

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND NETWORK-BASED TRAINING: THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PEDAGOGICAL GUIDE WITHIN THE INTEGRAR PROJECT (UERJ)

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Abstract

The Integrar Project – Training and Care as Tools for Inclusion and Social Transformation is a university extension initiative developed by the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), in partnership with the Rio de Janeiro State Secretariat for Social Development and Human Rights. The project aims to promote social inclusion, psychosocial care, and continuing education for public-sector professionals, with a particular focus on families living in situations of social vulnerability and on children and adolescents with neurodivergent profiles. Grounded in an intersectoral, territorialized, and rights-based approach, the initiative articulates actions across the fields of education, health, and social assistance. From a pedagogical perspective, the project is structured around the inseparability of teaching, research, and extension, adopting action research as its central methodological framework. Between July and December 2025, the project implemented academic and educational activities—including seminars, training workshops, and case studies—aimed at the humanized qualification of public service professionals, particularly those working in education. These actions focused on strengthening qualified listening practices, supporting the ethical identification of situations involving violence, neglect, and psychological distress, and enhancing intersectoral referral and care networks. One of the project's main pedagogical outcomes was the development of the guide “Conhecer para Incluir”, conceived as a practical educational tool to support professionals working in public service networks. Developed through an interdisciplinary and participatory process, the guide provides accessible guidance for inclusive pedagogical practices, the welcoming of neurodivergent children and adolescents, and the strengthening of intersectoral protection networks. The project's partial results indicate that Integrar is consolidating itself as a relevant extension experience, reaffirming the role of public universities in the production of socially grounded knowledge and in the strengthening of inclusive public policies.

Keywords: *Inclusive education, social protection networks, intersectorality, action research, university extension.*

1. Introduction

Over recent decades, socioeconomic transformations and urban inequalities have intensified situations of social vulnerability affecting Brazilian families, particularly in metropolitan territories marked by structural disparities. Understanding these dynamics requires recognizing territory not merely as a geographical delimitation but as a social and political category through which inequalities and differentiated access to rights are expressed. As Milton Santos (2005) argues, territory constitutes a socially produced space shaped by interactions among social actors, institutions, and economic structures.

In the state of Rio de Janeiro, these inequalities manifest through the combination of precarious labor conditions, unequal access to public services, and fragile articulation between social policies. Contemporary processes of labor flexibilization and economic instability have significantly affected the conditions of social reproduction among working-class families, expanding situations of vulnerability and insecurity (Antunes, 2018; Harvey, 2014).

These dynamics disproportionately affect women, who frequently assume central responsibility for caregiving activities within households. The intersection of gender inequality, labor precarization, and territorial disparities contributes to the persistence of structural inequalities and limits families' access to social protection mechanisms (Yazbek, 2016).

Within this context, the increasing visibility of children and adolescents with neurodivergent profiles or specific developmental needs highlights the limitations of fragmented institutional responses.

Although Brazilian legislation recognizes the rights of people with disabilities and guarantees inclusive education, the articulation between health, education, and social assistance services often remains insufficient.

Studies on public policy management emphasize that complex social problems require integrated institutional responses. Fragmented policy structures frequently lead to duplicated procedures, discontinuity of care, and limited effectiveness of public interventions (Bronzo, 2010; Cunill-Grau, 2014).

The Integrar Project – Training and Care as Tools for Inclusion and Social Transformation emerges within this context as an initiative aimed at strengthening social protection networks. Developed through cooperation between the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) and the State Secretariat for Social Development and Human Rights, the project seeks to promote professional training, psychosocial support, and knowledge production to support inclusive public policies.

This article analyzes the experience of the Integrar Project during 2025, discussing its contributions to the strengthening of social protection networks, the interprofessional training of public agents, and the development of pedagogical tools designed to support inclusive educational practices.

2. Territory and socio-spatial inequality

The analysis of social protection policies requires considering territory as a structuring dimension of inequality. Territory represents not only a physical space but also a field where economic relations, institutional arrangements, and access to public services are unevenly distributed (Santos, 2005).

Urban studies in Brazil highlight how socio-spatial segregation contributes to unequal access to services such as healthcare, education, and social protection. According to Villça (2001) and Maricato (2015), Brazilian urbanization processes historically reinforced inequalities by concentrating infrastructure and economic opportunities in specific areas while relegating low-income populations to peripheral territories with limited access to public services.

Rolnik (2015) further demonstrates how processes of land commodification and housing financialization intensify spatial inequalities, reinforcing the exclusion of vulnerable populations from urban resources and services.

2.1. Labor precarization and social vulnerability

Transformations in global capitalism have intensified processes of labor flexibilization and precarization. According to Antunes (2018), the expansion of informal and unstable work arrangements has produced new forms of social insecurity, affecting families' ability to ensure stable living conditions.

In Brazil, unemployment and underemployment disproportionately affect young people and women. Data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) indicate persistent gender inequalities in labor market participation and income levels.

The unequal distribution of unpaid care work further exacerbates these disparities, as women often combine precarious employment with domestic and caregiving responsibilities. These structural dynamics reinforce cycles of social vulnerability and highlight the importance of integrated social protection policies (Yazbek, 2016).

2.2. Intersectorality in public policies

Complex social challenges require coordinated responses across institutional sectors. The concept of intersectorality refers to strategies that promote collaboration between different policy areas in order to address multidimensional social problems (Bronzo, 2010).

Successful intersectoral initiatives typically involve shared institutional responsibilities, collaborative decision-making processes, and the creation of communication channels between public institutions. However, implementing such arrangements remains challenging due to administrative fragmentation and limited institutional capacity (Cunill-Grau, 2014).

