

Teachers' Perceptions and Experiences of Inclusive Education in Schools: A Review of the Literature

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Inclusive education has become a central theme in global education systems, seeking to address inequality and exclusion with the active participation of teachers. This research reviewed the literature on educators' perceptions and experiences of inclusive education, analyzing 10,306 publications from Scopus and Scielo between 2020 and 2024, and selecting 15 articles for the study. The results show an evolution in teacher perception: in 2020, there was motivation to provide quality education, although lack of training was recognized; in 2021, enrichment in practices through collaboration was observed, although limited; and in 2022, scarcity of resources persisted. By 2023 and 2024, the importance of empathy and flexibility was highlighted, although challenges in adapting strategies continued. Teachers proposed a variety of strategies, including innovative methodologies and collaboration with other professionals, underscoring the need for a comprehensive approach that empowers and provides resources for effective inclusive education.

Keywords: Perceptions, Experiences, Teachers, Schools, Inclusive Education.

1. Introduction

Inclusive education has positioned itself as a central theme in educational systems worldwide as a way to address inequality and exclusion, where the teacher has a primary role and implies he or she assumes the commitment to be fully involved in its implementation (Martínez, 2023; Ortiz, 2023). This pedagogical proposal seeks to ensure that all students participate and learn without discrimination and in school environments that meet their diverse needs. However, the effective implementation of inclusion in education remains a large-scale challenge (Culque et al., 2024; Ruiz et al., 2021).

Years ago, 155 countries made a commitment to promote access to basic education without discrimination and the goal of universalizing access to basic education, promoting quality and equity (World Declaration on Education for All, 1990). Currently, inclusive education is a fundamental human right must be at the foundation of society, to guarantee quality education for all where the existing diversity is explicitly valued (UNESCO, 2021; Montoya, 2021) making possible the participation and achievement of progress in student learning, providing

them with quality care and focusing on the development of the student as an individual (Arámbulo, 2024; Serna, A. and Serna, E., 2023). Inclusive education, in addition to being a fundamental right, is also a social demand and schools have obligation to create schools where all students learn and live fully in environments where exclusion does not exist (Magueira, 2023; Ble and Cornelio, 2023).

Inclusive education contemplates dimensions such as Collaborative Cultures, where members of the educational community assume responsibilities and create spaces for dialogue in search of improvements for school. Participatory action research is also considered, in which work teams carry out research processes of their own educational institution to achieve the implementation of planning, self-exploration and reflection methodologies. Likewise, inclusive leadership is contemplated, characterized by the fact that the director guides the processes of inclusive development by practicing democratic, participatory leadership, where decision-making is shared and bonds of trust are strengthened. In addition, Vision of Comprehensive Change is taken into account, which proposes a holistic and systemic view of school to promote integration and synergy between its different components and programs, as opposed to fragmented and disconnected approaches often imposed by traditional curriculum and educational policies, which tend to segment school work. Likewise, collaborative counseling is included, which seeks to enhance the reflective autonomy of teams through collaboration and build collaborative cultures with a comprehensive vision of school (Figuerola et al., 2021). Although training teachers for educational inclusion faces challenges, there are international experiences could inspire effective policies. However, the key challenge is to make inclusion a true State policy, with the government's commitment to implement and sustain programs guarantee inclusive and quality education for the most vulnerable sectors (Chuchón, 2024).

A variety of reviews have been compiled on this topic and published in popular science articles. The systematic review on inclusive education and its implications for educational guidance stands out, with results specifically indicating students with special needs face obstacles and require more support; teachers need better training and skills in inclusion; families demand more guidance; and schools must transform their culture and practices to facilitate inclusion processes (Reyes et al., 2020). Also, the review of practices and policies for successful integration of students with disabilities concluded that practices and policies that include curricular adaptations, development of teacher competencies, active participation of families and the community, and transformation of institutional culture must be implemented. However, students still face barriers such as lack of accessibility, negative attitudes, and insufficient support for families, which must be addressed to ensure inclusive environments (Meza et al., 2023). Likewise, the review on inclusive education in educational organizations, whose conclusions indicate although education should be provided under equal conditions of quality and applying strategies adapted to specific needs of students, including those with various difficulties, in practice the full inclusion of all students, regardless of their particularities, has not yet been achieved (Mathews et al., 2022).

