

## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND ITS CHALLENGES TODAY

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**RESUMO:** A educação inclusiva se tornou uma realidade cheia de desafios e oportunidades para as instituições educacionais. O objetivo do presente artigo é analisar os desafios e oportunidades que se apresentam nas instituições escolares relacionados com a educação inclusiva. A educação inclusiva tem seu antecedente na educação especial, esta definição está amplamente aceita e explícita nos compêndios educacionais do Brasil, relacionando-se com a com outras tradições pedagógicas, nas quais se respalda a defesa da escola e da educação pública. No entanto, é importante notar que a inclusão como tal, não só compreende o âmbito educativo, mas também abrange a problemática social que isso representa em toda a comunidade escolar. Diante disto, o presente trabalho objetivou analisar estes aspectos no contexto bibliográfico e literário na atualidade.

**Palavras-chave:** Juventude. Inclusão educacional. Barreiras educacionais. Espaços educativos. Políticas públicas. Acesso à educação.

**ABSTRACT:** Inclusive education has become a reality full of challenges and opportunities for educational institutions. The objective of this article is to analyze the challenges and opportunities that arise in school institutions related to inclusive education. Inclusive education has its antecedent in special education, this definition is widely accepted and explicit in educational compendiums in Brazil, relating to other pedagogical traditions, in which the defense of school and public education is supported. However, it is important to note that inclusion as such not only encompasses the educational scope, but also encompasses the social problem that this represents in the entire school community. In view of this, the present work aimed to analyze these aspects in the bibliographic and literary context today.

**Keywords:** Youth. Educational inclusion. Educational barriers. Educational spaces. Public policies. Access to education.

### INTRODUCTION

The educational inclusion of young people in different social, economic and cultural contexts remains one of the biggest challenges for the global education system. In countries like Brazil, where social and regional disparities are striking, many young people face significant barriers to accessing quality education. According to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) from 2024, approximately 30% of young people between 15 and 17 years old are out of school, which reflects a school exclusion that mainly affects the poorest layers of the population. This reality highlights the need for more inclusive

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and effective public policies and educational practices. Education, in addition to being a fundamental right, is seen as an essential tool for promoting social equity and building a fairer future for all.

However, the barriers that hinder young people's access and permanence in school are multiple and diverse. They encompass economic factors, such as the lack of financial resources for transportation and school supplies; social factors, such as prejudice and discrimination; and structural factors, such as the scarcity of adequate infrastructure in public schools. These obstacles not only make it difficult for young people to enter, but also compromise their active participation and academic success. In addition, many young people find themselves disconnected from the school curriculum, which often does not consider their cultural realities and experiences, which can generate disinterest and school dropout.

In this context, it is imperative to rethink the role of schools as spaces for socialization, learning, and identity construction. The school should be understood as an inclusive environment that respects diversity and offers opportunities for all students, regardless of their origin or social condition. The search for practices and policies that favor this inclusion is the objective of this study, which proposes to analyze the barriers faced by young people and suggest alternatives for the creation of a fairer and more accessible educational system.

## CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUNG PEOPLE IN EDUCATION

The challenges that young people face in accessing and staying in school are multifaceted and require a broad approach to be effectively overcome. One of the main obstacles is economic, as many young people belong to low-income families, which makes it difficult to access school materials, transportation, and other basic needs for good academic performance. Studies such as Silva's (2023) point out that poverty is one of the main causes of school dropout, with many students being forced to abandon their studies to work and help support their families. This problem is exacerbated in peripheral regions and rural areas, where educational opportunities are even more limited.

Another factor that contributes to educational exclusion is the lack of representation and prejudice faced by young people from minority groups. Racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination is still a reality in many schools, which makes it difficult for students from marginalized communities to fully integrate. Education, in many cases, does not take into account the cultural diversity of students, ignoring their roots, histories and ways of learning.

This can generate a feeling of alienation, causing many young people to not feel motivated to continue their studies. The lack of empathy and understanding on the part of educators and the absence of pedagogical practices that value these cultures contribute to the marginalization of students.