2.3. Public universities and action research

Public universities play a strategic role in strengthening public policies through research, professional training, and knowledge dissemination. Action research provides a methodological framework that integrates knowledge production with social transformation by involving researchers and practitioners in collaborative problem-solving processes (Thiollent, 2011).

By fostering cooperation between universities and government institutions, action research contributes to the development of innovative methodologies, training programs, and educational tools designed to support public services and strengthen institutional capacities (Pires & Gomide, 2016).

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in action research and institutional case study methodology. Action research was selected because it allows the simultaneous production of scientific knowledge and institutional transformation (Thiollent, 2011).

The empirical analysis focuses on the implementation of the Integrar Project during 2025. Data were collected through document analysis, participant observation during training seminars, and the systematization of discussions conducted in interdisciplinary workshops.

The training activities were structured around case-study exercises involving hypothetical situations of children experiencing social vulnerability. These exercises allowed professionals from different policy sectors—education, health, and social assistance—to collaboratively analyze possible institutional responses.

The analysis was guided by four central analytical categories: territory, social vulnerability, intersectorality, and professional training.

4. Results and discussion

The central empirical component of the Integrar Project consisted of interdisciplinary training seminars structured around case-study workshops. Participants collectively analyzed hypothetical situations involving children living in contexts of social vulnerability.

The discussions revealed a strong demand for multidisciplinary responses. Professionals emphasized the importance of coordinated actions between health services, educational institutions, and social assistance programs.

Participants also identified several institutional gaps, including insufficient professional training, limited availability of specialized services, and weak communication channels between public institutions. These findings reinforce the argument that institutional fragmentation remains one of the main barriers to effective social protection policies.

The pedagogical guide “Conhecer para Incluir”

One of the most significant outcomes of the project was the development of the pedagogical guide “Conhecer para Incluir”, designed as a practical educational resource for professionals working in public service networks.

The guide was developed through a participatory process that incorporated insights from training workshops, technical meetings, and the experiences of professionals working directly in vulnerable territories. It includes guidance for professionals in the social assistance network, particularly those working in CRAS, CREAS, and other institutions responsible for protecting children's rights. The guide provides recommendations on family reception, identification of rights violations, and intersectoral referrals to health and educational services. The material also includes operational tools such as checklists designed to support case monitoring and improve coordination between services.

Another version of the guide focuses on the educational environment, presenting pedagogical strategies to support teachers and school professionals working with neurodivergent children. The material highlights how relatively simple adjustments in classroom routines, communication methods, and sensory environments can significantly improve learning experiences and inclusion.

From an analytical perspective, the guide can be understood as a social technology derived from action research, since its development emerged directly from the interaction between academic research, professional practice, and territorial demands.

5. Conclusion

The Integrar Project demonstrates how cooperation between universities and public institutions can contribute to innovation in the field of social policies. By integrating research, professional training, and territorial intervention, the project strengthened intersectoral collaboration among health, education, and social assistance networks, creating spaces for dialogue and shared learning across different areas of the public sector.

The findings highlight that institutional fragmentation remains one of the main obstacles to the effectiveness of social protection policies, particularly in territories marked by persistent socioeconomic inequalities. Initiatives that promote continuing professional training, shared technical tools, and collaborative methodologies prove essential to strengthening coordination among public services and expanding the institutional capacity to respond to the complex demands affecting children, adolescents, and their families.

In this context, the development of the pedagogical guide “**Conhecer para Incluir**” represents one of the most significant outcomes of the project, translating academic knowledge and professional experience into practical guidance for everyday work within public service networks. By offering inclusive pedagogical strategies, guidance for welcoming families, and operational tools for intersectoral coordination, the guide contributes to improving the work of professionals operating directly in socially vulnerable territories.

The experience also highlights the potential of public universities to produce **social technologies** aimed at promoting rights and reducing inequalities. Unlike standardized and decontextualized solutions, the social technologies developed within the Integrar Project emerge from the interaction between scientific knowledge, professional practice, and territorial demands, which enhances their applicability and potential for replication in different institutional contexts.

Another important dimension of the project concerns its educational role, reaffirming the importance of the inseparability of teaching, research, and extension within public universities. By engaging students, researchers, and professionals from public service networks in collaborative learning processes, the Integrar Project contributes to the development of professionals who are more sensitive to social inequalities and better prepared to work in complex institutional contexts. In this sense, the experience analyzed demonstrates how university extension activities can constitute a privileged space for the production of knowledge directly connected to public policy challenges.

Furthermore, the project highlights the importance of inclusive education as a structuring axis of contemporary social protection policies. The school inclusion of neurodivergent children and adolescents requires not only pedagogical adaptations but also the construction of institutional networks capable of articulating schools, health services, and social assistance policies. Strengthening these networks is essential to ensure continuity of care and to expand opportunities for development and social participation for these children and their families.

Finally, the results suggest that initiatives based on cooperation between universities and public administration can represent relevant models of institutional innovation, particularly in contexts marked by territorial inequalities and limited coordination capacity within social policies. Expanding programs that integrate research, extension, and intersectoral training can significantly contribute to the consolidation of more coordinated, equitable, and territorially responsive social protection systems.

In this sense, the Integrar Project reinforces the strategic role of public universities in producing socially grounded knowledge and strengthening the institutional capacities of the State. By articulating professional training, applied research, and the development of pedagogical tools aimed at inclusive education, the initiative demonstrates how universities can act as active agents in the construction of more effective, democratic, and rights-oriented public policies.

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