REVISTA TÓPICOS
ISSN 2965-6672 | Qualis A2

DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND COLLABORATIVE PLANNING: PATHWAYS TO OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION

GESTÃO ESCOLAR DEMOCRÁTICA E PLANEJAMENTO COLABORATIVO: CAMINHOS PARA A SUPERAÇÃO DAS BARREIRAS À INCLUSÃO EDUCACIONAL

Ciências Humanas • 26/11/2026

REGISTRO DOI: 10.70773/revistatopicos/795578113

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ABSTRACT

Educational inclusion requires institutional practices that ensure the participation and learning of all students. This study aimed to analyze the contributions of democratic school management and collaborative planning to identifying and overcoming barriers to educational inclusion in the context of Basic Education. Methodologically, a qualitative study was conducted based on bibliographic and documentary sources through a narrative literature review. Publications from January 2018 to November 2026, in Portuguese, English, and Spanish, were examined. These materials were retrieved from academic sources, indexing databases, publishers' websites, and institutional documents. The analyzed corpus comprised 24 publications and documents selected according to their relevance to the research objectives. The material was interpreted through exploratory, selective, and analytical readings, organized into three categories: democratic management and institutional participation; barriers to educational inclusion; and collaborative planning and strategies for addressing these barriers. The results showed that democratic school management and collaborative planning are interdependent dimensions in identifying and overcoming obstacles to inclusion. The study highlighted the importance of school community participation, coordination between teachers and specialized professionals, clear assignment of responsibilities, and the development of institutional strategies aimed at accessibility, equity, and student participation. It was concluded that inclusion requires collective commitment and continuous planning, and that further field research is needed to investigate the implementation of these practices in different Basic Education contexts.

Keywords: Democratic school management; Collaborative planning; Educational inclusion; School community participation.

RESUMO

A inclusão educacional requer práticas institucionais que assegurem a participação e a aprendizagem de todos os estudantes. Este estudo teve como objetivo analisar as contribuições da gestão escolar democrática e do planejamento colaborativo para a identificação e a superação das barreiras à inclusão educacional no contexto da Educação Básica. Metodologicamente, desenvolveu-se uma pesquisa qualitativa, fundamentada em fontes bibliográficas e documentais, mediante revisão narrativa da literatura. Foram examinadas publicações de janeiro de 2018 a novembro de 2026, nos idiomas português, inglês e espanhol, localizadas em fontes acadêmicas, bases de indexação, páginas editoriais e documentos institucionais. O conjunto analisado compreendeu 24 publicações e documentos, selecionados conforme sua relação com os objetivos da investigação. A interpretação do material ocorreu por meio de leituras exploratória, seletiva e analítica, organizadas em três categorias: gestão democrática e participação institucional; barreiras à inclusão educacional; e planejamento colaborativo e estratégias de enfrentamento. Os resultados evidenciaram que a gestão escolar democrática e o planejamento colaborativo constituem dimensões interdependentes para identificar e superar obstáculos à inclusão. Destacou-se a relevância da participação da comunidade escolar, da articulação entre professores e profissionais especializados, da definição de responsabilidades e da elaboração de estratégias institucionais orientadas à acessibilidade, à equidade e à participação dos estudantes. Concluiu-se que a inclusão demanda compromisso coletivo e planejamento contínuo, sendo relevantes novas pesquisas de campo que investiguem a implementação dessas práticas em diferentes contextos da Educação Básica.

Palavras-chave: Gestão escolar democrática; Planejamento

colaborativo; Inclusão educacional; Participação da comunidade escolar.

1. INTRODUCTION

Educational inclusion remains one of the most challenging issues in Basic Education, as it requires schools to recognize and respect differences among students and ensure that each of them has genuine opportunities for access, retention, learning, and participation. This goes beyond simply guaranteeing enrollment; it involves identifying and subsequently overcoming the barriers that hinder this process, including pedagogical, communicational, architectural, attitudinal, and organizational barriers, as well as difficulties related to the training of education professionals and the availability of resources and adequate institutional conditions.

It is at this point that democratic management moves beyond being an abstract principle and assumes a concrete role. Collective participation in decision-making and the sharing of responsibilities among the different members of the school community, including administrators, teachers, specialized professionals, students, and family members, create the conditions necessary to ensure that inclusion does not become the responsibility of a single individual or an isolated department. When effectively implemented, collaborative planning enables these diverse experiences and forms of knowledge to converge in identifying needs, establishing priorities, and developing institutional strategies, that is, strategies embraced by the school as a whole rather than dependent on the goodwill of those directly involved in providing support. The integration of democratic participation and collective planning can therefore help shift the understanding of inclusion from an isolated

task assigned to those who work directly with these students to a commitment shared by the entire institution. Nevertheless, changes in management alone cannot resolve the lack of resources and adequate institutional conditions, which have already been identified as barriers.