Although there are reviews of the literature on inclusive education in schools, there are not many sources of systematic review that delve into how teachers perceive implementation of inclusive education in their schools, nor do they examine in depth the positive and negative experiences teachers have had in relation to inclusive education. In addition, the main

challenges and facilitators teachers recognize in the practice of inclusive education are not specifically identified. Nor is it possible to analyze the strategies and recommendations proposed by teachers to improve implementation of inclusive education in schools. It is of great interest for teachers, managers and specialists to know perceptions and experiences of teachers, in order to update their knowledge and analyze alternatives to effectively address the implementation of educational inclusion.

Based on the above, the research question was formulated: What are perceptions and experiences of teachers about inclusive education in schools, in Scopus and Scielo databases during 2020 to 2024?

In this sense, this research aimed to review literature of primary publications regarding perceptions and experiences of teachers about inclusive education in schools, in Scopus and Scielo databases during 2020 to 2024. To achieve this purpose, the general characteristics of selected studies, the methodological characteristics of the selected studies, the positive and negative experiences teachers have had regarding inclusive education and strategies teachers propose to improve the implementation of inclusive education in schools were identified.

2. Methodology

The systematic review takes advantage of strengths of the critical review together with an exhaustive search process, the objective of which is to explore broad topics to generate a synthesis of most relevant evidence available (García, 2022; Moher et al., 2009). In this sense, in present study, the Prisma methodology was used to carry out the literature review, clearly and openly establishing objective of the research, describing in detail methodology used: Eligibility criteria, search strategies and the use of diagrams and tables that facilitate understanding of the systematic review process carried out (Page et al., 2021a; 2021b).

In the literature review, the articles were selected following specific, previously defined criteria. Those included were: a) those that addressed issues of teachers' perceptions and experiences on inclusive education, b) published in Spanish or English, c) focused on schools, d) available in open access with full text, e) non-duplicated articles, f) between the years 2020 and 2024. Publications such as: a) opinion articles, b) conference abstracts, c) technical reports, d) letters to the editor, e) essays, f) theses and g) books, h) articles outside the specified period, i) as well as higher education level research, j) full review articles not retrieved, k) in languages other than Spanish or English, l) with restricted access and m) viewing cost were excluded.

A search for articles was conducted in journals indexed in Scopus and Scielo, covering publications from 2020 to 2024. For the search, combinations of the following descriptors were used: in Spanish, Docentes y Educación Inclusiva, Percepciones o Experiencias y Escuelas y Educación inclusiva. In English, Perceptions or Experiences and Teachers and Inclusive Education, Teachers and Inclusive Education, Perceptions or Experiences and Schools and Inclusive Education.

To select the articles in the systematic review, only open access and full text articles published from 2020 to January 2024 were accessed. This was done based on the previously predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, in order to select the articles that met these criteria, reviewing, *Nanotechnology Perceptions* Vol. 20 No. S15 (2024)

analyzing and interpreting them, and discarding those that did not align with selection criteria and objectives. It is important to note selection of primary studies was carried out autonomously by the principal investigator and the co-authors.

The articles selected for the review were compiled by organizing their characteristics in an Excel table as part of the review protocol. Data were recorded in the following fields: (a) author, (b) title, (c) year of publication, (d) abstract, (e) methodology, (f) country of study, (g) sample, and (h) main result. With this information matrix, the analysis of the selected documents was carried out.

3. Results

A systematic review was conducted on a total of 10,306 investigations, obtained by searching for key terms in Spanish (teachers* and inclusive education*) and in English (perceptions or experiences* and teachers* and inclusive education*). The investigations were identified in the Scopus and Scielo databases, resulting in a total of 10,306 records. These databases were selected due to their comprehensive coverage of studies and works related to the topic.

Furthermore, filters and exclusion criteria pertinent to this research were applied, thereby facilitating the elimination of articles that were not relevant to the study. Consequently, 1,069 studies were excluded from the Scopus database and 7,667 from SciELO. Furthermore, a comparison of the two databases revealed that no duplicate articles were present, thus allowing for the exclusion of a total of 8,736 investigations.

With regard to the thematic filter, only those articles that addressed inclusive education were included, as well as the perceptions or experiences of teachers in this area, specifically in the context of primary schools. Consequently, following a review of the titles and abstracts, several articles were excluded, leaving a total of 1,570 articles for further analysis. Furthermore, 55 articles were excluded due to the unavailability of the full text.

Ultimately, 8 articles written in languages other than Spanish or English, 11 articles with restricted access, and 39 articles requiring a fee for viewing were excluded from the total of 73 articles evaluated for eligibility. Consequently, 15 articles were selected for inclusion in the present study, as detailed in the subsequent flow chart (Figure 1).

