

UNDERSTAND AND BELONG: SCHOOLS AS SPACES FOR THE INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

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ABSTRACT

Autism is considered a complex syndrome that involves developmental deviations from the early years of life in the areas of social interaction, communication, and behavior, with multiple causes and manifestations that encompass a wide variability of symptoms and responses to interventions. It was initially described by the Austrian psychiatrist Leo Kanner in 1943, based on the cases of 11 children he was observing who exhibited impairments in three areas: social relationships, communication/language, and behavior. The author stated that individuals with autism had an innate inability to emotionally relate to other people, which would depend on a biological aspect. Due to the increasing number of cases of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their relationship with the process of inclusion and belonging, the objective of this research was to describe and update the methodological bibliographic field in the relationship between ASD and topophilia. Understanding the theoretical-methodological concepts is of fundamental importance to subsequently evaluate the participation of the actors in the school unit to promote the school inclusion of autistic children, which occurs through the effective participation of the parties.

Keywords: Autism; conceptions; school topophilia

INTRODUCTION

Inclusion is a topic full of challenges, and bringing this proposal into the school environment and implementing it with quality, competence, technique, and kindness requires the involvement of everyone who works at the school. One of the aspects that permeates school inclusion is the environment and its adaptation to the diversity of

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students, considering then that school inclusion is linked to personalized attention, as well as to the individual attributes of each student, seeking to generate and provide opportunities that benefit the holistic development of all children (Weizenmann et al., 2020).

In 1990, Brazil aligned itself with the World Declaration on Education for All and began to review its educational process, broadening the boundaries for physical, cultural, and cognitive accessibility, thus opting for inclusive education (UNESCO, 1994). In this way, the country became a signatory to the Salamanca Statement, thereby highlighting issues related to inclusion in the educational sphere. With this, severe modifications began in Brazilian educational principles, which consequently encompassed legal issues, especially in national educational guidelines, all based on the concepts of inclusion. Although the efforts for changes and adjustments have been recognized, it is still possible to identify flaws throughout the process.

In this context, children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) enrolled in regular education schools are increasingly common, with research emerging to demonstrate that this practice of inclusion is feasible and possible (Lemos et al., 2016). The quicker and more accurate diagnosis brings with it early intervention that seeks to enable and strengthen the development of the atypical child, aiming at their connection in the family, social, and school environments. The relevance of the interaction between children with ASD and their peers, that is, children of the same age group, is observed, which further supports the fact that the school is a place that addresses this issue and fosters the intellectual and social development of these children (Nunes; Araújo, 2014).

Therefore, the school becomes the environment for social interaction, learning, and the development of socio-emotional skills that are so important for children with ASD. For the Chinese-American researcher-geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, there are several distinctions in the way people perceive the world and the environments they are in, leading him to ponder that, due to individual differences and preferences, "personal worlds" can be constituted, in which views and attitudes towards life and the environment where one lives can vary, as they clearly demonstrate personal perceptions that can change according to age, gender, or social structure, for example

(TUAN, 2012). The concept of topophilia coined by Tuan seeks to understand how human beings relate to their environment, better comprehending man, his conditions, and how he connects with the world to which he belongs. It emphasizes that topophilia is the affective bond between a person and the place or physical environment to which they belong, structuring the connection between the individual and the world around them through the triggering of environmental perception, followed by attitudes, environmental values, and worldview, as well as the determinations of the individual's mental and social context, making them perceive, record, and highlight certain information (TUAN, 1980).

Given the above, the following hypothesis was formulated for this research: school topophilia impacts the overall development of autistic children. Having the problem defined from the following perspective: What contributions can school topophilia bring to the overall development of autistic children?

METHODOLOGY

The methodological path outlined permeates the concept of the qualitative-quantitative method, considering that the conception of education, inclusion, autism, and school space admits the use of this method, as it initially worked with non-measurable information in this bibliographic and documentary research, showing that the method will seek to be the most suitable for the object it intends to know, the problem it aims to answer, and the objectives it seeks to achieve (FIGUEIREDO & SOUZA, 2011).

In the theoretical/methodological conceptions that seek to elucidate autism, Leo Kanner, A. Rivière, and C. Lampreia were used. For studies regarding the individual's perception of Place, which encompasses various topophilic feelings, with Place being a space for building relationships, the importance of referencing the National Curriculum Parameters for subjects such as Sciences, Geography, and History, along with the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education, with a focus on High School, is highlighted. In the continuation of this research, the teachers' conception of the school space and the development of autistic individuals will be evaluated. It should

be noted that this research includes the development of the principal author's doctoral degree.

RESULTS

Regarding the evaluation of the PCNs for the respective subjects of Biology, Geography, and History, these subjects play the important role of instigating the student to develop a more critical awareness of the reality that surrounds them, making it essential for them to awaken the perspective that they are active subjects who help in the construction of the space around them, that is, transformative agents of their own reality and that of those around them. Considering the school topophilia, the school is a place that was perceived both through daily interactions and through statements in an initial diagnosis by the support teacher, indicating that the use of audiovisual resources, oral communication, and the employment of differentiated activities that align with the students' learning levels contribute to their teaching-learning process, articulating the perception of the landscapes of the studied locations with their dynamics.

CONCLUSION

It can be stated that the realization of the principles of school inclusion in Brazil is hindered by political, social, economic, and, above all, historical and cultural factors. According to the authors, institutions reflect in their functioning the structure of a complex, contradictory, and individualistic society. In this sense, exclusionary practices still prevail in schools due to people who do not conceive the possibilities of inclusive practices, who do not contribute to the consolidation of a fairer and more supportive society, and who do not seek to overcome the contradictions that constitute it.

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