

Conhecimentos Docentes Para a Inclusão: Relatos do Cotidiano Escolar na Educação Infantil

Teaching Knowledge for Inclusion: Reports of Daily School Life in Early Childhood Education

Enseñanza del Conocimiento para la Inclusión: Informes de la Vida Escolar Cotidiana en la Educación Infantil

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RESUMO

Este estudo investiga as percepções de educadoras da educação infantil sobre o manejo pedagógico de crianças em processo de inclusão escolar, com foco em estratégias, sentimentos e formas de apoio utilizadas na prática docente em um Centro Municipal de Educação Infantil (CMEI). Trata-se de uma pesquisa aplicada, com abordagem descritiva e exploratória. A coleta de dados foi realizada com 9 educadoras de uma rede pública de ensino no estado do Paraná, com média de 10 anos de experiência. As entrevistas abordaram o processo de inclusão e as estratégias pedagógicas voltadas a crianças com deficiência. A análise qualitativa resultou em quatro categorias: (1) Participação no planejamento pedagógico; (2) Auxílio pedagógico; (3) Orientação de profissionais especializados; (4) Estresse, sobrecarga, frustração e desânimo. Os resultados apontam que, embora as educadoras não se oponham à inclusão, relatam ausência de protocolos claros, suporte sistemático e formação contínua para lidar com as demandas específicas das

crianças com deficiência. Conclui-se que, mesmo após cerca de 15 anos de políticas inclusivas, ainda há lacunas no desenvolvimento de práticas pedagógicas eficazes e funcionais, evidenciando a necessidade de investimentos em formação, estrutura e articulação interprofissional para fortalecer a inclusão na educação infantil.

Palavras-chave: Gestão escolar; Inclusão; Infância; Diversidade; Gestão do Conhecimento.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates early childhood educators' perceptions of the pedagogical management of children undergoing school inclusion, focusing on strategies, feelings, and support mechanisms used in their daily teaching practice at a Municipal Early Childhood Education Center (*Centro Municipal de Educação Infantil – CMEI*). It is an applied research project with a descriptive and exploratory approach. Data were collected from nine educators working in a public school system in the state of Paraná, Brazil, with an average of 10 years of teaching experience. The interviews addressed the inclusion process and pedagogical strategies aimed at children with disabilities. Qualitative analysis resulted in four categories: (1) Participation in pedagogical planning; (2) Pedagogical support; (3) Guidance from specialized professionals; (4) Stress, overload, frustration, and discouragement. Findings indicate that, although educators do not oppose the inclusion process, they report a lack of clear protocols, systematic support, and ongoing training to address the specific needs of children with disabilities. It is concluded that, even after approximately 15 years of inclusive policies, there are still gaps in the development of effective and functional pedagogical practices. This highlights the need for investment in professional development, structural resources, and interprofessional collaboration to strengthen inclusive education in early childhood settings.

Keywords: School management; Inclusion; Childhood; Diversity; Knowledge Management.

RESUMEN

Este estudio investiga las percepciones de educadoras de la primera infancia sobre el manejo pedagógico de niñas y niños en proceso de inclusión escolar, enfocándose en las estrategias, sentimientos y formas de apoyo utilizadas en la práctica docente diaria en un Centro Municipal de Educación Infantil (CMEI). Se trata de una investigación aplicada, con un enfoque descriptivo y exploratorio. La recolección de datos se realizó con nueve educadoras que trabajan en una red pública de enseñanza en el estado de Paraná, Brasil, con un promedio de 10 años de experiencia. Las entrevistas abordaron el proceso de inclusión y las estrategias pedagógicas dirigidas a niñas y niños con discapacidad. El análisis cualitativo dio lugar a cuatro categorías: (1) Participación en la planificación

pedagógica; (2) Apoyo pedagógico; (3) Orientación de profesionales especializados; (4) Estrés, sobrecarga, frustración y desánimo. Los resultados indican que, aunque las educadoras no se oponen al proceso de inclusión, reportan la ausencia de protocolos claros, apoyo sistemático y formación continua para atender las necesidades específicas de estas infancias. Se concluye que, incluso después de aproximadamente 15 años de políticas inclusivas, aún existen brechas en el desarrollo de prácticas pedagógicas eficaces y funcionales, lo que evidencia la necesidad de inversión en formación, recursos estructurales y articulación interprofesional.