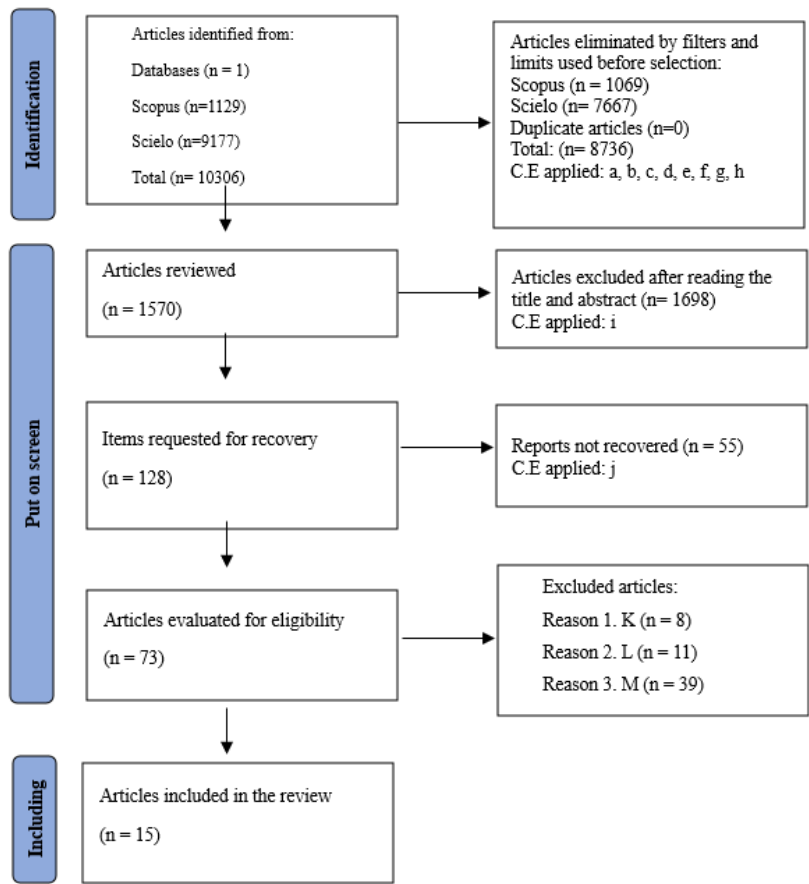


Figure 1. PRISMA flowchart

Source: Own elaboration (2024).

Table 1 Results of preliminary searches

Combined words in Spanish and English	Database		Total
	SCOPUS	SCIELO	
Teachers* and Inclusive Education*	7	146	153
Perceptions or Experiences* and Teachers* and Inclusive Education*	1 122	9 031	10 153
Combined words in Spanish and English	1 129	9 177	10 306

Source: Scopus and Scielo Database.

Table 1 presents the initial list of publications identified after applying the keywords in the various databases consulted, in accordance with the established search and inclusion criteria.

Table 2 General characteristics of the selected studies

ID (identifier)	Author/Year	Title	Country	Database
1	Del Olmo et al. (2020)	Perceptions of teachers of educational inclusion: Diversity, cooperation and commitment.	España	Scopus
2	Estrella et al. (2020)	Perception of the inclusion process in regular basic education in primary level teachers in northern Lima	Perú	Scielo
3	Arriagada et al. (2021)	Co-teaching from inclusive approaches for the School Integration Program teams	Chile	Scielo
4	Bayram y Öztürk (2021)	Opinions and Practices of Social Studies Teachers on Inclusive Education	Turquía	Scopus
5	Cantor et al. (2021)	Pedagogical practices for inclusion in two alternative educational models Inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities: resources and difficulties of families and teachers	Colombia	Scielo
6	França y Dos Santos (2022)	A comparative study of pre-service teachers' knowledge and perceptions of, and attitudes toward, inclusive education	Brasil	Scielo
7	Udeme y Pillay (2022)	Views of educators working with pupils with Down syndrome on their roles and responsibilities and factors related to successful inclusion	Sudáfrica	Scopus
8	Boundy et al. (2023)	An Inclusive Early Childhood Education Setting according to Practitioners' Experiences in Yogyakarta, Indonesia	Reino Unido	Scopus
9	Jusni et al. (2023)	Teachers' and family perceptions about the role of management teams as inclusive leaders in Primary Education	Indonesia	Scopus
10	García y Bohórquez (2023)	From Classroom Support to Co-Teaching: The Vision of the Support Teachers in Primary Education	España	Scielo
11	Gayol et al. (2023)	Teachers' perspectives on inclusive education	Chile	Scielo
12	León et al. (2023)	Beginning teacher preparation and readiness for the profession as inclusive educators Teacher self-efficacy and inclusive practice Changes experienced in primary education by teachers, autistic students and students' parents after a professional development intervention	Perú	Scielo
13	Rosenberg et al. (2023)	Perceptions of teachers of educational inclusion: Diversity, cooperation and commitment.	Australia	Scopus
14	Woodcock et al. (2023)	Perception of the inclusion process in regular basic education in primary level teachers in northern Lima	Australia	Scopus
15	Petersson y Holmqvist (2024)	Co-teaching from inclusive approaches for the School Integration Program teams	Suecia	Scopus

