

## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: NECESSARY DIALOGUES

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**Abstract:** This study sought to understand the barriers to implementing inclusive education in educational institutions. An integrative literature review was conducted, consulting the databases of the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), PsycINFO, the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), the Web of Science (WoS), the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD), and the database of theses and dissertations of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES). At a time when inclusive education deals with teaching adapted to differences and individual needs, the implementation of inclusive education has faced limitations and difficulties due to the lack of teacher training to meet the educational needs of students, as well as the precariousness of the infrastructure and material conditions for pedagogical work with children with special needs. The barriers are systemic and can be divided into: pedagogical: inflexible curricula and lack of adaptation of materials; formative: gaps in initial and continuing teacher training; structural: lack of physical accessibility and assistive technologies; and attitudinal and prejudice: low expectations of the student and resistance from the community. The implementation of inclusive education in educational institutions transcends mere normative adaptation, requiring the confrontation of multidimensional barriers that operate interdependently.

**Keywords:** teacher training; inclusive education; special education.

## INTRODUCTION

The inclusion paradigm emerged from historical commitments collectively undertaken by international movements advocating for social rights—such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the World Conference on Education for All (1990), and the UNESCO report by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century (1996). In this sense, inclusion means sharing in the process of humanization through a collective construction experience that positions everyone as active subjects; this process strips away the “thing-like” status often imposed on individuals, enabling them to become the subjects of their own lives (Freire, 2009).

Special Education, in all its aspects, has been the focus of discussions and research throughout Brazil aimed at understanding, analyzing, or proposing changes, with a view to the target audience of Special Education and the continuing education of teachers to better serve this specific group (Carvalho, 2015).

Teacher training is an aspect that deserves emphasis when addressing inclusion. Many prospective teachers feel insecure and anxious about the prospect of having a child with special needs in their classroom. This is a common complaint among education students, teacher trainees, and practicing teachers alike (Lima, 2002).

Current challenges regarding inclusive education in Brazil center on the need to develop systematic monitoring tools (indicators for implemented programs), conduct qualitative and quantitative research to demonstrate program outcomes and identify successful experiences, and implement human resource training programs—including teacher training grounded in the realities

of schools and regular classrooms within the education system (Glat et al., 2003).

Research points to the promotion of forms of participation by school communities in developing strategic action plans to make their schools more inclusive, valuing and utilizing existing resources while taking into account contextual and local specificities (Carvalho, 2015).

As an educational paradigm, school inclusion aims to build a welcoming school environment free from criteria, requirements, or mechanisms of selection or discrimination regarding the access and successful retention of all students. This paradigm requires a process of redefining concepts and practices, wherein educators come to understand human difference in all its complexity—no longer viewing it as something fixed or located primarily in “the other,” but recognizing that differences are constantly being created and recreated, existing within each and every individual. At the same time, it helps transform the historical reality of the educational and social segregation of people with disabilities, thereby realizing everyone’s right to education. Given the existing gaps in research on this subject, the present study seeks to understand the barriers to implementing inclusive education in educational institutions.

## METHODS

An integrative literature review was conducted. This approach was adopted because it allows for the combination of data from empirical and theoretical research, which can thus be directed toward conceptualization, the identification of research gaps, theoretical review, and methodological analysis of studies on a specific subject, thereby enabling an analysis of the literature (Ercole; Melo; Alcoforado, 2014).

In this regard, six interdependent and interrelated phases were considered: formulation of the guiding question, literature search or sampling, data collection, critical analysis of the included studies, discussion of the results, and presentation of the integrative review. The guiding question was defined as follows: What are the barriers to the implementation of inclusive education in educational

institutions? (Souza; Silva; Carvalho, 2010).

Studies were collected via electronic searches in the following databases: Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), PsycINFO, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Web of Science (WoS), the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD), and the thesis and dissertation repository of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes).

Inclusion criteria comprised full-text articles available electronically in Portuguese, English, or Spanish that addressed the proposed topic in the title, abstract, or keywords. Exclusion criteria included letters to the editor, editorials, duplicate articles, and those that did not unequivocally address the subject under study.

