


**EDUCATION, DISCIPLINE AND ENGAGEMENT IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION:
CHALLENGES AND TEACHING STRATEGIES IN CONTEXTS OF SOCIAL
VULNERABILITY** <https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2025.019-005>**Helder Fernando Canavarros da Guia¹****ABSTRACT**

This article presents a report of teaching experience at the Gustavo Kulmann State School, located on the outskirts of Cuiabá-MT, with classes of the 6th and 7th grades of Elementary School. From the experience in the classroom, the text analyzes challenges related to indiscipline and student disinterest, intensified by social, economic and cultural issues. Most students live in a situation of vulnerability, facing poverty, violence, family breakdown and lack of access to basic resources, which compromises their motivation and learning. In view of this, the article defends the need for pedagogical practices that consider local knowledge and dialogue with the peripheral reality, often devalued in traditional schools. The central proposal is the valorization of an active, critical and inclusive pedagogy, centered on student protagonism and sensitive listening to the educator. The text highlights the importance of continuing education, teacher reflection and the adoption of methodologies that promote student engagement, making teaching more meaningful. By articulating theory and practice, the study shows how the ethical and social commitment of the teacher can transform public education into a space of resistance and emancipation.

Keywords: Public Education. School Engagement. Indiscipline. Active Methodologies. Teacher Training.

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INTRODUCTION

Public education in Brazil faces numerous challenges, especially in peripheral regions marked by deep social inequalities that directly impact the teaching-learning process. In these realities, the school goes beyond its traditional role and becomes a space of welcoming, protection and resistance in the face of the multiple forms of exclusion experienced by students. In these contexts, the social function of the educator goes beyond the mere transmission of curricular content: it expands to encompass ethical, political, and cultural dimensions, requiring from the teacher sensitivity, active listening, and commitment to social transformation.

The present study reflects on the teaching experience in Elementary School in a public school located on the outskirts of Cuiabá-MT, where daily difficulties – such as lack of resources, indiscipline, lack of interest and the impacts of violence and poverty – require the constant reinvention of pedagogical practices. The research focuses on the strategies used to promote the engagement and discipline of students in the face of adversity, valuing listening to youth experiences, respect for local knowledge and the construction of affective bonds as a starting point for meaningful learning.

In addition to discussing the pedagogical practices implemented, the study analyzes the methodological paths adopted to make teaching more dynamic, inclusive and participatory. By addressing the challenges faced in the school environment, it proposes a critical reflection on the transformative role of education and on the importance of building a school that, even in the face of structural limitations, is capable of offering real possibilities of emancipation and citizenship.

TEACHER TRAINING AND THE REALITY OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Teacher training is one of the fundamental pillars for improving the quality of education, especially in a country marked by deep social inequalities. However, it is observed that initial training, in most undergraduate courses, still has significant gaps when it comes to preparing educators to work in contexts of high social vulnerability. Often, academic curricula prioritize theoretical content and methodologies that are disconnected from the concrete reality of public schools, disregarding the cultural, social, and economic specificities that permeate school daily life.

In view of this scenario, it becomes evident the need to invest in continuing education processes that promote professional strengthening and the resignification of pedagogical practice. Participation in courses, workshops, seminars, study groups and collaborative spaces has proven to be essential to expand the theoretical-methodological

repertoire of teachers, as well as to develop attentive, critical and empathetic listening to the demands that emerge in the school environment. This training, by approaching local realities, favors the construction of more dialogical, inclusive and contextualized practices. As Tardif and Moscoso (2018) state, "reflection directly linked to the action that sustains it is one of the most important sources of professional learning" (p. 392).

Despite technological advances and the growing appreciation of active methodologies, most public schools still face serious structural limitations, such as the absence of laboratories, unstable internet, lack of pedagogical materials, and environments that are poorly suited to learning. Such challenges require creativity, flexibility and the ability to continuously adapt from the teacher. Thus, training that considers the real working conditions becomes an act of resistance and an instrument of social transformation, as it contributes to forming committed, innovative educators who are aware of their political and emancipatory role in the construction of quality public education.

