

# Inclusion in early childhood education: teachers' conceptions<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

This article is part of a completed master's dissertation that addresses perceptions of Early Childhood Education teachers regarding continuing education for the inclusion of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The starting point is the question: how is the process of inclusion of children with ASD in education? The objective is to analyze teachers' perceptions and emphasize the difficulties they face in Early Childhood Education. The research has a qualitative approach, of an interpretative nature, with data collection through interviews with eight teachers from four Early Childhood Education Centers in a municipality of Santa Catarina. The results indicate insecurity on the part of the classroom teachers due to the lack of continuing education aimed at inclusion, adequate spaces and support for inclusion.

**KEYWORDS:** Early Childhood Education; Continuing Education; Inclusion; Autism Spectrum Disorder.

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*Inclusão na Educação Infantil: concepções de professoras***RESUMO**

Este artigo é parte de uma dissertação de mestrado concluída que aborda percepções de professoras de Educação Infantil a respeito da formação continuada para a inclusão de crianças com Transtorno do Espectro Autista. Parte-se da questão: como se dá o processo de inclusão de crianças com TEA na Educação? O objetivo é analisar percepções de professoras e enfatizar as dificuldades que enfrentam na Educação Infantil. A pesquisa é de abordagem qualitativa, de caráter interpretativo, com coleta de dados por meio de entrevistas com oito professoras de quatro Centros de Educação Infantil de um município de Santa Catarina. Os resultados indicam insegurança por parte das professoras regentes devido à falta de formação continuada voltada à inclusão, de espaços adequados e apoio para a inclusão.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Educação Infantil; Formação Continuada; Inclusão; Transtorno do Espectro Autista.

*Inclusión en la Educación Infantil: Concepciones de Profesoras***RESUMEN**

Este artículo es parte de una disertación de maestría que aborda percepciones de profesoras de Educación Infantil respecto a la formación continuada para la inclusión de niños con Trastorno del Espectro Autista. Se parte de la cuestión: ¿cómo se da el proceso de inclusión de niños con TEA en la Educación? El objetivo es analizar percepciones de profesoras y enfatizar las dificultades que enfrentan en la Educación Infantil. La investigación es de abordaje cualitativo, de carácter interpretativo, con recogida de datos por medio de entrevistas con ocho profesoras de cuatro Centros de Educación Infantil de un municipio de Santa Catarina. Los resultados indican inseguridad por parte de las profesoras regentes debido a la falta de formación continuada volcada a la inclusión, de espacios adecuados y apoyo para la inclusión.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Educación Infantil; Formación Continua; Inclusión; Trastorno del Espectro del Autista.

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*To problematize problems is to look for ways to create,  
to invent the new from the problem itself,  
without the illusion and desperation of 'giving' the solution  
and put an end to arguments or anxieties.*

Sílvia Ester Orrú

## **Introductory notes**

Inclusion in Early Childhood Education is still a complex field, as it is not only a matter of introducing a child, but of knowing, understanding, reflecting and acting so that the process happens throughout the educational career, in the context of pedagogical practice. It therefore requires prior knowledge, including appropriate continuing education.

Every child has the right to education, preferably in the public school system, as established by the Federal Constitution of 1988. As social beings, children need to interact with their peers, since sociability influences social, emotional and cognitive development, among other aspects of life. This begins at birth, in the first contact with the environment and with family members, and extends to the institutions of Early Childhood Education, Elementary, Secondary, Higher Education and all other broader social contexts.

To be included is to feel part of, integrated into the environment, interacting with it, being influenced and influencing at the same time. If the child is unable to situate himself, locate himself, or feel part of this environment, it is likely that he will feel excluded. Even if exclusion affects everyone, it is even more complex for those who are socially perceived as "different", who do not fit the pattern, the "normality", the "perfection" that is believed to exist. It is worth thinking, then, from another perspective:, in the sense that human beings are unique subjects, they therefore have characteristics that differentiate them from each other. For this reason, rights are constitutionally provided for that cannot be challenged by difference, by singularity. Thus, it is

understood that everyone has the same rights and that these need to be guaranteed and experienced in daily practice, from Early Childhood Education. This guarantee extends across different areas, ranging from the physical environment to the child's socio-emotional support.