In addition, the structure of public schools in many locations is also a significant barrier. The lack of adequate infrastructure, such as schools without access to modern technologies, libraries or laboratories, undermines the quality of education and prevents students from having a complete and diversified education. Many teachers, in turn, face precarious working conditions, which directly impacts the quality of education that is offered to students. The scarcity of resources and the overload of work for educators further aggravate the situation, making the school environment less attractive and less productive.

## **PUBLIC POLICIES AND INCLUSIVE PRACTICES IN EDUCATION**

In recent years, several public policies have been implemented in order to promote a more inclusive and accessible education for all young people. Programs such as Bolsa Família, the Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education (FUNDEB) and the Quota Law in federal universities have been important steps in an attempt to reduce educational inequalities. Such initiatives aim to ensure the poorest youth's access to education and development opportunities, reducing the financial barriers that make it difficult for them to stay in school.

However, the effectiveness of these policies still faces considerable challenges. Often, government actions focus only on expanding access to education, without considering fundamental aspects, such as the quality of teaching, teacher training, and the adequacy of the curriculum to the needs of students. Therefore, a more holistic and integrated approach is needed, which contemplates not only the entry of young people into school, but also their permanence and success in the school environment. The implementation of policies that prioritize valuing diversity, the continuous training of educators, and the creation of a welcoming and inclusive school environment are essential to ensure that young people can develop their full potential.

The educational inclusion of young people is an issue of extreme importance for the development of a more just and egalitarian society. The analysis of the barriers faced by young people in the education system reveals that the challenges are multiple and complex, involving

economic, social and structural factors. However, public policies and educational practices can play a key role in overcoming these obstacles, creating a more accessible, inclusive, and diversity-friendly environment.

It is urgent that the educational system be reformulated in a way that values the experiences and cultures of students, promoting equity and inclusion. Only through an approach that considers the diverse realities of young people and that offers real opportunities for development will it be possible to build an education capable of transforming society and ensuring a fairer future for all. Thus, the construction of educational spaces that welcome and respect differences, while offering quality training, is essential so that all young people, regardless of their origin, have the opportunity to fulfill their dreams and contribute to collective well-being.

## JUSTIFICATION

The educational inclusion of young people in situations of social, economic and cultural vulnerability is an urgent and fundamental issue for the construction of a more just and egalitarian society. Although Brazil and other countries have advanced in terms of public policies aimed at inclusion, there are still significant barriers that make it difficult for young people to access and remain in schools, especially those from contexts of social inequality or who belong to historically marginalized groups, such as black, indigenous, LGBTQIA+, and people with disabilities. These barriers are not limited to physical aspects, such as the lack of accessibility in educational institutions, but also involve symbolic issues, such as prejudice, discrimination, and social exclusion. Such obstacles directly impact young people's self-esteem and harm their academic performance, often resulting in school dropout.

Education is a fundamental right, a powerful means of emancipation and social transformation. For this right to be fully exercised, it is essential that the school environment becomes more inclusive, welcoming and respectful for all. Understanding the challenges these young people face and proposing effective alternatives to overcome them is essential for building an educational system that is truly democratic, accessible, and capable of promoting equity for all students. Educational inclusion should not only be a goal to be achieved, but a daily practice that recognizes and values diversity as an essential part of the learning process and social development.

## METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted from a qualitative approach, seeking to deeply understand the issues related to the educational inclusion of young people in contexts of vulnerability. To this end, a comprehensive literature review was carried out, with a selection of academic texts, reports from governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as publications by experts in inclusive education and youth. The research also included the analysis of educational policies, both in Brazil and in other international contexts, to understand how different approaches have sought to overcome educational barriers. In addition, cases of schools that implemented inclusive practices effectively were studied. The objective of this analysis of case studies was to identify the elements and strategies that contributed to the success of these initiatives, highlighting the conditions that favor overcoming the difficulties faced by young people in vulnerable situations. This process has made it possible to understand the challenges and possible solutions in a more concrete way, providing a solid basis for proposing alternatives that can improve educational inclusion in different contexts.

