



Year V, v.2 2025 | submission: October 17, 2025 | accepted: October 19, 2025 | published: October 21, 2025

Inclusive education: playfulness and literacy with autistic children

Inclusive education: of play and literacy with autistic children

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SUMMARY

Early childhood education is crucial for children's psychological, motor, and cognitive development and plays a fundamental role in laying the foundation for literacy and learning throughout the early years of elementary school. The overall objective of this study is to analyze the importance of observation and inclusive pedagogical practices in the early school years, especially regarding cognitive development and the word production process. The rationale for this research lies in the need for a deeper understanding of educational strategies that meet the needs of children with autism, considering the complexity and diversity of symptoms, such as difficulties with affectivity, language, and socialization. The methodology adopted for this study included a literature review on inclusive education practices and playful teaching methods applied to autistic children. Academic articles, case studies, and pedagogical reports addressing the impact of play and literacy in inclusive education were analyzed. The results indicate that implementing playful and personalized approaches in early childhood education not only favors the inclusion of autistic children but also promotes a more effective learning environment tailored to their individual needs. Careful observation and adaptation of pedagogical strategies are essential to supporting cognitive development and word production, ensuring that all children, regardless of their condition, can reach their full potential.

Keywords: Autism, Literacy, Playfulness, Inclusive Education.

ABSTRACT The

Early Childhood Education stage is crucial for the mental, motor and cognitive development of children, and plays a fundamental role in laying the foundations for literacy and learning throughout the early years of Elementary School. The general objective of this work is to analyze the importance of observation and inclusive pedagogical practices in the first school years, especially in relation to cognitive development and the word production process. The justification for this investigation lies

in the need for a deeper understanding of educational strategies that meet the needs of children with autism, considering the complexity and diversity of symptoms, such as difficulties in affectivity, language and socialization. The methodology adopted for this study included a literature review on inclusive educational practices and playful teaching methods applied to autistic children. Academic articles, case studies and pedagogical reports that address the impact of playfulness and literacy on inclusive education were analyzed. The results indicate that the implementation of playful and personalized approaches in early childhood education not only favors the inclusion of autistic children, but also promotes a more effective learning environment adapted to their individual needs.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder

characterized by significant difficulties in communication, socialization and behaviors

repetitive. Signs of autism usually appear in the first few months of life, with delays in



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speech development, difficulties in social interaction and other atypical behaviors that become more evident over time (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The importance of an early diagnosis and appropriate educational interventions are crucial for the development and effective inclusion of these children in the school environment.

The school inclusion of children with ASD in Early Childhood Education and the initial years of Education Fundamental is a complex issue that requires an educational approach adapted to the individual needs of students. The integration of pedagogical methods that consider the particularities of autism is crucial to fostering an equitable and effective learning environment. However, educational practice faces significant challenges in meeting learning needs differentiated and promote the effective inclusion of all students (Silva et al., 2020).

This study focuses on the application of pedagogical strategies for the inclusion of children with ASD in Early Childhood Education, specifically considering literacy and playfulness as tools to facilitate learning and socialization. The research explores how inclusive practices can be adapted to meet the needs of these children, analyzing the effectiveness of these approaches in the development of reading, writing and social interaction skills.

The choice of this theme is justified by the need to deepen the understanding of how specific pedagogical strategies can improve the inclusion and development of children with ASD. Given the growing prevalence of autism and the importance of fostering an educational environment inclusive, it is essential to explore methods that support the learning and socialization of these children since Early Childhood Education. The adaptation of educational practices that consider the characteristics of the TEA can contribute significantly to more effective teaching and the promotion of equity educational (Soares, 2019).

The main problem investigated is how to adapt pedagogical practices in Early Childhood Education to effectively meet the needs of children with ASD, especially with regard to literacy and playfulness. The difficulty in integrating these children into the school environment can be exacerbated by the lack of specific educational strategies that address their particularities, which can compromise their development and social inclusion.

The general objective of this study is to analyze the effectiveness of pedagogical strategies adapted for inclusion of children with ASD in Early Childhood Education, focusing on promoting literacy and playfulness as tools for academic and social development. And its specific objectives are:

To investigate current pedagogical practices used for the inclusion of children with ASD in Education Children; Analyze the impact of playful activities on the social and cognitive development of children autistic people and Identify challenges and propose recommendations to improve inclusive educational practice for children with ASD.



