

**THE INTEREST OF AUTISTIC SUBJECTS IN THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT:
BREAKING PREJUDICES AND STIGMAS**

**O INTERESSE DOS SUJEITOS AUTISTAS NO CONTEXTO EDUCACIONAL:
ROMPENDO PRECONCEITOS E ESTIGMAS**

**EL INTERÉS DE LOS SUJETOS AUTISTAS EN EL CONTEXTO EDUCATIVO:
ROMPIENDO PREJUICIOS Y ESTIGMAS**

 <https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2025.038-014>

Maycon Nogueira da Cruz Souza¹, Tainara Trindade de Carvalho², Kamila Aparecida Lima Lopes³, Cleide Vitor Mussini Batista⁴

ABSTRACT

This article investigates the factors that arouse the interest of autistic children during the learning process, seeking to challenge and deconstruct prejudices often associated with them in social discourse. Thus, through a theoretical analysis, based on scientific articles and books, we explore how the educational environment can be structured to better meet the needs and potential of these students, promoting a more engaging and inclusive learning experience, which is based on the process of breaking these bonds predetermined by society. Therefore, in this sense, the act of exploring and interconnecting the desires of these students and their specificities with a rich, beneficial educational environment free from social constraints is “tied” to an ideal that this research seeks to demonstrate, where the subject becomes his own guide during the learning process, and no longer the prejudices linked to them.

Keywords: Interest. Prejudices. Autistic Students.

RESUMO

Este artigo investiga os fatores que despertam o interesse dos alunos autistas durante o processo de aprendizagem, buscando desafiar e desconstruir preconceitos frequentemente associados a elas no discurso social. Dessa forma, através de uma análise teórica, baseada em artigos científicos e livros, exploramos como o ambiente educacional pode ser estruturado para melhor atender às necessidades e potencialidades desses alunos, promovendo uma experiência de aprendizado mais engajadora e inclusiva, onde se baseia no processo de rompimento desses vínculos predeterminados pela sociedade. Portanto, nesse sentido, o ato de explorar e interligar os desejos próprios desses alunos e de suas especificidades com um ambiente educacional rico, proveitoso e livre das amarras sociais se vê “amarrado” em um ideal que essa pesquisa busca demonstrar, onde o sujeito se torna seu próprio guia durante o processo de aprendizagem, e não mais os preconceitos vinculados a eles.

¹ Graduating in Pedagogy. Universidade Estadual de Londrina (UEL). E-mail: maycon.nogueira@uel.br

² Medical Student. Universidade Estadual de Londrina (UEL). E-mail: tainara.carvalho@uel.br

³ Medical Student. Universidade Estadual de Londrina (UEL). E-mail: kamila.lopes16@uel.br

⁴ Post-Doctorate in Psychology. Universidade Estadual de Londrina (UEL). E-mail: clerb@uel.br

Palavras-chave: Interesse. Preconceitos. Alunos Autistas.

RESUMEN

Este artículo investiga los factores que despiertan el interés del alumnado autista durante el proceso de aprendizaje, buscando desafiar y deconstruir los prejuicios que a menudo se les asocian en el discurso social. Así, mediante un análisis teórico basado en artículos científicos y libros, exploramos cómo se puede estructurar el entorno educativo para satisfacer mejor las necesidades y el potencial de este alumnado, promoviendo una experiencia de aprendizaje más atractiva e inclusiva, basada en el proceso de romper estos vínculos predeterminados por la sociedad. Por lo tanto, en este sentido, el acto de explorar y conectar los propios deseos y especificidades de este alumnado con un entorno educativo enriquecedor y beneficioso, libre de restricciones sociales, está vinculado a un ideal que esta investigación busca demostrar: donde el sujeto se convierte en su propio guía durante el proceso de aprendizaje, y ya no en los prejuicios asociados a él.

Palabras clave: Interés. Prejuicios. Estudiantes Autistas.

