

The Inclusive Teacher: Strategies for Integrating Students with Disabilities into the Classroom

El Docente Inclusivo: Estrategias para Integrar Estudiantes con Discapacidad en el Aula

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ABSTRACT

Educational inclusion is a crucial challenge in the contemporary school environment, which seeks to integrate students with disabilities in regular classrooms. This study aimed to develop and evaluate a pedagogical strategy that facilitates the effective inclusion of these students at the Restrepo Millán Educational Institution in Bogotá, Colombia. As materials, it adopted a qualitative, action research approach, using structured interviews and direct classroom observations, involving six teachers who work with students with disabilities. The results indicate that, although teachers have basic knowledge about inclusion, there is a significant gap between theory and practice. For its part, the strategy called "The Learning Corner" proved to be effective, as it fostered an inclusive environment and improved interactions among students. These findings suggest that continuous training is essential to strengthen teachers' competencies in inclusion. Finally, it concludes and highlights the importance of implementing adapted pedagogical strategies that address the specific needs of students with disabilities, as well as the need for ongoing training for teachers, thus ensuring quality inclusive education in local and particular contexts.

Key words: Teaching methods, Teaching experience, Special education, Knowledge base for teaching and Media adaptation.



RESUMEN

La inclusión educativa es un desafío crucial en el ámbito escolar contemporáneo, donde se busca integrar a estudiantes con discapacidad en aulas regulares. Este estudio tuvo como objetivo desarrollar y evaluar una estrategia pedagógica que facilite la inclusión efectiva de estos estudiantes en la Institución Educativa Restrepo Millán de Bogotá, Colombia. Como materiales, adoptó un enfoque cualitativo, de tipo investigación acción, se utilizó entrevistas estructuradas y observaciones directas en el aula, involucrando a seis docentes que trabajan con estudiantes con discapacidad. Los resultados indican que, aunque los docentes poseen un conocimiento básico sobre la inclusión, existe una brecha significativa entre la teoría y la práctica. Por su parte, la estrategia denominada "El rincón del aprendizaje" demostró ser efectiva, ya que fomentó un entorno inclusivo y mejoró las interacciones entre los estudiantes. Estos hallazgos sugieren que la capacitación continua es esencial para fortalecer las competencias docentes en inclusión. Finalmente, se concluye y resalta la importancia de implementar estrategias pedagógicas adaptadas que aborden las necesidades específicas de los estudiantes con discapacidad, así como la necesidad de formación constante para los docentes, garantizando así una educación inclusiva de calidad en contextos locales y particulares.

Palabras clave: Métodos de enseñanza, Experiencia docente, Educación especial, Base de conocimientos para la enseñanza y Adaptación de medios

Introduction

Educational inclusion has become a fundamental pillar in the search for an equitable and accessible education for all students, regardless of their abilities. This approach not only promotes diversity in the classroom but also ensures that all students have the opportunity to participate and learn in an environment that respects their individual needs. Inclusion is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which seeks to ensure inclusive, equitable and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2015). In this sense, despite efforts by governments and regulatory and public policy advances that promote inclusion, problems persist in educational inclusion.

In this challenging context, a group of teachers developed in Bogotá, at the Restrepo Millán Educational Institution, a reflection on their educational work, who face the challenge of integrating students with special educational needs, and also face significant challenges in the implementation of effective inclusive practices. Among the factors of failure in educational inclusion they face are the lack of specific training, limited resources and low awareness of functional diversity, which constitute barriers that hinder the inclusion process in regular classrooms. This led to the question: How

could develop a pedagogical strategy in inclusive education that would facilitate the teaching of students with disabilities? This question was crucial, since it allowed focusing the study on the search for concrete solutions that could be implemented in the classroom, considering the diversity of needs presented by students with disabilities.

Having mentioned the above, the proposal to implement the strategy "The Learning Corner" is presented, which allows not only to address these barriers, but also to create a learning environment that fosters collaboration and positive interaction among all students. The relevance of this research lies in its potential to contribute to the improvement of educational practices and offer concrete solutions to the challenges faced by teachers in the classroom in this educational institution, this in harmony with what is proposed by Lizcano et al., (2022) who point out that historical progress in inclusion begins with small groups of people interested in improving education.

Similarly, with the publication of this study, it is possible to propose a favorable strategy that can guide teaching practice in other educational scenarios and project the formulation of inclusive educational policies. In turn, by documenting and evaluating the effectiveness of the proposed strategy, this work enriches the database of the available scientific literature on educational inclusion and contributes to the international collective effort in the search for the fulfillment of the SDGs, in this particular case goal 4 of inclusive and quality education, since, according to Marchesi et al. (2021), the literature on inclusion supports the theory and leads to transform educational practice.