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The educational inclusion of young people in situations of social, economic and cultural vulnerability has been widely discussed in the field of education, especially in view of the challenges that this public faces in the schooling process. The theory of educational inclusion proposes that education should be a universal right, without distinctions, and should promote an environment that favors the full development of students, respecting and valuing their diversity. The concept of inclusion goes beyond the simple adaptation of schools, involving a commitment to pedagogical practices that guarantee access, permanence and school success for all students.

## EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

According to the Salamanca Document (1994), educational inclusion should be understood as the opportunity for all students, regardless of their social, economic, cultural or physical conditions, to participate in a common educational system. The document emphasizes the need to create an environment that accepts and celebrates differences, promoting equity and social justice. In this sense, inclusive education is a way to build a more egalitarian society, capable of respecting and integrating differences in a natural and healthy way.

The concept of "diversity" in the educational context encompasses different aspects, such as ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical and socioeconomic condition. According to Araújo (2021), diversity, when recognized and valued in schools, contributes to the formation of a more inclusive and plural learning environment. The author highlights that education should be a reflection of the diversity of society, promoting respect for the identities and cultures of students, which favors the construction of a positive identity, fundamental for the academic and social development of young people.

## **BARRIERS TO INCLUSION**

Despite advances in terms of public inclusion policies in Brazil and other countries, educational barriers are still a reality for many young people. These barriers can be both physical and symbolic. Physical barriers refer to the inadequate infrastructure of schools, such as the lack of accessibility for students with disabilities, the scarcity of adequate teaching materials, and the absence of technologies that favor learning. Symbolic barriers, on the other hand, are linked to prejudice, discrimination, and stigmatization of students who belong to marginalized groups, such as black, indigenous, LGBTQIA+, and people with disabilities (Santos, 2022).

Studies by Almeida (2020) point out that, in addition to structural difficulties, schools also need to face the challenge of training teachers prepared to deal with diversity, being able to apply pedagogical methods that respect the different ways of learning of students. The author warns of the importance of investing in the continuing education of educators, who must be prepared to deal with the complexity of social and cultural issues present in the classroom.

## **PUBLIC INCLUSION POLICIES**

In Brazil, public policies for educational inclusion have been expanded in recent decades, with emphasis on the Brazilian Law for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (Law 13.146/2015), which establishes rights of accessibility and equity in access to education for people with disabilities. In addition, programs such as Bolsa Família, which aims to ensure the permanence of young people in situations of socioeconomic vulnerability in schools, have also been important to reduce school dropout and promote inclusion (MEC, 2021).

The implementation of public policies that guarantee the right to education for all young people has generated positive results, but there are still many challenges to be faced. Effectively integrating young people from marginalized groups into the education system requires a transformation in pedagogical practices, as well as a commitment to creating welcoming and safe school environments for all students. According to Costa (2022), public policies should be complemented with concrete actions in schools, such as awareness programs on diversity and initiatives that promote equal opportunities for all.

## CASE STUDY: INCLUSIVE PRACTICES IN SCHOOLS

Case study analysis is an important tool for understanding inclusive practices that have been successfully applied in different contexts. According to research by Silva (2023), some schools in Brazil have adopted innovative pedagogical practices, such as collaborative teaching and curricular adaptation, which seek to meet the specific needs of students in vulnerable situations. Such practices, when well implemented, can help overcome physical and symbolic barriers, providing a more equitable learning environment.

An example of an inclusive school is the Dona Leonor Municipal Elementary School, located in a peripheral community of São Paulo. According to the study by Souza (2022), the school adopted a teaching methodology based on interdisciplinary projects, which integrates different areas of knowledge and respects the experiences of students. The school also developed affirmative actions aimed at the inclusion of black and indigenous students, such as offering content that addresses the cultures of these groups, promoting a more welcoming and respectful environment.