Palabras clave: Gestión escolar; Inclusión; Infancia; Diversidad; Gestión del conocimiento.

Introduction

Early childhood education plays an important role in the development of cognitive and socio-emotional skills, which are fundamental for academic performance and children's social lives (von Suchodoletz *et al.*, 2023). Evidence indicates that high-quality early childhood education fosters the development of linguistic, mathematical, and problem-solving competencies, preparing children for entry into and continuity in formal education with better academic performance indicators (Blair, 2016; Koshy *et al.*, 2024). Additionally, such programs contribute to the strengthening of socio-emotional skills, such as empathy, self-control, and cooperation, which are necessary for establishing interpersonal relationships and overall well-being (Chen; Wolf, 2021). Another relevant aspect concerns the promotion of physical and mental health, insofar as early childhood education can reduce risk behaviors and encourage healthy habits, particularly benefiting children in situations of vulnerability (Hahn; Barnett, 2023). By offering these conditions, early childhood education not only facilitates students' adaptation to and continuity in the educational journey but also constitutes a strategy for promoting social equity and reducing educational and economic inequalities (McCoy *et al.*, 2017).

Early childhood education in Brazil is guaranteed by law and recognized as part of basic education. However, different studies show that difficulties still exist in ensuring adequate operating conditions for institutions, including unequal distribution of resources, limitations in teacher training, and weaknesses in assessment processes, especially in peripheral and rural regions (Silva *et al.*, 2023; Vieira & Teles, 2024). In some municipalities, the organization of pedagogical work does not address the specific needs of children, which interferes with their learning and development possibilities (Toutonge; Pereira, 2024). Regarding inclusion, studies reveal that there are barriers to building practices that address the needs of students with disabilities and other educational needs, even when teachers demonstrate knowledge of evidence-based strategies (Carvalho; Miranda; Schmidt, 2024). The authors further assert that inclusive practices are infrequent and that teachers report feeling insecure about

applying them in everyday settings, highlighting that the lack of institutional support and continuing education contributes to this difficulty.

These descriptions point to a school inclusion process that generates ongoing demands for monitoring school processes, teaching quality, and the protocols used in the school environment to promote learning and assess student achievement. It is understood that in Brazil, inclusive education has been a widely promoted topic since 2008 (Brazil, 2008) with the proposal of a school for all and the construction of an equality-oriented landscape. It is also recognized that the protocols for learning assessments have shaped the Brazilian educational landscape and have influenced the dissemination of strategies for improving learning quality at the national level (Gomes et al., 2020). Each assessment initiative refers to a national, regional, state, or municipal examination or evaluation system that generates performance and learning achievement rankings (Brazil, 2014).

In the context of the state of Paraná, it can be observed that schools in the central-western region, to which the municipality studied in this research belongs, have shown progress in reaching the benchmark set by Brazil's national education quality index, the Basic Education Development Index (*Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica* – IDEB). Data available on the QEDu platform¹, which compiles IDEB data for Paraná as well as information from the Basic Education Assessment System (*Sistema de Avaliação da Educação Básica* – SAEB), indicate that the state is well positioned for continued improvement in school performance, with significant average scores, such as 7.2 on the IDEB at the municipal level and an overall state average of 4.7, compared to the national average of 5.1.

Also noteworthy is the Brazilian Educational Opportunity Index (*Índice de Oportunidade da Educação Brasileira* – IOEB), which measures, on a scale of 0 to 10, the educational opportunities offered in Brazil. Paraná scores an average of 5.2, slightly above the national average of 5.1, based on 2023 data. These indicators describe a school context that prioritizes learning and achieves significant results in national assessments, reflecting an upward trajectory in student achievement.

