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RESEARCH ARTICLE

SUPPORTING AUTISTIC PUPILS' ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS: TEACHING PRACTICES, ADAPTED COMMUNICATION AND RESOURCES IN OUAGA 5 AND OUAGA 10, BURKINA FASO

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ABSTRACT

In Burkina Faso, as in many West African contexts, inclusive education remains a normative ideal that teaching practice still struggles to put into effect for pupils with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This study examines the contribution of inclusive pedagogical practices, adapted communication tools and support resources to the academic success of autistic pupils enrolled in mainstream classrooms in the Ouaga 5 and Ouaga 10 Basic Education Districts (CEB). Using a mixed-methods approach, the research draws on a purposive sample of thirty-six participants across four stakeholder groups: pedagogical supervisors, classroom teachers, headteachers and pupils, including autistic pupils who participated in focus groups. Data were collected using a questionnaire, a semi-structured interview guide, a classroom observation checklist and a framework for analysing academic results. Findings triangulated across stakeholder groups reveal almost universal use of differentiated instruction and peer tutoring, alongside persistent shortcomings in initial and continuing teacher training in inclusive education and a unanimously reported absence of specifically adapted teaching aids and visual communication supports. Chi-square tests applied to suitable variables confirm the statistical significance of several observed differences. However, a marked discrepancy between supervisors' accounts and those of teachers and pupils regarding the availability of functional classroom displays reveals a breakdown in information sharing between levels of school supervision. These findings are discussed in relation to Bandura's social learning theory, Vygotsky's social constructivism and Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory, which respectively illuminate the roles of pedagogical practices, communication tools and support resources in autistic pupils' academic success. The study calls for structural improvements in teacher training, wider provision of adapted communication supports and a policy for supplying specialised teaching materials.

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INTRODUCTION

Access to quality education for all children, regardless of ability, is one of the clearest indicators of equity within an education system. Since the emergence of organised societies, unequal distributions of resources and opportunities have shaped individual trajectories. Besançon (2012) thus traces the roots of inequality to the transformations of the Neolithic period, long before schooling became a distinctive mechanism through which it operated. Bourdieu and Passeron (1970), as cited in Troger (2009), demonstrated that schools do not automatically redress social inequalities; rather, they tend to reproduce them when they fail to address explicitly the diversity of their pupil populations. This reproduction is particularly apparent among children with disabilities, especially pupils with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), for whom mainstream schooling remains, in many contexts, a tolerated exception rather than a fully realised right. The right to education for all has nevertheless long been enshrined in international legal instruments. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations [UN], 1948) affirms that everyone has the right to education, without restrictions based on the nature or degree of disability. The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) established the conceptual foundations of inclusive education by inviting states to organise their school systems to accommodate all children, including those with special educational needs, in mainstream settings rather than separate tracks. UNESCO's Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education (2009) subsequently clarified the pedagogical, organisational and cultural arrangements through which this ideal can be translated into

everyday classroom practice. Burkina Faso has participated in this international normative movement, but persistent obstacles hinder the implementation of these principles. In the early 2010s, Barro and Coulibaly (2012) had already highlighted the scale of the difficulties primary teachers faced when teaching pupils with disabilities. Kara (2014) documented weaknesses in initial training on disability in Burkinabè teacher education institutions. More recently, drawing on the case of the Kaya Basic Education District, Barro and Coulibaly (2022) showed that negative social representations and prejudice against children with disabilities continue to affect their actual schooling, even where regulations guarantee access. Niya (2015) identified structural and attitudinal barriers to the school inclusion of autistic children specifically, while Carlier (2021) emphasised that late autism diagnosis, common in resource-constrained settings, delays appropriate educational support. Derra (2023) and the Conseil des Droits des Personnes Handicapées du Burkina Faso (CDCPH, 2024) likewise report that psychoeducational support for autistic pupils remains far below identified needs because of shortages of trained personnel and material resources.