Inclusion in Basic Education is based on laws, decrees and guidelines that legalize, determine and direct the process, all centered on equal rights. In practice, however, what is presented in these documents does not seem sufficient, given that the material/physical, human and structural resources that provide opportunities for pedagogical practices appropriate to the specificities of the subjects who attend educational institutions are not always provided. In addition, it is important to consider that there is a social and educational expectation of standardization of human development, so when the difference stands out, the tendency is to compare it to the standard and exclude what is different.

Thus, it can be observed that inclusion is almost always understood as a challenge, particularly by professionals who work in Early Childhood Education. This is because working with difference requires knowledge and practices focused on the complexity of each subject, because no child is the same as another. When it comes to children with ASD, it is worth remembering that this disorder manifests itself in different ways and levels, which requires knowledge, understanding, and adaptation of practices in order to meet the specific needs of the child who is on the spectrum.

Following from the above, this article is part of a master's dissertation already completed and part of the question: how is the process of inclusion of children with ASD developing and what are the challenges faced by teachers in the daily life of Early Childhood Education? The objective is to highlight the perceptions of the teachers interviewed and emphasize the difficulties that these professionals face.

Regarding the nature of this study, it is a qualitative approach and interpretative nature, based on literature review and field research, with narrative analysis. To collect empirical material, semi-standardized

interviews were conducted with eight teachers - four classroom teachers and four inclusion support teachers - from four Early Childhood Education Centers in a municipality in Santa Catarina.

The article is composed of an introduction; theoretical framework - which addresses the issue of Early Childhood Education, inclusion and pertinent legislation; analysis of excerpts from teachers' narratives about initial and continuing education; final considerations and references.

### **Theoretical framework**

Early Childhood Education is a right guaranteed in the Federal Constitution (Brasil, 1988) and in the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA) (Brasil, 2017), among other legal documents. Considered as a phase of socialization of the child with spaces for social interactions, Early Childhood Education is aimed at children from zero to five years of age and offered in daycare centers (for children from zero to three years old) and preschools (for children of four and five years old) (Brasil, 2009), preferably in public institutions, a right that is not always accessible to all children.

According to article 29 of the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law (LDB), Early Childhood Education "[...] has as its goal the integral development of the child [...] in its physical, psychological, intellectual and social aspects, completing the action of the family and the community" (Brasil, 1996).

Based on the broader legislation and guidelines specifically for Early Childhood Education, this process has been continuously debated and changed, in order to implement public policies that aim at quality and equity of care in institutions focused on children. Documents referring to this stage state that children learn from experience and living in the world and in relationships with the environment, with other children and with adults. In this sense, the approach that permeates Early Childhood Education tends to value the playful and pleasurable

aspect of educational processes, with a view to providing a space that allows children to explore the environment and express themselves creatively and autonomously. However, for this approach to be put into practice, it is important not only that the pedagogical practices are aligned with the guidelines and principles established by law, but that the physical and structural conditions, first and foremost, are consistent with what is expected of the teachers and the institution.

Reflected in the sense presented in the guiding documents of Early Childhood Education, of education as a universal right for all children, with the purpose of promoting their integral development and contributing to the construction of social equity, which institution presents itself as an ideal space for childhood to be valued and its educational rights guaranteed. In this way, the institution of Early Childhood Education is constituted as a "[...] place of multiple experiences, expanded from those opportunities provided" in the "[...] family nucleus, which invites", the children, "to the challenges of a planned space, of social interaction and of learning par excellence" (Martins; Sternberg; Rozek, 2019, p. 19). However, when observing different spaces where Early Childhood Education takes place, it can be recognized that not all of them offer the necessary conditions to promote this experience.

Another aspect is added to this context, namely that educational policies are not always aligned with the reality of educational institutions in order to develop inclusive education. And this also becomes an object of reflection, as it is the result of social movements that occurred worldwide in the twentieth century against discrimination that prevents People with Disabilities (PwD), Global Developmental Disorders (GDD), High Abilities/Giftedness (AH/S), Learning Difficulties, among other differences, from exercising their full rights.. Inclusion goes beyond this: it also refers to other "minorities" who experience exclusion because they do not fit the standard understood as socially acceptable.

According to the Ministry of Education (Brasil, 2015), education is inclusive, in a general sense, when it includes children who, in other times, would be referred to specific institutions in response to disabilities, disorders and other differences. Since this is a broad subject, we seek to reflect primarily on the inclusion of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Early Childhood Education, which is aligned with the concept of difference.