Source: Scopus and Scielo database.

Table 2 shows that, of the 15 scientific articles selected, 7 were found in the Scielo Database, while 8 articles were identified in Scopus. In addition, the analysis carried out indicates that Spain, Australia, Peru and Chile are the countries that contribute with the largest number of publications examined in this research. In addition, other publications from Turkey, South Africa, Indonesia, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Colombia and Brazil were included, whose

studies were related to inclusive education.

Table 3 Methodological characteristics

Approach	N	Instruments	N	Authors' ID
Quantitative	7	Questionnaire	7	2,4,5,7,10,12,15
Qualitative	8	Interviews	8	1,3,6,8,9,11,13,14

Source: Scopus and Scielo database.

In Table 3, an analysis of 15 scientific articles was carried out, which were located and selected in the Scopus and Scielo databases. Of these, more than half, i.e. 8, indicate that the most common data collection method was the interview, while only 7 studies used a questionnaire. In terms of methodological approach, most of the studies (n=8) are characterized by having a qualitative approach, unlike the 7 studies that adopted a quantitative approach.

Table 4 Results of positive and negative experiences of teachers regarding inclusive education

Positive experiences	ID	Negative experiences	ID
Personal and professional satisfaction Teachers expressed feeling satisfied and motivated to be able to provide quality education to students with special educational needs.	2,10,12	Lack of training and preparation Teachers reported that they do not have adequate training to effectively address the needs of students with disabilities.	1,7,12,13
Development of skills and competencies The implementation of inclusive education has allowed teachers to develop skills such as empathy, patience and flexibility.	15	Insufficient resources and support They expressed a lack of materials, equipment, and specialized support staff to adequately implement inclusive education.	6,8,9,10
Mutual learning Teachers have enriched their pedagogical practices through the learning they have obtained from their students with disabilities, as well as from the collaboration between teachers, which has fostered a more inclusive and dynamic educational environment.	3,7,8,11,14	Reluctance to abandon traditional models Despite seeking effective co-teaching practices, many teachers cling to traditional models, which limits the inclusive potential of teaching and hinders collaborative learning for all students.	11
Improving the classroom climate The inclusion of students with special needs has contributed to fostering greater acceptance and solidarity among all students.	1,6,13	Challenges in classroom management Teachers face difficulties in making curricular adaptations and adapting teaching-learning strategies to the diverse needs of students.	2,14,15
Strengthening Learning Communities Students value the dialogic activities and interactive groups that take place in learning communities, which encourage their participation and create an inclusive environment where they feel recognized and heard.	4,5	Limited collaboration Teachers limit collaborative work to the mere sharing of materials, without taking advantage of the opportunity to exchange experiences or professional strategies, preventing the benefits of collaboration from being maximized.	3

Collaborative leadership		Disconnect between teacher and student perception	
It encourages the active participation of all members of the educational community. By establishing a shared vision and promoting equal roles, an inclusive culture is cultivated that motivates children to interact and engage in their learning and play.	9	Teachers believe they are promoting inclusion, but students do not feel the same level of active participation or recognition, revealing a disconnect between teacher perception and the reality of the student experience.	4,5

Source: Scopus and Scielo database.