The present study addresses this context. Data from the General Population and Housing Census (RGEH, 2013) indicate that only 27.4% of children with disabilities aged three to eighteen were attending school at the time of the census, while 36.4% were no longer attending and 34.6% had never attended; these proportions varied substantially across the country's regions. Within the more specific setting of the Ouaga 5 Basic Education District, internal statistics recorded nineteen autistic pupils among 233 pupils with disabilities in the 2021–2022 school year, seventeen among 255 the following year, and eighteen among 261 in 2023–2024. These figures indicate a continuous but numerically modest and fluctuating presence in school enrolments. Testimony from the leadership of the Association Burkinabè d'Aide aux Personnes Autistes (ABAPE) further points to social representations of autism shaped by superstition in several Burkinabè communities, creating an additional barrier to schooling in a supportive environment.

Although scientific studies and previous graduation dissertations have extensively examined barriers to school access for children with disabilities, the specific pedagogical, communicative and material conditions that foster academic success once these pupils enter mainstream education remain comparatively underdocumented in Burkina Faso. Most available research concerns access to schooling or provision in specialised settings, leaving the everyday dynamics of mainstream classrooms relatively unexplored, even though teachers, pedagogical supervisors and peers must accommodate autistic pupils within these settings. This study seeks to address this gap within its scope by directly examining practices implemented in two education districts in Ouagadougou. The main research question is therefore: how do inclusive pedagogical practices, adapted communication tools and available support resources contribute to the academic success of autistic pupils in mainstream classrooms in the Ouaga 5 and Ouaga 10 Basic Education Districts? Three subsidiary questions follow: which inclusive pedagogical practices do teachers actually implement for autistic pupils? Which communication tools and techniques are used to foster their interactions and learning? Which material and human support resources are available to sustain their schooling?. The scientific rationale for this study lies in this shift of focus. Existing Burkinabè research on disability and schooling, including Barro and Coulibaly (2012, 2022), Kara (2014) and Niya (2015), has largely documented barriers to school access or unfavourable social representations of disability in general, without consistently distinguishing the specific circumstances of autistic pupils already enrolled in mainstream classrooms. However, the educational needs associated with ASD differ in nature from those associated with other disabilities, particularly in communication and sensory regulation, warranting dedicated investigation. By focusing on the pedagogical practices, communication tools and resources used daily by teachers, supervisors and pupils themselves, this study seeks to provide original empirical insights into the practical conditions supporting autistic pupils' academic success in mainstream Burkinabè education, an issue that, to our knowledge, existing literature addresses only indirectly or partially.

The overall research objective is to analyse how the inclusion of autistic pupils contributes to improving their academic success in the Ouaga 5 and Ouaga 10 CEB. Three specific objectives accompany it: to describe inclusive pedagogical practices used for autistic pupils; to identify adapted communication tools and techniques used with them; and to document available resources and support for their schooling. The general hypothesis is that the inclusion of autistic pupils contributes to improving their academic success. It comprises three specific hypotheses: inclusive pedagogical practices foster autistic pupils' academic success (SH1); adapted communication tools and techniques support their learning (SH2); and available resources and support, particularly human support, contribute positively to their schooling (SH3).

The article is organised into four parts. We first present the methodology, followed by the findings under the three thematic areas outlined above. We then discuss these findings in relation to the existing literature and the selected theoretical framework. The conclusion revisits the main findings, limitations and directions for future research.

METHODOLOGY

Research design: This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis to establish the frequency of reported practices and resources with qualitative inquiry to explore how stakeholders understand their practices and to access autistic pupils' own experiences. This methodological choice reflects the multifaceted nature of the research topic: inclusive pedagogical practices, adapted communication and support resources cannot be fully understood through statistical counts or interpretive analysis alone, but require these two forms of evidence to be brought into dialogue.

Study setting: The research was conducted in two Basic Education Districts in Ouagadougou. The Ouaga 5 CEB, established in 2013 and subsequently renamed under Order No. 2020-247/MENAPLN/SG of 2 September 2020, is headed by Mr Oumar Soulama. The Ouaga 10 CEB, headed by Mr R. Apollinaire Kaboré, comprises 115 schools within its jurisdiction. These districts were selected because autistic pupils were known to be enrolled in their schools and because the sites were accessible to the research team.

Population and sampling: The study population comprises thirty-four inspectors of primary and non-formal education (IEPENF), twenty-one classroom teachers and 638 pupils, including twenty-one autistic pupils identified across the two districts. Following Blanchet and Gotman's (2006, p. 127) definition of purposive sampling, whereby researchers deliberately select observation units for their relevance to the research topic rather than through random selection, the sample was purposively constituted. It includes six pedagogical supervisors, including two heads of Basic Education Districts (CCEB), nine practising classroom teachers, three headteachers and eighteen pupils, comprising nine autistic and nine non-autistic pupils, with six pupils per school visited. The total sample thus comprises thirty-six participants.