METHODOLOGICAL TEACHING PROCEDURES: BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY

The peripheral educational scenario imposes a series of limitations that go beyond the absence of material and structural resources, also extending to affective, symbolic and linguistic deficiencies that directly influence the teaching-learning process of the Portuguese language. In this complex reality, the role of the teacher becomes even more challenging, requiring not only mastery of the content, but, above all, sensitivity to welcome and interpret the various forms of expression and communication of students. It was in this context that the need to adopt active and participatory methodologies was evidenced, which placed students as subjects of language, valuing their linguistic and cultural repertoires, encouraging the production of meanings and promoting the collective construction of knowledge through reading, writing and orality in significant social practices. According to PAZ (2012, p. 2):

We have to act – reflect and only then act again so that we can really form critical citizens. The student needs to realize that the language spoken by him is the same as the one taught in school, we have to go beyond grammar and right and wrong, demystifying that the Portuguese language is boring and difficult.

Classes began to be organized based on interdisciplinary proposals, incorporating a variety of resources — such as music, videos, multimodal texts, dynamics and pedagogical games — that made the school environment more attractive and meaningful. This approach

enabled the dialogue between the curricular contents and the daily reality of the students, favoring contextualized and motivating learning.

Playfulness, in particular, proved to be a powerful and multifaceted pedagogical tool, with significant impacts on different dimensions of the educational process. Its systematic use in daily school life has been shown to be effective in coping with school dropout, mediating interpersonal conflicts and strengthening students' self-esteem. In contexts marked by social vulnerability, playful activities, such as games, dynamics, games and interactive proposals, enabled a more welcoming school environment, arousing the interest of students and favoring their permanence in school. By providing pleasure in learning, these practices contributed to students developing more positive bonds with the school environment, significantly reducing the rates of demotivation and dropout.

In addition, playfulness worked as an effective instrument for conflict mediation, since it stimulated cooperation, active listening, respect for rules and harmonious coexistence among peers. Such elements are essential for the construction of a healthy and democratic learning environment. On the emotional level, engaging in playful activities allowed students to experience success and recognition, contributing to the strengthening of self-esteem and the appreciation of their potential. This affective dimension of playfulness proved to be fundamental to stimulate self-confidence, especially among those with a history of school failure, allowing them to rebuild their relationship with knowledge in a more positive and autonomous way.

Pedagogical planning, in turn, ceased to be a mere bureaucratic formality to assume a strategic, flexible and responsive character to the concrete needs of the class. The insertion of critical literacy and reading practices in the world allowed the debate of urgent issues such as racism, violence, inequality and prejudice, establishing bridges between the school and the community, and encouraging students to recognize their identity, history and social role.

In this process of didactic adaptation, individualized teaching practices were also implemented, aimed at meeting the specificities of students with disabilities, learning disorders, school discrepancy and, notably, students in illiteracy, even in the early stages of Elementary School. The presence of these students revealed the urgency of pedagogical practices sensitive to the structural inequalities that cross the public education system, especially in peripheral contexts. Such subjects, historically made invisible by traditional pedagogical approaches, require personalized strategies that consider their unique trajectories and offer real learning opportunities.

Active listening, continuous monitoring and the celebration of small achievements proved to be fundamental strategies to ensure not only the permanence of these students in school, but the effective development of their cognitive, linguistic and socio-emotional skills. In the specific case of illiterate students, it was necessary to rebuild, in a patient and respectful way, the links with the act of learning and with the school space itself, often marked by experiences of failure, stigmatization or exclusion. Visual resources, multisensory activities, literacy games and contextualized oral practices were used as a way to arouse interest, build meaning and promote the protagonism of these students.

Such actions reiterated the commitment to a genuinely inclusive, equitable and transformative educational proposal, based on guaranteeing the right of all to access knowledge, regardless of their socioeconomic, cognitive or historical schooling conditions. In this context, the teaching practice overcame the technical character and began to assume an ethical and political dimension, by fighting to guarantee meaningful learning for subjects historically marginalized by the educational system.