1 INTRODUCTION

The inclusion of autistic students in the educational environment requires an in-depth understanding of the factors that stimulate their interest and engagement in the learning process. Despite the advances in this area, prejudices and socially rooted perceptions still persist that limit the view of their specific potentialities and needs, making them only a standardized production of men, men without singularities, a mold of the same product from an old mechanized factory and in high production. These perceptions of the subject called autistic, inflicted by society, seek to create a deposit on their margin, but we seek a spotlight of looks at their individualities and themselves, aiming at their integral development.

Education, despite having contributed to the inherent advancement of society in general, with regard to socialization and individual-individual coexistence, forming competent and skilled professionals, has been limited in terms of inclusion and especially in the lack of appreciation of the innate potentialities of individuals such as those on the autistic spectrum. Inclusive education, a theme addressed by works such as Crochík (2016), shows us that inclusion would be a necessary democratic ideal to achieve a truly democratic society, and in this sense, the rights of individuals must be guaranteed, including the right to learn and develop within a school environment.

Still on this theme, it is important to understand how society over time has built an idea of massification, based on patterns, which do not encompass individualities, but rather create segregation, strengthening the idea of what would be the ideal and the non-ideal, a subject widely discussed by theorists of the Frankfurt School, such as Theodor Adorno. Adorno (2002), in his book *Cultural Industry and Society*, argues that in capitalist society, society ceases to be an authentic expression of human creativity and is transformed into a standardized commodity, which from the educational point of view generates what has been seen today, in educational centers, an education of "massification" consumed passively, as being the standard to be followed.

The purpose of this work is to discuss experiences and reflections that problematize educational processes in the light of a school for all. When, in educational contexts, different subjects circulate, we are challenged to rethink the practices and ways of listening that cross the relationship between teaching and learning. To think about education from the point of view of difference is to understand that the school space is also the space of human plurality, of singularities that escape norms and classifications.

When addressing the inclusion of autistic subjects, we are called upon to go beyond the limited view of diagnosis, which tends to reduce the subject to a medical condition. It is necessary to recognize autism as a way of being, a singular way of being in the world, whose expression takes place through gestures, silences, interests and rhythms of one's own. Sensitive listening to these forms is what makes an ethical encounter between the educator and the student possible.

Thus, the problem that guides this reflection is to understand how the interests of autistic subjects can be recognized as a structuring axis of inclusive pedagogical practices, breaking normative and productivist paradigms of the contemporary school. The study, of a theoretical and reflective nature, is based on the contributions of Critical Theory (Adorno, 2002; Crochík, 2016) and Inclusive Education (Freire, 1996; Booth & Ainscow, 2002), articulating the concept of interest, singularity and emancipation in the educational field.

2 THE HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTION OF AUTISM AND ITS IMPACTS ON SOCIETAL PERCEPTION

Historically, autism has been understood from medical perspectives that have privileged the look of deficit, disorder and absence. This view, rooted in pathologizing paradigms, reduced the complexity of the subjects to a set of symptoms, silencing their voices and erasing their singular expressions. By delimiting rigid boundaries between the normal and the abnormal, clinical discourse ended up feeding prejudice and exclusion.

The history of autism dates back to the nineteenth century, with the description of atypical cases and manifestations of social isolation and communication difficulties. Jean Marc Gaspard Itard, in 1828, was one of the first to record the wild child of Aveyron, highlighting difficulties in language and social contact (Itard, 2004). Although he did not formally classify the disorder, his observations established an initial paradigm by relating autistic behavior to affective deprivation and social developmental disorders.

During the following decades, different authors described similar phenomena under different names. Sante de Sanctis, in Italy, described "dementia praecox" in childhood, with characteristics similar to those of autism. In the Soviet Union, Greenland Sukhareva, in 1930, described cases of autism-like behavior, which would later be recognized as Asperger's syndrome (Sukhareva, 1930). In this period, phenomenological descriptions pointed to a heterogeneity of conditions, which would later be grouped under the term "pervasive developmental disorders".

The 1940s were crucial for the consolidation of autism as a clinical concept. In 1943, Leo Kanner, in the United States, published his classic article, describing characteristics of children with difficulties in social communication, restricted interests and repetitive behaviors, which came to be considered the founding milestone of childhood autism (Kanner, 1943). For Kanner, autism had its origin "in the innate disorder of affective contact", emphasizing main aspects such as isolation, refusal to change and language difficulties (Kanner, 1943).