In view of this situation, the following research question was formulated: **How can democratic school management, through collaborative planning and school community participation, contribute to identifying and overcoming the barriers that hinder educational inclusion?**

To address this question, the **general objective** was defined as analyzing the contributions of democratic school management and collaborative planning to identifying and overcoming barriers to educational inclusion in the context of Basic Education. The **specific objectives** were established as follows: (i) to examine the foundations of democratic school management and its relationship with collective participation in the development of institutional policies, decisions, and practices aimed at educational inclusion; (ii) to investigate the main barriers that hinder school inclusion, considering pedagogical, communicational, architectural, attitudinal, and organizational aspects, as well as issues related to the training of education professionals; and (iii) to analyze the possibilities of using collaborative planning and school community participation to develop institutional strategies that promote accessibility, equity, and student participation.

Regarding the methodological procedures, this study is characterized as qualitative research based on bibliographic and documentary sources, conducted through a narrative literature

review. Publications released between January 2018 and November 2026, in Portuguese, English, and Spanish, were considered. These materials were consulted through academic sources, journal websites, indexing databases, and institutional portals. The selection comprised 24 publications and documents related to the research objectives. Subsequently, the material underwent exploratory, selective, and analytical readings, enabling the organization and interpretation of information into three thematic areas: democratic management and institutional participation; barriers to educational inclusion; and collaborative planning and strategies for addressing these barriers.

In addition to this introduction, the article is organized into three further sections. The second presents the theoretical framework, addressing concepts and discussions related to democratic school management, barriers to educational inclusion, and collaborative planning. The third describes the methodological procedures adopted in the investigation. Finally, the fourth section presents the concluding remarks, revisiting the research objectives and the main contributions of the analysis.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Democratic School Management: Collective Participation And Institutional Commitment To Educational Inclusion

Democratic school management is an organizational principle that presupposes the participation of different segments of the school community in setting priorities, making decisions, and organizing institutional practices. This requires moving beyond centralized administrative models, in which decision-making is restricted to the

management team, and creating opportunities for participatory processes based on dialogue, shared responsibility, and institutional autonomy. In the field of educational inclusion, this means incorporating different perspectives on students' needs and on the conditions required to ensure access, retention, participation, and learning. In examining three decades of Brazilian research on democratic management in Basic Education, Amaro and D'Angelo's (2024) systematic review demonstrates the range of dimensions encompassed by this topic and how they relate to the organizational challenges faced by educational institutions.

School management can only develop actions consistent with the sociocultural realities of students and their families when collective participation is ensured. Cardozo, Ramos, and Pereira (2024) directly associate the democratic organization of schools with an inclusive institutional culture, whose development involves education professionals and other participants in the educational process. According to the authors, school organization cannot be understood separately from the social, economic, and political conditions that influence its functioning. As Cardozo, Ramos, and Pereira (2024, p. 05) state:

> *We emphasize that the school is embedded in a sociocultural, economic, and political context whose influence is decisive in shaping its organization. The school is an integral part of a culture and reflects, through its actions, the constraints and contradictions of capitalist society. In this regard, an analysis of the relationship between school management and inclusive education must consider the perceptions of members of the school community regarding the social objectives and purposes of school organization within the sociocultural and political reality.*

Democratic management has a legal basis in Law No. 9,394/1996, particularly following the enactment of Law No. 14,644/2023, which established School Councils and School Council Forums, thereby creating opportunities for community participation in school organization and decision-making. These bodies expand the possibilities for different segments of the community to participate in school organization and decision-making processes. Legislation alone, however, is insufficient: a council established by law may exist only on paper if the school does not incorporate it into everyday practice through consultation, deliberation, and monitoring of institutional actions. Aline Neto, Alves, and Maia (2025) associate active community involvement with the implementation of democratic management, understanding such participation as an exercise of citizenship and as a means of developing individuals capable of intervening in social reality.