Sampling procedures: Purposive selection prioritised stakeholders directly involved in educational support for the identified autistic pupils: teachers with one or more autistic pupils in their classrooms, supervisors responsible for monitoring those classrooms, the headteachers of the schools concerned, and pupils themselves, both autistic and non-autistic. Non-autistic pupils were included for comparison and to document peer interactions.

Data collection instruments: Four instruments were used. A questionnaire was administered to classroom teachers and headteachers. A semi-structured interview guide was used with pedagogical supervisors, while a focus group guide supported discussions with pupils in small groups. A classroom observation checklist documented pedagogical and communication practices in situ. Finally, an academic results analysis framework was used to examine the sampled autistic pupils' exercise books and end-of-term assessment results.

Data collection procedures: Data were collected directly from stakeholders in the two districts through questionnaires, individual interviews with pedagogical supervisors, pupil focus groups, classroom observations, and examination of the identified autistic pupils' exercise books and assessment materials.

Data analysis: Quantitative questionnaire data were manually tabulated and subjected to descriptive statistical analysis presented in tables and graphs. For this article, we supplemented the descriptive analysis with chi-square goodness-of-fit tests for variables whose raw frequencies, as reported in the source dissertation, permitted such calculations, namely where responses showed actual variation across categories. The significance level was set at 0.05. The data do not permit Student's t-tests, analysis of variance (ANOVA), or Pearson or Spearman correlation analyses, which require paired continuous variables or independent groups comparable on a quantitative measure—conditions not met by the predominantly categorical data collected here. Where responses were unanimous (0% or 100% across all respondent groups), no variation was available for statistical testing; this is explicitly acknowledged rather than circumvented. Qualitative interview and focus group data were analysed through thematic content analysis.

Ethical considerations: Participants were informed of the research objectives before data collection, and respondent anonymity was maintained throughout. No identifying information was linked to individual responses during analysis. The source dissertation does not report formal approval by an institutional ethics committee; we acknowledge this here in the interests of methodological transparency, as in comparable research undertaken in this academic context.

RESULTS

Sample response rate: Table 1 presents the sample response rate, defined as the number of participants actually surveyed as a proportion of the planned sample.

Table 1. Sample response rate by stakeholder group

Stakeholder group	Planned sample	Achieved sample	Response rate
Pupils (autistic and non-autistic)	18	18	100.00 %
Classroom teachers and headteachers	12	12	100.00 %
Pedagogical supervisors	6	6	100.00 %
Total	**36**	**36**	**100.00 %**

All planned participants were surveyed, providing a sound empirical basis for the findings below. This does not, however, establish statistical representativeness across the two districts, since sampling was purposive rather than probabilistic.

Theme 1 — Inclusive pedagogical practices

Regarding training in inclusive education, only two of twelve teachers (16.66%) reported receiving specific training, whereas ten (83.34%) reported receiving none. A chi-square goodness-of-fit test against an equal-probability distribution yielded $\chi^2 = 5.33$ (df = 1), exceeding the critical value of 3.841 at the 0.05 level and confirming a statistically significant difference: lack of training was overwhelmingly predominant among the teachers surveyed. This finding was corroborated by pedagogical supervisors, all of whom (6/6, 100%) reported receiving no specific training in inclusive education. No statistical test was applicable to this distribution because the responses showed no variation. By contrast, the use of differentiated instruction was unanimously reported: all teachers (12/12), supervisors (6/6) and pupils (18/18) confirmed its implementation. Peer tutoring was likewise unanimously reported across the three stakeholder groups. No teacher (0/12) reported using other approaches, particularly multisensory methods; all indicated that they did not use them. Supervisors confirmed this absence (6/6, 100%), while pupils stated that they did not know whether such methods were used. The accessibility of teaching materials and the adaptation of assessment procedures were reported almost unanimously: 100% of teachers and supervisors and 88.88% of pupils (16/18) confirmed both dimensions. Table 2 summarises these main findings.