Difference, as Nogueira and Orrú see it (2021, p. 366), "[...] is nothing more than the quality of what is different", in the sense that, in difference, "[...] there is an absence of similarity, there is nonconformity, divergence." Based on this idea, the term difference involves "[...] diversity itself, it is inexact and, at the same time, it is an excess of a magnitude, in it there is no repetition [...]"

Machado (2021, p. 5901) complements this idea by stating that it is not possible to understand difference in terms of "[...] some subjects being different because they do not correspond to the dominant and conventional identity of being human". In this sense, it is understood that "[...] We are all different and not just those who make up excluded minorities (blacks, Indians, women, people with disabilities, the elderly and others)", therefore, difference is based on the conception of "[...] a plural and ever-changing world, which infinitely multiplies differences and which must fight against inequalities of all kinds." Thus, when it comes to difference, the term implicates all subjects, as it defines them; therefore, it does not segregate them, nor does it exclude some because they do not conform to a standard that understands equality as a norm. For Bocciolesi and Orrú (2021, p. 166), "We are not all the same! But we are all, equally, different!"

Having outlined the definition of difference, we can return to the contextualization of inclusive education in Brazil, a process that has developed more intensely since the commitment of the Brazilian State to inclusive education since the 1990s. According to Sekkel, Zanelatto and Brandão (2010), there are two international frameworks through which

Brazil is committed to inclusive education: the World Declaration on Education for All, of 1990, and the Salamanca Declaration on Principles, Policies and Practices for Special Educational Needs, of 1994. These two documents highlight the State's commitment to promoting adequate conditions of access to education for all, regardless of their learning needs.

In 1994, when the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) held the World Conference on Special Educational Needs, it sought to deepen the discussion on access and quality, as well as on other aspects of education that are not always accessible to all. In the sense given in Brazil to the process of school inclusion, the school is understood as a space in which difference is recognized and valued (or should be recognized and valued). For this to occur, it is considered necessary to develop and implement teacher training policies, providing adequate funding and management to transform the educational structure and ensure the conditions of access, participation and learning for all students (Brasil, 2015).

Although official documents present a discourse of inclusion that reflects real possibilities, Giroto and Castro (2011) already pointed out, even before the Ministry of Education's statements in 2015, that this is a complex process. From the perspective adopted by the Brazilian State, inclusion implies providing conditions for access and continuity for all in school, with necessary and constantly updated resources in order to also ensure the use of new resources and technologies that provide opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge. Recent years, however, and especially in the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, have shown that there is still a considerable distance between what is proposed and what happens.

As for Early Childhood Education, it is linked to education and care, considering that care goes hand in hand with the educational process. In this sense, in order to expand the experiences, knowledge and skills of children, the State understands that it is appropriate to diversify and consolidate learning in a way that complements family education. The State



considers it important to welcome the experiences and value the knowledge that students bring from their family and social environment along with those built in Early Childhood Education institutions through interactions with other subjects, with subjects of the same age group and with adults who work in the school space (Brasil, 2017).

On the other hand, in the BNCC (“document of normative character that defines the organic and progressive set of essential learning that all students must develop throughout the stages and modalities of Basic Education” – Brasil, 2017), it is understood that Early Childhood Education is a stage prior to basic schooling, and therefore independent and not preparatory, considering that the school phase only begins in Elementary School. In this version of which document, Early Childhood Education, due to its independent character as the phase that precedes schooling, is outside what is meant by formal education (Brasil, 2017). Although this context does not appear explicitly in the data analyzed, inclusive pedagogical practices may reflect a set of norms, guidelines and bases that underlie Brazilian education.

According to Cruz and Mota (2016, p. 22), when establishing “[...] a baseline curriculum”, that is, standardizing what should be applied in “all regions and contexts of Brazil”, the Base ends up excluding “[...] the local differences of each educational institution”, which implies, firstly, a “[...] great connection with neoliberal governmentality.” However, according to the same authors, this also allows us to observe “[...] some indications that it is taking on other contours, showing itself to be extremely conservative.”

According to Pandini-Simiano and Buss-Simão (2016, p. 85), a “bureaucratized curriculum” tends to move away from the idea of Early Childhood Education as a space for experiences consistent with the “[...] privileged way of living childhood”, a phase marked by the elaboration of “[...] senses and meanings about the world” on the part of children. In this sense, the authors understand that a rigid curriculum ends up being detached from everyday life.