For Cheng (2019), standardized assessment processes in school systems generate an ongoing demand for reflection on how things are done. The author, whose approach draws on East Asian educational traditions, argues that lesson study is a management tool that should be employed every time educational performance is scored or ranked, as a process of knowledge sharing and organizational memory (Cheng, 2019). What is observed in Brazilian school systems, as well as in other educational contexts, is the absence of analysis of the actual landscape of educational practice. Averages are obtained, variables are understood, but what becomes of the

¹ Data on IDEB scores and their components by municipality in Paraná were consulted on the QEDu platform ("QEDu – Use data. Transform education", available at qedu.org.br), which compiles information from the School Census and the SAEB for states and municipalities.

knowledge-sharing process, or even the organizational memory regarding pedagogical strategies for improving students' performance and scores?

Teacher training and the school environment as a space for knowledge sharing have not fostered discussions about the process itself, but rather about outcomes and performance. According to Gomes, Hirata, and Oliveira (2020), what exists are descriptive analyses that do not generate meaningful changes in broader aspects such as educational policy or decision-making for social and educational transformation. The authors emphasize that eligibility criteria are framed around ranking demands rather than internal motivators such as teachers' own proposals or the problematization of pedagogical challenges (Gomes; Hirata; Oliveira, 2020).

A central question is raised here: have educational assessments and rankings generated improvements or changes in the quality of education, or have they merely produced infographics that describe school performance profiles? This question is accompanied by the context of inclusive education: how has a state and municipality that rank among the highest in performance rankings promoted inclusive education? In this regard, this study aims to understand the perceptions of early childhood educators regarding the pedagogical management of children undergoing the school inclusion process, highlighting their strategies, feelings, and pathways of support in facing the everyday challenges of teaching practice in a CMEI. Early childhood education was chosen as the research field because it constitutes an educational space and time that fosters the learning foundations and executive functions that underpin comprehension of content in primary school.

The following specific objectives were defined for this study: to investigate the knowledge acquired by educators regarding the behavior and needs of children with neurodevelopmental disorders and mental health issues; to identify the strategies used by educators to address difficulties in the teaching and learning process; to analyze how educators perceive the work environment in terms of structure, institutional support, emotional burden, and conditions for practicing inclusive reception; and to understand to whom and to which support networks educators turn when they face doubts or difficulties in managing the behaviors and specific demands of their students.

Method

This section describes the methodological characteristics of this qualitative research, conducted through a semi-structured interview in a school setting, with a specific focus on early childhood education and the school inclusion process.

Study design

This is a qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive research study, conducted in a municipally managed early childhood education center. The methodological basis of

the study is the situational diagnosis, which allows, through a systematized process of data collection, processing, and analysis, for an understanding of the organization and needs of the school environment. This knowledge management tool enables a comprehensive evaluation of school processes with a view to improving the quality of education.

Participants

This research features a sample of early childhood educators who work with students between 4 and 5 years of age and are responsible for classroom teaching in public early childhood education centers. Participants were selected through approval by the municipal education secretariat of a municipality in the state of Paraná, via an invitation extended to the school principal. The school designated as the research site was chosen by the administration, which identified 12 early childhood educators working alongside the municipal pedagogical team. Following the secretariat’s indication, all 12 educators were invited to participate, and 9 of them took part in the semi-structured interview. The sample characteristics are described in Table 1 below:

Table 1 – Sample Characterization.

PARTICIPANT	TRAINING	DEGREE LEVEL	CAREER TIME	EXPERIENCE ONLY IN CMEI	TIME IN CMEI
Educa 1	Pedagogy	Bachelor's	8 years	No	4 years
Educa 2	Physical Education	Specialization	18 years	Yes	12 years
Educa 3	Pedagogy	Specialization	4 years	No	4 years
Educa 4	Pedagogy	Specialization	10 years	Yes	10 years
Educa 5	Pedagogy	Specialization	13 years	No	10 years
Educa 6	Pedagogy	Specialization	15 years	No	10 years
Educa 7	Pedagogy	Master's	24 years	No	10 years