On the other hand, the objective of the research was to develop a pedagogical strategy in inclusive education for teaching in elementary school at the Restrepo Millán Educational Institution, to achieve this purpose, we first sought to recognize the components of teaching in elementary school based on inclusive education, integrating the strategic and pedagogical elements in the classroom; then to implement a pedagogical strategy for teachers that allows students with disabilities to have accessibility, permanence and success in the teaching-learning process; and to evaluate the pedagogical strategy in inclusive education for primary school teaching.

Regarding the research topic, educational inclusion has been the subject of worldwide attention, especially in the context of human rights and equity in education. At the international level, UNESCO has promoted inclusion as a fundamental principle in

education, emphasizing that all students have the right to participate fully in the educational process, regardless of their abilities (UNESCO, 2017). This approach was consolidated with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, where the Fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) establishes the need to ensure inclusive, equitable and quality education for all (United Nations, 2015). However, despite these guidelines, many countries still face significant challenges in implementing effective inclusive policies.

At the international level, Porra and Galí (2020) identify deficiencies in teacher training in Cuba that affect inclusion, suggesting the need to establish achievable goals to improve attention to diversity. On the other hand, in Spain, Domingo (2021) highlights that inclusive education faces significant challenges, pointing out that teacher training is insufficient and that academicist and traditional professionalism limits critical awareness and perpetuates stereotypes. Arnaiz et al. (2021) emphasize the urgency of improving teacher training in Spain, revealing that many lack preparation to respond to special educational needs. Finally, Carrillo and García (2024) address the organizational management of the inclusive classroom, questioning the figure of the teacher and the need for intervention outside the classroom.

In the Latin American context, the situation is similar. Several studies have documented the deficiencies in teacher training and the lack of resources to serve students with special educational needs (SEN). Chiqui and Ureta (2019) conclude that teacher training should focus on developing competencies that facilitate learning for all students. Rojas et al. (2020) analyze the inclusion policy in Ecuador, identifying gaps in the attention to special educational needs due to conceptual deficiencies and lack of knowledge about inclusive curriculum. Castillo (2021) proposes a competency profile for teachers in Chile, suggesting curricular modifications to improve training. Finally, Machado et al. (2024) emphasize the need for a diversified and cooperative approach in inclusive education.

In the Colombian scenario, inclusive education has been supported by various regulations, including Law 1618 of 2013, which establishes provisions to guarantee the full exercise of the rights of persons with disabilities. The Ministry of National Education (2017) has developed Decree 1421, which regulates attention to students with disabilities in the education system, but its effective implementation remains a challenge. However, Zapata et al. (2019) find that the use of the DUA and PIAR is limited in regular classrooms, creating a gap between regulations and practice. Marulanda and Sánchez (2021) propose a formative model for teachers, emphasizing that the special condition should not limit learning expectations. Guerrero et al. (2022)

emphasize that, despite constitutional advances, there is still little teacher preparation in inclusive education. Finally, Pérez et al. (2024) stress the importance of educators being updated in inclusive regulations. This finding highlights the urgency of implementing teacher training programs that address these deficiencies and promote effective inclusive practices.

Regarding the city of Bogotá, Martínez (2023) identifies exclusions towards students with functional diversity and communication barriers. Pinzón and Camelo (2024) highlight the need to redefine the concept of inclusion in schools. Vargas et al. (2024) suggest a critical analysis on how to improve the inclusive environment in five educational institutions. Finally, Silva (2024) concludes that resistance to change in traditional practices limits the effectiveness of inclusive pedagogical strategies.

In summary, the international, Latin American, Colombian and Bogota background reveals a complex panorama regarding educational inclusion. Despite regulatory and public policy advances, significant barriers persist that limit the effective implementation of inclusive practices. Continuous teacher training and the creation of learning strategies adapted to the specific needs of students are essential to overcome these challenges and ensure that everyone, including those with disabilities, can fully participate in the educational process.

On the other hand, as theoretical references for the categories that allow the construction of an inclusive pedagogical strategy, the Montessori model and Paulo Freire's (1970) pedagogy of hope are presented. The Montessori model has been widely recognized for its approach to inclusive education, emphasizing the importance of adapting the learning environment to the individual needs of each student. This approach is based on the premise that each child has a unique learning pace and style, which demands flexibility in educational methodology. The implementation of this model allows educators to design learning spaces that foster autonomy and self-regulation. In this way, students, including those with disabilities, can be effectively integrated into the classroom, developing skills that allow them to actively participate in their educational process (Gonzalez, 2010).