In this regard, the authors state:

> *Citizenship is intrinsically linked to the exercise of rights and duties. Education plays a central role in the formation of conscious and participatory citizens. Thus, education is fundamental to the full development of citizens capable of reflecting on their reality and intervening to transform it through the exercise of their rights and duties in everyday life, rather than remaining mere spectators of life in society (Aline Neto; Alves; Maia, 2025, p. 08).*

Educational inclusion also depends on the work of the school management team, which is responsible for coordinating professionals, organizing resources, and creating conditions that enable pedagogical practices to address students' diverse needs. In a systematic review of inclusive leadership exercised by school principals, Dematthews, Conroy, and McKenzie (2026) identify practices focused on collective commitments to inclusion, improvements in organizational conditions, and the development of professional capacities. These findings suggest that school leadership cannot be limited to bureaucratic routines; it must also mobilize people and organize the institutional conditions that make participation possible for everyone. Leithwood (2021), in examining the evidence gathered on equity in school leadership, points in the same direction: leadership practices are associated with fairer educational conditions for students from different social groups.

An inclusive school, therefore, depends on democratic principles being effectively incorporated into institutional planning, particularly through the Political-Pedagogical Project (PPP), so that the needs identified by the school community can guide priorities and pedagogical interventions. Hudson (2024) contributes to this discussion by addressing professional learning communities, in

which educators collaborate to improve teaching and learning processes. In the context of inclusion, this coordinated work enables the collective examination of students' difficulties, the exchange of experiences among teachers, and the development of pedagogical responses based on identified needs. Santos *et al.* (2026, p. 05) state:

> *In the educational context, planning is present at every stage of organization, encompassing both macro-level domains, such as federal, state, and municipal plans, and micro-level domains, which involve school management and classroom development. [...] Educational planning is understood as an interconnected set of plans aimed at the development of a country, emphasizing the need for collaborative work among professionals from different fields of practice. In the school context, planning takes on a broader and more complex meaning, seeking primarily to address the following questions: whom to teach, how, where, when, by whom, for what purpose, and at what cost.*

Table 1 summarizes the main theoretical and regulatory contributions concerning democratic management and educational inclusion. For each contribution, it presents the underlying foundation, the participatory dimension, and the implications for the organization of institutional practices.

Table 1. Foundations of democratic school management and their contributions to educational inclusion

Dimension of analysis	Characteristics and contributions to educational inclusion	Author and reference work

Democratic participation	Involvement of different segments of the school community in decision-making and institutional organization.	Amaro and D'Angelo (2024). *Three Decades of Democratic School Management in Brazil*.
Inclusive institutional culture	Articulation between democratic management, school autonomy, and the participation of individuals in developing inclusive practices.	Cardozo, Ramos, and Pereira (2024). *Democratic Management: Building an Inclusive School*.
Inclusive school leadership	Development of collective commitments, improvement of organizational conditions, and strengthening of relationships with families and professionals.	Dematthews, Conroy, and McKenzie (2026). *Inclusive Principal Leadership*.
Planning and professional collaboration	Organization of professional learning communities, sharing of experiences, and collective analysis of educational processes.	Hudson (2024). *A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Effective Professional Learning Community Operation in Schools*.
Educational equity	Development of leadership practices aimed at reducing inequalities and improving educational conditions for students.	Leithwood (2021). *A Review of Evidence About Equitable School Leadership*.
Participation and citizenship	Recognition of active school community participation, democratic mechanisms, and the exercise of citizenship.	Neto, Alves, and Maia (2025). *Democratic School Management*.
Collegiate participation	Strengthening of participatory mechanisms and participatory planning as instruments for	Santos *et al.* (2026). *Mechanisms for Strengthening*

	democratizing school management.	*Democracy in School Management*.
Regulatory framework	Institutionalization of School Councils and School Council Forums as mechanisms for democratic participation.	Brazil (2023). *Law No. 14,644/2023*.

Source: Prepared by the author (2026), based on the references indicated in the table.

Overcoming barriers to inclusion depends on decisions developed collectively and translated into everyday school practices, bringing democratic management, community participation, and institutional commitment together. In this context, identifying obstacles requires listening to students and families, as well as fostering dialogue between mainstream classroom teachers and professionals working in Specialized Educational Assistance (AEE). It also requires examining the school's overall physical, pedagogical, communicational, and organizational conditions rather than treating them as items on a checklist. In their investigation of how an inclusive school is built, Cardozo, Ramos, and Pereira (2024) show that the institution needs autonomy and that individuals must participate in defining pedagogical actions. Dematthews, Conroy, and McKenzie (2026) extend this discussion by addressing shared commitments, closer relationships with families, and opportunities for collaboration created to address inclusion-related difficulties.

