


AUTISM IN CHILDHOOD: BUILDING A PATH OF INCLUSION THROUGH EARLY INTERVENTION

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Discuss the main aspects related to school inclusion of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), focusing on early intervention strategies and teacher training.

Methods: Narrative review of national and international scientific literature, focusing on studies from 2009 to 2022 about inclusive practices and public policies for the education of students with autism.

Discussion: It was evident that early intervention, combined with continuous teacher training and family involvement, constitutes a fundamental tripod for the implementation of inclusive educational processes. The literature also highlights the importance of interdisciplinary approaches and pedagogical adaptations.

Conclusion: The consolidation of a truly inclusive school requires structural, pedagogical, and policy changes based on actively listening to the needs of students with ASD and the commitment of educational agents and public managers.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder. Inclusive Education. Early Intervention. Multidisciplinary Assessment. Public Policies.

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INTRODUCTION

The inclusion of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the school context has become a topic of notable relevance in contemporary debates on education and public policies, especially in Brazil, where structural disparities still challenge the realization of truly equitable education. Specialized literature provides a robust theoretical framework that highlights the centrality of early intervention and inclusive pedagogical practices in promoting the integral development of autistic students in regular educational environments (SCHWARTZMAN, 2011; OLIVEIRA, 2009; NUNES, AZEVEDO, and SCHMIDT, 2013).

According to Santos (2009), early diagnosis is a strategic element for preserving communicative and social interaction skills, creating favorable conditions for the timely initiation of specialized educational interventions. The author argues that the effectiveness of therapeutic approaches is strongly linked to the use of behavioral methods combined with multidisciplinary assessment (SANTOS, 2009; SCHWARTZMAN, 2011).

Several complementary studies reinforce this thesis. Nunes, Azevedo, and Schmidt (2013), in investigating the impacts of including children with ASD in regular classrooms, highlight collateral therapeutic effects such as strengthening social bonds and humanizing relationships between students. Similarly, Bernardy and Zamo (2016) emphasize the need for personalized therapeutic devices, warning of recurring challenges in the late detection of the disorder.

From this perspective, this article aims to critically discuss the theoretical and empirical contributions on the school inclusion of children with autism, with an emphasis on early intervention strategies and continuous teacher training, essential elements for building a fairer and more inclusive educational system. The selection of studies followed the PRISMA approach (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) (MOHER et al., 2009).

OBJECTIVES

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

This document aims to promote an in-depth understanding of the essential factors for the school inclusion of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), emphasizing the importance of early intervention, continuous teacher training, and family participation.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of this article include:

- Identify and analyze early intervention practices that contribute to the educational and social development of children with ASD.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of interdisciplinary approaches and pedagogical adaptations in the school inclusion process.
- Investigate the importance of continuous teacher training to implement effective inclusive practices.
- Discuss the role of public policies in creating truly inclusive and adapted school environments for children with ASD.
- Highlight the relevance of family involvement in supporting children with ASD and strengthening the inclusion process.

METHODOLOGY

The inclusion criteria encompassed original articles, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses addressing inclusive practices and public policies aimed at the education of students with autism. The selection of studies followed the PRISMA approach (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses).

DISCUSSION

Santos (2009) highlights the effectiveness of interventions based on behavioral assumptions, recognizing them as preferential strategies in the treatment of ASD. In certain clinical contexts, she points to the need for articulation between therapeutic and pharmacological approaches, especially in cases of comorbidities such as sleep disorders or disruptive behaviors.

On the other hand, the absence of a more in-depth discussion on the multiplicity of available psychoeducational approaches is observed in Santos' (2009) study. Approaches based on social skills, parent-mediated therapies, and alternative communication models could have been explored, enriching the analysis and expanding intervention possibilities.

In the same investigative line, the study by Nunes, Azevedo, and Schmidt (2013), titled "Educational Inclusion of People with Autism in Brazil: A Literature Review," investigates the interactions between students with ASD and their peers in inclusive environments. The authors highlight mutual benefits, such as strengthening social bonds, promoting empathy, and building a more collaborative school environment.

The authors draw attention to the importance of public policies that consider the uniqueness of each classroom, as opposed to excessive standardization that ignores the specificities of students with special educational needs. They also propose the adoption of

strategies such as the Natural Functional Curriculum (NFC) and the qualified use of psychopedagogical reports in pedagogical planning.

These investigations show that the success of inclusion depends greatly on educators' sensitivity to the particularities of students with autism, continuous teacher training, and the articulation between school, family, and specialized services (BERNARDY and ZAMO, 2016).

Santos (2009) highlights the effectiveness of behavioral interventions in the treatment of ASD, recommending the integration of therapeutic and pharmacological approaches in cases of comorbidities. However, her study does not explore different psychoeducational approaches, such as social skills, parent-mediated therapies, and alternative communication models.

Nunes, Azevedo, and Schmidt (2013) investigate the educational inclusion of people with autism in Brazil, highlighting benefits such as social bonds, empathy, and a collaborative school environment. They emphasize the importance of public policies that consider the uniqueness of classrooms and suggest strategies such as the Natural Functional Curriculum (NFC) and psychopedagogical reports in pedagogical planning.

These studies show that the success of inclusion depends on educators' sensitivity to the needs of students with autism, continuous teacher training, and cooperation between school, family, and specialized services (BERNARDY and ZAMO, 2016).

The studies by Santos (2009), Nunes, Azevedo, and Schmidt (2013), and Bernardy and Zamo (2016) offer a comprehensive view of the treatment and inclusion of people with autism, highlighting the need for a multifaceted approach. Behavioral interventions are effective, and the integration of therapeutic and pharmacological approaches is crucial for treating comorbidities associated with ASD.

Furthermore, educational inclusion should be a priority in public policies, ensuring that classroom peculiarities are respected and methods such as NFC and psychopedagogical reports are incorporated into pedagogical planning. Continuous teacher training and collaboration between school, family, and specialized services are fundamental for successful inclusion.

Therefore, a joint and coordinated effort is necessary for people with autism to fully develop their skills, promoting an inclusive and empathetic educational environment that favors the personal and social growth of these individuals. Each student with autism requires personalized strategies that meet their particularities, and it is up to educators, politicians, and society in general to unite to ensure that these needs are met effectively and humanely.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The studies analyzed here converge to the understanding that the school inclusion of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder demands more than mere curricular adaptation or physical presence in the classroom. It requires, above all, a reconfiguration of pedagogical practices, continuous and critical teacher training, and the construction of a support network that integrates family, school, and specialized services (ZWAIGENBAUM et al., 2015). Continuous teacher training, early intervention, and active family participation are fundamental pillars in this process (BERNARDY and ZAMO, 2016; OLIVEIRA SANTOS, 2009). The evidence points to the need for an integrated and personalized approach that considers the specificities of each student and promotes a collaborative and empathetic learning environment. Thus, it is imperative that public and educational managers commit to building policies and practices that ensure the effective and equitable inclusion of children with autism in the educational system.

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