Educa 8	Pedagogy	Specialization	12 years	Yes	12 years
Educa 9	Pedagogy	Specialization	13 years	Yes	13 years

Data Collection

This research was structured around a semi-structured interview directed at early childhood educators, addressing questions related to the school inclusion process across distinct categories. The interview guide contained 21 questions and lasted approximately 50 minutes. The interviews were conducted in the school setting, at a time indicated by each educator as convenient, with the authorization of the school and of the professionals involved for recording purposes. After completion and archiving of the recordings, the interviews were transcribed and dissociated from the order in which they were conducted, to prevent any possibility of linking responses to or identifying any of the respondents. The data are stored in a digital drive, along with authorizations and consent forms, as well as the recording files, with no possibility of identification.

Data Analysis

The semi-structured interview in this study was carried out in full, but the questions comprising the present study address the specific issue of the work environment. The questions included are: a) Do you have freedom to participate in lesson planning and the pedagogical project offered for inclusion?; b) What is your greatest difficulty in relation to students with disabilities?; c) Do you feel the need for more freedom to act and express your opinions?; d) When you have questions, to whom do you turn?; e) Are there guidance professionals available, such as a psychologist or speech therapist?; f) Do you feel overburdened?; g) Do you have access to the special education team that works with students in resource rooms, in order to support the development of students with disabilities?; h) Regarding the students' diagnoses, do you observe coherence? What is your opinion?; i) Do you feel the need for emotional support, such as a space to talk with a psychologist, for your personal needs and emotional well-being in your professional role?

The focus of this research lies in the questions corresponding to the Work Environment category, which yielded 4 classes: Participation in pedagogical planning; Pedagogical support; Guidance from specialized professionals; Stress, overload, frustration, and discouragement. These classes allowed for the organization of the educators' responses and were analyzed using content analysis, following the guidelines of Bardin (2011). The educators' narratives were thus first read broadly, and then, as the questions were considered and responses were grouped by proximity,

they were assigned to the pre-defined categories for the semi-structured interview. In this process, carried out without the use of software and relying solely on content analysis, responses were grouped by question and by context (Bardin, 2011), generating a perception of similarity or specificity within each class.

Results and Discussion

The questions posed to the early childhood educators gave rise to four classes: 1) Participation in pedagogical planning; 2) Pedagogical support; 3) Guidance from specialized professionals; 4) Stress, overload, frustration, and discouragement. These classes describe how education professionals are sharing their pedagogical, practical, and social knowledge of the school inclusion process. Most educators conveyed an empathetic narrative toward school inclusion and toward students between 4 and 6 years of age who attend the last two years of early childhood education. However, the emotional burden, curricular demands, pedagogical processes, and social validations of school inclusion sustain a discourse characterized by appeals for assistance, support, and a continuous search for solutions.

Participation in pedagogical planning

Knowledge of inclusive education in Brazil has taken different paths from the 1990s to the 2000s, but over the last ten years new challenges and new directions have emerged (Seabra *et al.*, 2024). It is understood that inclusion has been part of the school community since 2008, with the implementation of the National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education (Brazil, 2008), yet the pedagogical demands and needs are part of this historical trajectory. This assertion is reflected in the narratives of the educators below, who constitute this class, and in which it is possible to observe that the education professionals who responded to the interview are still searching for strategies for planning time or to be able to promote activities that are adapted to or more closely aligned with the children's interests.

"[...] This is how it works: we are the ones who do the planning here. We receive a guideline from the SEDUC and we work from that. But we have the autonomy to change what we think won't work. We change some things, and I make adaptations for inclusion" (Educa 6).

"[...] but that's the thing... our schedule is very fragmented, and you end up with everything planned but not actually getting things done, right? So I think it's time that trips everyone up, this lack of conditions. The ideal school would have two floating teachers to cover absences, like coordination assistants, who have other tasks too. No one would be standing around idle, but they could step in whenever someone was absent." (Educa 9)

It can thus be observed that participation in lesson planning and in the pedagogical project involves adaptations resulting from an exchange of responsibilities

among the lead teacher, the early childhood educator responsible for the class, and the support teacher, who is sometimes present in classrooms providing individualized attention to students with disabilities. We observe narratives from lead teachers who alternate educational responsibilities in response to task demands or the dynamics of school life, and who project the possibility of one day being able to better develop and refine their educational strategies with greater time for analysis and evaluation.