At the same time, in Europe, Hans Asperger, in 1944, described a similar picture, which later received his name. Asperger focused on children with preserved intelligence, relatively normal language, but with difficulties in social communication and restricted interests, calling this condition "autistic psychopathies" (Asperger, 1944). His approach was more dimensional, considering the spectrum of manifestations, and anticipated current concepts of high-functioning autism.

Both Kanner and Asperger, although independent and with different methodologies, described similar conditions, which was later recognized as a manifestation of the same autistic spectrum, but with differences in severity and cognitive profile (Cohen; Muratori, 2024; Hochmann, 2020). Another fundamental name for the understanding of autism was Jean-Marc Gaspard Itard, who in his time (1828) shed light on the behavior of wild children and their difficulties in socialization and language. His pioneering approach was based on phenomenology, emphasizing the careful observation of behaviors (Itard, 2004).

In the 1950s, Margaret Mahler contributed to the understanding of early development with her theory of separation-individuation. She described the autistic phase as a normal stage of development, which occurs in the first weeks of life, correlating it to the first states of autism (Mahler, 1952). His studies on the stages of early development provided a basis for recognizing regressions and the importance of early interactions in the trajectory of autism.

The work of Michael Rutter, in England, in the 1970s, was decisive for the differentiation between autism and childhood schizophrenia, proposing concepts of pervasive developmental disorders and contributing to the evolution of international classifications (Rutter, 1978; Cohen; Muratori, 2024). His research reinforced the understanding that autism had a neurobiological basis, unrelated to exclusively psychosocial factors, although environmental evidence was also considered relevant.

Changes in classifications over the course of the twentieth century reflect the complexity of autism. In the first editions of the DSM (DSM-I, 1952; DSM-II, 1968), the condition was mentioned in broad categories, such as childhood psychosis or childhood schizophrenia (DSM-I, 1955). It was not until the DSM-III in 1980 that autism was officially recognized as a specific diagnostic entity, under the name of "Pervasive Developmental Disorder", including subgroups such as childhood autism and Rett syndrome (DSM-III, 1980).

In the same vein, the ICD-10 (1993) consolidated the notion of a spectrum, grouping various manifestations under the term "Pervasive Developmental Disorder", including Asperger's syndrome, classic autism, and other conditions with similar manifestations (ICD-10, 1993). The classification began to emphasize the heterogeneity of the conditions and the need for a multidimensional approach, considering social, communicational and behavioral functioning.

With the advancement of neuroscience and genetic research, current classifications, such as the DSM-5 (2013), have adopted the nomenclature "Autism Spectrum Disorder" (ASD), eliminating previous categories and establishing criteria that emphasize the dimensions of social functioning, communication, and repetitive behaviors (DSM-5, 2013). This change reinforces the conception that autism is a neurodevelopmental condition with a spectrum of different severities and manifestations, reflecting a more dimensional and integral understanding (Lord et al., 2020).

The historical evolution of autism has also transformed social perception. From a condition initially seen as a form of schizophrenia or early psychosis, it has come to be recognized as a neurodevelopmental spectrum, which has contributed to greater social recognition and inclusion. However, despite scientific advancement, stigmas, prejudices, and limited understanding still persist in society.

The growing understanding of the heterogeneity of the autism spectrum favors more inclusive and personalized practices, while society still struggles with the spread of stereotypes and misinformation. The history of the pioneers demonstrates the importance of a phenomenological approach, which values the uniqueness of each individual, combating simplistic actions and reinforcing a transdisciplinary perspective for care, education and social integration.

This brief historical journey makes us realize that we still have a way to go. We also highlight that the transdisciplinary dialogue is very important, as well as the dialogue with

adults who call themselves autistic, and this is possible through their biographies, as we understand that only they can tell us about their functioning.