For its part, Paulo Freire's (1970) pedagogy of hope has significantly influenced the way inclusive education is perceived. Freire argues that education should be an act of liberation and empowerment, where students become active subjects of their learning. This perspective highlights the need to foster a culture of respect and acceptance in the classroom, where diversity is valued as an enriching resource rather than an obstacle. Freire advocates an education that promotes dialogue and critical

reflection, allowing students to question and transform their reality. In this sense, the pedagogy of hope not only seeks inclusion from a technical perspective, but also invites social transformation, which according to Vásquez et al (2024) leads to the recognition and respect for the dignity of all students under the protection of constitutional rights.

Both approaches, Montessori and the pedagogy of hope, offer a robust theoretical framework that guides the implementation of inclusive pedagogical strategies in elementary school education, according to Cuaical (2025), it is possible to promote investigative spaces from teachers' actions and their work is empowered. By integrating these models, an educational environment is created that not only responds to the individual needs of students, but also fosters an inclusive and supportive school community, where each student has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential in an equitable and respectful learning space.

Materials and methods

This research used a qualitative Action Research methodology, which, according to Lewin (cited in Restrepo, 2005), is characterized as a reflexive and social practice in which theory and practice interact in order to generate significant transformations in the studied reality.

The research was conducted in an educational institution in the Department of Cundinamarca in a locality of the city of Bogotá Capital District - Colombia, which has four sites: two of high school and two of elementary school of which we focused on the headquarters C of elementary school, which has 276 students; of this population we only took into account students with disabilities from transition grade to fourth grade in the morning and of which the population under study are 6 teachers who are in charge of students with such need; the research was focused from a structured interview applied to teachers of elementary school with students with disabilities, a virtual survey of 15 questions addressed to the teacher focus group and direct observation of teachers.

The interviews allowed obtaining detailed information on pedagogical practices, while the surveys facilitated the collection of opinions on educational inclusion. In addition, a focus group was formed with the participating teachers to promote collective reflection on their experiences.

Data analysis was carried out using three main techniques: content analysis, data triangulation, and coding and categorization.

These techniques, as pointed out by Hernández-Sampieri (2014) and Gibbs (2012), allow us to delve deeper into the participants' experiences and generate meaningful interpretations that enrich the research process.

Subsequent to this process, the pedagogical strategy in inclusive education for teaching in elementary school was designed, which allowed teachers to have a basis for working with inclusive students and confirmed its relevance for this population.

The research adheres to fundamental ethical principles where consent was obtained from all participants, explaining the objectives and scope of the study, Confidentiality in which the protection of the identity of the participants and the confidentiality of the information provided was guaranteed, Beneficence: The research sought to directly benefit the educational community, promoting more effective inclusive practices, Respect for diversity: The diversity of the participants was recognized and valued, avoiding any form of discrimination, Scientific integrity: A high ethical standard was maintained at all stages of the research process.

These ethical principles were based on the recommendations of (Noreña, 2012) who emphasize that "the ethical criteria of a qualitative research should respond to the reflection that the researcher should make about the effects, the scope, the consequences, the relationships established with the subjects involved in the study and the way in which the results are written and disseminated" (p. 265).

Results

It was evidenced that at a general level teachers have a previous knowledge about disability and inclusion in the classroom, however, it also allowed observing that there is a gap between theory and practice, since although there is some knowledge, it is not fully implemented in the classroom for this population.

It is worth noting in this question that 66.7% recognize that the shortcomings in inclusive education are not only due to external factors such as structural barriers, but also to internal factors such as the lack of training in inclusion, which represents not only curricular barriers, but also attitudinal barriers.

The question asked in this item shows the diversity of thoughts, concepts and definitions that teachers have regarding inclusive education, and although in one way or another the answers they gave have something to do with this topic (50%), there is

not enough clarity or knowledge; their perceptions are limited in relation to all that inclusive education implies, which leads to a conceptual deficiency that could generate an obstacle or learning barrier by not being clear about this concept.

In this aspect, it can be analyzed that although teacher training in inclusive education and attention to diversity is fundamental to guarantee equitable and quality teaching, some teachers have assumed this challenge with commitment, training continuously to update their pedagogical practices and apply strategies that respond to the needs of all students, especially those with disabilities, there is still a group (33.3%) that has not received training in this area. This lack of preparation represents an attitudinal and curricular barrier that limits learning opportunities, having then as a challenge the permanent qualification.

A pedagogical strategy was designed that allows teachers to have more tools to generate an innovative, real, inclusive education where they can break the line between theory and practice as two different concepts and become integrated in their daily teaching work called: "The learning corner".