Table 2. Reported pedagogical practices by stakeholder group

Reported practice	Teachers (n=12)	Supervisors (n=6)	Pupils (n=18)
Training in inclusive education received	16.66 %	0.00 %	—
Differentiated instruction used	100.00 %	100.00 %	100.00 %
Peer tutoring used	100.00 %	100.00 %	100.00 %
Other methods (multisensory) used	0.00 %	0.00 %	Do not know
Accessible teaching materials	100.00 %	100.00 %	88.88 %
Adapted assessment procedures	100.00 %	100.00 %	88.88 %

Regarding autistic pupils' written work, ten of twelve teachers (83%) rated it as highly satisfactory and two (17%) as unsatisfactory; the chi-square test confirmed a significant difference ($\chi^2 = 5.33$; df = 1; $p < 0.05$). Among supervisors,

four of six (66.66%) considered the work highly satisfactory and two (33.33%) unsatisfactory. Among pupils, thirteen (72.22%) rated it as highly satisfactory, three (16.66%) as satisfactory and two (11.11%) as unsatisfactory. All teachers (12/12) reported that pupils achieved passing marks, specifying that a passing mark was obtained in at least three of five assignments; 88.88% of pupils (16/18) also reported passing marks. Supervisors indicated that a passing mark was obtained in at least seven of ten assignments. All three stakeholder groups (100%) reported the existence of a mechanism for monitoring autistic pupils' progress. Teachers' accounts of classroom adaptations were more varied: one (8.33%) reported a specific adaptation such as an adapted chair; nine (75%) indicated that a classroom support assistant (AVS) sat beside the autistic pupil; and two (16.67%) stated that the pupil received no specific assistance. A chi-square goodness-of-fit test of this three-category distribution yielded $\chi^2 = 9.5$ (df = 2), exceeding the critical value of 5.991. This confirms that the distribution was not attributable to chance and that the presence of an AVS was the most frequently reported form of support. Large majorities of supervisors and pupils (100% and 88.88%, respectively) reported classroom adaptations, although they did not consistently specify their precise nature. The apparent convergence across respondent groups therefore requires cautious interpretation.

Theme 2 — Adapted communication tools and techniques

Teachers and supervisors unanimously reported using bodily expression to communicate with autistic pupils, as did almost all pupils according to the focus group accounts. Verbal expression was also reported by 100% of teachers and supervisors, but by only thirteen of eighteen pupils (72.22%). A chi-square goodness-of-fit test for this latter distribution yielded $\chi^2 = 3.56$ (df = 1), below the critical value of 3.841. Thus, the difference among pupils narrowly failed to reach statistical significance at the 0.05 level. Given the modest sample size, this result warrants cautious interpretation rather than dismissal. All stakeholder groups surveyed—teachers, supervisors and pupils—unanimously reported an absence of visual communication supports, with no exceptions. Although this unanimous absence cannot be statistically tested because the responses show no variation, it constitutes a substantive finding that we explore further in the discussion. A more distinctive finding concerns functional classroom displays: all teachers (12/12) and, according to the focus group discussions, all pupils reported that such displays existed, whereas all pedagogical supervisors (6/6) reported their absence. A chi-square test of independence applied to the contingency table crossing respondent group (teachers/supervisors) with reported availability (present/absent) yielded $\chi^2 = 18.0$ (df = 1), far above the critical value of 3.841. This confirms that the discrepancy between respondent groups was not attributable to sampling chance. Table 3 summarises the findings for this theme.

Table 3. Adapted communication tools and techniques by stakeholder group

Tool or technique	Teachers (n=12)	Supervisors (n=6)	Pupils (n=18)
Bodily expression used	100.00 %	100.00 %	≈ 100.00 %
Verbal expression used	100.00 %	100.00 %	72.22 %
Visual communication supports available	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00 %
Functional classroom displays available	100.00 %	0.00 %	100.00 %

Theme 3 — Resources and support for schooling

Regarding assistance from specialised personnel, ten of twelve teachers (83.33%) reported receiving it, compared with two (16.67%) who did not. The chi-square test confirmed a significant difference ($\chi^2 = 5.33$; df = 1; $p < 0.05$). Such assistance was reported by all pedagogical supervisors (6/6, 100%) and sixteen of eighteen pupils (88.88%). For the latter distribution, the chi-square test yielded $\chi^2 = 10.89$ (df = 1), well above the critical value, confirming a significant difference in favour of the widespread reported availability of assistance.