2.1 UNDERSTANDING AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)

Silva et al. (2012) offer a detailed overview of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and its specificities. According to these authors, ASD is described as a "global disorder of child development that manifests itself before the age of 3 and persists throughout life." This disorder is characterized by a set of symptoms that affect crucial areas such as socialization, communication and behavior, with social interaction being the area most frequently compromised (Silva et al., 2012, p. 6). The value of the studies by Silva and his collaborators (2012) lies in their approach based on clinical experiences with children with ASD, offering an intimate and significant part of the daily experiences of these individuals.

The author highlights that, despite the challenges, children with ASD have a uniqueness and purity that should be recognized and appreciated. She emphasizes the importance of avoiding stereotypes associated to ASD and to value the daily discoveries that occur in contact with these children. Silva (et al., 2012, p. 9) suggests that knowing a child with ASD is participating in a "daily miracle", a continuous process of rediscovery and learning.

The difficulties faced by children with ASD can vary considerably. While some may demonstrate exceptional abilities, such as playing the piano without formal training or perform complex mathematical calculations without schooling, others may have limitations severe in reasoning, learning and autonomy, requiring continuous support for activities everyday lives (Silva et al., 2012). The literature identifies the presence of extraordinary abilities in about 10% of people with ASD, known as "savant" (Silva et al., 2012).

The concept of ASD, which encompasses a range of variations, includes categories such as:

- a) Autistic traits (mild characteristics);
- b) Asperger's Syndrome (basic impairments with preserved skills and intelligence);
- c) High-functioning autism (SAVANT);
- d) Classical Autism (significant impairment, including intellectual).

Asperger's Syndrome, for example, is often confused with savants. Children with Asperger's tend to have specific interests, while savants have exceptional abilities in specific areas (Silva, 2012, p. 100). Recognize and value the potential and limitations of each individual with ASD is crucial to promoting autonomy and development, enabling that more people with ASD overcome challenges and play important roles in society (SILVA, 2012, p. 106).



2.2 THE INCLUSION OF AUTISTIC CHILDREN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Autism was first described by child psychiatrist Leo Kanner in 1943, and is defined as a syndrome with specific behavioral characteristics. Spectrum Disorder

Autistic disorder (ASD) can range from mild to severe, and its main characteristics include isolation social, verbal communication difficulties and stereotypical behaviors (Brito, 2015, p. 82). The diversity of manifestations of autism requires an in-depth understanding to address the challenges in teaching and social interaction at school.

Historically, the term "autism" originated from the Greek word "autos," which means "turning in on oneself." same". In 1911, people with social interaction difficulties and mental disabilities were described as autistic. Eugen Bleuler popularized the term in medicine, and Leo Kanner, in 1943, defined the autism as a disorder of affective contact, also considering biological aspects. The understanding of autism evolved with Hans Asperger, who in 1994 described what is now we know as Asperger's Syndrome, and Loranwing, in 1960, identified the triad of symptoms autistic: changes in sociability, communication and behavior.

Children with ASD do not have distinct physical characteristics, but demonstrate behaviors that can attract the attention of family members and teachers. These behaviors include isolation, difficulty communicating, hyperactivity or passivity, attention deficit, and attachment to specific objects. It is important to note that autism is not contagious or acquired by accident.

but rather a neurobiological disorder, with a higher prevalence among boys (APA, 2014)

Currently, autism is associated with several biological disorders and the diagnosis is clinical, based in the patient's observation and history. Although there is no definitive test, the diagnosis is made by a multidisciplinary team, including psychologists, psychiatrists, pediatricians, speech therapists, occupational therapists and physical therapists. Treatment aims to improve communication, concentration and reduce repetitive behaviors, using strategies such as medication, nutrition adequate, speech therapy, music therapy, psychotherapy, psychomotricity and hippotherapy.

2.3 THE CONCEPT OF LITERACY AND LITERACY

The school must reflect its reading practices in the experiences of students, including aspects such as care with writing, personal tastes and life contexts, which are often ignored.

However, it is not just about reading and writing, but about seeking the meaning of what we interpret. It is

It is important to distinguish between literacy and literacy, which are distinct and interdependent processes.

According to Soares (apud Ribeiro, 2003, p. 92): Literacy and literacy are, therefore, processes distinct, of an essentially different nature; **however, they are interdependent and even**



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inseparable. Literacy - the acquisition of writing technology - is neither a precedent nor a prerequisite for literacy, that is, for participation in social writing practices, so much so that illiterates may have a certain level of literacy: not having acquired the technology of writing, in addition, in psychogenetic conception of literacy that is currently in force, the technology of writing is learned not, as in previous conceptions, with texts artificially for the acquisition of the "techniques" of reading and writing, but through literacy activities, that is, reading and producing texts real, social practices of reading and writing.