### TABLES I: ANALYSIS OF Inclusive Practices

The following is a table with examples of inclusive practices implemented in schools, which were analyzed in the research:

Inclusive Practice	Description	Expected Result
<b>Collaborative Teaching</b>	Students with and without disabilities work together in activities	Increased cooperation and respect among students
<b>Curricular Adaptation</b>	Adequacy of the content to the needs of the students	Improved student performance and engagement

<b>Awareness Program</b>	Diversity and inclusion workshops for students and teachers	Reduction of discriminatory attitudes and greater empathy among students
<b>Multicultural Content</b>	Inclusion of topics on Black, Indigenous and LGBT culture QIA+	Valuing diversity and increasing students' self-esteem

The educational inclusion of young people in vulnerable situations requires an integrated approach that involves public policies, innovative pedagogical practices, and a real commitment to diversity and equity. Creating an educational environment that is accessible, welcoming, and respectful of differences is essential to ensure that all young people, regardless of their social, cultural, or economic background, have access to the same learning opportunities. Through effective inclusive practices and the implementation of public policies that value diversity, it is possible to transform the educational system into a space for emancipation and social transformation.

## RESULTS

The analysis of inclusive practices and educational policies adopted in schools that seek to promote the inclusion of young people in vulnerable situations revealed that, although there are advances, there are still many challenges to be overcome. The implementation of practices such as collaborative teaching, curriculum adaptation, awareness programs and multicultural content has been shown to bring significant benefits to the school environment and student performance. The following tables summarize the results observed in the schools analyzed, based on the practices implemented.

**Table 1:** Inclusive Practices And Their Results

Inclusive Practice	Description	Expected Result
<b>Collaborative Teaching</b>	Students with and without disabilities work together in activities	<b>Increased cooperation and respect:</b> Students learned to work as a team supporting each other regardless of their differences this fostered a more harmonious and collaborative environment
<b>Curricular Adaptation</b>	Adequacy of the content to the needs of the students	<b>Improved academic performance:</b> Students with specific needs were able to follow classes more effectively with strategic materials that respected their learning pace
<b>Awareness Program</b>	Diversity and inclusion workshops for students and teachers	<b>Greater empathy and mutual respect:</b> Reduction of prejudiced attitudes, increased understanding of the difficulties faced by colleagues and a more welcoming environment.

<b>Multicultural Content</b>	Inclusion of topics on Black, Indigenous and LGBT culture QIA+	<b>Valuing identity and self-esteem:</b> Students from different cultural backgrounds felt more represented and respected, which strengthened their self-esteem identity.
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The results indicate that the implementation of these practices, in an integrated and constant way, contributes to the construction of a more inclusive and empathetic educational environment. Collaborative teaching, for example, made it possible for students with different abilities and characteristics to work together, generating a rich and diversified exchange of experiences. The curricular adaptation, in turn, provided that each student was respected in his or her time and learning style, promoting continuous progress without exclusions. In addition, awareness programs, which involve both students and teachers, have significantly reduced discriminatory behaviors, creating a culture of respect and understanding.

**Table 2:** Impact On Educational Barriers

Educational Barrier	Solutions Adopted	Observed Impact
<b>Lack of physical accessibility</b>	Adaptation of space and resources (accessible material ramps).	<b>Increased participation of students with disabilities:</b> better access and mobility by ensuring that all students could fully participate in activities.
<b>Discrimination and respect</b>	Teacher awareness and training programs.	<b>More welcoming environment:</b> Reducing prejudice and discrimination or creating a safer and more welcoming school for students of different ethnicities, backgrounds and orientations
<b>Disconnection with the local culture.</b>	Inclusion of content related to different cultures.	<b>Greater sense of belonging:</b> Students from diverse cultural backgrounds felt more represented and in the school content promoting an environment of respect and inclusion

Schools that have adopted practices to overcome these educational barriers have obtained positive results, creating a more accessible, welcoming, and respectful environment. The adaptation of spaces and the availability of accessible materials ensured greater participation of students with disabilities, allowing their full inclusion in school activities. Likewise, the inclusion of diverse cultural content was crucial for students to feel represented, which strengthened their sense of belonging to the school community.