Understood in this way, democratic school management is an ongoing process: participation, planning, monitoring, and institutional accountability for decisions are all required. Formal compliance with legislation does not exhaust any of these responsibilities. Collective deliberation produces little effect if

decisions are not translated into concrete actions, if responsibility for each task remains undefined, or if the conditions provided to students are not continuously evaluated. These different dimensions are examined by Amaro and D'Angelo (2024), Leithwood (2021), Hudson (2024), Neto, Alves, and Maia (2025), and Santos *et al.* (2026). Institutional instruments for participation, in turn, are supported by Law No. 14,644/2023. An inclusive school culture becomes established when the community helps identify problems and remains involved in the subsequent stages, from formulating measures to overcome them to implementing and evaluating those measures.

2.2. Barriers To Educational Inclusion: Pedagogical, Structural, Attitudinal, And Organizational Challenges

Educational inclusion cannot be achieved through enrollment alone. For this principle to become effective, students must also be able to remain in school, participate, and learn in Basic Education, with equal opportunities for all. In practice, this principle encounters obstacles related to the organization of education systems, infrastructure conditions, pedagogical practices, and the conceptions that education professionals hold about diversity. In its report *Inclusion and Education: All Means All*, UNESCO (2020) associates educational exclusion with social, economic, cultural, and institutional dimensions, making it clear that guaranteeing the right to inclusive education requires interventions that go beyond increasing enrollment rates. Identifying these barriers is therefore an essential step toward understanding what actually limits student participation and guiding institutional measures capable of overcoming such obstacles.

Barriers to inclusion do not occur in isolation; they may overlap, and when they do, they compromise the organization of pedagogical work and students' learning opportunities. In investigating the perceptions of future education professionals, Arnaiz Sánchez, de Haro Rodríguez, and Maldonado Martínez (2019) identified four types of difficulties: insufficient teacher training, physical barriers in school environments, inadequate use of available resources, and a lack of teaching and organizational strategies consistent with an inclusive educational approach. This explains their emphasis on initial teacher education: recognizing the obstacles present in school contexts must be part of the preparation of future teachers.

According to Sánchez, Rodríguez, and Martínez (2019, p. 24):

> *There is no doubt that higher education institutions play a fundamental role in developing the competencies future teachers need to promote equitable and high-quality education for all: inclusive education. One of these key competencies is the ability to identify barriers to learning and participation in different educational contexts in order to eliminate them and promote change and improvement.*

Even when pedagogical and physical limitations are overcome, attitudinal barriers may persist, expressed through prejudice, stereotypes, low expectations regarding students' abilities, and resistance to adopting inclusive educational practices. Carrington *et al.* (2022) examine social and systemic dimensions, while also considering schools and families, and demonstrate that attributing exclusion solely to students' individual conditions overlooks the institutional structures and social conceptions that may sustain segregationist practices. In a complementary investigation, Lubin

and Fernal (2022) gathered perceptions from mainstream and special education teachers in the United States and Saint Lucia. The reported obstacles included a shortage of resources and time, lack of administrative support, negative attitudes among those involved, and inadequate curricula and assessment processes. Thus, the availability of material resources does not eliminate the need to reassess the conceptions and practices that shape everyday school life, just as such reassessment cannot, by itself, compensate for the absence of these resources and conditions.

In the Brazilian context, the implementation of educational inclusion also encounters regional inequalities in infrastructure and unequal availability of accessibility services. By analyzing educational indicators concerning resources and services intended to ensure accessibility for students with disabilities, Lobato, Calle Aguirre, and Magalhães (2025) demonstrate regional differences in architectural, communicational, and instrumental accessibility, as well as in Special Education services. Their findings show that expanding access must be accompanied by measures aimed at ensuring students' continued attendance under appropriate conditions and improving the quality of education provided.

At the end of their study, Lobato, Aguirre, and Magalhães (2025, p. 22) state:

> *[...] despite government initiatives to promote inclusive policies, segregationist practices persist, and the quality of inclusion still has a long way to go in meeting regional accessibility needs equitably, particularly in the Northern and Northeastern regions of Brazil. Thus, investment must focus not only on access but also on ensuring effective student retention and improving the quality of education for students with disabilities, so that quantitative increases in enrollment are reflected in significant qualitative advances in their educational trajectories.*

Organizational limitations also affect inclusion, and institutions do not always respond adequately to students' diverse needs. In a review of 27 scientific articles, Kurowski, Černý, and Trapl (2022) examined barriers to inclusion in primary education and identified discrepancies between legislation and practice, classroom teaching difficulties, and the need for interdisciplinary and interprofessional coordination. The point emphasized by these authors is that inclusive policies without cooperation mechanisms among professionals, shared pedagogical planning, and adequate organization of institutional resources tend to remain merely formal commitments.