THE DIVERSIFICATION OF STRATEGIES AS A TOOL FOR INCLUSION AND LEARNING

Learning, understood as a dynamic, continuous and integral process, demanded the adoption of pedagogical strategies that respected the different rhythms, life histories and singularities of the students. In contexts marked by social vulnerability, it was found that learning goes far beyond the acquisition of cognitive skills: it is a process crossed by emotional, affective, relational and cultural dimensions. In this sense, pedagogical practice began to recognize that school success is closely linked to the creation of bonds of trust, the feeling of belonging and the appreciation of the individual trajectory of each student.

The construction of knowledge was stimulated through collaborative and dialogical practices, such as interdisciplinary projects, conversation circles, collective textual productions, and oral and written activities that encouraged autonomy, critical thinking, and mutual respect. Proposals such as the elaboration of letters, experience reports, interviews, debates and opinionated productions allowed for the exercise of active listening, argumentation and coexistence with the diversity of opinions and realities. Such practices favored student protagonism and the approximation between school content and students' experiences.

Situated learning was also prioritized, anchored in the sociocultural context of the students and in the valorization of their potentialities. Error was re-signified as an essential part of the process of knowledge construction, promoting a welcoming environment and



freedom to experiment. Affectivity emerged as a key element, especially for students with a history of school failure, contributing to their permanence and engagement.

Peer interactions were encouraged as a form of learning mediation, with the intentional organization of heterogeneous groups to favor the exchange of knowledge, respect for diversity and the appreciation of differences. This strategy not only contributed to the cognitive advancement of students, but also assumed an essential formative function in the development of socio-emotional skills, such as empathy, active listening, solidarity, and cooperation. By living with classmates from different school backgrounds, proficiency levels and life experiences, the students were challenged to review their own beliefs, exercise patience and recognize the value of others as a fundamental part of the process of knowledge construction.

More than a pedagogical technique, the organization of intentional interactions between peers proved to be a political and ethical gesture of resistance to the meritocratic and competitive logics that often permeate the school environment. By promoting collective and collaborative learning practices, a space was built where error was no longer stigmatized and began to be understood as part of the training process, favoring a safer, more welcoming and democratic environment.

In this context, the school began to be configured as a true learning community, committed not only to the acquisition of content and academic performance, but, above all, to the integral formation of the subject. Such commitment involves the cultivation of ethical values, the development of critical thinking and the encouragement of the active participation of students in their social environment. In the context of Portuguese language teaching, this was translated into practices that promoted the reading of texts of various genres, such as chronicles, open letters, reports, poems and opinion articles, articulated with the critical reading of the world. Through these approaches, students were invited to reflect on urgent social issues and to propose concrete interventions aimed at improving their local reality. Thus, language is no longer just an object of study to become an instrument of expression, resistance and transformation, strengthening the formation of conscious, supportive subjects capable of effectively contributing to the construction of a more just, democratic and inclusive society.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AS AN INSTRUMENT OF TRANSFORMATION

Evaluation, in this context, was profoundly resignified, no longer occupying the historically assigned place of a punitive and excluding instrument to assume the role of a central component of the pedagogical process, guided by listening, monitoring and



reflective mediation of learning. The classificatory and meritocratic logic was abandoned, which, especially in contexts of social vulnerability, accentuates inequalities, marginalizes non-hegemonic knowledge, and disregards the multiple ways of learning and expressing knowledge. Evaluation thus began to be conceived as a living, continuous and dialogical process, which values the formative paths of each student, recognizing that the time of learning is not linear, uniform or universal. As Rêgo and Lima (2010) state, evaluation "should be a means for teacher and student to move towards the objectives, considering progress and the path in relation to what has already been learned and what remains to be learned" (p. 41).