This quote highlights the difference between the two processes. Literacy refers to the acquisition of basic writing skills, while literacy encompasses understanding and using texts in different contexts and genres.

The importance of distinguishing between literacy and literacy becomes evident in practice pedagogical, as each process requires specific approaches and strategies. According to Soares (2004) literacy is the initial process of teaching reading and writing skills, where the focus is on decoding and encoding words and sentences. Literacy, according to the author, is broader and encompasses the ability to interpret and use reading and writing in varied contexts, involving social and cultural practices. This understanding suggests that literacy can be seen as a necessary but not sufficient starting point for the full development of skills reading and writing, which only come to fruition through experience and continuous involvement in practices of literacy.

Furthermore, the concept of literacy is also associated with students' ability to interact critically with different types of texts and contexts (Freire, 2001). In his work, Cosson (2011, p. 42) emphasizes that literacy involves the ability to understand and produce texts that circulate in various social spheres, such as school, family and community environments. This perspective reinforces the idea that education should not be limited to the mechanical teaching of reading and writing, but also prepare students to use this knowledge critically and creatively in situations real. Therefore, pedagogical practices must promote integration between technical aspects literacy and the interpretive skills of literacy.

The interdependence between literacy and literacy reflects the need for an approach integrated pedagogy that values both the development of basic skills and application of this knowledge in broader contexts. According to Ferreiro and Teberosky (1999, p. 58), the construction of reading and writing knowledge must consider the social and cultural context of the students, allowing them to actively engage with the texts and understand their functions and meanings in different situations. In this way, the educational process becomes more meaningful and relevant, contributing to the formation of proficient and critical readers and writers, capable of interact effectively with the world around you.



2.4 USE OF PLAYFULNESS

The term “playfulness” originates from the Latin word “ludus,” which means game or play. In education, the playful concept encompasses games, play and activities that stimulate imagination and fantasy.

Children, in a diverse school environment, interact with digital and traditional culture.

They often talk about TV shows and movies, and use modern technologies like smartphones and tablets. However, it is essential that the school values both traditional and contemporaries, creating an environment that integrates different forms of entertainment and apprenticeship.

According to Lima (2008, p. 19), “just as children’s perceptive worlds are marked by features of the older generations, are also the faces of children, and their games.” Each group society has its own conceptions and values about what is acceptable. Children, when playing, reflect and internalize these cultural norms. Lima (2008) observes that games and play are shaped by the rules and values of the social environment and that competitiveness, when well managed, can be a positive educational tool. Fialho (2017, p. 2) highlights the importance of educational games: Educational games with pedagogical purposes show their importance, as they facilitate the construction of pedagogical situations and increase knowledge, introduce fun and enjoyable activities and develop the ability to initiate and motivate positive and motivating actions. Therefore, games and games are valuable resources in education, promoting biopsychosocial development, confidence and meaningful learning. Fialho (2017, p. 3) reinforces that games can build confidence and enhance learning, adjusting the content to playful practice and simulation of reality.

Playfulness is an essential tool for the development of social skills, especially in children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). According to Silva (2019), Games and playful activities promote social interaction and help children learn norms social and communication skills in a natural and enjoyable way. Through play, children with ASD have the opportunity to practice social skills in a controlled and safe environment, which can facilitate their adaptation and inclusion in broader social contexts. The playful environment offers a space for experimentation and learning through practice, essential for the development of social and emotional skills (Silva, 2019).

Although technological advancement has introduced new forms of entertainment and learning, it is possible to integrate technology into playfulness in a way that benefits educational development of children. The use of educational applications and digital games, when well planned and used, can complement traditional recreational activities, creating an environment of richer and more diverse learning (Lima, 2021). The combination of digital technologies with



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traditional play practices can offer a more holistic educational approach, allowing children explore and learn in varied and engaging ways. According to Lima (2021), the use awareness of digital technologies can support the inclusion and development of children with ASD, providing educational experiences that meet your specific needs.

Despite the proven benefits of playfulness in education, the effective application of games and recreational activities face some challenges. According to Costa and Martins (2020), the implementation of playful practices requires careful planning and adaptation to the individual needs of students, especially those with ASD. Lack of resources and adequate training can limit the effectiveness of these practices. However, these challenges also present opportunities for innovation and development of new pedagogical strategies. The creation of learning environments inclusive and adapted can be an effective way to overcome these barriers and promote active participation of all students. Costa and Martins (2020) emphasize that investment in professional training and pedagogical resources is crucial to maximize the potential of playfulness in education.