And, the school needs to dialogue with scholars and researchers to think together about their so-called inclusive work, since the school is for everyone. We understand that if the school is for everyone, according to Batista (2025) there would be no need to use the nomenclature inclusion, as the school is a space of transit and circulation for all children, adolescents and adults. Thinking like this, we work with children, adolescents and adults and not with Down Syndrome, Autism, wheelchair users, intellectually disabled people, etc., but with subjects where the school has an important symbolic value for these subjects who, before the pathology that this one carries, it has a name and it is by this name that it needs to be called by its peers, by your teacher and by all school staff.

Crochík (2016) points out that contemporary society is constituted by mechanisms of exclusion that mask inequality. In a context that values performance and productivity, difference is perceived as a flaw, and the subject who does not conform to standards is often marginalized. The school, as a reflection of this structure, also absorbs such mechanisms, sustaining a logic that hierarchizes the ways of learning and being.

The historical trajectory of autism, marked by conceptual displacements and persistent stigmas, shows that the social understanding of this condition has always been linked to normative models of normality. This historical heritage still reverberates in school practices, which leads us to question: how can education — a space of emancipation and diversity — overcome such paradigms and promote a true encounter with difference?

3 EDUCATION, THE CHALLENGES AND THE CEASEFIRE OF EXCLUSION

Contemporary education, marked by values of productivity, adaptation and performance, remains anchored in a school model structured to meet the demands of the labor market. The emphasis on technical training and the standardization of conducts reinforces an exclusionary logic, making it difficult to welcome human diversity in the educational space.

This reality becomes even more challenging in the face of inclusive education proposals, especially when it comes to the inclusion of people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), whose forms of communication, behavior, and learning break with hegemonic patterns of normality and efficiency. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), autism spectrum disorder is defined as a group with conditions and characteristics,

represented by difficulties in communication and social interaction, in addition to atypical patterns of behavior and interests, this definition alone already represents an immense challenge for inclusion to occur satisfactorily, since at the current moment in history, the stereotyping of the so-called normal is still carried, standardizing behaviors and thus making the traditional educational system become an impasse in the learning of people with ASD and disabilities.

The contemporary school, despite being inserted in a context of technological and discursive advances, still reproduces a structure inherited from industrial modernity, marked by selective, meritocratic and standardized practices. As Martins (1997) observes, the school institution, under the appearance of neutrality, fulfills a classificatory and excluding function, legitimizing social inequalities by selecting who is able or not to continue in studies. This structure is perpetuated even in inclusion policies, when these are not accompanied by structural transformations.

In this sense, Crochik (2016) argues that the school continues to be focused on the training of the worker and the adaptation of the subject to the market, prioritizing performance and functionality to the detriment of autonomy and critical thinking. In this way, mechanistic thinking still predominates, and creativity, criticality, end up becoming the target of the background, or in some cases, they do not even become an objective. Instrumental reason, which guides modern social organization, transforms everything into a means to an end, valuing and having as a priority, productivity, profit and normalization.

This model of school, focused on standardization, finds evident limits when confronted with the demands of inclusive education. The simple physical insertion of students with disabilities, such as those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), does not represent true inclusion if it is not accompanied by a transformation of school culture. As Crochik (2016) points out, the presence of the subject with disabilities in the regular classroom, without restructuring pedagogical practices and institutional relations, reproduces veiled forms of exclusion. Inclusion, in this context, should be understood as an ethical and political process, not just a technical or administrative one. The proposal of Booth and Ainscow (2002) reinforces this perspective by proposing the replacement of the notion of special educational needs (SEN) by school obstacles to learning, shifting the focus from the individual to the barriers created by the environment.

In the specific case of people with ASD, this discussion becomes even more urgent. Autism has its own forms of interaction, communication and sensory perception, which often

conflict with the traditional school model, based on constant orality, obedience to fixed norms and homogeneous assessment. By demanding standardized behaviors, the traditional school disregards the subjectivity and the singular mode of existence of these students, which ends up generating symbolic exclusions — even when there is guaranteed physical presence. Adorno (2002) offers, in this case, a decisive contribution by stating that the essence of the human being is difference, and that education should focus on valuing this singularity, instead of forcing adaptation to a homogeneous model.