Based on a formative approach, multiple evaluation instruments were incorporated into the school routine, such as systematic observation records, portfolios, self-evaluations, conversation circles, oral and written productions, as well as practical activities rooted in the students' reality. Each of these strategies aimed not only to measure performance, but to understand processes, map advances, identify needs and build more effective and contextualized pedagogical interventions. The evaluative feedback, in this scenario, was re-signified as a pedagogical moment par excellence: an opportunity for horizontal dialogue between teacher and student, guided by empathy, respect and commitment to the integral formation of the subject.

This practice also assumed an ethical-political bias by recognizing error as a constitutive element of learning, and not as a failure to be punished. Welcoming the error allowed the construction of a more humane and encouraging school environment, in which students felt legitimized to try, make mistakes, revise and start over. Such an attitude fostered not only the students' confidence and self-esteem, but also the development of metacognitive and socio-emotional skills, such as self-reflection, persistence, and intellectual autonomy.

Inclusive assessment, in turn, has become one of the pillars of the educational process, as it respects the different rhythms, styles and modes of learning of students, with special attention to those with disabilities, learning disorders, school lag or a history of failure. Methodological and instrumental adaptations were implemented, such as the use of accessible languages, visual support, extended deadlines and individualized mediations, which guaranteed the right to learning and full participation of all students, strengthening the principle of equity.

By adopting this emancipatory perspective, evaluation went beyond the technical-administrative character and revealed its transformative potential: it became a pedagogical act committed to social justice, to the valorization of singularities and to the democratization

of knowledge. Instead of functioning as an instrument of control and exclusion, assessment began to assume a humanizing function, allowing the recognition of the multiple ways of learning and the diverse trajectories that mark the daily lives of students, especially in contexts of social vulnerability.

This resignification of evaluation implied the construction of practices that were more dialogical, ethical, and sensitive to the realities of the students, in which the criteria for analyzing performance were not limited to homogeneous and decontextualized standards, but took into account individual processes, efforts, and advances. Thus, evaluation has consolidated itself as an instrument capable of strengthening students' bonds with the school, promoting youth protagonism and reaffirming the role of public education as a space for welcoming, belonging and critical formation.

In this sense, evaluating is no longer just a moment of verification to become a space for listening, reflection and guidance, in which students are invited to understand their own learning paths and to actively participate in the construction of their knowledge. Such an approach contributed not only to the improvement of academic performance, but also to the strengthening of students' self-esteem, intellectual autonomy and citizen awareness, reaffirming that quality education is only possible when guided by the principles of equity, inclusion and social justice.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: THE TRANSFORMATIVE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN THE PERIPHERY

The experience lived at the Gustavo Kulmann State School, located on the outskirts of Cuiabá-MT, showed that the teaching practice, when guided by an ethical, social and political commitment to the reality of the students, can assume a genuinely transformative role. In a scenario marked by inequalities and multiple vulnerabilities, the school is configured not only as a space for the transmission of content, but as a territory of resistance, of welcome and of the possibility of reinventing trajectories. As Freire (1996) states:

All content teaching demands from those who are in the position of apprentice that, from a certain moment on, they also assume the authorship of the knowledge of the object. The authoritarian teacher, who refuses to listen to the students, closes himself to this creative adventure.

It was found that the teacher's work in peripheral contexts requires sensitive listening, a critical posture and the ability to promote a pedagogy that dialogues with the students' experiences, recognizing their subjectivities and knowledge as central elements in



the teaching-learning process. Valuing local culture, investing in active methodologies, making planning more flexible, and incorporating inclusive practices proved to be fundamental for building meaningful and equitable education.

However, despite the transformative power of the teaching action, it is necessary to recognize that it is not sustained in isolation. In order for experiences such as the one reported here to expand and consolidate, it is essential to implement public policies that ensure adequate infrastructure, quality initial and continuing education, professional valorization and mechanisms for the democratic participation of the school community.

It is concluded that teaching in vulnerable territories demands more than technical competence: it requires sensitivity, courage and hope. It requires believing in education as a political act capable of promoting the emancipation of subjects and social transformation. By humanizing educational practices, promoting dialogue and building knowledge collectively, the teacher becomes an agent of change that contributes to the formation of conscious, critical individuals who are protagonists of their own stories.

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