The clearest finding under this theme nevertheless concerns teaching aids specifically adapted to autistic pupils' needs: no teacher, supervisor or pupil reported that such aids were available in the schools surveyed. Triangulated across the three stakeholder groups and the full sample of thirty-six participants, this absence constitutes the study's most robust finding precisely because it reflects complete convergence rather than disagreement between sources. Table 4 summarises the findings for this theme.

Table 4. Resources and support for schooling by stakeholder group

Resource or support	Teachers (n=12)	Supervisors (n=6)	Pupils (n=18)
Assistance from specialised personnel	83.33 %	100.00 %	88.88 %
Adapted teaching aids available	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00 %

Analysis of autistic pupils' academic results

According to the source document, examination of the exercise books of the twenty-one autistic pupils identified across the two districts showed that nineteen achieved passing marks in writing and copying. The source dissertation reports a success rate of 90.03%, although direct calculation of nineteen divided by twenty-one yields 90.48%. We note this minor discrepancy without correcting it because its precise origin cannot be verified from the documents provided. Similarly, sixteen of twenty-one pupils achieved passing marks in conjugation, corresponding to a reported rate of 74.61% in the source dissertation, whereas direct calculation yields 76.19%. We likewise retain the reported figure to remain faithful to the data supplied. The reported success rates for observation exercises and geography were 73.52% and 69.32%, respectively, the lowest among the documented subjects.

Analysis of first- and second-term assessment rankings showed that three autistic pupils ranked near the bottom of their classes, with mean scores between 2.5 and 4.25 out of 10 (or on the marking scale used in the source document). Two other pupils obtained mean scores of 5 and 5.15, ranking forty-seventh and fiftieth in their cohorts, respectively. The remaining sixteen pupils obtained mean scores above 5.50, with rankings from fourth to forty-seventh. These data do not allow a statistically controlled comparison group to be constructed and are presented strictly descriptively; no inferential test can validly be applied to them.

Summary of statistical tests: Table 5 summarises all chi-square tests calculated from the frequencies reported in the source dissertation for variables displaying sufficient variation.

Table 5. Summary of chi-square goodness-of-fit and independence tests

Variable tested	χ^2	df	Critical value ($\alpha = 0.05$)	Conclusion
Inclusive education training (teachers)	5.33	1	3.841	Significant
Assessment of written work (teachers)	5.33	1	3.841	Significant
Verbal expression used (pupils)	3.56	1	3.841	Not significant
Classroom adaptations (teachers)	9.50	2	5.991	Significant
Functional displays (teachers vs supervisors)	18.00	1	3.841	Significant
Specialised staff assistance (teachers)	5.33	1	3.841	Significant
Specialised staff assistance (pupils)	10.89	1	3.841	Significant

Hypothesis testing: Findings on inclusive pedagogical practices, particularly the widespread use of differentiated instruction and tutoring alongside persistent shortcomings in teacher training, suggest that SH1, concerning the contribution of inclusive pedagogical practices to autistic pupils' academic success, is broadly supported, albeit qualified by the observed training deficit. The source dissertation explicitly links this hypothesis to Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory. Findings on communication, particularly the widespread use of bodily and verbal expression combined with the almost unanimously reported absence of visual supports, also support SH2, which the source dissertation links to Vygotsky's (1934) social constructivist theory. Finally, findings on resources and support, characterised by widely reported specialised human assistance but a total absence of adapted teaching aids, support SH3, linked to Bandura's (1976) social learning theory. Taken together, these findings therefore confirm the general hypothesis that the inclusion of autistic pupils contributes to improving their academic success, subject to the limitations and qualifications discussed below.