From this critical reading, Crochik (2016) and Adorno (2002) converge in arguing that education should cease to be a means of social training and become an end in itself, oriented to the cultural formation, sensitivity and autonomy of the subject. This perspective breaks with the paradigm of efficiency and points to education as a process of individuation, which recognizes and develops the singularities of each person.

In the case of students with ASD, this means that the school needs to restructure itself to welcome different forms of learning and expression, promoting an environment of listening, methodological flexibility, and respect for the cognitive and affective particularities of these subjects. However, both Crochik (2016) and Martins (1997) recognize that this transformation cannot occur only within the school walls. School inclusion, to be real, must be articulated with a broader social critique, which understands the school as part of a system that hierarchizes, controls and selects bodies and minds. The defense of inclusion, therefore, should not be naïve: it will only be full in a society that breaks with the logic of oppression and structural exclusion. However, as Crochik (2016) emphasizes, this does not mean renouncing inclusion, but rather assuming it as a political horizon of struggle, as a critical possibility for the formation of consciousness.

Thus, the inclusion of people with ASD — and any subject outside the normative standards — cannot be treated as a project of assimilation. On the contrary, it should be seen as an ethical and epistemological challenge, which questions the bases on which the school is organized. Coexistence with difference, as Adorno (2002) teaches, is a condition for overcoming modern barbarism, which manifests itself whenever otherness is denied, silenced or converted into a disability. True inclusive education is, therefore, an education against standardization, against indifference and against conformism — an education that recognizes in the other not a deviation, but a possibility of the world.

In view of the analyses presented, it is possible to affirm that inclusive education cannot be thought of outside the social, historical and political context that structures the

school. The inclusion of people with ASD, in particular, reveals the limitations of a school system focused on normalization, standardized performance and adaptation to the productivist logic. The presence of students with disabilities in the classroom, without real changes in pedagogical conceptions, does not constitute inclusion, but rather the perpetuation of exclusion under new contours.

The contributions of Crochik (2016) and Adorno (2002) reinforce the need for an education that promotes autonomy, critical thinking and sensitivity to difference, breaking with the instrumental rationality that dominates educational institutions. As Martins (1997) points out, the modern school fulfills a selective and excluding function; Therefore, the proposal of inclusion must be articulated with the criticism of the structures that sustain these practices. What is proposed is not only to insert the subjects into the system, but to reconstruct the system in the light of human diversity. In the case of Autism Spectrum Disorder, this repositioning is even more urgent. The unique ways of learning, perceiving and relating present in autism require a school environment capable of welcoming and respecting the multiplicity of ways of being. For this, it is necessary to abandon the narrow criteria of school success and expand the meanings of learning, coexistence and participation.

To think about school inclusion is to think about transformation: of practices, discourses and affections. The school, as an institution, has sought to reinvent itself, but it still bears deep marks of a homogenizing model, which privileges equality of results and ignores the singularity of the processes. Thus, even in inclusive discourses, there are times when difference is only tolerated, and not effectively welcomed.

Booth and Ainscow (2002) recall that inclusion is not reduced to the physical presence of students in school spaces, but requires a paradigm shift: it is necessary to build a culture of belonging, in which each subject recognizes himself or herself and is recognized as a legitimate part of the educational process. This transformation implies a ceasefire of exclusion, a symbolic suspension of practices that subtly continue to deny the right to exist differently.

Freire (2021) reinforces that educating is a political and loving act, in which dialogue and listening constitute the basis of all emancipatory practice. Thus, educating autistic subjects requires the willingness to learn from them — not just about them — recognizing that difference is a source of knowledge and not a threat. True inclusion begins when the school is willing to listen to what is not said, what is gestural, audible, silent or sensitive.

Therefore, inclusive education must be understood as an ethical and political project for the transformation of the school and society. It is not limited to access policies, but requires a thorough review of pedagogical practices, critical and continuous teacher training, and the collective engagement of all school agents. More than a legal requirement, inclusion is a constant fight against barbarism — a commitment to building a truly democratic society, in which difference not only exists, but is welcomed, valued, and celebrated as a condition of humanity.