Another issue to be observed with regard to Early Childhood Education is the tendency to think of the curriculum without qualifying it as educational. This means that the absence of this adjective and its consequences in the educational proposal of Brazilian children can generate what they call risks, which can compromise the approach defended by and for Early Childhood Education prior to the BNCC (Pandini-Simiano; Buss-Simão, 2016).

In the BNCC for Early Childhood Education, six learning and development rights are established that aim to guarantee children the conditions to play an active role in environments that present them with new challenges, which inspire them to solve these challenges in order to construct meanings about themselves, about others and about the social and natural world. In this way, the learning and development rights are: "to live together, to play, to participate actively, to explore movements, to express oneself and to know oneself" (Brasil, 2017, p. 38).

From the guarantee of these rights to learning and development, according to the same document, the child will be able to observe, question, raise hypotheses, conclude, make judgments, assimilate values and build knowledge by taking in knowledge of the physical and social world (Brasil, 2017).

In this context, the role of the professionals who will be in charge of the process in order to provide children with the necessary experiences for their development becomes a matter for discussion.

Although teachers are considered as subjects in these actions, when a common base is established, there is also a tendency to standardize pedagogical practices, which implies a reduction in the diversity that also shapes Early Childhood Education professionals.

By situating the importance of the teacher as the subject who will mediate the Base in Early Childhood Education institutions, Pandini-Simiano and Buss-Simão (2016) reflect on the standardization of the BNCC, which ends up limiting the diversity of pedagogical practices. In other words, according to the Base, all teachers in the country must follow, first, what is common to all and then, on a smaller scale, must contemplate the differences.

It is worth reflecting, therefore, that if the educational institution and society in general are shaped by difference, as Nogueira and Orrú (2021) point out, pedagogical practices centered on a common curriculum will have reduced space to deal with what actually makes up education, which is difference - of ideas, thoughts, habits, customs, relationships, knowledge, culture, knowledge, among many others.

In this sense, Pandini-Simiano and Buss-Simão (2016, p. 88) add "[...] that the definition of a curricular policy through a National Common Curricular Base for basic education is based on choices that are neither neutral nor stable", that is, in what is defined as the State's educational policy, "[...] There is always a cultural and social intentionality, conditioned by a given reality, in the production of educational policies that arise from issues and power relations." And these relationships "[...] compete and compete for space when selecting the knowledge that should be part of this policy in order to achieve the previously defined objectives". Perhaps it is this, combined with other factors, that contributes to the complexity of inclusive education in the context of Early Childhood Education.

For Cruz and Mota (2016, p. 3), when it is emphasized that "[...] The child needs to learn baseline knowledge to become an adult who can compete in a society aligned with the logic of the economy", this statement refers to the standardization that is expected of subjects, a situation that becomes more complex when thinking about inclusive education.

In other words, the BNCC, considers a relationship of minimum knowledge to be acquired by the child, divided into fields of experience and respective objectives, with a view to the future, that is, the child is not thought of as a present subject, but as the adult he or she will be.

It should also be noted that, even though the BNCC is a basis that needs to be adopted in Brazilian basic education, it does not offer a specific discussion of inclusive education, in contrast to previous educational policies that had, at their core, inclusive education as one of the emphases in

educational processes. As it is a reference and a mandatory basis for the construction of school curricula in all stages and modalities of Basic Education, the absence of emphasis on the theme of inclusion can make the inclusive process more difficult.

In this sense, the BNCC has the potential to result in an educational system that does not address the varied needs of children in the Early Childhood Education institution, especially those who face significant obstacles in trying to fit into the conventional structures that are ingrained in the educational environment. Additionally, the absence of a specific approach to inclusion can perpetuate biases and stereotypes regarding differences.

As Skliar (2019, p. 167) understands it, "When educating becomes an alliance with the normal, something in the world ends. When the opaque outline of his identity is imposed on a being, something of the gesture of teaching ends." In this sense, when seen from the perspective of difference, the importance of an education that celebrates diversity, respects individual identities and adapts to the needs of each child is highlighted. This not only enriches the educational process but also contributes to a more inclusive society.

For Abramowicz, Rodrigues and Cruz (2011, p. 92), "[...] difference is not appeased, since it is not a function to appease; what difference does is to differ". Thus, "with each repetition it extracts a difference, that is, differences generate differences, difference goes against identities, since it has the function of blurring them". In other words, difference does not seek to harmonize, but rather to differentiate. It doesn't soften but creates more differences, challenging established identities by blurring them. Difference is dynamic, constantly generating new perspectives and possibilities.

