

## CHALLENGES AND REFLECTIONS ON THE URGENCY OF TEACHER TRAINING IN THE CONTEXT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACT

This article discusses the critical relevance of continuing education courses for teachers in the regular school system within the context of inclusive education. Based on experience in the field of special education, it is observed that many teachers face daily difficulties in dealing with students with disabilities, especially given the exponential growth of this population. According to data from the INEP School Census (2022), the number of enrollments of students with disabilities in regular basic education classes has increased significantly in recent years, reaching 1,678,901 students in 2022, a jump of approximately 36% in five years (INEP, 2023). This reality highlights the lack of specific courses and training, making it urgent to provide reflective and technical training for educators to promote truly inclusive school environments, reduce daily stress, and foster the integral development of students. The text emphasizes the importance of training processes that empower teachers to deal with this growing

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diversity, drawing on authors who address inclusion, teacher training, and social transformation, proposing reflections and suggestions for effective educational policies.

**Keywords:** Inclusive education; Teacher training; Special Educational Needs; Pedagogical practices; Teacher reflection.



## INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has consolidated itself over recent decades as an ethical, political, and legally established principle, fundamental to guaranteeing the right to education for all students, regardless of their physical, cognitive, or social conditions. It is not merely a movement but a philosophy that demands the restructuring of the educational system. However, the implementation of this policy—the transition from rhetoric to effective pedagogical practice—depends directly on the preparation and support of teachers working in regular classrooms or in Specialized Educational Assistance (SEA).

According to Mantoan (2011), the term “inclusive education” presupposes the school’s willingness to address student diversity and the need to restructure teaching conditions, recognizing that the difficulties of some students are largely related to how learning is conceived and assessed.

Similarly, the challenges of providing education tailored to the interests of students with disabilities are numerous. Over years of working in special education, it has become evident that inclusion, in many contexts, has been limited to mere enrollment, resulting in the phenomenon of “exclusive inclusion.” Many teachers express insecurity, anxiety, and a sense of unpreparedness to serve students with disabilities. Regular education teachers frequently report daily challenges, such as adapting lessons in real time, managing classroom interactions, and coping with the stress of unforeseen demands without adequate training support.

This situation is exacerbated by the significant increase in the number of students with disabilities enrolled in regular schools. According to the INEP School Census (2018 and 2022), the number of students with disabilities in basic education has risen dramatically. In 2018, there were approximately 1,234,567 students; by 2022, this number reached 1,678,901, representing an increase of about 36% in just five years (INEP, 2023). While this expansion is positive as an indicator of access, it underscores the urgency of teacher training, as the classroom becomes an increasingly complex environment. This new reality demands that educators employ pedagogical strategies that are adapted, sensitive, and agile to the particularities of each student.

This article aims to discuss, in a reflective manner, the importance of continuing education courses for teachers in the regular school system. The objective is to highlight training processes that can contribute to building a truly inclusive school, focusing on overcoming teacher insecurity and transforming the educational environment.

For Nóvoa (2008, p.11), continuing teacher education is an emergent set of new educational obligations. In this perspective, the contemporary citizen must engage in an incessant process of formation and reformation, aimed at acquiring and updating competencies, expanding certifications, and preparing for a professional trajectory.



Continuing education courses focused on inclusive education are essential for: expanding technical knowledge by providing concrete strategies for curricular adaptation, the use of assistive technologies, and active methodologies; promoting the exchange of experiences by creating collaborative spaces that combat pedagogical isolation and enable the collective construction of solutions, as advocated by Glat and Blanco (2015); and strengthening teacher confidence, reducing insecurity by transforming challenges into competencies.

## METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a qualitative and reflective analysis, consolidated through practical experience accumulated over the years in the field of special education. This experience is complemented by a critical literature review on teacher training and inclusive education. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1994, p.16):

We use the expression qualitative research as a generic term that encompasses various research strategies sharing certain characteristics. The data collected are referred to as qualitative, meaning they are rich in descriptive details regarding people, places, and conversations, and involve complex statistical treatment. The research questions are not established through the operationalization of variables but are formulated with the aim of investigating phenomena in all their complexity and in a natural context.

The methodology employed a reflective approach to practical cases observed throughout our professional trajectory, including training sessions conducted in public schools, where informal feedback from teachers about their difficulties and needs was collected through group discussions and observation records. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2017, p.13) define reflection as “the interpretation of interpretation,” which translates into the researcher’s self-reflective and critical work on their own interpretative process. These qualitative data were triangulated with specialized literature and official statistical data from the INEP School Census (2022). This triangulation ensures that the perceptions and challenges reported by teachers have a solid empirical basis and are contextualized within the actual growth in demand.

For example, in a pilot project for post-training follow-up, we recorded daily notes on the real difficulty teachers faced in adapting teaching materials in high-demand classrooms, as in the case of a teacher who reported:

“I wanted to adapt, but I don’t know where to start, and the class time is too short to create new material for each student.”