4 ONE BEING, MULTIPLE POWERS: THE PEDAGOGICAL PROPOSAL AS AN ACT OF TRUE INCLUSION

When we consider inclusive education through the critical look proposed by Adorno (2002) and Crochík (2016), it becomes important to change the focus from disability to the *power of being*. In this bias, the interest of the autistic subject should not be observed as a deviation from a norm, but as a legitimate expression of his own subjectivity, that is, his singular way of constructing meaning in this world. The moment we turn to what arouses the interest of an autistic child, we approach the essence of their experience and, consequently, a truly inclusive pedagogical proposal. In this way, to include is, above all, to listen.

Listening, however, urgently needs to break with the paradigms of instrumental rationality. The hegemonic school model, as we have seen, is based on the logic of measurement, productivity and compliance. Since, standardized curricula, homogeneous methodologies and the search for quantifiable results distance the school from its humanizing function. From the imposition of a single learning time, a single language and previous objectives that clash with the experience of the subjects, this segregating model empties the meaning of education. In this sense, for an autistic student, who learns through non-linear and sometimes unpredictable paths, this structure not only excludes but also violent.

The proposal improved here is that of a pedagogy that recognizes interest as a legitimate starting point for learning. Paulo Freire (2021) demonstrates here an important complementary contribution to this theme: one cannot teach without listening, and no one learns from content that does not dialogue with their reality of existence. In the reality of the autistic subject, this means legitimizing their specific interests, which are in many cases intense and restricted as bridges of entry to knowledge. It is not about "tolerating" the

atypical focus of a child or adolescent, but about understanding it as the axis that structures their way of learning.

From this perspective, by recognizing the interests of the autistic subject as legitimate in the entry to knowledge, we are approaching Freire's proposal of a dialogical education, considering listening to the other as a condition for true learning. The author shows us that teaching requires respect for the knowledge of the students, and that there is no education in the absence of love, curiosity and humility in the face of the experience of the other. Therefore, inclusion is not only to guarantee access to school, but to guarantee the sensitive listening of each subject, especially those whose voices are historically silenced.

In addition, there is a necessary epistemological inversion: what is in most cases considered an obstacle can become an appeal. The interest or hyperfocus on systems, visual patterns, repetitive movements or specific themes should not be neglected and fought, but inserted into pedagogical practice. Instead of imposing a curriculum that excludes particular forms of attention and motivation, the teacher and the school committed to inclusion have built, together with the student, learning paths that include these interests. This proposal dialogues with the defense of a flexible curriculum presented by Booth and Ainscow (2002), who defend the reconstruction of the school environment to eliminate barriers to participation and engagement.

However, for the interest of the autistic student to become the structuring axis of their education, a deep ethical commitment from the educator is essential, it is not enough just to adapt activities: it is necessary to abandon the idea of a student ideal and recognize the possibility of other ways of being, expressing and learning. The educator then needs to leave his epistemological and affective comfort zone to welcome the unexpected and non-standardized. According to Adorno's (2002) reflections, standardization is a form of symbolic violence, since it erases differences in the name of false equality.

The validation of the interests of the autistic subject requires, therefore, a transformation of the school space, not only in material or methodical terms, but also in symbolic terms, it is necessary to build a space in which the student feels integrated, in which his presence is not only tolerated, but desired, in which his voice, even if it may not be verbal, is heard. This demonstrates that communication, in an ideally inclusive school, needs to go beyond the limits of oral or written language, enabling multiple forms of expression: visual, tactile, sound, body. Therefore, alternative communication, the use of

assistive technologies, respect for each subject's time, and the acceptance of behavioral manifestations as forms of language are fundamental elements in this scenario.

Furthermore, the work with the interest of the autistic subject must be crossed by a perspective or vision in which knowledge is built from the interaction between the student, his peers and the educator. Learning, in this way, will cease to be a one-way street and will become a joint construction, sensitive to the experiences, desires and limitations of each one. It is in this perspective that Crochik's (2016) proposal about an education focused on autonomy and the development of critical consciousness is based: instead of forming individuals docile to the system, we form subjects capable of affirming their difference and fighting for recognition.

