasizes that community participation is indispensable to developing a school committed to the life projects of Indigenous peoples. From this perspective, education is strengthened when it respects distinctive forms of social organization and recognizes that communities are key agents in defining educational pathways. This understanding must also guide inclusive education initiatives, preventing pedagogical decisions from being made without considering the knowledge produced by families and local leaders.

Nevertheless, challenges continue to hinder closer relationships. In some circumstances, families have difficulty accessing information about Autism Spectrum Disorder, educational rights guaranteed by legislation, or available specialized services. In other cases, schools are unable to establish lasting channels of dialogue with the community, limiting families' participation to occasional meetings or the resolution of administrative matters. These situations demonstrate the need to strengthen practices that facilitate effective community participation in school life.

It is also essential to recognize that different ways of understanding child development form part of the cultural universe of Indigenous communities and must be respected by schools. Strengthening relationships among schools, families, and communities promotes the development of more humane and

culturally contextualized pedagogical practices, making it possible to understand each child in their uniqueness and broaden their opportunities for learning and participation.

Accordingly, the school inclusion of Indigenous children with ASD must be understood as a shared responsibility. Schools play a fundamental role in this process, but their work becomes more meaningful when they establish partnerships with families and recognize the community as an active participant in developing educational practices. Only through this collective effort will it be possible to consolidate an inclusive education that respects cultural diversity, strengthens the identity of Indigenous peoples, and ensures children with ASD the right to learn, participate, and fully develop their potential.

Inclusive pedagogical practices in indigenous schools

Developing inclusive pedagogical practices for Indigenous children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) requires the planning of strategies that connect the principles of special education, Indigenous school education, and interculturality. In Indigenous schools, these practices must take the cultural specificities of communities into account by valuing Indigenous languages, traditional knowledge, and students' different forms of learning and participation.

In Indigenous schools, this flexibility must be developed through dialogue with the knowledge produced by communities. The use of Indigenous languages, traditional narratives, oral traditions, elements of nature, cultural expressions, collective activities, and experiences rooted in the territory strengthens learning and helps children recognize the school as a space that values their cultural identity. Consequently, educational content ceases to be presented in a decontextualized manner and begins to engage with students' everyday realities.

In discussing human development, Vygotsky (1997) emphasizes that learning occurs through social interactions and mediation by other people. This understanding contributes to conceptualizing the school inclusion of Indigenous children with ASD because it highlights the importance of the relationships established among teachers, peers, families, and communities in the construction of

knowledge. Students cease to be viewed solely in terms of their limitations and instead come to be recognized as individuals capable of learning when they participate in environments that promote interaction and development.

From this perspective, teachers assume the role of mediators in the educational process, organizing learning situations that respect students' different rates of learning and potential. To this end, they may employ varied strategies, such as visual resources, concrete materials, educational games, illustrated stories, image sequences, structured routines, small-group activities, assistive technologies, and practical experiences related to the everyday life of the Indigenous community. These strategies broaden opportunities for children with ASD to participate and promote learning throughout the class.

Another relevant aspect concerns the organization of the school environment. Children with ASD frequently benefit from structured spaces, predictable routines, and reduced exposure to stimuli that may hinder concentration. Nevertheless, these adaptations must be planned with sensitivity to the Indigenous school context, avoiding the reproduction of standardized models and taking the distinctive characteristics of each community into account. Pedagogical planning must therefore balance accessibility, curricular flexibility, and appreciation of local cultural practices.

Collaborative activities are also important. Group work, discussion circles, shared experiences, interdisciplinary projects, and collectively developed practices strengthen relationships among students and foster a school culture founded on respect for differences. Everyday interaction enables children to learn to recognize diversity as part of community life, contributing to the development of cooperation, empathy, and solidarity.

In addition to strategies developed in the classroom, pedagogical planning must be undertaken collectively by mainstream classroom teachers, Specialized Educational Services professionals, school leadership teams, families, and Indigenous leaders. This coordination expands the possibilities for identifying potential, overcoming barriers, and developing more meaningful interventions for each

student. School inclusion thus ceases to be the exclusive responsibility of one professional and becomes a commitment shared by the entire school community.

According to Mantoan (2003), teaching from an inclusive perspective entails abandoning practices based on homogenizing students and recognizing that diversity constitutes one of the school's greatest assets. This understanding aligns with the interculturality advocated by Candau (2012), which recognizes that different ways of learning, teaching, and producing knowledge enrich educational processes. When these frameworks engage with the principles of Indigenous school education, the possibilities for developing genuinely inclusive and culturally contextualized pedagogical practices are expanded.

Inclusive pedagogical practices developed in Indigenous schools must therefore be grounded in valuing students' potential, community participation, curricular flexibility, and respect for cultural identities, ensuring that Indigenous children with ASD have effective conditions for participation, learning, and development.

Pathways toward strengthening inclusive intercultural education

The reflections developed throughout this chapter demonstrate that the school inclusion of Indigenous children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) constitutes a complex process requiring coordination among special education, Indigenous school education, and interculturality. Although Brazilian legislation has expanded recognition of the rights of persons with disabilities and Indigenous peoples, challenges remain concerning the implementation of those rights in everyday school life. In this context, particular emphasis should be placed on strengthening public policies for preservice and continuing teacher education, thereby promoting pedagogical practices grounded in both scientific knowledge and the traditional knowledge of Indigenous communities. Investing in teacher education means investing in educational quality and in guaranteeing all students' right to learn.