According to Leal, Amorim, and Lopes (2023), the organization of pedagogical practices in early childhood education requires recognizing children as rights-bearing subjects, with planning grounded in interactions and play as central pillars of the educational process. Such planning must consider children's interests and initiatives as requirements for organizing teaching work, thereby ensuring their active participation and respecting their autonomy (Haddad *et al.*, 2023). However, it is observed that the reality experienced in relation to planning teaching practices for students in the inclusion process does not align with this ideal. The literature has identified that the lack of time and of continuing education specifically focused on pedagogical planning are described as recurring obstacles reported by early childhood teachers (Brostolin; Souza, 2023). These limitations hinder the development of strategies capable of addressing children's needs and reinforce the view that responsibility for specialized educational support falls on the support teacher, strengthening a fragmented conception of school inclusion. These descriptions are reinforced by the educators' narratives:

"It's the support teacher who makes the adaptations; we talk and she does it." (Educa 2).

"We have a structure where every student with a diagnosis is supposed to be entitled to a support teacher [...] I had 3 students with diagnoses. If I had at least 2 support teachers, then yes, one support teacher could handle two students and the other could handle the one who needed full support, at level 3. Then if one teacher were there and the other working with that student, I could attend to those other students who don't even have a diagnosis. Then you can truly dedicate yourself to them. It's a structural problem [...] Lack of investment, lack of public policy for inclusion" (Educa 9).

The narratives presented reflect a demand for support. The educators are interested in promoting attitudes and interventions that advance inclusive education and foster learning. However, the role of an educational agent present in the school, the in-classroom figure known as the support teacher, deserves attention. According to Bezerra (2020) and Haas *et al.* (2024), this agent is an individual without specific professional training. This highlights the absence of a formal process or protocol within school settings for promoting lesson study or experience sharing. The study by Dal Forno, Urpia, and Silva (2024) highlighted that many education professionals do not recognize how to promote inclusion through sharing-based actions and initiatives. Much of what is established in school organization is premised on the assumption that

information exchange, collaborative planning, and ongoing discussion of individual students' cases will occur at some future point.

Pedagogical support

Regarding Class 2, designated Pedagogical Support, the educators' narratives address the process of seeking assistance, the specific demands of learning, and who to turn to when a student's specific needs call for a more targeted and adapted intervention.

"I always share a lot with the team... exchanging ideas with my peers, you know? Sometimes a colleague gives me an idea. I really miss the pedagogical meetings; they're wonderful. We have that guaranteed activity hour, but the topic never advances." (Educa 9)

"We always ask each other: supervision, management... we go there and exchange knowledge". (Educa 6)

"I mostly ask the colleagues who are already in the field, like the support staff, I ask them. And at other times, when it's more urgent, I turn to the school counselor". (Educa 4)

Recognizing that all the educators work in the same school, it can be understood that there is a shared strategy among the professionals to meet the demands of the school routine. A sense of cooperation, exchange, and mutual access is evident in the narratives, consistent with the concept of lesson study.

However, particular attention should be given to the final remark by Educator 9: "We have that guaranteed activity hour, but the topic never advances." This account makes it evident that the time allocated to studying, assessing, verifying, and sharing a student's needs is insufficient within a single activity hour. A pattern of peer support is observed, and when more specific issues arise, educators turn to those in principal or pedagogical coordination roles. This choice is related to the perception that school administrators possess experience and knowledge, particularly regarding the student learning process.