DISCUSSION

The findings invite an interpretation of school inclusion for autistic pupils in the two districts that is both encouraging and cautious. The almost universal use of differentiated instruction and peer tutoring reflects teachers' and supervisors' actual adoption of pedagogical principles conducive to inclusion, consistent with Kafando's (2021) account of the conditions required for education adapted to pupils with disabilities. This finding also aligns with Garnier's (2016) observation that prior experience of teaching diverse groups encourages the spontaneous implementation of differentiated practices, even without specific training. However, the statistically significant deficit in inclusive education training among both teachers and pedagogical supervisors corroborates earlier findings by Niya (2022) and Barro and Coulibaly (2012), who had already identified weak initial and continuing training as a major barrier to quality school inclusion in Burkina Faso. This finding echoes Rogé's (2003) emphasis on continuity and specialisation in support for autistic children, which the absence of structured training makes difficult to sustain in mainstream schools. It also aligns with Diallo's (2023) analysis of practitioners' limited knowledge of the legal framework governing the school inclusion of children with disabilities. Despite this training deficit, teachers' ability to implement relatively developed differentiated practices suggests practical knowledge acquired through direct contact with pupils rather than expertise developed through training. This raises questions about the medium-term sustainability of these practices if the training deficit persists. Teachers' predominantly favourable assessments of autistic pupils' written work require particular methodological caution. Since teachers themselves implement the pedagogical practices under evaluation, social desirability bias cannot be excluded: respondents may be inclined to present their pupils' results favourably. The more qualified assessments provided by supervisors, who are relatively external to the direct pedagogical relationship, reinforce the relevance of this interpretive caution without invalidating the broadly positive finding. One of the study's most significant contributions is the statistically confirmed discrepancy between teachers' and pupils' accounts, on the one hand, and supervisors' accounts, on the other, regarding the availability of functional classroom displays. This breakdown in information sharing between the supervisory and classroom levels merits attention. It may reflect either insufficient classroom visits by supervisors or different understandings of what constitutes a genuinely "functional" display in pedagogical terms. Teachers may regard a display as functional when supervisors consider it insufficiently adapted to autistic pupils' specific needs. On a small scale, this discrepancy illustrates Koussoubé and Bassolé's (2022) broader observation of persistent gaps between supervisory guidance and its practical implementation in Burkinabè classrooms.

In our view, the unanimously reported absence of visual communication supports and specifically adapted teaching aids is the study's most concerning finding, precisely because respondent groups do not disagree on it. This finding aligns with Mecherbet and Azzouz (2013), who emphasise the importance of adapted materials for autistic pupils' educational and social integration, and Luisier (2019), who highlights mutual understanding among peers, itself facilitated by appropriate communication tools. The complete absence of these tools in the schools surveyed, despite teachers' widespread use of bodily and verbal expression to communicate with autistic pupils, suggests that non-specialist communication methods serve as practical substitutes in the absence of a policy for supplying adapted teaching materials. This finding is consistent with Vygotsky's (1934) social constructivist framework, in which mediating tools—including communication supports—play a decisive role in children's cognitive development within their zone of proximal development. Their absence therefore constrains the learning potential that pedagogical interactions might otherwise mobilise. The widely reported availability of assistance from specialised personnel, although statistically significant, contrasts with the complete absence of adapted teaching aids, suggesting that human support at least partly compensates for material shortages. This finding can be related to Bandura's (1976) social learning theory, according to which observing and imitating competent models constitutes a form of learning in its own right. Beyond providing direct assistance, the presence of a classroom support assistant or specialised professional beside an autistic pupil may thus provide a behavioural and pedagogical model for both the pupil and their peers. These findings must also be situated within the broader context of educational inequalities, whose structural nature is emphasised by Besançon (2012) and by Bourdieu and Passeron, as cited in Troger (2009). Mainstream schooling for autistic pupils in the two districts thus appears to reproduce, on a specific scale, the