The survey of studies was conducted between October 2025 and January 2026. The descriptors “inclusive education” and “special education” were used as search strategies; the Boolean operator “AND” was employed to combine the selected descriptors, thereby refining the search and improving data selection for analysis.

For data collection, an instrument validated by Ursi (2005) for integrative reviews was used, covering the following analysis categories: identification code, publication title, author and author’s background, source, year of publication, study type, region where the research was conducted, and the database where the article was published. Following the selection of articles, the information to be extracted from the studies was defined. To facilitate data capture, a database was created using Microsoft Office Excel 2010 software, comprising the following variables: article title, year of publication, study design, and main outcomes. The obtained data were organized into a table and thematic approaches, and interpreted according to relevant literature.

## RESULTS

Eleven studies meeting the eligibility criteria were included in this review; the table below

outlines the titles and main findings of the analyzed studies (Table 1). Overall, a limited number of studies on the subject was observed, especially considering the impact of the topic.

Table 1. Studies included in the review and the characteristics evaluated.

| Nº | Article Title/Authors/Years                                                          | Key Results and Identified Barriers                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Public Policies and Pedagogical Practices in Inclusive Education (Lopes, 2022)       | It highlights precarious teacher training and the lack of continuity in public policies following the pandemic. It points out that technological innovations from remote learning were abandoned upon the return to in-person instruction. |
| 2  | Barriers and facilitators to inclusion in higher education (Nascimento et al., 2022) | It identifies that inclusion in higher education focuses solely on access but fails regarding retention. The main barriers are attitudinal (prejudice) and the lack of specific assistive resources.                                       |
| 3  | Inclusive Education and Its Obstacles: Teachers' Conceptions (UFMG, 2026)            | It reveals that many teachers still operate under a "medical model," focusing on the disability rather than on potential, in addition to facing difficulties in adapting abstract content (e.g., Science).                                 |
| 4  | Barriers to Inclusive Education: A Comprehensive Review (IJRISS, 2026)               | A global study identifying "rigid curricula" and standardized assessment systems as major obstacles to the pedagogical flexibility required for inclusion.                                                                                 |
| 5  | Challenges and barriers in the implementation of inclusive education (Leite, 2025)   | It lists cultural resistance within the school community and inadequate physical infrastructure as barriers that make the environment hostile for students with specific needs.                                                            |
| 6  | Barriers to Effective Implementation in Public Schools (ResearchGate, 2025)          | Quantitative research showing that 55.6% of teachers lack any formal training in inclusive education, leading to a lack of confidence and segregating teaching practices.                                                                  |
| 7  | Barriers to inclusive education: a look at the reality (Santos; Lopes, 2022)         | It points out that the lack of assistive technologies and adapted educational materials prevents the student from actively participating in classroom activities.                                                                          |
| 8  | Challenges of inclusive education in the early years (Multivix, 2025)                | It focuses on the lack of adapted furniture and recreational resources (toys and instruments) for children with disabilities in municipal public schools.                                                                                  |
| 9  | Teacher Training and Inclusion: Obstacles and Possibilities (Santos, 2022)           | It concludes that continuing education is viewed as "optional" rather than part of the required working hours, which discourages professionals from keeping up to date with new methodologies.                                             |

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|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10 | Cultural resistance and inclusion in Brazilian schools (Silva & Oliveira, 2020) | A case study identifying bullying and social exclusion by peers (an attitudinal barrier) as factors leading to school dropout among students with disabilities. |
| 11 | Material resources and accessibility in the inclusive school (Santos, 2020)     | It focuses on architectural barriers (ramps, restrooms, Braille signage) that restrict students' physical autonomy within the educational institution.          |

Source: study data.

## DISCUSSION

In Brazil, the training of teachers and other educational professionals involved in education still follows a traditional model, which is inadequate to meet the demands for inclusive education. It is worth highlighting that, among Pedagogy programs and Pedagogy programs with a specialization in Special Education, few offer courses or content focused on the education of people with special educational needs. This lack of courses and content has persisted despite the legal requirement established in § 2 of Article 24 of Decree No. 3,298, of December 20, 1999. In addition to this Decree, Ordinance No. 1,793/94 also recommends the inclusion of the course “Ethical-political-educational aspects of the normalization and integration of persons with special needs,” preferably in all teacher education programs (Costa, 2005).