## Teacher training for inclusion

The training of teachers has long been the subject of debate; however, a consensus has not yet been reached on what it should take into account, given that the educational universe is complex and variable, as are the subjects who attend school institutions. This complexity is accentuated when it comes to training focused on inclusion, which does not always seem to occur satisfactorily. This is due to the fact that Inclusive Education is, in a way, recent, considering the history of education in Brazil and public policies aimed at inclusion.

In the present context, one element that draws attention is that, according to the teachers interviewed, the training aimed at inclusion occurs only with the support teachers, that is, the classroom teachers do not participate in these formative moments, as can be seen in the summary of the narratives, represented here by the conversation with PR1: “Training is not for the classroom teacher and should be joint. I think that's how it should be, but I think They're making a mistake in this regard”.

The above raises a question to reflect on in connection with inclusive education, that is, all persons in Early Childhood Education institutions would need to have knowledge related to the realm of inclusion. Thus, it is understood that the classroom teachers should also be integrated into these moments.

However, even if the influence of education in relation to its effects is debated, education is seen as fundamental for acting as a teacher. Although children with ASD receive support from a support teacher, when we consider the inclusion process, this is not an isolated and specific case, but rather an individual with the same rights as others, so they require care that corresponds to their needs. When the training is focused exclusively on support teachers, deficiencies can be observed in the situation studied.

According to the teachers interviewed, the continuing education offered takes place during class time, for this reason, the classroom teachers remain in the classroom. This aspect, perhaps, could be rethought, since these teachers do not feel prepared for inclusion, as can be inferred from the statement of PR3: “I don't think I have the training to work with special children, I didn't do Special Education, I did Pedagogy. [...] I'm learning now in practice”.

From the perspective of the interviewed teachers, there is a certain gap regarding inclusive education in the initial training courses for teachers and, as their perspectives indicate, there was no training focused on this issue in their initial educational training. Even so, PR3 emphasizes the practice as an educational experience, which takes place in the context of the class, in the daily interaction with diversity.

In a way, his words can be corroborated by Skliar's reflections, when he points out that

[...] More than "being prepared", in the sense of "anticipating" some particular educational situation, what counts, what is worthwhile, is to be available, to be open, to the existence of others. In any case, every pre-preparation, every anticipation, represents a technical device, a certain rationality, but it does not necessarily function as an ethical position in the relationship with others. For this same reason, it is not a matter of training that is based only on including the theme in training curricula, even when most of the countries that respond to the report affirm that this is their main policy and main educational transformation (Skliar, 2015, p. 22).

There is, as can be seen, a need to reflect and, perhaps, propose a training that does not focus exclusively on addressing the theme in the curricula. For Skliar (2015), being open to the new is also a way of thinking and acting so that inclusion happens.

This entails considering the current national situation, especially with regard to the implementation of a common curriculum across the country. In this sense, the BNCC establishes guidelines for all stages of teaching and for Early Childhood Education and guides the adoption of a baseline curriculum. However, when addressing diversity, there is an important gap in this document, which can be seen as a way to allow education systems to avoid the implementation of the process of inclusion.

On the issue of training, according to the explanations of the teachers interviewed, there is a certain absence of sharing and integration of knowledge between classroom and support teachers when the educational experiences take place in isolated groups, even though the two teachers work in the same class, with the same children. In this sense, as indicated by the research data, classroom and support teachers are also engaged in the search for knowledge that adds to their inclusive pedagogical practice:

PR1 [...] *I'm starting to do Special Education so I can know how to deal with it.*

PR3 [...] *I've already looked into secondary training in Special Education, because even if I don't want to be a support teacher, I need to know it. [...] My biggest feeling is precisely that I need to have more knowledge to deal with them, to be able to know, to have more certainty and to be able to help better.*

PA3 *I'm always studying, but we're always studying because there's always news about the disease, always. Prepared, I don't think anyone is prepared; we learn on a daily basis.*

It should also be noted that even though the teacher is learning in daily practice, and that it is an important experience, having a consistent knowledge base can add to the practice and contribute to the inclusive process of children with ASD. For PR3, “[...] *the training would have to be*



*really for those who do Pedagogy, who are going to be the conductor of a class, who are going to have a child [with ASD], it should not be separated [...]. It should be training for everybody, because everybody's going to deal with the child in the room”.*