Reis and Alves (2023) point out that school management can play a supporting role in inclusion-related actions by organizing institutional conditions that facilitate adaptations in the pedagogical process. Such organization includes the creation of collective spaces for continuing education, which can contribute to the development of collaborative practices among school professionals (Gomes; Cenci, 2024). However, the research results indicate that, when facing difficulties with students in the inclusion process, the educators turn to colleagues and the pedagogical coordinator on an ad hoc basis, which demonstrates the absence of a formalized support structure. This situation may be related to the lack of collective planning organized by school

management, since the limited time available for such organization compromises the continuity of actions and hinders the development of joint responses to the demands of inclusion (Santos; Prsybyciem; Bonez, 2020).

Tavares (2015) noted in his study that the articulation between management and teachers can be strengthened through practices based on institutional diagnosis, collective planning, and the use of indicators, provided that time and structure are in place to make them viable. Studies in a systematic review that examined the effectiveness of structured pedagogical interventions demonstrated that management-organized actions, including lesson planning, teacher training, and systematic monitoring, can have a positive impact on student learning (Angrist *et al.*, 2025). On the other hand, the absence of school policies that guarantee such continuous follow-up compromises joint professional action and hinders the consolidation of inclusive practices (Pereira *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, the data indicate that building responses to inclusion demands requires shared institutional decisions that guarantee time, planning, and pedagogical support in the organization of school work.

Guidance from specialized professionals

In Class 3, a description was obtained of how much the educators recognize the importance of planning with multidisciplinary value, along with an analysis of the development and learning of children with disabilities, as described below:

“The psychologist comes here once a year... It could be for everyone”. (Educa 2)

“No, only when they come for visits. That’s when they come to see the children, right? The ones who already have a diagnosis. Then we talk about something. Sometimes she asks, and we share something or other”. (Educa 4)

“No. Last year I’m not sure if it was the occupational therapist for that student I mentioned who came to talk, but generally they don’t come, they generally don’t come to us. For the diagnostic report, for example, me and the other teacher, we write a report and pass it to the school counselor. She drafts it, puts it in a proper letter, and the family takes it to the child’s therapist, psychologist, psychiatrist, right? But that kind of conversation – us talking directly with the specialist – is very rare. From the SEDUC, the staff from the GAP come to observe, but it’s basically the GAP advisor who comes, takes a look at the classroom and the students, and asks how things are going. Like when one of my students was very agitated. I talked to “M” who was from the GAP... she helped me. But it’s very little, you know? The support basically consists of them sending us on courses to learn how to write the student’s IEP, and so on”. (Educa 3)

Based on the narrative of Educator 3, it can be understood that the common approach taken focuses on verifying how protocols are implemented, rather than on the pedagogical routine or practical process itself. The Individualized Educational Plan (*Plano Educacional Individualizado* – IEP) mentioned refers to a structure of actions and strategies that address the child’s learning process. Silva and Alencar (2024) argue that the Specialized Educational Service (*Atendimento Educacional Especializado* – AEE), when coordinated with the multidisciplinary team, can contribute to the creation of inclusive environments by offering support to the mainstream classroom teacher and promoting the development of students’ potential. Cavalcante (2012) further argues that the AEE should be integrated into the school’s pedagogical proposal, involving the family and other public policies, and should be offered primarily in multifunctional resource rooms, with a focus on developing specific pedagogical interventions that supplement, rather than replace, mainstream education.

Furthermore, it is possible to observe in the teachers’ discourse a scarcity of interactions with specialized professionals, which may constrain the development of pedagogical planning and practices grounded in technical guidance. This finding reinforces the argument that ongoing in-service training is indispensable for equipping teachers with the tools to build inclusive strategies and engage in dialogue with the other professionals involved in the educational process (Silva and Alencar, 2024). The implementation of the AEE requires a structured support network, with practices involving teachers, specialists, and families, sustained by channels of communication among the school, therapists, and guardians, as a prerequisite for the welcoming and inclusion of children in mainstream education (Fagundes; Farias; Andrade, 2024). It is thus observed that the absence of coordination between the pedagogical team and specialized professionals limits the use of the IEP as a collective tool and compromises its function as a guide for teachers’ daily work in the context of inclusion.

Stress, overload, frustration, and discouragement

Regarding the narratives in Class 4, the analysis focuses on the demands of school practice and routine.