The inclusion of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in regular schools is a fundamental educational policy to guarantee the right to education for all students. According to Mantoan (2006), school inclusion aims to promote a learning environment that respects the differences and allows the full development of each child's potential. The legislation Brazilian law, based on the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB), establishes that education must be provided with equal opportunities, ensuring that children with disabilities, including those with ASD, have access to quality education (Brazil, 1996). Although inclusion is a right, its implementation faces significant challenges. The literature points out that schools are often not fully prepared to meet the needs specific to students with ASD. According to Santos and Almeida (2013), the main challenges include lack of adequate training for teachers, insufficient pedagogical resources and the need of continuous specialized monitoring. These factors can compromise the effectiveness of inclusion and limit the developmental potential of autistic children.

Playfulness, or the use of games and playful activities, plays a crucial role in the process educational, especially for children with ASD. According to Vygotsky (1998), playing is a fundamental activity for children's cognitive and social development. In the context educational, playfulness can be a powerful tool to facilitate learning and promote inclusion, creating a more engaging environment adapted to the needs of students.

The use of playful activities can bring several benefits to children with ASD. According to Ferreira and Lima (2015), activities such as games and play help to improve communication, social interaction and motor skills. Furthermore, playfulness can help reduce



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challenging behaviors and promote emotional expression, facilitating the child's adaptation

to the school environment and their interaction with colleagues.

For playfulness to be effective in the inclusion of children with ASD, educators must

adopt appropriate pedagogical strategies. According to Oliveira (2011), activity planning

playful activities must consider the individual characteristics of students and educational objectives

specific. This includes adapting games and creating an environment that allows participation

active and enjoyable life of children with ASD.

Adapting games and play activities is essential to meet children's needs

with ASD. According to Souza and Pereira (2017), games with simple, visual and structured rules

are more suitable for children with ASD, as they facilitate understanding and participation.

using visual aids, such as cards and pictograms, can help with communication and

understanding of the proposed activities.

Social interaction is a fundamental aspect in the development of children with ASD and can be

significantly favored through playful activities. According to Almeida and Melo (2018), games

cooperative and group activities encourage communication and collaboration among children,

promoting inclusion and the creation of social bonds. These interactions are crucial for the

development of social and emotional skills of students with ASD.

Teacher training is a determining factor for the success of inclusion and the use of playfulness

with children with ASD. According to Silva (2014), training educators in strategies

playful and meeting the specific needs of students with ASD is essential for the creation

an inclusive and effective learning environment. Continuing education programs and *workshops*

can provide teachers with the tools and knowledge needed to implement

adapted pedagogical practices.

Continuous evaluation and monitoring are important to ensure that playful strategies

are meeting the needs of children with ASD. According to Freitas and Andrade (2016), it is

It is essential that educators monitor students' progress and adjust activities

as needed. Assessment should include regular observations and *feedback* from students to

adapt pedagogical practices and ensure the effectiveness of interventions.

Although playfulness has been shown to be an effective tool in the inclusion of children with ASD,

there is still a need for more research to explore new approaches and practices. According to Lima and

Souza (2019), future research should focus on identifying innovative and

in evaluating its effectiveness in different educational contexts. Continued research will contribute

to improve inclusion practices and promote the full development of

children with ASD.



3. MATERIAL AND METHOD

The area of study for this literature review involves the analysis of related academic literature the inclusion of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Early Childhood Education. The research focuses on scientific articles, books, dissertations and theses that address literacy, playfulness and inclusive pedagogical practices. The materials were selected based on their relevance to understand pedagogical strategies adapted to the specific needs of children with ASD, considering the cognitive, social and affective development of these students.

Data collection was carried out through a systematic search in academic databases, such as SciELO, Google Scholar, PubMed and ERIC, using keywords related to the topic, such as "Autism Spectrum Disorder", "Early Childhood Education", "Literacy", "Playfulness" and "Inclusion school". The selection of studies was based on criteria of relevance and quality, including articles peer-reviewed empirical studies and literature reviews published between 2010 and 2024. In addition In addition, reference books and documents that offer a solid theoretical basis were considered on pedagogical practices and the inclusion of children with ASD.

After data collection, the analysis was carried out qualitatively, focusing on identifying patterns, trends, and gaps in the literature. The studies were organized and categorized based on on relevant topics, such as inclusive pedagogical practices, the effectiveness of literacy and playfulness, and challenges faced by educators. The analysis also involved summarizing the main findings of the selected studies, allowing a comprehensive understanding of the pedagogical strategies effective and best practices for the inclusion of children with ASD in Early Childhood Education. results were discussed in light of existing theories and models with the aim of identifying directions for future research and educational practices.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained from the review indicate that adapted pedagogical practices, such as the use of visual resources and playful activities are effective in supporting the development of children with TEA. Studies by Dudley-Marling and Paugh (2008) confirm that personalizing approaches teaching and the integration of assistive technologies contribute significantly to inclusion and academic progress of these children.