In PR3's speech, we can observe the importance of training for education professionals regardless of the area in which they work. This involves thinking about the entire educational process, as the person with ASD will attend different classrooms and will have contact with different teachers. From this we can infer the relevance of an initial training also focused on inclusion. It is important to highlight that the thinking of the classroom teachers is also corroborated by the support teachers, as can be identified in the words of PA1, “[...] *this continuing education that we have, support teachers, I think that in general it should be for everyone, not only for the support teachers, but for all employees, administrators, the school team in general*”, and PA2, “[...] *when the theme is directly focused on Special Education, I think it would have to be for everyone. [...], even the Physical Education teacher commented that they also miss training for special students*”.

The teachers refer to a continuing education focused on the process of inclusive offered primarily to support teachers. However, they understand that these experiences should be extended to all persons who work in the Early Childhood Education institution, both faculty and other employees, that is, the staff in general.

Considering the perspectives of the teachers, the importance of training for all those who work, in this case, in Early Childhood Education institutions rises. It is understood that, as long as there is no such training, there will be a possibility that professionals who work with children with ASD in these institutions will adopt non-inclusive practices, contributing to maintaining a non-inclusive environment.

Although I understand the importance and necessity that inclusion must be truly inclusive, it is also worth saying that the national context suggests the realization of effective education, in the sense of basic training,



without, in fact, being inclusive. And this turns out to be one of the greatest contradictions of contemporary education. It also leads to the question of whether or not Brazilian education is inclusive.

One of the possible answers, and the one defended here, is that it is not inclusive, considering that inclusion occurs in educational institutions much more because of volunteer labor than because of public policies and practical actions. In this sense, it is worth reflecting that the Federative Republic of Brazil is still choosing, in terms of public policies, who has the right to quality education.

This problem raises pertinent questions about the importance of continuing education for all subjects who work in Early Childhood Education institutions, as each professional performs important functions for the development of children. It is understood, therefore, that the limitation of continuing education only to support teachers can generate inequalities and gaps in the professional development of the team as a whole; consequently, it can impact the process of inclusion that takes place in the institution of Early Childhood Education. This is because, as the support teacher 2 points out:

*PA2 [...] they hit a lot about the fact that the special student is not only ours, a support teacher and the regent teacher is not only a teacher of the other students, I am everyone's teacher and she is also everyone's teacher, so, as she is also everyone's teacher, she also has to participate in the formation of special education. [...] It's getting it into the heads of teachers that they're all the same, that we're going to have to treat everyone the same without distinction.*

In these statements, we observe that inclusive education involves both teachers, hence the idea that both should participate in continuing education aimed at inclusion. Another aspect that stands out in this speech is the issue of equal opportunities and respect for difference that permeates the institution of Early Childhood Education, which also ends up becoming a theme that can be discussed in training or sought by teachers individually.

By problematizing the narratives presented, several concerns related to the training and knowledge of education professionals in relation to the inclusion of children with ASD are highlighted. PR1, for example, expresses the need to seek specific training to learn how to deal with these children. This concern highlights the importance of acquiring adequate knowledge and strategies to support and meet the individual needs of children for inclusion, which is also apparent in the statement of teacher PR4:

*I think that, in the first instance, we always have to be looking for knowledge, but we would have to have a greater foundation in the issue of specific training. It's no use saying: "Oh, that's what Autism is", but bring some suggestions for activities, some more recent studies, provide a better mediation of knowledge for us. So, [...] we have to study a lot and not only for us teachers to chase after it, but for the Department of Education to offer this to us. I believe that further training should be more in-depth on this point. My biggest difficulty is the lack of knowledge, because you research, you go after it, but the municipality itself doesn't offer you material, it doesn't offer you training. The Faculty of Pedagogy does not fully prepare for this, no, it gives you a guide, but you are prepared to arrive, do your planning and work in a general way, not specifically with Autism.*

PA2, on the other hand, broadens the discussion by stating that training in Special Education should be directed to all education professionals, not only those who work directly with children with disabilities, so that an inclusive and supportive environment can be offered to all. It is not, as PR3 states, a matter of studying to be a support teacher, but of knowing more and, thus, of being able to better interact and help the children, emphasizing, in her speech, the idea of continuity, that is, information and studies on inclusion occur continuously. Thus, to keep up with the changes, training should also be a constant.