“Yes, because it’s hard to manage 24, 25 children and still teach effectively. Sometimes you can’t get around to every table because of the time constraints; sometimes you have to stop to address a conflict. So it would be important to have an assistant, two people in the classroom, because I think it would make learning more productive. Instead of only having an assistant in the third year of early childhood, the assistant should continue in the fourth and fifth years, alongside the support teacher. That would be feasible for managing all the demands of the classroom”. (Educa 4)

“Enormously, a lot – the exhaustion. Like I said about the 25 kids, there are the calmer ones you can manage. What overwhelms you is that 1 or 2 who drain you the entire year, all the time, those 4 hours I spent in the classroom. The ones you find yourself secretly hoping will be absent one day. And then there’s all that planning, so much comes with it. And then you end up stressed,

it wears on your mind, you feel overwhelmed, because you have to see... wow, I need to work on this, I haven't done that yet. And then you talk to a colleague and she says: gosh, I haven't even done that other thing yet either. So these are situations where there's too much accumulating and too little time. We're in the classroom for 4 hours, and I have 2 hours for pedagogical work. I arrive at 7:30, so it's just time to receive the children; we can't do anything at snack time. Then at 8 o'clock they go for snack, back by 8:15. Then I do the routine, things like the alphabet, what's the weather like, is it sunny or rainy... you know, the daily routine. Then at 8:30 we go for snack again, back at quarter to 9. When it's 10:10 I already have to stop to tidy the room, put out the mats, and take them to the bathroom for lunch. And that's it, my time is gone. So how am I supposed to cover so much ground in that time? How are they supposed to leave ready? And they hold you accountable... in the fifth year, they're expected to already be forming syllables, like BA, having that awareness of the sound coming from BA. How are you going to do that? You can't do quality work. And then in that roughly one and a half hours you have, you're constantly stopping to manage children, that one child who never stops disrupting. They think I have 4 hours to do pedagogical work, that I don't eat, don't go to the bathroom, that we don't have to manage anyone's behavior. And then they also want us to go outside to play. On top of everything, we have to go outside to play. Or play in the classroom. As if they haven't already played enough, right? So that's how it is. We feel very pressured, yes. Not from within the school, like I said, that doesn't come from here, it comes from higher up. If we had 4 hours for pedagogical work, we could really work intensively with those children who have difficulties. If only I had someone to help me hand out snacks, to take them to the bathroom". (Educa 7)

"Yes, overwhelmed... I'm a person who doesn't hold on to a lot of feelings; I try to resolve things. I have a support network in my family. I do reflect on my own practice, but yes, I am very overwhelmed. And then last year I started doing physical exercise; and it's so important. How it helps me! I come to work feeling so much more energized. I can solve problems because I'm much calmer in the classroom. So I stop and think. I can think through strategies. I wish all teachers could do it, because it helps a lot. It gives you so much more joy to come to work the next day, so much more energy, and my mental health has improved greatly". (Educa 9)

The educators' narratives reveal that the overload of tasks, the absence of in-classroom support, and the limited time available for pedagogical work compromise the feasibility of school inclusion in early childhood education. Figueiredo et al. (2023) indicate that the lack of planning and the absence of structured institutional time for pedagogical practice hinder the implementation of inclusion policies in schools' daily routines. This reality is made evident when teachers report having to attend to twenty or more children on their own, which makes the individualized attention required by students with disabilities difficult to provide. Furthermore, the literature has identified that the scarcity of specialized professionals and the accumulation of roles directly affect the quality of pedagogical practice and reduce the possibilities of addressing students' specific needs (Harper; McGrath-Champ; Wilson, 2024). The absence of time for reflection on one's own practice also emerges in the accounts as an element that generates frustration, especially when teachers are held accountable for standardized learning outcomes.

