
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Inclusive Education in Spain: An Observational Analysis of Six Inclusive Schools in León

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| ABSTRACT

This study examines inclusive education practices in six schools in Leon, Spain, through observational analysis. The research explores methodologies, pedagogical strategies, pedagogical practices, inclusive policies, institutional support mechanisms, and support systems employed to accommodate students with diverse needs, including disabilities, learning difficulties, and socio-cultural challenges. Drawing from direct observations and interviews, the study critically evaluates how inclusion is operationalized at different educational levels in Spanish public and private schools. Findings highlight the role of psycho-pedagogical teams, curriculum adaptations, and teacher training in fostering inclusive environments. The findings also provide insights for improving inclusive education globally, particularly in multilingual and multicultural contexts. The study contributes to the discourse on inclusive education by identifying best practices and areas for improvement, emphasizing the need for continuous professional development and systemic support.

| KEYWORDS

Inclusive education, Spain, psycho-pedagogical teams, curriculum adaptation, teacher training, pedagogical inclusion, SEN, psycho-pedagogy.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Inclusive education is a global imperative, enshrined in international frameworks such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006). It is a cornerstone of modern educational systems, aiming to provide equitable learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds (UNESCO, 2020). Spain has made significant strides in inclusive education, as evidenced by legislative frameworks such as Organic Law 2/2006 (LOE) and its amendment, Organic Law 3/2020 (LOMLOE), which mandate educational support for students with diverse needs (Ministry of Education, Spain, 2020). In the European context, Spain has undertaken significant legislative and institutional reforms to promote inclusive practices in education (Eurydice, 2022). This study investigates the implementation of inclusive practices in six schools in Leon, Spain, through qualitative observation, focusing on the strategies used to address the needs of students with disabilities, learning difficulties, and socio-cultural challenges.

2. Literature Review

Inclusion in education refers to the process of accommodating all learners, regardless of their physical, cognitive, or socio-emotional characteristics (Ainscow & Miles, 2008). In Spain, Organic Law 2/2006 (LOE), modified by Organic Law 3/2020 (LOMLOE), outlines the state's commitment to equity and diversity in education (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, 2021). This commitment is reflected in regional strategies and school-level initiatives. Inclusive education is also rooted in the principles of equity, accessibility, and social justice (Ainscow, 2020). Theoretical frameworks such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL) emphasize the importance of flexible learning environments to accommodate diverse learners (Rose & Meyer, 2002). In Spain, inclusive education is supported by decentralized governance, with regional administrations responsible for implementing national policies (Eurydice, 2021).

Key components of inclusive education include curriculum adaptation—modifying content, pedagogy, and assessment to meet individual needs (Florian, 2014); teacher training, which equips educators with the skills necessary to address diverse learning needs (Forlin, 2013); and support systems, such as psycho-pedagogical teams and specialized staff to assist students (OECD, 2018). This study builds on existing research by providing empirical insights into the practical application of these components in Spanish schools.

Indeed, inclusive education has increasingly become a fundamental principle in educational policy and practice worldwide, seeking to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all students regardless of their diverse needs. In the Spanish context, inclusive education has evolved substantially over the past decades, influenced by international mandates, national legislation, educational reforms, and ongoing debates about its implementation and challenges.

2.1 Historical and Legislative Background

The advancement of inclusive education in Spain is closely linked to international frameworks such as the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006), which stress the importance of integrating all learners within mainstream educational settings. Spain has progressively incorporated these global principles into its national legislation, beginning with the Organic Law on Education (LOGSE, 1990) and extending through subsequent reforms such as the Organic Law on Education (LOE, 2006) and the Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality (LOMLOE, 2020) (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2022; Lacruz-Pérez et al., 2021).

The Spanish Constitution (1978) underpins these efforts by guaranteeing the right to education without discrimination (Spanish Constitution, 1978). The LOMLOE (2020) notably marks a comprehensive overhaul aimed at promoting educational inclusion through mechanisms such as universal design for learning (UDL), early detection and intervention for learning difficulties, and adaptation of curricula and assessments tailored to individual needs. Furthermore, the law envisions special education schools transitioning into resource centers supporting mainstream schools, reflecting a move toward greater inclusiveness (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2022).

2.2 Conceptualizing Inclusion in Spain

Despite legislative advances, the conceptual understanding and practical realization of inclusion in Spain reflect a complex interplay between integration and full inclusion models. The former, often associated with placing students with special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream classrooms without substantial systemic changes, still influences practices. Conversely, full inclusion emphasizes accommodation and participation of all learners within general education settings (Lacruz-Pérez et al., 2021).