Educational inclusion is a fundamental process for building a more just, equitable, and respectful society. The results of this research show that the implementation of inclusive

practices in schools has a positive impact both on the educational environment and on the development of students. Practices such as collaborative teaching, curriculum adaptation, promotion of awareness-raising programmes and the inclusion of multicultural content are essential to overcome the physical and symbolic barriers that still exclude many young people, especially those from marginalised groups.

The success of these initiatives depends on building a school environment that values diversity, respects differences, and promotes equity. Although there are advances in public inclusion policies, there is still much to be done, especially in the continuing education of teachers, in the creation of accessible environments and in the appreciation of students' cultures. Inclusive education should not be just a goal, but a constant practice that is reflected in the daily life of schools, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to develop fully, respected in their identities and contexts.

Therefore, it is essential that schools and educational systems commit to adopting inclusive practices on an ongoing basis and implementing policies that ensure access, permanence, and success for all students, regardless of their social, cultural, or economic backgrounds. Education, when truly inclusive, has the power to transform lives and communities, promoting social emancipation and building a more just and egalitarian future for all.

## DISCUSSION

The educational inclusion of young people in situations of social, economic and cultural vulnerability is a central theme in the search for a more just and egalitarian society. However, the challenges to ensure the full inclusion of these young people in the education system are still great. The physical, symbolic, and pedagogical barriers they face remain significant obstacles, and overcoming them requires profound changes in educational practices, public policy, and the attitudes of all those involved in the learning process.

From the analysis of the research carried out, it is possible to realize that educational inclusion goes far beyond the simple adaptation of spaces or resources. True inclusion is closely related to a change in mentality and a reconfiguration of pedagogical practices.

As Ainscow (2020) highlights:

"An inclusive school is one that adapts to the needs of all students, respecting their differences and promoting the active participation of all students in the learning process."

Therefore, it is necessary for schools not only to offer adequate physical and material resources, but also to implement pedagogical practices that effectively integrate all students, regardless of their individual characteristics. Among the practices that have shown positive results, collaborative teaching stands out. According to Silva (2022), "by promoting activities in which students work together, respecting each other's abilities and differences, collaborative teaching fosters empathy and mutual understanding, contributing to the construction of a more inclusive environment." This approach not only facilitates interaction between students with different abilities, but also allows students to develop social skills that are essential for living in a plural society.

When applied consistently, collaborative teaching transforms the classroom into a space for exchange and learning, where differences are valued and respected. Another crucial point highlighted in the research was curricular adaptation, which proved to be essential to meet the needs of students with disabilities or specific learning difficulties. According to Pereira (2021) "the adaptation of the curriculum should be understood not as an exception, but as a common practice in an inclusive school." Adapting the curriculum means adjusting content, methodologies and assessments in order to ensure that all students can learn according to their needs. For this to happen, it is necessary that teachers receive continuous training and pedagogical support so that they can implement these adaptations effectively. This change, however, requires a significant commitment from schools and the government, with investments in resources and in the qualification of educators.

The inclusion of multicultural content is also a powerful pedagogical strategy to promote inclusion and respect for diversity. When schools incorporate themes that reflect the different cultures, identities, and histories of students, these students feel more represented and respected.

As Araújo (2021) points out:

"The inclusion of content that addresses Black, Indigenous, and LGBTQIA+ cultures not only enriches the curriculum, but also strengthens students' self-esteem and sense of belonging, especially those who have historically been marginalized."

By adopting a curriculum that reflects the plurality of their communities, schools not only enrich the academic training of students, but also contribute to the construction of a more just and egalitarian society. However, there are still considerable challenges to be faced. Physical barriers in schools, such as the lack of accessibility for students with disabilities,

continue to be a reality in many regions of Brazil. This limits access for a significant part of the student population and perpetuates inequality in access to education.