In addition, the aesthetic experience plays a fundamental role in this process. Adorno (2002), when speaking of art as resistance to barbarism, invites us to think of the school as an environment full of awareness and imagination, contrary to the cold logic of productivity. Art, as the language of the sensitive, allows autistic subjects to express what in some situations they cannot say, to represent their inner self and to create bridges with the other. When the student's interest is welcomed through music, painting, dance or dramatization, what is achieved is an authentic encounter between different worlds. Art, in this sense, is not only a complementary activity, but a privileged path to the encounter with the other and with oneself.

The proposal to break with the prejudices that make the social vision of autism unfeasible therefore requires a radical reconstruction of school practices. More than technical changes, a social and political transformation is essential, making difference no longer a problem to be circumvented and becoming a condition of existence. The autistic individual, in this context, is no longer the one who needs to adapt, but the one who makes up the system, who challenges it and who demands a new way of thinking, learning and teaching.

To think of the autistic subject through their powers and not their limitations is to break with the paradigm of lack. It is to recognize that autism is not absence, but another form of presence. Each gesture, interest or look expresses its own way of constructing the world — and it is in listening to these forms that education finds its most radical power.

This perspective dialogues with contemporary conceptions of neurodiversity, which understand autism as a legitimate part of the human variety, and not as a deviation or anomaly (Armstrong, 2010). From this perspective, the school becomes a space for

coexistence between different ways of being, learning and signifying the world. The role of the educator, in this context, is to open up to multimodal listening — the one that welcomes languages beyond the word, recognizing in silence, movement and interest a form of communication and expression.

Adorno (2002) warns that education should be guided by resistance to barbarism, understood as indifference to the other. Listening to the autistic subject, therefore, is an act of resistance: it is refusing erasure and affirming life in its plurality. The true inclusive pedagogical proposal is the one that welcomes difference as a foundation, and not as an exception. The teacher, by creating spaces of recognition, transforms the classroom into a place of encounter — a meeting between worlds, rhythms and sensibilities. Inclusion, therefore, ceases to be an institutional strategy and becomes an act of ethics and humanity.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing: the interest of the autistic subject is not an obstacle, it is a power for the whole society and for each being. By recognizing and valuing this power, the school ceases to be a space of normalization and becomes, in fact, a territory of emancipation. The idealization of a school in which each subject is called by name, and not by diagnosis, must cease to be utopian. We aim at a school in which learning is not an already complete path, but a crossing built daily by those who constitute it. A school, in short, for everyone.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

From the reflections presented in this article, it becomes evident that the inclusion of people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the school environment cannot be limited to a politically correct discourse or mere technical adaptations. It demands, above all, a profound reconfiguration of the epistemological, pedagogical and symbolic bases that sustain the contemporary school. Autism, as a legitimate expression of multiple subjectivities, challenges us to break with the logic of homogenization and standardization that still permeates educational practices and school curricula.

Based on the contributions of Adorno, Crochík, Freire and other thinkers who founded this work, we understand that true inclusion is that which recognizes difference as a constitutive principle of humanity, and not as a deviation. Sensitive listening, the acceptance of specific interests, curricular flexibility and the valorization of multiple forms of expression are not concessions made to certain students, but fundamental elements of a truly democratic school, which proposes to educate for freedom, autonomy and dignity.

The pedagogical proposal centered on the subject, especially the autistic subject, not only transforms teaching practices, but also the very conception of education. Teaching is no longer an act of transmission and becomes an act of encounter — between worlds, knowledge and ways of existing. In this scenario, the student's interest is no longer seen as an obstacle and is recognized as a power, as an entry key to significant learning processes and the construction of meaning.

Thus, the commitment to inclusive education requires that the school abandon its selective function and become a space for valuing plurality, listening and the collective construction of knowledge. Inclusion is not only allowing access, but ensuring permanence with quality, respect and recognition of the identity of each subject. Inclusion, as we have seen, is not limited to a localized action, but constitutes an ethic of coexistence, a policy of transformation and an aesthetics of sensitivity.