It is worth remembering with Martins, Sternberg and Rosek (2019) that inclusion is a constantly changing process. In this sense, even though there is a specific training, inclusion is a broad field that involves differences, the unique way of each subject.

Therefore, the authors warn that

When we take seriously the ethical issues involved in Inclusive Education, we understand that nothing is ready, that no technique is capable of solving all the problems encountered in school. The important thing is that educators are open to discussions and are willing to problematize their practices on a daily basis, constituting themselves as educators in the encounter with the real subjects of learning, which is the basis of their planning and the exercise of responsible teaching (Martins; Sternberg; Rozek, 2019, p. 19).

This discussion brings the idea that ethical issues related to Inclusive Education should permeate Early Childhood Education institutions. In this way, thinking ethically about it can contribute to the search for solutions to the challenges faced daily in these institutions. Thinking ethically also involves knowledge that permeates, or should permeate, the initial and continuing education of teachers.

### **Final thoughts**

As Lopes and Veiga-Neto (2022, p. 23) state, "treading paths capable of problematizing" and questioning "fundamentalist postures" is very important. In a world where extremism and dogmatic thinking are still prevalent in many areas, it is critical to seek approaches that can weaken these narrow and inflexible views. By promoting critical inquiry, reflection, and open dialogue, we can contribute to a more inclusive environment where ideas are debated and biases are challenged.

By reflecting on the trajectory that led to school inclusion and the various paths suggested by Autism Spectrum Disorder, it can be understood that thinking about inclusive education is still a complex challenge. There are various laws that correspond to what is expected in a legal sense; however, when focusing on the reality of inclusive education in Early Childhood Education institutions, it can be seen that there is an important mismatch and, in point of fact, a detour from the route between what the law provides and what can be put into practice within these institutions.

If, according to Orrú (2014, p. 28), in relation to the school, inclusive education and the teachers who work in this process, there is a desire to "[...] change, and this is very good", it is worth remembering with them that for this change "[...] the existence of legislation and public policies is not enough", because inclusion goes beyond a process developed in schools and in Early Childhood Education institutions, as if it were confined to them. In the sense addressed by the author, which seems to reflect the perceptions of the teachers interviewed for this research on inclusion, "[...]. We need a profound transformation in our being through reflections and discussions that lead us to a conscious conception that [we] are all" part of society. And if the society of which we are a part is founded on and values a pattern that separates the equal and the different, for Orrú (2014, p. 21), "[...] We need to get rid of our prejudices and look at our neighbor as an active subject of their own history", in the same way that we are also subjects and construct our stories.

As well stated by Orrú (2014), yes, we want to change; however, the desire alone is not enough when, often, teachers feel alone, not because they do not want to act towards an inclusive education. They want to, but for that, they need support to overcome personal barriers that sometimes reflect the context in which they are trained and the structural barriers that are presented daily in Early Childhood Education institutions.

It is necessary to promote transformations in the standards, in the curriculum and in the pedagogical practices, in order to respond to the

particularities, needs and specificities of all children. Despite the changes that have occurred in the national context, transforming Early Childhood Education institutions into spaces of inclusive education is still a challenge that requires commitment, breaking paradigms and overcoming barriers. This process is continuous and dynamic, involving the entire educational community, from administrators, teachers to families and children.

For this, it is important to analyze each educational context, the curriculum, the continuing education of professionals and teaching practice, valuing and welcoming each subject involved in the educational environment. Although we have made progress in the sense of not isolating people with disabilities in segregated environments, such as special schools, there is still uncertainty about how to organize a pedagogical proposal that meets the needs of all children, especially those who require specific attention or intervention and attend Early Childhood Education institutions.

It should be said that inclusive education allows everyone to learn and have shared experiences in the Early Childhood Education institution. In other words, therefore, everyone benefits when inclusive education is put into practice, therefore, when there is coexistence between differences. However, as can be observed both in the empirical realities and in the theoretical and documentary references, Brazilian education continues to format children according to a pattern of skills and competencies of neoliberal performance to produce and reproduce sameness.

This means that inclusive education is still a challenge to be faced, and perhaps it is a permanent challenge, because nothing, when it comes to education, is done and finished; on the contrary, education and inclusion are in continuous movement. The challenge, therefore, is for this movement to be dynamic, one of aggregation, acceptance of differences, coexistence, respect, and especially of questions that lead to reflections on what can be changed in us, in society, in Early Childhood Education institutions.

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