Table 4 presents the positive and negative experiences identified in the study. Among the positive experiences, the following stand out: personal and professional satisfaction, mentioned by three authors (Estrella et al., 2020; García and Bohórquez, 2023; León et al., 2023); the development of skills and competencies, mentioned by one author (Petersson and Holmqvist, 2024); mutual learning, mentioned by five authors (Arriagada et al., 2021; Udemé and Pillay, 2022; Boundy et al., 2023; Gayol et al., 2023; Woodcock et al., 2023); the improvement of the classroom climate, mentioned by three authors (Del Olmo et al., 2020; França and Dos Santos, 2022; Rosenberg et al., 2023); the strengthening of learning communities, pointed out by two authors (Bayram and Öztürk, 2021; Cantor et al., 2021); and collaborative leadership, mentioned by one author (Jusni et al., 2023). On the other hand, negative experiences include the lack of training and preparation, cited by four authors (Del Olmo et al., 2020; Udemé and Pillay, 2022; León et al., 2023; Rosenberg et al., 2023); insufficient resources and support, also mentioned by four authors (França and Dos Santos, 2022; Boundy et al., 2023; Jusni et al., 2023; García and Bohórquez, 2023); resistance to abandoning traditional models, indicated by one author (Gayol et al., 2023); Challenges in classroom management, referred to by three authors (Estrella et al., 2020; Woodcock et al., 2023; Petersson and Holmqvist, 2024); limited collaboration, mentioned by one author (Arriagada et al., 2021); and the disconnect between teachers' and students' perceptions, cited by two authors (Bayram and Öztürk, 2021; Cantor et al., 2021).

Table 5 Types of strategies proposed by teachers to improve the implementation of inclusive education

Type of strategies	Description of strategies	ID
Innovative teaching-learning methodologies for students	Application of innovative methodologies that help overcome obstacles that impede the development of learning among students. These methodologies must be committed to promoting shared learning experiences, where students can collaborate and build knowledge together.	1,2,4,5,14
Continuing teacher training	Participation in professional development programs that adequately prepare teachers to teach students with disabilities, ensuring constant updating in inclusive methodologies.	7,15
Adaptation and diversification of teaching and assessment methods	Application of differentiated teaching focused on adapting materials, carrying out activities that encourage collaborative work among students. In addition, use a greater variety of methods to assess student learning.	9,10,12,13
Interdisciplinary work for timely and relevant attention	Collaboration between teachers and other professionals (psychologists, therapists, etc.) to address student needs in a relevant and timely manner.	3,6,8,11

Source: Scopus and Scielo database.

Table 5, we can observe that strategies are identified as: Innovative teaching-learning methodologies for students, mentioned by (n=5) authors, followed by: Continuing teacher training, mentioned by (n=2), the other categories: Adaptation and diversification of methods for teaching and evaluation, mentioned by (n=4) and Interdisciplinary work for timely and pertinent attention, mentioned by (n=4). The main results of these investigations show that, of the identified strategies, five of them indicate that novel didactic approaches must be applied that allow addressing and overcoming the barriers that impede the development of learning in students, implementing teaching-learning strategies that promote shared experiences, in which students can work collaboratively and build knowledge together.

Another identified strategy is that teachers participate in and receive training through professional development programs. This ensures that teachers are able to teach students with disabilities effectively and that they are aware of the latest developments in inclusive methodologies, as noted by two authors.

Similarly, other strategies include the implementation of personalized teaching, which entails adapting learning resources and materials, creating learning experiences that encourage support and mutual help among students, and using a wider variety of assessment strategies to assess student progress. These strategies were noted by four authors.

Another identified strategy is the joint and coordinated work between teachers and other experts (such as psychologists, therapists, and so forth) to address the specific needs of students in a relevant and timely manner, as referenced by four authors.

It should be noted that none of the articles reviewed and analyzed specifically describe the strategies that could be applied to improve the implementation of inclusive education. The studies only mention general strategies of what could be done, without providing concrete details about their application.

4. Discussion

In order to review the literature on teachers' experiences in relation to inclusive education in schools, an exhaustive search was carried out that revealed the existence of bibliographical review research worldwide focused on this area. These investigations not only highlight school contexts and role of teachers, but also identify the main challenges and facilitators that educators face in practice of inclusive education, collecting their perceptions on the matter. In addition, it seeks to identify the strategies that teachers propose to improve and implement inclusion in schools, which allows a better understanding of how to optimize educational practices and foster a more inclusive environment for all students. This review offers a significant resource to broaden understanding of inclusive education and to implement innovative strategies that raise its quality, generating a positive impact on students and teachers.

Regarding positive and negative experiences, of the research analyzed, one of most outstanding was carried out in the teaching field by Reyes et al. (2020), indicating that, although some educators maintain a positive perspective on inclusive education, conservative attitudes conceptualize students from a rehabilitative approach still persist. For this reason, it is crucial that they receive ongoing training in inclusive education, which will allow them to

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adequately understand the legislative and practical framework that supports it. Likewise, for Mathews et al. (2022), it is essential to train them in pedagogical strategies and in the use of technological resources to ensure quality education that is accessible to all. Critical training of teachers is essential for them to reevaluate their educational practices, addressing both the needs and potential of their students, and thus promoting an inclusive environment.