Table 1. Corners

<i>Title</i>	<i>THE LEARNING CORNER</i>
Objective:	To design a pedagogical proposal that enables the transformation of pedagogical practices in the classroom with the disability population in an inclusive and diverse environment.
Introduction	This pedagogical proposal arises from the need to adequately integrate students with disabilities in the regular classroom; For this purpose, a pedagogical strategy is designed to facilitate an articulated work of co-responsibility where significant learning is achieved, since it is increasingly common that students with disabilities arrive to regular classrooms, the challenge for the educational community is to be prepared and respond to their needs, ensuring a comprehensive, equitable and high quality education that provides an inclusive education without exception

for all, which can be incorporated into the Institutional Educational Project (PEI).

**Problem
Statement**

Education in Colombia generates great challenges for teachers on a daily basis; one of the most transcendental at this moment is the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms. The Restrepo Millán school is no stranger to this situation, which represents a challenge for its teaching staff in the school environment, since teachers do not have the necessary specific training, tools or pedagogical strategies that fully address the diversity presented in their classrooms, therefore, it is necessary to generate a pedagogical proposal that responds a little to this challenge, providing viable methodological and ludic pedagogical alternatives to be applied in the classroom to successfully achieve the teaching-learning processes of this community.

Justification

At present, educational institutions face the challenge of linking and keeping children with disabilities, therefore, strategies must be created to enable the participation of all students in an inclusive environment, which responds to public policies and guarantees the right to education for all. Each human being as a unique and unrepeatable person presents particularities in his or her way of learning and understanding the world, children who present a more accentuated particularity in their learning pace, in their interaction with the social environment or in their way of acquiring learning require a more assertive support from the family, the school and the social sphere in general. Therefore, it is important not only to take into account that the student learns but also the methods, strategies and tools of accompaniment of the different agents involved in the learning construct of the individual and their forms of evaluation; likewise the teacher must be sufficiently prepared to develop within the classroom, meaningful learning that link the student according to their needs

to an inclusive education and that have the possibility to develop their thinking and be guarantors of rights.

Methodology

For the development of this pedagogical proposal, two phases are proposed: the first one focused on teachers where they will raise awareness and strengthen competencies focused on disability and inclusion in the classroom with concrete, specific and permanent training on topics such as types of disability, regulations, methodologies and pedagogical strategies to implement in the classrooms where the population with disabilities is found, for this purpose, spaces will be taken from the weeks or pedagogical meetings that the Educational Institution has. The second phase of the proposal will be implemented directly in the classrooms where it is intended to create once a month a space called "EL RINCON DEL APRENDIZAJE" (THE LEARNING CORNER), where on this day the class time will be cut by 5 minutes, This time saved (one hour) will be used at the end of the classes according to the classroom schedule and the space will be opened to conduct different workshops with students where both traditional and innovative methodologies will be used, in order to strengthen the school skills of children and at the same time create a diverse and inclusive environment, within them can be implemented or strengthen cooperative learning. Development of critical thinking, game-based methodologies, personalized teaching (in the case of children with disabilities, PIAR follow-up), autonomous learning, laboratory practices, daily problem solving, among others.

Planning

First phase

for teachers, training workshop on disability and inclusion in the classroom and disability awareness.

Workshop 1 "Conversation among teachers towards effective inclusion in the classroom".

Objective

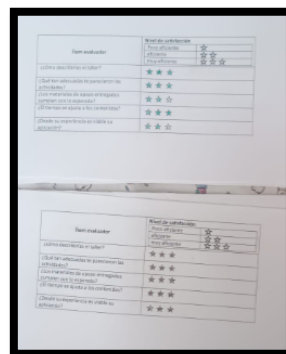
Conduct a discussion with teachers on teaching and learning processes in the classroom for students with disabilities.

Methodology

The discussion began with a guiding question: "Do I consider myself an inclusive teacher, why? We brainstormed, collected perceptions and gave way to another question, "Are the strategies I have used effective for the teaching and learning process? At the end, concepts about inclusion and pedagogical strategies are explained and concepts are given, doubts and concerns are clarified in relation to what was seen in this first approach .

Finally, teachers are invited to evaluate and analyze themselves based on their own experience, and will be given a sheet with a satisfaction survey with 5 questions about the workshop.

The duration of the workshop is budgeted for 50 minutes.





Workshop 2 Training, Disability and Inclusion from PIAR and DUA

Methodology

Teachers will be welcomed, a survey will be made on what they understand by disability and inclusion from their role as teachers and basic concepts of Individual Plan of Reasonable Adjustments (PIAR) and Universal Design for Learning (DUA) will be given. From the explanation, a collaborative conceptual construction will be made that allows the teacher to have more tools that can be applied in the approach to content.