Another fundamental aspect concerns strengthening Specialized Educational Services (SES), which must be integrated into the school's institutional pedagogical plan and aligned with the cultural

specificities of Indigenous communities, thereby helping to remove barriers to students' learning and participation. Similarly, scientific research on Indigenous children with ASD must be expanded in order to support the development of more contextualized public policies, pedagogical materials, and educational proposals committed to the realities of these communities.

It is also essential to recognize Indigenous communities' agency in developing educational policies and practices. The participation of families, Indigenous teachers, traditional leaders, and other community members strengthens the development of culturally contextualized pedagogical strategies. In this process, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) constitutes an important possibility for transforming the principles of inclusive education into concrete practices by proposing flexible curricula, diversified methodologies, and different forms of student participation consistent with the principles of interculturality.

Nevertheless, no pedagogical proposal will produce meaningful results if it remains confined to official documents. Inclusion is realized through relationships among teachers, students, families, and communities—relationships grounded in dialogue, respect for differences, and appreciation of each child's potential. As discussed throughout this study, and in light of the contributions of Mantoan (2003), Candau (2012), Freire (1996), Vygotsky (1997), and Baniwa (2020), the development of a genuinely inclusive school depends on recognizing diversity as a constitutive element of education and as an opportunity for learning and strengthening human relationships.

Strengthening the school inclusion of Indigenous children with Autism Spectrum Disorder therefore means reaffirming a commitment to an education that recognizes the plurality of cultures, forms of knowledge, and ways of learning. More than guaranteeing access to school, it entails ensuring conditions for participation, learning, the development of students' potential, and respect for their cultural identity, reaffirming inclusive education and Indigenous school education as pathways toward building a more just, democratic society committed to equity.

CULTURE, INDIGENOUS IDENTITY, AND THE INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

The school inclusion of Indigenous children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) requires an understanding that moves beyond exclusively clinical or pedagogical perspectives, recognizing that human development is influenced by the social, cultural, and historical relationships experienced by individuals. Among Indigenous peoples, the construction of identity is deeply connected to language, territory, ancestry, distinctive forms of community organization, and traditional processes for producing and transmitting knowledge. Discussing these children's inclusion therefore entails simultaneously recognizing their status as persons with disabilities and their ethnic and cultural belonging.

Indigenous school education, guaranteed by the 1988 Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil and the Law of Guidelines and Foundations of National Education, is grounded in Indigenous peoples' right to a specific, differentiated, bilingual, community-based, and intercultural education. More than guaranteeing access to schooling, this educational model seeks to strengthen cultural identities, preserve Indigenous languages, and value the knowledge produced by communities, understanding the school as a space for dialogue between traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge.

In this context, interculturality constitutes a guiding principle of educational practices because it promotes recognition of diversity as a constitutive element of society and education. As Candau (2012) argues, intercultural education presupposes relationships grounded in dialogue, respect for differences, and confrontation of historically constructed inequalities. Differences therefore cease to be understood as obstacles and instead come to represent opportunities for enriching educational processes.

In discussing Indigenous school education, Gersem José dos Santos Luciano (Baniwa, 2020) emphasizes that schools must be committed to communities' life projects by strengthening their political, cultural, and educational autonomy. From this perspective, learning extends beyond the classroom and is constructed through social interaction, oral traditions, observation, collective participation, and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge. Daniel Munduruku (2012) reinforces this understanding by

demonstrating that Indigenous knowledge is produced through relationships with the community and territory, reaffirming the need for schools to promote dialogue among different ways of producing knowledge without establishing hierarchies between them.

Although legal advances have expanded recognition of the rights of persons with disabilities and Indigenous peoples, the literature indicates that Indigenous children with ASD remain largely invisible in research, public policies, and educational practices. In many contexts, access to diagnosis, specialized services, and Specialized Educational Services (SES) remains limited, particularly in communities located far from urban centers. This situation is compounded by the scarcity of studies connecting special education, Indigenous school education, and interculturality, which hinders the development of pedagogical proposals capable of simultaneously addressing the specific characteristics of ASD and Indigenous cultural contexts.

Making these children visible is not limited to identifying them as members of special education's target population; it also entails recognizing their rights, cultural identity, and potential for learning. In light of Mantoan's (2015) contributions, school inclusion becomes a reality only when schools reorganize their practices to guarantee the participation of all students, removing barriers that hinder their learning and promoting effective conditions for access, retention, and participation.

From this perspective, it is essential to strengthen intercultural pedagogical practices that respect Indigenous languages, forms of communication, traditional knowledge, and family and community participation in the educational process. Connecting special education, Indigenous school education, and interculturality broadens the possibilities for developing a school committed to equity, respect for diversity, and realization of the right to education, recognizing Indigenous children with ASD as rights-bearing subjects capable of learning, participating, and contributing to community life.

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