As Souza (2020) states:

"It is not enough just to ensure that the student has access to a physical place; It is necessary to ensure that the school environment is truly accessible, both physically and symbolically."

This implies building schools that, in addition to being accessible, are safe and welcoming for all students, promoting true social inclusion. Another crucial point is teacher training, which still needs to be further developed with regard to diversity and inclusion issues. While many educators are committed to inclusion, the lack of continuous, specific training on how to address diversity in classrooms is a significant obstacle.

As Costa (2022) also points out that:

"It is necessary that teacher training be rethought to include inclusive pedagogical practices, so that all educators feel prepared to deal with the plurality present in the classrooms."

Finally, it is important to highlight that educational inclusion is not an exclusive responsibility of schools or teachers, but involves a collective effort of the whole society. Support from families, the community, and the government is essential to ensure that all young people have access to quality education. It is essential that public inclusion policies are more effective and that there is greater awareness of the importance of inclusion from the highest levels of government to local communities.

Educational inclusion is, without a doubt, one of the pillars for building a more just and egalitarian society. Research shows that, by adopting inclusive practices such as collaborative teaching, curriculum adaptation, awareness programs, and the inclusion of multicultural content, schools can transform the educational environment, making it more welcoming and respectful of diversity. However, this transformation requires a continuous commitment from all those involved, from teachers to school managers, and, above all, robust support from public policies that ensure the effectiveness of these principles in practice.

Overcoming educational barriers, both physical and symbolic, should be a priority for the education system. This will only be possible through an integrated approach, which involves the proper training of teachers, the adaptation of content and pedagogical methods, and the creation of a school environment that is accessible, safe and welcoming for all students. Inclusive education, ultimately, is not just a pedagogical practice, but a commitment to building

a more supportive and egalitarian society, where each young person has the opportunity to fully develop, regardless of their origins or circumstances.

#### 4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The main objective of this study was to understand the challenges faced by young people in situations of social, economic and cultural vulnerability in accessing and remaining in education, in addition to identifying practices and public policies that can promote real and effective inclusion in the school environment. Throughout the research, we seek to critically analyze the educational barriers that still persist and explore alternatives that can transform schools into more welcoming and accessible spaces for all students.

The methodology adopted was qualitative, centered on a literature review and analysis of educational policies and inclusive practices in different contexts. The review allowed us to understand the strategies that have been implemented in schools and how these approaches directly impact student participation and performance. In addition, the study focused on practices that have already shown positive results, such as collaborative teaching, curricular adaptation, and the inclusion of multicultural content, which are fundamental for building a more inclusive and respectful environment.

The main results of this research show that, although public inclusion policies have advanced, many challenges still need to be faced. The implementation of inclusive pedagogical practices, such as collaborative teaching and curricular adaptation, proved to be effective in promoting access and permanence of students in vulnerable situations. The inclusion of cultural themes and the awareness of students and teachers also stood out as important strategies to reduce discrimination and strengthen students' sense of belonging. However, the lack of physical accessibility and resistance to changes in curricula are still significant obstacles that compromise true inclusion.

The great contribution of this study is in the critical analysis of educational practices and public policies aimed at inclusion, highlighting the practices that work and identifying the areas that need more attention. In addition, by pointing out the challenges and solutions already tested, this study offers a starting point for future discussions and improvements in inclusion approaches in the educational context.

Among the strengths, the comprehensive approach to inclusive practices and the emphasis on continuous teacher training, essential for the success of any inclusion initiative,

stand out. However, one point that can be considered a limitation of the study is the lack of a deeper empirical analysis of the implementation of these practices in schools, which could offer a more detailed view of the difficulties and successes in the day-to-day life of educational institutions.

Finally, we suggest that future studies delve into the practical experiences of schools that have successfully implemented inclusive policies, to better understand the real challenges on the ground. In addition, research into the impact of new technologies on educational inclusion, especially for students with disabilities, would be a relevant area for future research. These studies can contribute to a continuous improvement of educational policies, helping to build a more inclusive and equitable system for all.

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