wider tensions between the ideal of inclusive education and the material and human constraints hindering its full realisation. This overall picture also invites reconsideration of the concept of inclusion used in this study. Bouquet (2015) stresses that inclusion goes beyond the mere physical presence of a pupil with a disability in a mainstream classroom: it requires changes in pedagogical practices and the learning environment that enable full participation. Myers (2015) expresses this distinction through a formulation widely used in inclusion literature: diversity means being invited to the party, while inclusion means being invited to dance. Applied to this study, the distinction highlights the gap between autistic pupils' actual physical presence in the classrooms surveyed and the inadequate provision of training, communication supports and adapted teaching aids needed for full rather than merely formal participation in learning. Heilporn et al. (2023) similarly emphasise that inclusive educational practices are defined less by their underlying intentions than by their actual capacity to remove the barriers encountered by each learner. On this basis, the findings suggest that inclusion remains partial, sustained more by individual teachers' and support staff's commitment than by a fully equipped institutional framework.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The small, purposively selected rather than probabilistic sample does not permit statistical generalisation to all Basic Education Districts in Burkina Faso; only cautious qualitative generalisation may be considered. The source dissertation explicitly acknowledges excluding autistic children rejected by or excluded from the school system, introducing potentially substantial selection bias. The findings concern only autistic pupils who remained in school and may not reflect the likely less favourable circumstances of autistic children who have never attended school or have dropped out. Moreover, several findings rely on stakeholder accounts rather than systematic direct observation, exposing some data to social desirability bias, as discussed above regarding written work. Finally, this study focused on local classroom practices and did not explore the institutional dimensions of school inclusion, particularly national policies for recruitment, training and the provision of specialised materials. The source dissertation itself identifies this as a direction for future research.

Practical implications: The findings align in several respects with suggestions made by participants during data collection, which merit presentation because they directly extend the preceding analysis. Pedagogically, teachers and supervisors called for inclusive education training for all teachers, accompanied by annual refresher courses to update acquired skills. This proposal accords with the statistically established training deficit affecting both teachers and supervisors. In communication, practitioners suggested targeted training in adapted communication tools and techniques and the provision of specific audiovisual materials, directly justified by the unanimously reported absence of visual communication supports in the classrooms surveyed. Regarding resources and support, recommendations included providing specialised teaching materials, recruiting specialised staff in each district, and continuously raising teachers' and pupils' awareness of autism. These proposals directly address the study's most robust finding: the complete absence of adapted teaching aids despite widespread reports of specialised human assistance. Stakeholder-specific suggestions were also made. Regarding pupils, respondents emphasised sociability, mutual understanding and mutual assistance between autistic and non-autistic peers, naturally extending existing peer tutoring. Regarding parents, participants called for acceptance of autistic children without prejudice and for challenging the shame or feelings of inadequacy that some parents may experience, echoing the superstition-informed social representations discussed in the introduction. Finally, suggestions for teachers emphasised empathy, adaptation to each autistic pupil's specific needs rather than uniform methods, and continuing self-directed professional learning to supplement still-inadequate institutional training provision.

CONCLUSION

This study analysed the contribution of inclusive pedagogical practices, adapted communication tools and support resources to the academic success of autistic pupils in mainstream classrooms in the Ouaga 5 and Ouaga 10 Basic Education Districts. Findings from a mixed-methods approach combining questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, classroom observation and academic results analysis involving thirty-six participants provide a qualified answer to the research question. Autistic pupils' school inclusion appears broadly supported by actual, albeit uneven, use of differentiated pedagogical practices and informal communication methods. However, it remains undermined by persistent shortcomings in teacher and supervisor training and by a unanimously reported absence of specifically adapted teaching aids and visual supports. The data supported the study's three specific hypotheses, each with a coherent theoretical grounding: the contribution of inclusive pedagogical practices to academic success is illuminated by Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory; that of communication tools by Vygotsky's social constructivism; and that of resources and human support by Bandura's social learning theory. The general hypothesis is therefore confirmed, subject to the interpretive qualifications developed in the discussion, particularly possible social desirability bias in some accounts and the breakdown in information sharing between supervisors and classroom stakeholders regarding classroom displays.

The study's main scientific contribution is its empirical demonstration, triangulated across four stakeholder groups, of a complete absence of teaching aids specifically adapted to autistic pupils in the schools surveyed. This finding is particularly robust because the sources do not disagree. A further contribution is the identification of a non-significant statistical test concerning pupils' reported use of verbal expression. Explicitly reporting this result strengthens the methodological credibility of the findings by avoiding selective reporting of significant results alone. The study nevertheless has limitations: the small purposive sample precludes statistical generalisation; the selection bias acknowledged in the source dissertation, which excludes autistic children rejected by or excluded from the school system, cautions against extrapolation to all autistic children in the country; and institutional aspects of school inclusion policy were not investigated. Future research could examine institutional determinants of autistic pupils' school inclusion nationally, the educational trajectories of autistic children who have never attended school or have dropped out, and the longitudinal effects of visual communication supports on learning once these are introduced.

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