Current Spanish educational policies allow for three major schooling types for students with SEN: regular schools, special education schools, and special education classrooms within regular schools. The decision about placement considers the student's individual needs, family input, and psycho-pedagogical assessments (Lacruz-Pérez et al., 2021; Ministry of Education, 2022). This flexible approach acknowledges student diversity but has also led to ambiguity regarding the standard of inclusion pursued (Lacruz-Pérez et al., 2021).

2.3 Teacher Attitudes and Preparedness

Teachers in Spain generally exhibit positive attitudes toward educational inclusion, recognizing its importance in fostering equitable learning environments. However, these attitudes can sometimes be ambiguous and are influenced by factors such as prior training and direct experience with inclusive practices (Lacruz-Pérez, Sanz-Cervera, & Tárraga-Mínguez, 2021). Regarding preparedness, research indicates that Spanish teachers' perceptions of their readiness to implement inclusive education vary significantly with age and years of teaching experience. Notably, younger teachers and those with fewer years in the profession tend to feel more prepared compared to their older, more experienced counterparts, highlighting a potential need for ongoing professional development to support veteran teachers in inclusive settings (Triviño-Amigo et al., 2022).

2.4 Student Outcomes and Social Integration

Inclusion aims not only to place students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms but also to promote their social participation and academic success. Studies reveal mixed outcomes in Spain regarding these goals. While many students Needs and Inclusive Education, 2022).

Social integration is often limited by segregative practices and insufficient teacher support, leading to feelings of isolation among students with disabilities (Sandoval et al., 2019). Research on students' perspectives highlights barriers with disabilities attend regular schools, their full inclusion in all aspects of school life remains uneven (European Agency for Special such as fragmented support services and inadequate coordination between general and special education staff, which affect both academic engagement and peer relationships (Sandoval, Simón & Echeita, 2018; Broer, Doyle & Giangreco, 2005).

Yet, when inclusive practices such as adaptation of curriculum, individualized support, collaborative teaching, and school-wide inclusive culture are effectively implemented, positive outcomes in student tolerance, acceptance, and academic achievement have been documented (Lacruz-Pérez et al., 2021; Chiner & Cardona, 2013).

2.5 Challenges and Barriers

Inclusive education in Spain faces several systemic, cultural, and practical challenges. Persistent attitudinal barriers among educators and stakeholders include beliefs that some students are "better off" in specialized settings, concerns about the extra workload inclusion entails, and doubts about academic standards and peer group effects (Lacruz-Pérez et al., 2021; Sandoval et al., 2018).

Resource constraints constitute a significant obstacle. Many mainstream schools lack sufficient specialized staff, adaptive materials, and accessible infrastructures, which impedes effective inclusion (Sandoval et al., 2019; 21K School Spain, 2025). Furthermore, support services often adopt a remedial model that isolates students for extra help outside the general classroom, inadvertently fostering marginalization (Sandoval et al., 2018).

Spain's decentralized education system adds complexity, as the degree of implementation and resource allocation varies considerably across the 17 Autonomous Communities (UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2020; European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2019). This regional disparity influences both access to inclusive education and the quality of support provided.

Social stigma, bullying, and limited engagement of families and communities also undermine inclusion efforts. Negative societal attitudes towards disability and insufficient community support contribute to exclusion both within and beyond school environments (21K School Spain, 2025; Sandoval et al., 2019).

2.6 Case Studies and Observational Insights

Empirical research including case studies and observational analysis in Spanish schools illuminates how policies translate into practice and reveals contextual factors enabling or hindering inclusion. For example, studies in León and Catalonia report varying levels of inclusive culture, participation of families, and teacher collaboration, emphasizing the need for systemic support to realize inclusion beyond legal mandates (García et al., 2022; Sánchez-Bello et al., 2023).

Notably, high-profile legal cases, such as that of a child with Down syndrome in León, have exposed ongoing segregation practices despite the legal framework, underscoring the gap between policy and lived experiences (United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2020; Sandoval et al., 2018).

2.7 Conclusion and Future Directions

Inclusive education in Spain has made significant strides, supported by progressive legislation and growing awareness of the rights of students with disabilities. Nonetheless, challenges persist in transforming policy into effective, equitable educational experiences. Central to future progress is enhancing teacher training, reallocating resources to support inclusive pedagogies, fostering inclusive school cultures, and addressing regional disparities.