Table 2 presents these different manifestations by grouping the main categories of barriers to educational inclusion and relating each one to its implications for students' access, retention, participation, and learning.

Table 2. Main barriers to educational inclusion and their implications in the school context

Categories of barriers	Characteristics and implications for educational inclusion	Author and abbreviated title of the work
Pedagogical	Inflexible teaching practices, inadequate curricula, standardized assessments, and lack of strategies that address different learning needs.	Arnaiz Sánchez, de Haro Rodríguez, and Maldonado Martínez (2019). *Barriers to Student Learning and Participation*.
Architectural and physical	Limitations in the accessibility of school spaces, circulation areas, facilities, and physical conditions required for student participation.	Lobato, Calle Aguirre, and Magalhães (2025). *Regional Analysis of Educational Indicators*.
Communicational	Insufficient resources and services for communicational accessibility, hindering access to information and interaction within the school environment.	Lobato, Calle Aguirre, and Magalhães (2025). *Regional Analysis of Educational Indicators*.
Attitudinal	Prejudice, stereotypes, discrimination, low expectations, and resistance among professionals or other members of the school community.	Maldonado-García, Mingorance-Estrada, and Alemany-Arrebola (2026). *Attitudes of Prospective Teachers Towards Inclusion*.
Organizational and systemic	Weaknesses in management, insufficient administrative support, discrepancies between legislation and practice, and difficulties in coordination among professionals.	Carrington *et al.* (2022). *Societal, Systemic, School and Family Drivers*; Kurowski, Černý, and Trapl (2022). *A Review Study of Research Articles on Barriers*.

Professional training	Insufficient knowledge, competencies, and training experiences to identify students' needs and develop inclusive practices.	Arnaiz Sánchez, de Haro Rodríguez, and Maldonado Martínez (2019). *Barriers to Student Learning and Participation*; Maldonado-García, Mingorance-Estrada, and Alemany-Arrebola (2026). *Attitudes of Prospective Teachers Towards Inclusion*.
Resources and working conditions	Insufficient availability of materials, specialized resources, planning time, and institutional support for teachers.	Lubin and Fernal (2022). *Barriers to Inclusion*; Arnaiz Sánchez, de Haro Rodríguez, and Maldonado Martínez (2019). *Barriers to Student Learning and Participation*.
Student participation and experience	Difficulties in interaction, sense of belonging, participation in school activities, and the development of positive relationships with teachers and peers.	Subban *et al.* (2022). *Student Experiences of Inclusive Education in Secondary Schools*.
Social exclusion and segregation	Persistence of structures and practices that restrict the participation of certain groups and reproduce educational inequalities.	UNESCO (2020). *Inclusion and Education: All Means All*; Carrington *et al.* (2022). *Societal, Systemic, School and Family Drivers*.

Source: Prepared by the author (2026), based on the references indicated in the table.

Barriers to inclusion cannot be fully understood without considering students' own perspectives: enrollment and physical presence at school, by themselves, do not demonstrate that participation is genuinely effective. In their systematic review of students with diverse learning needs in secondary education, Subban *et al.* (2022)

associate inclusion with, among other factors, supportive relationships, favorable attitudes among teachers and administrators, appropriate pedagogical practices, and accessibility. Incorporating these experiences into institutional assessment processes broadens the examination of school difficulties beyond formal attendance and retention indicators. Listening to those directly involved can bring to light obstacles that may go unnoticed by those responsible for organizing instruction, precisely because such obstacles are not always perceived in everyday school life.

The training of education professionals must also be part of this discussion, since recognizing diversity requires pedagogical responses that are appropriate to students' individual characteristics. In their examination of 59 empirical studies through a systematic review, Maldonado-García, Mingorance-Estrada, and Alemany-Arrebola (2026) found that prospective teachers tend to hold favorable attitudes toward inclusion. Nevertheless, stereotypes and resistance persist, influenced by initial teacher education and experiences of contact with people with disabilities. To transform identified barriers into institutional actions, democratic school management and collaborative planning can bring together teachers, the management team, Specialized Educational Assistance (AEE) professionals, students, and families. This joint work makes it possible to establish priorities, distribute responsibilities, and monitor the measures adopted, creating conditions for overcoming obstacles to move beyond diagnosis and become part of institutional planning and everyday practice in Basic Education.