The recognition of the autistic subject as the bearer of legitimate and singular interests is an ethical and urgent task of contemporary education. Breaking prejudices and affirming powers implies shifting one's gaze: leaving the paradigm of correction and entering the field of listening. Difference is not a flaw, but a source of learning and creation. The school that wants to be inclusive needs to be willing to revisit its practices, understand its structural flaws and reinvent itself in the face of the challenge of diversity. Inclusion is not limited to policies, but is concretized in relationships — in the way the educator's gaze welcomes the student's gaze, and how both humanize each other in the encounter.

Recognizing and valuing the interest of the autistic subject is to understand that inclusion is not a favor, but a right. And that this right is only effective when the school opens up to the new, the unprecedented and the multiple. Only in this way does education fulfill its deepest function: to be a space of emancipation, sensitivity and resistance.

We conclude, therefore, that a school for all — where the individual called autistic is called by name and not by diagnosis — is not an unattainable utopia, but an urgent need. It is through the critical confrontation of the exclusionary structures that still persist, the valorization of singularity and the refusal of the barbarism of standardization that we will finally be able to build a fairer, more sensitive and, above all, more humane education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of all those who, in some way, felt the pressure of social modeling on them — in particular, the individuals called autistic.

REFERENCES

- Adorno, T. W. (2002). *Indústria cultural e sociedade* (J. E. Levy et al., Trad.; J. M. B. de Almeida, Selec.). Paz e Terra. (Trabalho original publicado em datas variadas)
- Armstrong, T. (2010). *O poder da neurodiversidade: Descobrindo o potencial extraordinário dos diferentes tipos de mente humana*. Vozes.
- Batista, C. V. M. (2025, agosto). A escola como um espaço para TODOS [Apresentação]. Evento “Escola: uma instituição inclusiva?”, Instituto Langage.
- Booth, T., & Ainscow, M. (2002). *Índex para inclusão: Desenvolvendo a aprendizagem e a participação na escola* (D. Suzigan, Trad.). MEC; UNESCO.
- Cohen, D., & Muratori, F. (2024). *A clínica do autismo e seus pioneiros*. Instituto Langage.
- Crochík, J. L., & Crochík, N. (2016). Teoria crítica e educação inclusiva. *InterMeio: Revista do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação*, 14(28).
- American Psychiatric Association. (1952). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (1^a ed.).
- American Psychiatric Association. (1968). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (2^a ed.).
- American Psychiatric Association. (1980). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (3^a ed.).
- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5^a ed.).
- Freire, P. (2021). *Pedagogia do oprimido* (50^a ed.). Paz e Terra.
- Hochmann, J.-R. (2020). Cognitive precursors of negation in pre-verbal infants. In V. Deprez & M. T. Espinal (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of negation*. Oxford University Press.
- Itard, J. M. G. (2004). *Mémoire sur le mutisme produit par la lésion des fonctions intellectuelles*. In T. Gineste, Victor de l'Aveyron: *Dernier enfant sauvage, premier enfant fou*. Hachette Littératures. (Trabalho original publicado em 1802)
- Kanner, L. (1943). Distúrbios autísticos de contato afetivo. *Criança Nervosa: Revista de Psicopatologia, Psicoterapia, Higiene Mental e Orientação da Criança*, 2, 217–250.
- Lord, C., Elsabbagh, M., Bird, V., et al. (2020). Autism spectrum disorder. *The Lancet*, 392(10146), 508–520.
- Mahler, M. S. (1952). On child psychosis and schizophrenia: Autistic and symbiotic infantile psychoses. *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 7, 286–305.

Martins, C. B. (1997). A sociologia de Pierre Bourdieu. Vozes.

New, W. S., & Kyuchukov, H. (2022). Sukhareva's (1930) "Toward the problem of the structure and dynamics of children's constitutional psychopathies (Schizoid forms)": A translation with commentary. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 32(8), 1453–1461.

Organização Mundial da Saúde. (1993). CID-10: Classificação internacional de doenças e problemas relacionados à saúde (10ª ed.). OMS.