The literature argues that inclusive institutions must guarantee time to reorganize routines and practices, allowing professionals to take critical stances in relation to structural barriers (Sønsthagen, 2024). In this regard, the role of management is paramount, as it is the administration that can create the material conditions for inclusion to become effective in daily school life. Batista and Mendes (2021) reinforce that inclusive practices depend on an institutional organization that fosters active listening, shared responsibility, and the redistribution of tasks among team members. Khaskheli (2023) demonstrates that technical support and continuing education for the teaching team contribute to strengthening inclusive practices, especially in high-complexity work environments. Given this context, the data indicate that, although inclusion is mandated in regulatory documents, its implementation depends on institutional decisions involving time, personnel, and structure; elements still absent from the reality described by the educators.

The educators' statements also reveal that this accumulation of functions and the absence of institutional support have generated physical and emotional exhaustion, compromising the continuity and quality of pedagogical work. Singh and Gautam (2024) observe that teachers frequently face anxiety, depression, and burnout, which affects their performance and negatively impacts the student learning process. In the context of inclusive early childhood education, demands increase as teachers are responsible for multiple functions, many of them non-pedagogical, such as physical care and routine management of the classroom, without direct support. The literature indicates that this type of intensive physical, mental, and emotional demand increases the risk of mental disorders and fatigue (Ekawati *et al.*, 2025). Mansfield (2020) argues that every child has the right to be supported by a teacher who is engaged with their own learning process, and that institutional practices promoting teacher well-being are an essential condition for guaranteeing this right. Zhou, Slem, and Vella-Brodrick (Zhou; Slem; Vella-Brodrick, 2024) complement this by noting that teachers with greater emotional well-being establish more harmonious relationships with students, whose socio-emotional development also tends to be better.

The limitations of this study relate to its exploratory nature and the specific scope of the sample. Since it was conducted in a public-school institution selected by the municipal administration, the data reflect the perceptions of a restricted group of educators, which may limit the diversity of experiences and institutional contexts represented. It is also worth noting that the content analysis was carried out without the use of categorization software, which may have influenced the organization and refinement of the classes. However, this procedure was conducted systematically, based on the approach proposed by Bardin (2011), ensuring coherence between the study's objectives and the analyzed data.

Conclusions

This study is grounded in a discussion that, in the Brazilian educational context, has gained prominence over the past 17 years, following the implementation of the National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education in 2008. This policy highlighted the need to ensure all students' access to mainstream schooling, free from discrimination based on disability or other conditions, grounded in the concept of special educational needs and school inclusion. Since then, the topic of inclusion has permeated the debate about the role of mainstream education as a legitimate space for the promotion of inclusive practices. However, despite the existence of laws, guidelines, and orientating documents, significant challenges persist with regard to the implementation of this proposal. Such challenges relate primarily to the practical dimension of inclusion, since, even in municipalities with high educational performance and positive indicators in basic education, educators continue to report difficulties in mastering functional and effective pedagogical strategies to address children's specific needs in everyday school life.

In light of this context, the present study made it possible to understand, albeit partially, teachers' perspectives on the impact of working conditions, the absence of collective planning, the scarcity of specialized support, and professional overload on the feasibility of school inclusion in early childhood education. The educators' narratives evidenced that institutional organization does not ensure the time, structure, or follow-up necessary to consolidate inclusive pedagogical practices. It was also found that work with children with disabilities has been sustained predominantly by individual initiatives, given the lack of access to specialized professionals and the absence of institutional support networks. Data analysis revealed that the accumulation of functions, the fragmentation of school routines, and the pressure to achieve results compromise both the quality of teaching and the mental health of the teachers. The discussions indicate that the effective implementation of inclusive education requires institutional decisions that prioritize active listening, care for the educator, and the creation of spaces for collective planning, which emerge as structuring elements of teaching practice.

Finally, emphasis is placed on the importance of lesson study and the possibility of knowledge management through the implementation of a database that allows teachers to access successful experiences, best practices, and adaptation models that have enabled educational actions for accessibility and inclusion. When considering the school context, it is observed that knowledge sharing occurs informally, without the support of adequate tools and without a structured strategic plan for implementing school inclusion. There is also an excessive emphasis on performance results related to national assessments, which often proves ineffective in addressing the everyday challenges faced by educators in inclusive practice.

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