Ongoing research should adopt diversified methodologies, including qualitative and mixed methods, to deepen understanding of teacher attitudes, student experiences, and systemic barriers. Policies must prioritize comprehensive support systems that integrate academic, social, and emotional dimensions of inclusion. Ultimately, realizing the full promise of inclusive education in Spain requires collaborative efforts across schools, families, communities, and policymakers to create learning environments where every student can thrive.

2.8 Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are:

- 1- What inclusive practices are employed in the observed schools?
- 2- How do schools adapt curricula and methodologies to meet diverse student needs?
- 3- What challenges and opportunities exist in the implementation of inclusive education in León?

3. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative observational approach complemented by semi-structured interviews with teachers and administrators to gain in-depth insights into inclusive education practices. The research involved visits to six inclusive schools in León, Spain, during a focused one-month internship period during the academic year 2022-2023. The schools included CEIP San Isidoro, Colegio Virgen Blanca, Colegio Sagrado Corazón Jesuitas, IES Lancia, Colegio La Asunción, and IES San Andrés.

Data collection consisted of direct observations within various school settings, supplemented by detailed field notes and reflective memos to capture contextual nuances and participant perspectives. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences and views regarding inclusion, facilitating richer data triangulation.

All qualitative data, including field notes and interviews, were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2006) rigorous six-phase framework. This process involved familiarization with data, coding, theme development, and refinement to identify patterns and insights related to inclusive education implementation in these schools.

Table 1: Phases of Thematic Analysis by Braun & Clarke (2006)

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and rereading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking in the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic map of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

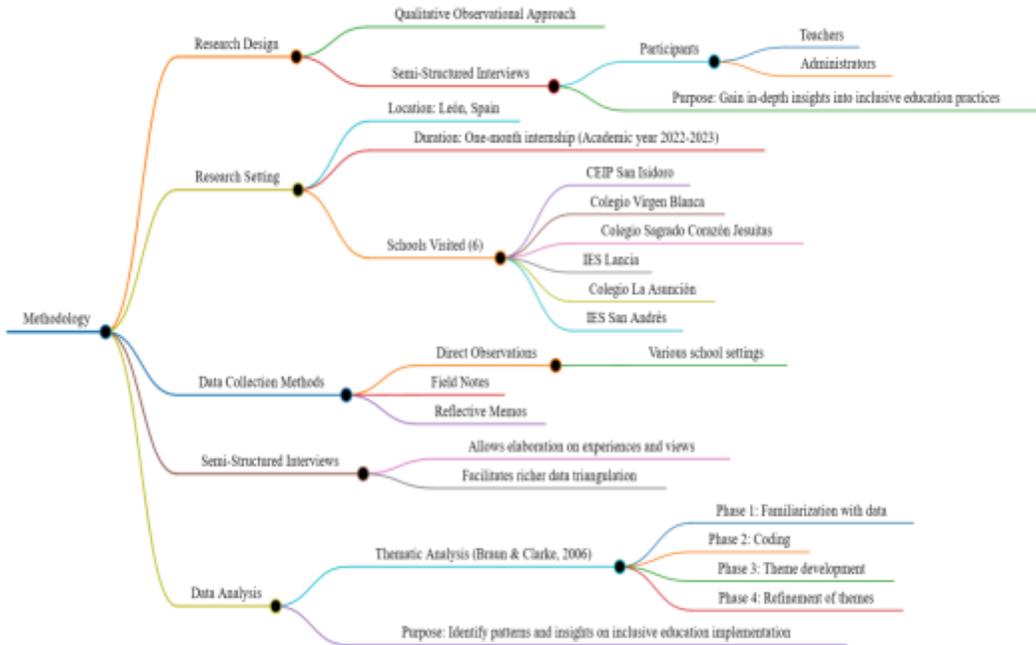


Figure 1. Methodology of Inclusive Education Study

3.1 CEIP San Isidoro

San Isidoro School is active public school. It has innovation and quality. It promotes inclusive education. The school has active methodologies and Community. The students do and perform activities to improve the physical environment of the school, the temperature classrooms, biodiversity and the fight against climate change.