At the end of each session, a satisfaction survey will be conducted.

Time 45 minutes

Resources Video beam, classroom and chairs, handouts and pens.

workshop 3 sensitization

- Physical disability session
- Hearing disability session
- Session, visual disability
- Deafblindness session
- Intellectual disability session
- Session psychosocial disability (mental)
- Multiple disabilities session.

Second phase

For the primary grades that have in the regular classroom students with disabilities one day a month will be held workshops entitled the learning corner, which will be focused according to skills, tastes, skills, motivations and needs that are presented, the workshops would have a duration of 45 minutes, among the topics to be addressed will be:

- Creative writing
- Painting
- Art
- Music
- Entrepreneurship
- Logical-mathematical

Resources

- Human Resources.
 - Classroom or large space (patio, green areas).
 - Texts.
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- Materials that can be manipulated such as plasticine, food, clay.
 - Board games that strengthen the formation of strategies and critical thinking.
 - Folder with white sheets.
 - Television.
 - Video beam.
 - Cards with images.

- Recommendations**
- Articulation with public and private entities.
 - Talks with experts or professionals who have experience with the different disabilities that occur in the Educational Institution.
 - Link to the Institutional Educational Project (PEI).
 - Support with pedagogical strategies by expert institutions such as INSOR, INCI, National Council on Disability CND, Asdown Colombia, among others.
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Once the data collection instruments were applied, imaginary knowledge, perceptions and pedagogical strategies that teachers have and use to address disability and inclusion in the classroom were identified. Based on the Montessori method in terms of educational principles, the preparation of the environment and the teacher as a guide and supervisor. López, I. (2023) postulates a comprehensive approach in which the social, emotional, intellectual and physical development of the student is involved; as well as Guzmán Santos, M. (2023). He refers that the principles of the Montessori method are based on individualities and autonomy, which allows inferring that this research managed to develop a pedagogical strategy that is close to the characteristics stated above with the pedagogical proposal "the learning corner", strengthening the teaching task.

By analyzing the tools used, it was possible to visualize or detect some of the shortcomings of the teachers in their work. Murillo, F. J., & Duk, C. (2024) points out that Paulo Freire, "in the pedagogy of hope and its representation in critical pedagogy" gives a deeper look at the relationship between teacher and student where knowledge is not transmitted, but built from the collective. Pinzón, A. A., &

Camelo, V. H. D. (2024). It relates and confronts the role played by the teacher's knowledge regarding the attention to diversity. From this point of view, the instruments used showed that the lack of teacher preparation and training has an impact on the fact that the attention to inclusion is not 100% effective. On this point, we fully agree with what was stated by (Galarraga Triana et al, 2023) when he mentions that a true educational and diverse inclusion cannot be applied due to "lack of adequate teacher training".

Conclusions

In the findings found, it is evident that in some questions of the survey focused on inclusive education, it is observed that there is a discrepancy between the knowledge and the teaching practice with a percentage of (83.3%), referring that "sometimes in their pedagogical practices they strengthen inclusive education". Similarly, Mestanza, J. E. G., Soto, E. E. O., & Navas, C. D. H. (2021). Refers to the application of the Montessori method, indicating that the teacher's work involves planning learning experiences, providing students with the construction of competencies and possibilities for them to learn, but to achieve this, an extra effort must be made, which not all apply.

Another result of the survey reflects that the school gives relevance to collaborative learning with 66.7% and the use of technology in the classroom with 33.3%; therefore, it can be concluded that the strategies used are effective and efficient for the teaching-learning process; however, retaking a publication by Revista Internacional. Chiqui, Y. M. H., & Ureta, R. S. M. (2019) we agree that the teacher should guide the development of competencies so that students have progress and advancement, in which the students' abilities are strengthened and not only in their particular differences, as mentioned by. López, I. (2023) who, based on the Montessori method, emphasizes that collaborative learning allows children to learn from each other, teaching each other and developing skills related to inclusion and acceptance.

In this research it was possible to develop a pedagogical proposal for teachers that allowed students with disabilities to have greater accessibility, permanence, effectiveness and success in the teaching-learning process, through the design of workshops implemented both in the proposal the learning corner and in the discussion held with teachers about the teaching-learning processes in the classroom for students with disabilities. Misischia, B. (2017). Takes up in his text "Inclusive

Education and Teacher Training. A Paulo Freire. *Journal of Critical Pedagogy*. Where he refers to the term resignify; postulating that it is necessary to retake and give a central place in teacher education and training thus giving meaning to the right to education.

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