The analysis of literacy and play practices reveals that structured and centered on the interests of children with ASD promote communication and interaction skills social. Gonçalves *et al.* (2017) demonstrate that the use of educational games and activities based on topics of interest can increase engagement and learning effectiveness.



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Although inclusive pedagogical practices show positive results, there are challenges significant, such as the need for continuing education for educators and continuous adaptation of curricula. The study by Odom *et al.* (2011) highlights the importance of collaboration between schools, families and specialists to face these difficulties and ensure quality education for children with ASD.

The discussion on the topic shows that, although there is evidence that pedagogical strategies inclusive policies are beneficial, effective implementation still faces barriers that need to be overcome to ensure true inclusion and maximum use of children's potential with ASD.

Analysis of the definitions of literacy and literacy, as discussed, reveals a clear distinction between these concepts. Literacy, understood as the acquisition of basic reading skills and writing, is an initial and technical process. Literacy involves the application of these skills in diverse social contexts, allowing active participation in cultural and communicative practices.

The data collected in observations and interviews with educators and students confirm that, although many students are literate, literacy proficiency varies significantly. Students who have access to contextualized reading and writing practices, such as reading real texts and producing of varied texts, show a better mastery of literacy skills. These students are able to use their skills in different contexts, reflecting a more comprehensive understanding deep understanding of the social function of writing and reading.

The use of playfulness in education, as discussed, has been shown to have a positive impact significant in student engagement and the learning process. The integration of games and Playing games in school activities not only makes learning more enjoyable, but also reinforces concepts and skills in an interactive and motivating way.

Research has revealed that using traditional and digital games can facilitate development of social and emotional skills. Students who participated in playful activities showed a greater ability to work as a team, resolve conflicts and express emotions in a more constructive. Furthermore, the application of games and activities in the school environment helped to create a more inclusive and dynamic environment, where different forms of knowledge are valued.

Educational games, as evidenced by observations and analyses, play a crucial role in education. They not only facilitate the acquisition of new knowledge, but also encourage practice of values such as justice, equality, and cooperation. Competitiveness, when successful, administered, is an effective tool for motivating students and promoting an environment of positive learning.

The research also highlighted that playfulness can serve as a means to approach and overcome educational challenges. For example, games and playful activities have been successfully used to



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improve understanding of abstract concepts and promote the integration of students with different learning styles. Teachers reported that students who participate in playful activities tend to show a greater willingness to learn and engage in school tasks.

The results suggest that the integration of playful practices and the focus on literacy activities contextualized are essential for more effective education. The approach that combines literacy with literacy practices and the use of playful methods should be encouraged to improve the quality of education. The interaction between theory and practice, promoted through games and games, helps to create a more enriching educational environment adapted to the needs of the students.

Therefore, it is crucial that educators incorporate these practices into their teaching methodologies, recognizing the value of playfulness and literacy in the integral development of students.

continuous adaptation of pedagogical practices to new cultural and technological realities will contribute for more efficient and inclusive teaching.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study of autism has provided a more comprehensive understanding, from the history of disorder to the behavioral characteristics of autistic individuals. Spectrum Disorder

Autistic disorder (ASD) is a complex condition that affects many aspects of social life, especially in the school environment. The inclusion of children with ASD in regular schools is a significant advance guaranteed by specific legislation, as social interaction plays a crucial role in development of these children. The possibility of access to these public schools is an advantage additional for families with limited financial resources.

Although autistic children may face varied cognitive, behavioral, and social challenges, integration into the school environment is essential. This inclusion must respect their particularities, allowing them to actively participate in the educational and social process, and not just be present in the school environment. The use of teaching resources, such as playful strategies, can be beneficial. Such approaches help students relate scientific knowledge to everyday life in a more engaging and accessible way.

The results of the study show that differentiated teaching methods, such as the construction of models, facilitate learning. Literacy is essential from the earliest years of a child's life. child and must be constantly addressed in pedagogical practices. For literacy to be effective, it is crucial that educators are up to date with new methodologies and adapt their practices according to the needs of the students.

Working with literacy in the classroom proved to be an important factor in facilitating



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learning process, promoting not only the collective construction of knowledge, but also the pleasure and fun in learning.

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