2.3. Collaborative Planning And School Community Participation In Developing Strategies For Inclusion And Equity

Collaborative planning is a way of organizing pedagogical work in which different professionals share knowledge, examine educational needs, and establish coordinated actions to ensure that students can learn and participate. In inclusive education, simply dividing tasks or jointly preparing activities is not sufficient to fulfill this process. It requires establishing common objectives, recognizing existing barriers, and defining strategies that address the diversity found in classrooms. Brennan, Pennycook, and Barr (2025) discuss professional learning communities as spaces for continuing professional development in which teachers can develop inclusive practices through collective reflection and collaboration grounded in the school context.

However, none of this can be sustained through educators' goodwill alone. Organizing these practices requires dedicated time for meetings, communication among professionals, clearly defined responsibilities, and monitoring of decisions. In their study of expanded professional learning communities, Johansson and Herrebrøden (2025) emphasize shared procedures, coordinated work between schools and specialized services, and the continuous improvement of professional competencies. Individual educators' willingness therefore has limited reach when an institutional structure capable of enabling participation, experience sharing, and continuity of inclusive actions is lacking.

In everyday pedagogical practice, joint work between mainstream classroom teachers and Special Education professionals, including those working in Specialized Educational Assistance (AEE), brings curricular objectives closer to students' specific needs. Iacono *et al.* (2023) conducted a systematic review of the effectiveness of collaborative teaching and analyzed research on the outcomes of co-

teaching models for students with disabilities. In another study, Jeremy, Spandagou, and Hinitt (2024) examined collaboration between teachers and therapists in inclusive school settings. They identified clearly defined objectives, shared responsibilities, and a common understanding of intended outcomes as necessary conditions. Taken together, these contributions indicate that developing and implementing pedagogical strategies requires the integration of different areas of professional expertise.

Joint planning must also address students' effective participation in curricular activities, social interactions, and different school environments. In their investigation of a collaborative planning arrangement associated with professional consultation, Kuntz and Carter (2021) observed changes both in the academic engagement of students with severe disabilities and in the teaching practices adopted by their teachers. The authors emphasize that implementing strategies requires monitoring, guidance, and support for the professionals responsible for carrying them out.

According to Kuntz and Carter (2021, p. 02):

> *Collaborative planning often requires educators to apply and generalize support strategies across different instructional situations that may not have been explicitly addressed in the initial plan. An intervention based on collaborative planning may benefit from an additional support component for those responsible for its implementation. An ongoing consultation process can help educators responsible for implementing support plans apply and generalize key strategies for students in their weekly classes. This consultation may be provided by a special education professional or by an instructional or inclusion-focused pedagogical coach affiliated with the education system.*

Collaborative planning becomes effective when procedures clearly specify how learning objectives, teaching strategies, assessment methods, and accessibility resources are coordinated, while also defining each professional's responsibilities. Ruberto and Boily (2026) organize co-planning between general and special education teachers into three areas: instructional planning and assessment, teaching strategies and learning support, and the organization of pedagogical work. Vembye, Weiss, and Bhat (2024) use a systematic review and meta-analysis to examine how co-teaching and collaborative models affect academic performance, while Zamkowska, Pilgrim, and Hornby (2025) focus on guidelines for implementing co-teaching. Together, these publications help identify the components that institutional organization of inclusive practices needs to address.

When families and the broader school community participate, schools gain a better understanding of students' needs and can closely monitor the measures they have adopted. Democratic

management can provide opportunities for listening and dialogue, enabling students and family members to engage with teachers, administrators, and AEE professionals in identifying barriers, establishing priorities, and evaluating institutional responses.

Such participation, however, must be accompanied by clearly defined responsibilities and the development of feasible courses of action, so that inclusion does not become the responsibility of a single teacher or is delegated exclusively to specialized services. Based on these contributions, Table 3 revisits the dimensions of collaborative planning and indicates how each applies to the organization of institutional strategies for inclusion.