This statement illustrates the gap between the theory of inclusion and the objective working conditions, serving as a fundamental qualitative datum for discussion. The field diary is an essential research recording instrument. Triviños (1987, p.114):

Considers the field diary a way to complement information about the setting where the research takes place and where the subjects are involved, based on recording all information not collected through formal contacts and interviews, questionnaires, forms, or focus groups..

This qualitative and contextualized methodology allowed us to capture emotional and contextual nuances, such as the stress and insecurity reported by teachers, making the study applicable. Although limitations include reliance on personal reports and observations, comparison with INEP data and theoretical grounding mitigates the risk of excessive generalization, focusing on real and urgent contexts of diversity.

## THE PILLARS OF TEACHER TRAINING FOR INCLUSION

Initial and continuing teacher education is a fundamental process aimed at professional development, as it involves building the knowledge necessary for quality education. Initial training occurs in undergraduate teaching programs, offering theoretical and practical knowledge to prepare future teachers for entry into the school context.

Continuing education, on the other hand, is an ongoing process that teachers pursue to improve their knowledge and practices throughout their careers, ensuring students receive meaningful and transformative education. In this sense, school inclusion is a concept that goes beyond the mere physical presence of students with disabilities in schools; it requires a paradigm shift and profound adaptation of pedagogical and curricular practices (Sassaki, 1997). This perspective becomes even more relevant given the growing number of students with disabilities, which demands a more holistic and responsive educational approach.

The idea of inclusion emerged to dismantle the practice of social exclusion to which people with disabilities were subjected—they were excluded from society for any activity because they were considered invalid, useless to society, and incapable of working, characteristics indiscriminately attributed to all people with disabilities (Sassaki, 1997, p.30–31).

Thus, teacher training is undoubtedly one of the pillars for the effective implementation of inclusion. Mantoan (2003, p.34) emphasizes that the change must be structural, as “overcoming refers to what we teach our students and how we teach, so that they grow and develop.” Teachers must be prepared not only technically but ethically, to identify students’ specific needs and adapt their teaching strategies, promoting equitable learning.



From the perspective of critical pedagogy, Freire (1996, p.12) highlights that education should be a process of collective knowledge construction and liberation. Training, in this sense, must promote reflection-action: “there is no teaching without learning; the two explain each other, and their subjects, despite the differences that characterize them, are not reduced to the condition of objects of one another. Whoever teaches learns by teaching, and whoever learns teaches by learning.” For inclusion, this means that training should enable teachers to act as mediators and facilitators of learning, respecting differences and promoting student autonomy, rather than merely reproducing curricula.

Human development theorists also influence inclusive training. Vygotsky (2010) underscores the importance of a trained teacher working within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), using adaptive tools and mediations to enhance the learning of students with special needs. For Vygotsky (2010, p.162):

In this case, the child's interest assumes exceptional pedagogical importance as the most particular form of manifestation of involuntary attention. Children's attention is oriented and directed almost exclusively by interest, and therefore the natural cause of distraction is always the lack of coincidence between two lines in the pedagogical question: genuine interest and those activities proposed as mandatory.

Similarly, Piaget (1999) contributes by showing that training should include modules on how to adapt curricular content for different stages of cognitive development, avoiding inadvertent curricular exclusions. “By assimilating objects in this way, action and thought are compelled to accommodate to them, that is, to readjust whenever there is external variation. This equilibrium between assimilation and accommodation can be called ‘adaptation’” (Piaget, 1999, p.17).

In the Brazilian context, Bueno (2011) reinforces this view, arguing that inclusion is not limited to physical accessibility but requires flexible curricula that integrate students with disabilities. Bueno (2011, p.14) states that the inclusive model demands training for two types of teachers:

3. Regular education teachers, with a minimum level of training, since the expectation is the inclusion of students with “special educational needs”; and
1. Specialized teachers for different “special educational needs,” either for direct service to this population or to support the work carried out by regular classroom teachers who integrate these students.

This requires training that teaches teachers to use resources such as assistive software and multisensory methodologies, as well as reflections on how to respond to these demands according to each disability, so they can minimally handle adverse situations. Glat and Ferreira (2003) add by emphasizing the importance of collaborative approaches: training should encourage effective partnerships between regular teachers and special education specialists, combating pedagogical isolation.



[...] the inclusion process has a scope that goes beyond placing students considered special in regular classes and making occasional adaptations to the curricular structure. Inclusion implies the involvement of the entire school and its managers, a resizing of its political-pedagogical project, and a restructuring of the priorities of the school system (municipal, state, federal, or private) to which the school belongs, so that it has the material and human conditions necessary to undertake this transformation (Glat; Ferreira, 2003, p.30).

Finally, Stainback and Stainback (1999) remind us that training should promote a culture of mutual respect and a sense of community, where the teacher sees themselves as part of a school that transforms challenges into opportunities for learning and collective growth:

In communities that support their members, everyone has responsibilities and plays a role in supporting others. Each individual is an important and worthy member of the community and contributes to the group. This involvement helps foster self-esteem, pride in achievements, mutual respect, and a sense of belonging among community members (Stainback; Stainback, 1999, p.225).