Furthermore, these findings are consistent with previous research, such as of Meza et al. (2023), which states that inclusive education and the integration of students with disabilities reveal both challenges and opportunities in this field. Therefore, it is essential to adopt a more comprehensive and collaborative approach to address the challenges associated with inclusive education, highlighting the importance of teacher training and implementation of effective pedagogical strategies, in order to reduce significant obstacles in the scarcity of resources, resistance to change and insufficient training.

The analysis of primary research reveals an evolution in perception and practice of inclusive education by teachers over the years. In the 2020 primary articles, educators were motivated by the opportunity to offer quality education to students with special educational needs, while recognizing their lack of training and the difficulty in making curricular adaptations. For the 2021 primary articles, an enrichment in their pedagogical practices is observed through learning from their students and collaboration between colleagues, although this collaboration is often limited to the simple sharing of materials, which prevents them from fully taking advantage of its benefits. In 2022 primary articles, even though inclusion has promoted acceptance and solidarity among students, teachers continue to face training and resource shortages. Moving into 2023 and 2024, the primary articles highlight the importance of active participation and an inclusive culture, where teachers develop skills such as empathy and flexibility, but challenges persist in adapting their strategies to diverse needs of students. This evolution highlights the need for a more comprehensive approach that not only trains teachers but also provides them with the necessary resources to implement effective and meaningful inclusive education.

Regarding the strategies proposed by teachers, in the primary articles from 2020 to 2024, the strategies proposed by teachers to favor the implementation of inclusive education are highlighted, underlining the importance of adopting innovative methodologies to improve this practice. Teachers suggest various strategies to overcome obstacles in the learning of students with disabilities, including the promotion of shared learning experiences and participation in professional development programs that guarantee constant updating in inclusive methodologies. Likewise, the need to apply differentiated teaching that adapts materials and encourages collaborative work is emphasized. Diversifying assessment methods and collaborating with other professionals, such as psychologists and therapists, are crucial steps to effectively address the needs of students and create an inclusive and enriching educational environment.

Regarding the limitations of present research, it was identified that, in each of studies reviewed, although teachers proposed a variety of strategies to implement inclusion, none of the studies delves into the effectiveness of these strategies in daily educational practice. Another limitation found in the reviewed studies is vast majority of them focus, according to their study needs, on a specific context, which implies generalization of any results to other

educational settings is limited.

Therefore, researchers are urged to conduct further research related to continuing teacher training and inclusive education, as well as its impact on students' learning experiences. In addition, it is relevant that collaborative participation between teachers and other professionals or specialists who contribute to the educational field is carried out. Finally, researchers may consider conducting studies on the role of educational policies in the implementation of inclusion, in order to provide a more holistic view of the challenges and opportunities of inclusive education.

5. Conclusions

Inclusive education is presented as a fundamental approach to ensure that all students, including those with disabilities, can access quality education in an environment that promotes acceptance and solidarity.

This study has facilitated a more profound examination of the experiences and perceptions of teachers regarding inclusive education. The evidence indicates that, despite the motivation and satisfaction that teachers derive from offering inclusive education, they continue to encounter considerable challenges. These include a lack of adequate training, limited resources, and the necessity to adapt their teaching strategies to accommodate the diversity of the student population.

To surmount these impediments, innovative methodologies are imperative. Teachers have proffered a plethora of strategies, including the promotion of shared learning experiences and differentiated instruction, which foster collaborative endeavors and active student engagement. Moreover, collaboration with other professionals, such as psychologists and therapists, is regarded as pivotal to effectively address the specific needs of students.

Despite the advancements in inclusive education, there is a clear necessity for a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach between the various stakeholders in the educational system, under the guidance of school counselors, to achieve a more profound understanding of the reality of students and ensure their comprehensive development in a constructive and dynamic environment.

Ultimately, the scientific community is encouraged to pursue more comprehensive investigations into pivotal areas such as early childhood education, pedagogical training, familial influence, and the interplay between external factors and student development. These pivotal stages are instrumental in instilling values of respect and cultural acceptance, not merely reinforcing intercultural competencies, but also fostering an educational community that is collaborative and dedicated to social inclusion.

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