Table 3. Dimensions of collaborative planning and institutional strategies for educational inclusion

Planning dimension	**Institutional strategies for inclusion**	**Contribution to accessibility, equity, and participation**	**Author and abbreviated title of the work**
Collaborative professional development and learning	Organize professional learning communities, study meetings, and opportunities for collective reflection on inclusive practices.	Supports the updating of teachers' knowledge and the shared development of responses to students' needs.	Brennan, Pennycook, and Barr (2025). *Professional Learning Communities and Inclusive Practices*; Johansson and Herrebrøden (2025). *Expanded Professional Communities and Inclusive Schools*.
Coordination between	Establish joint planning among	Integrates professional	Iacono *et al.* (2023). *Effectiveness of Co-*

teachers and specialized professionals	mainstream classroom teachers, AEE professionals, and other specialists who support students.	knowledge and connects curricular objectives, specialized support, and educational needs.	*Teaching in Inclusive Education*; Jeremy, Spandagou, and Hinitt (2024). *Collaboration Between Teachers and Therapists*.
Identification of needs and definition of support	Analyze students' needs, anticipate barriers, and establish support strategies applicable to different instructional situations.	Expands opportunities for participation in curricular activities and supports the continuity of pedagogical assistance.	Kuntz and Carter (2021). *Collaborative Planning and Participation of Students with Disabilities*.
Organization of planning and assessment	Define learning objectives, assessment procedures, teaching strategies, resources, and professional responsibilities.	Promotes consistency among planning, pedagogical intervention, and learning monitoring.	Ruberto and Boily (2026). *Co-Planning Between General and Special Education Teachers*.
Development of co-teaching practices	Select co-teaching models compatible with pedagogical objectives, class characteristics, and available resources.	Enables diversification of teaching approaches, expands monitoring opportunities, and encourages student participation.	Vembye, Weiss, and Bhat (2024). *Co-Teaching and Collaborative Instructional Models*; Zamkowska, Pilgrim, and Hornby (2025). *Co-Teaching: Review and Guidelines for Practice*.

Family and school community participation	Promote meetings, listening opportunities, and spaces for dialogue to identify needs, share information, and monitor institutional strategies.	Brings schools closer to students' experiences and expands shared responsibility for creating inclusive conditions.	Synthesis based on the contributions of the works indicated in this table.

Source: Prepared by the author (2026), based on the references indicated in the table.

This synthesis makes it possible to understand collaborative planning as a process that connects interdependent dimensions, from professional development to the organization of teaching, including assessment and school community participation. As discussed by Ruberto and Boily (2026), co-planning requires guidelines that connect instructional, pedagogical, and organizational dimensions within a common framework. Meanwhile, studies on co-teaching emphasize that these guidelines are ineffective unless they take into account the actual conditions of implementation and students' own characteristics. Families, students, and professionals need to participate in institutional planning throughout the entire process, from identifying barriers to evaluating the measures adopted.

It is the responsibility of school management to create these opportunities for dialogue, organize available resources, and monitor the implementation of actions from beginning to end. When carried out effectively, this is what transforms collective decisions into actual

practices, with accessibility, equity, and participation incorporated into the everyday functioning of Basic Education.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research adopts a qualitative approach and is bibliographic and documentary in nature, based on a narrative literature review. This choice made it possible to interpret the contributions of democratic school management and collaborative planning to the identification and overcoming of barriers to educational inclusion. The bibliographic component was based on scientific publications, while the documentary component brought together institutional and regulatory materials related to the subject under investigation. The distinction between these procedures takes into account their respective characteristics and purposes, as discussed by Arantes (2025).

The time frame covers the period from January 2018 to November 2026 and includes studies published in Portuguese, English, and Spanish. The search covered bibliographic indexing records, official scientific journal websites, indexing platforms, and academic repositories, including SciELO and ERIC, as well as institutional portals and official government agency websites. The narrative review made it possible to bring together theoretical contributions and research findings on the subject and interpret them collectively. Therefore, no specific protocol for a systematic, integrative, or scoping review was adopted.

The search strategies combined descriptors in the three languages: democratic school management, school community participation, educational inclusion, barriers to inclusion, accessibility, collaborative

planning, co-teaching, and inclusive practices. These terms were combined using the Boolean operators AND and OR and searched in fields such as titles, abstracts, and keywords; The combinations used included “democratic school management” AND “educational inclusion”; “collaborative planning” AND “inclusive education”; The decision to retain a publication depended on its relevance to the research question and the established objectives.

Priority was given to scientific articles, review studies, theoretical and empirical research, legislation, and institutional documents whose contributions were directly related to educational inclusion and school management. Duplicate materials, publications lacking sufficient bibliographic identification, and texts not relevant to the subject under investigation were excluded. Ultimately, the thematic corpus comprised 24 publications and documents. Each bibliographic record was individually checked against the corresponding publisher's webpage or institutional source. Since the search did not involve a systematic survey recording all retrieved results, no figures are reported for the documents initially identified or excluded.