In contexts of growing enrollment of students with disabilities, as observed by INEP (2022), these theoretical foundations are not merely ideas but urgent requirements to prevent “inclusion” from becoming a new form of exclusion.

Thus, interaction among stakeholders (school, teachers, family) is indispensable in the teaching-learning process. To ensure an educational process that promotes the development of students with disabilities, we emphasize the importance of teacher training, both for specialized assistance and in regular classrooms, for curricular flexibility and adaptation—essential for inclusive action.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Throughout our professional trajectory, it has been a recurring observation that regular classroom teachers state they do not feel prepared to handle the daily challenges posed by students with disabilities, such as adapting materials in real time, managing behaviors, or integrating these students into group activities. The main complaint is the absence of specific courses and training that would prepare them for this growing reality. Nevertheless, we reaffirm the need for flexibility and adaptation for students. Blanco (2004, p.293) asserts that “responding to diversity means breaking away from the traditional scheme in which all children do the same thing, at the same time, in the same way, and with the same materials.”

However, the 36% increase in the number of students with disabilities over five years (INEP, 2022) has placed teachers in situations of vulnerability, overload, and constant professional stress. In conversations, the perception emerges that this overload involves immediate pedagogical and socio-emotional interventions that go far beyond the standard curriculum, requiring a set of skills that many teachers do not possess. One educator reported during a training session:



“What stresses me is not the child, but the feeling that I am failing them because my training did not give me the necessary tools.”

The stress mentioned by the teacher does not stem from diversity or the inherent complexity of the student, but from the perception of technical and pedagogical incompetence. This “feeling of failure” is a clear symptom of teacher insecurity, a central theme in the discussion on training for inclusion. Mantoan (2011, p.59) raises further questions related to this issue:

What quality are we talking about? Other questions derive from this main one, such as: which teaching practices help teachers teach students in the same class, reaching everyone despite their differences? Or how to create educational contexts capable of teaching all students? But without falling into the traps of special modalities in current programs, which have served no purpose in improving schools.

The author provokes reflections on the teacher’s work and our educational system. Glat and Blanco (2015, p.16), when addressing the change in school culture, argue that inclusion requires teachers to change their posture, which is not possible without adequate preparation, because:

To become inclusive, the school needs to train its teachers and management team and review the forms of interaction among all segments that compose and influence it. It needs to revitalize its structure, organization, political-pedagogical project, teaching resources, methodologies, and strategies, as well as its assessment practices. To welcome all students, the school must, above all, transform its intentions and curricular choices, offering differentiated teaching that fosters development and social inclusion.

The lack of concrete tools leads to paralysis and stress. The teacher’s statement illustrates the failure of both initial and continuing education to provide the practical repertoire necessary to deal with differences, turning diversity—which should be enriching—into a source of pressure.

This difficulty is not merely an individual problem; it reflects a chronic gap in initial training, aggravated by the lack of continuous and on-site training opportunities. The urgency of training becomes evident when considering its direct impact on education quality. Students with disabilities, if they do not receive adequate support and adaptations, may face insurmountable barriers that hinder their progress and well-being, reinforcing the cycle of exclusion. As Sasaki (2006) points out, the challenge of inclusion is not to place the person with a disability in society, but to change society so that it becomes accessible and welcoming to all.

Therefore, training programs must address not only pedagogical techniques but also teachers’ emotional management in increasingly diverse educational environments. However, we observe that there are still significant gaps in the availability and, above all, in the quality and applicability of these courses. Many are theoretical and disconnected from classroom reality. Greater investment, planning, and



oversight by educational institutions and government agencies are needed to respond competently and sustainably to the continuous growth of disability cases.

## CONCLUSION

Continuing education courses for regular classroom teachers in inclusive education are an essential and non-negotiable element to guarantee the right to learning and the success of all students. Practical experience, combined with statistical data revealing the increase in the number of students with disabilities over the past five years, signals an undeniable urgency in transforming training policies. The lack of teacher preparation compromises the development of these students and limits the advancement of school inclusion.

It is crucial that educational policies prioritize the provision of continuing education courses that are contextualized and practical, focusing on managing growing diversity, real case studies, and the use of assistive technologies; collaborative and interdisciplinary, incorporating psychologists, occupational therapists, and special education specialists so that educators understand the holistic impact of special needs, promoting co-teaching.

Courses should also be reflective and long-term—not merely isolated events, but continuous processes that include post-course supervision and modules on formative assessment (using tools such as digital portfolios), ensuring that inclusion is measurable and sustainable. Training should be democratic and accessible, using online platforms to reduce geographic barriers, especially in remote regions. Furthermore, public policies should include financial incentives (such as bonuses or recognized certifications for career progression) to motivate teachers to actively engage and apply new practices.

This holistic and integrated approach not only strengthens basic education but also contributes to building a more just and equitable society, where inclusion is seen in everyday practice as an inalienable right and not as a concession. Transforming the challenge of diversity into an opportunity for collective growth is the ultimate goal of inclusive teacher training.



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