The fact is that, in general, teacher education programs are not prepared to fulfill the role of training teachers who are able to deal with the heterogeneity resulting from inclusion. This is concerning because, whether adequately or inadequately, students are being included, and classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse, although, evidently, not at the desired pace (Glat; Pletsch, 2004; Pletsch; Fontes, 2006). In other words, this constitutes a precarious form of inclusion.

Teacher education should not be understood merely as a technicist and “democratizing” instrument that enables individuals to gain access to culture, information, and work. Education should be understood as a “democratizing” instrument not only in the relationship between individuals and culture, individuals and information, and individuals and work, but, above all, as a means of enabling

the integral development of each human being, allowing them to understand their own practices and their complexities (Fiorentini, 2003).

As inclusive education seeks to provide teaching that is appropriate to differences and individual needs, the implementation of inclusive education has encountered limitations and difficulties resulting from the lack of teacher training to address students' educational needs, as well as inadequate infrastructure and insufficient material conditions for pedagogical work with children with disabilities. This situation has brought into question the lack of teacher preparation to work with inclusion, which becomes a serious problem in the implementation of policies of this nature. In view of this context, it is important that teachers be adequately equipped to address the particularities presented by students (Lima; Cavalcante, 2010).

As inclusive education seeks to provide teaching that is appropriate to differences and individual needs, its implementation has encountered limitations and difficulties due to the lack of teacher training to meet students' educational needs, in addition to inadequate infrastructure and insufficient material conditions for pedagogical work with children with special needs. For the inclusive context not to remain merely rhetorical, it is necessary to consider the training of human resources, working conditions for teachers, and opportunities for dialogue between teacher educators (in this case, universities) and schools (Gómez, 2009).

The transition from a segregating model to an inclusive education perspective requires more than simply ratifying legal frameworks; it demands a profound restructuring of school cultures, policies, and practices. However, the specialized literature points to the persistence of significant obstacles that prevent the full participation of students with disabilities or specific educational needs in mainstream education (Hoffmann, 2009).

The primary barrier, and often the most resilient, lies in the ableist conceptions that still permeate the school environment. The persistence of a "clinical gaze" toward students, which prioritizes diagnosis over pedagogical potential, generates low academic expectations. Prejudice and resistance among school administrators, teachers, and school communities create a form of symbolic

isolation in which the student's physical presence does not translate into social or intellectual belonging (Mendonça, 2016).

Architectural and resource-related barriers should also be highlighted. Although physical accessibility is the most visible aspect, its absence remains a reality in several institutions. In addition to basic infrastructure, such as ramps, adapted restrooms, and signage, there is a shortage of Assistive Technologies and accessible teaching materials. Thus, the lack of investment in multifunctional resources limits students' autonomy and restricts the possibilities for mediating knowledge (Schiff; Heller, 2015).

Finally, the implementation of inclusion encounters rigid curricula and standardized assessment systems that rarely take into account the singularities of learning processes. The absence of time and spaces for collaborative planning between mainstream and special education teachers fragments student support, transforming inclusion into a merely administrative enrollment process without guaranteeing substantive equity (Ainscow, 2009).

Overcoming these barriers requires that students' needs not be understood as an attribute inherent to the individual, but rather as the result of the interaction between their individual characteristics and the barriers imposed by the social and institutional environment.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the implementation of inclusive education in educational institutions goes beyond mere compliance with regulations, requiring the addressing of multidimensional barriers that operate interdependently. Overcoming attitudinal barriers and the ableist paradigm is the first step toward ensuring that structural and architectural changes acquire genuine pedagogical meaning. At the same time, it is imperative that public policies promote robust and continuing teacher education, capable of equipping educators to work effectively in this area and to make effective use of assistive technologies. Only through collaborative planning, flexible curricula, and adequate institutional

funding will it be possible to move from merely administrative inclusion toward substantive equity. Therefore, the success of this process depends on a cultural restructuring that recognizes diversity as an inherent and enriching element of the academic environment, rather than as an obstacle to the norm.

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