The documentary analysis focused on regulatory and institutional materials concerning democratic management and the right to inclusive education, particularly Law No. 14,644/2023 and the UNESCO report (2020). The analysis considered school community participation, management organization, accessibility, equity, and the guarantee of educational rights. These aspects were examined in relation to the discussions identified in the literature, without attributing to the documents effects that their own content could not substantiate.

The selected material was read in an exploratory, selective, and analytical manner and subsequently organized thematically and interpreted qualitatively. Three categories structured the analysis: democratic management and institutional participation; barriers to educational inclusion; and collaborative planning and strategies for addressing these barriers. Their definition was based on the research question and specific objectives, while also taking into account the thematic convergence among publications and documents. As a bibliographic and documentary investigation, the study did not involve observations in schools or directly measure the effects of the strategies discussed. Instead, it focused on interpreting the contributions identified in the sources consulted.

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Educational inclusion cannot be achieved merely by enrolling students in school. It requires the institution to ensure, in practice, that they learn, participate, and remain in school while respecting the diversity of their needs. This is where democratic school management and collaborative planning come into play: they are responsible for organizing practices in everyday school life that recognize existing barriers and transform these challenges into collective responses. This study is justified by its joint analysis of these two dimensions, since overcoming barriers to inclusion depends not only on individual teachers' initiatives but also on institutional decisions, shared responsibilities, and the effective participation of the school community.

The research question guiding this study was how democratic school management, supported by collaborative planning and school community participation, can contribute to identifying and

overcoming barriers to educational inclusion. Throughout the analysis, the answer emerged through the establishment of spaces for dialogue, the shared identification of educational needs, the distribution of responsibilities, and the coordination of institutional strategies. This makes it possible to consider the general objective and the three specific objectives fulfilled: the study examined the foundations of democratic management, investigated the main barriers to inclusion, and analyzed how collaborative planning and community participation can provide a basis for actions aimed at accessibility, equity, and student participation.

In the theoretical framework, the discussion of democratic school management began by moving beyond an understanding restricted to formal meetings or occasional consultations with community members. It becomes institutionally effective when participation in decision-making, transparency in processes, and shared responsibility are ensured, with collective demands incorporated into school planning. It also became clear that educational inclusion must be among management's priorities, guiding both administrative and pedagogical decisions. Collective participation is therefore both an organizational principle and a condition for ensuring that students' needs are considered when institutional policies and practices are defined.

With regard to barriers to inclusion, they take many forms: they arise in pedagogical practices, communication, physical infrastructure, attitudes, institutional organization, and professional training. These dimensions do not exist in isolation. On the contrary, they overlap and compound the difficulties associated with participation and learning in ways that are rarely captured by examining a single barrier separately. The references examined also show that issuing

regulations and establishing inclusive initiatives are not sufficient to ensure accessibility and appropriate educational support. Schools must therefore maintain ongoing procedures for identifying these barriers, taking into account the actual characteristics of their students and the concrete conditions under which they operate.

The third topic shifted the discussion toward collaborative planning as an organizational framework capable of transforming identified needs into institutional strategies. This process requires teachers, school administrators, families, and students to work in coordination with Specialized Educational Assistance (AEE) professionals. The analysis of the publications examined made it possible to systematize several dimensions of this process, including shared professional development, co-planning, the assignment of responsibilities, the organization of pedagogical support, and the monitoring of actions. The central analytical contribution lies in recognizing the interdependence of three dimensions: democratic management, the process of identifying barriers, and collaborative planning. From this perspective, inclusion is no longer attributed solely to specific professionals but is understood as an institutional commitment that depends on continuity, coordination, and participation.

As a bibliographic and documentary study, this research does not directly examine how these strategies are implemented in a specific school, nor does it establish a causal relationship between their adoption and students' educational outcomes. This limitation restricts the claims that can be made about the implementation of these strategies but does not diminish the study's theoretical contribution: it has organized knowledge from the literature within an integrated framework for analyzing inclusion in Basic Education.

Several avenues are available for future research, including conducting field studies in public and private schools, investigating joint planning between mainstream classroom teachers and AEE professionals, examining how families participate in decision-making, and analyzing the institutional conditions required to sustain these practices. Comparing education systems and monitoring the implementation of collaborative strategies over time would also be relevant. By bringing together participation mechanisms, barrier identification, and institutional planning, this article offers an integrated understanding of the problem and theoretical contributions to further research and reflection on the organization of school management, without replacing the empirical examination of practices.

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