3.1.1 Teaching Team

Foreign Language-English (Primary)
Hearing and Language
Early Childhood Education (COVID Support)
Music (Primary)
Primary Religion
Therapeutic pedagogy
Foreign Language-French (Primary)
Early Childhood Education
Physical Education (Primary)
Primary Education (COVID Support)
Primary Education-Bilingual English
Hearing and Language
Foreign Language-English (Primary)
Primary education

A dynamic, participatory, and motivating methodology is employed, beginning with an assessment of students’ prior knowledge. Activities are designed across varying levels of complexity, progressing from simpler to more advanced tasks, as appropriate to the individual characteristics of the students. When feasible, both small- and large-group activities are implemented to

encourage collaborative learning. Instruction is carefully sequenced in small, manageable steps, utilizing both standard and adapted materials as needed. Motivational strategies such as personal praise and social recognition are used to reinforce student engagement. Efforts are made to minimize disruptive stimuli in order to address common challenges related to attention and concentration. The evaluation of students supported by the A.A.I. (Support for Integration Assistance) follows an individualized and continuous process, allowing for timely adjustments to better meet each student's educational needs. This evaluation process involves collaboration between subject teachers, those engaged in the teaching-learning (E-A) process, and the special education (P.T.) teacher. Additionally, the functioning of the integration support classroom is continuously assessed to determine the effectiveness of implemented measures—such as methodology, scheduling, and group organization—with necessary adjustments introduced to ensure optimal outcomes for all students.

3.2 General Lines of Pedagogical Action

The primary objective of the center is to foster basic learning across seven key elements: learning foreign languages, particularly English; acquiring skills in information and communication technology; developing new reading techniques and promoting the use of the library; raising students' academic performance across all curricular areas; encouraging comprehensive education through sports and artistic expression; improving the overall climate of coexistence within the center; and continuing the implementation of educational Plans and Programs they have been developing. These goals are pursued through several lines of pedagogical action, including promoting the learning of foreign languages, advancing the use of new information technologies and audiovisual media, and encouraging reading and effective library use through initiatives such as book loan programs.

3.2.1 Curricular Contents

The criteria applied for the selection, sequencing, and organization of content are designed to support the development of educational objectives, ensure short-term functionality for the child, and align with their developmental stage. These criteria also aim to address the biological and emotional needs of children, reflect their interests, and contribute to the development of their whole personality. The selected educational content is therefore focused on promoting the integral and harmonious development of the child. It is organized into three interrelated areas and is delivered through globalized activities that are meaningful and engaging for children.

Self-awareness and personal autonomy	Knowledge of the Environment	Language: Communication and mathematical representation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gradual construction of their own identity and emotional maturity. • Affective relationships based on respect for the rules of coexistence. • Development of their personal autonomy. • Acquisition of good health, hygiene and nutrition habits (they help to take care of one's own body and spaces, and the progressive autonomy of children) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of living beings. • Knowledge of the relationships they maintain with them, their characteristics and functions. • Promote attitudes of respect and care towards the natural environment, towards living beings and the elements that make it up. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal language. • Artistic language. • Body language. • Audiovisual language. • Language of information and communication technologies. • Discover the uses of reading and writing. • Knowledge of some properties of written text and its conventional characteristics. • Approach to children's literature. • Mathematical language • Association of the number with the quantity (from 0 to 10, depending on the course). • Diverse notions: ordinal, large/small..

Transversal treatment in the areas of education in values and other teachings integrating gender equality

The transversal contents, in addition to being specifically treated, are present throughout the entire programming, in the selection of examples, conversation topics in the oral expression, choice of texts, and specific exercises, etc.

a) Education in values

The educational approach emphasizes the development of social awareness, responsibility, and respect in children through a variety of key values and practices. These include recognizing the difficulties faced by people with disabilities in daily life and fostering sensitivity to include them in games and activities; acquiring good manners and appropriate behavior for different situations such as at the table, in supermarkets, cinemas, or social gatherings; understanding the importance of not wasting

food, water, paper, clothing, and other resources; and respecting all family models. They also promote attentiveness and support toward classmates in need, appreciation and respect for all professions and workers, and care for nature, urban furniture, public spaces, and monuments. Furthermore, children are taught the value of respecting individuals from all countries and races, with special emphasis on practices such as paper recycling and energy conservation to nurture environmental responsibility.

b) Gender equality

Assessment includes recognizing everyone's participation in domestic work and daily chores, promoting involvement in all types of activities or games, fostering awareness of the importance of respecting equal participation in class without gender-based comments, and ensuring equal appreciation for the work done by both the father and the mother outside the home.

Indeed, there is a psycho-pedagogical team at this school. There is a learning community at this school. This school provides a variety of activities, including recycling, painting, drawing, and group projects. This school serves students with high abilities, learning difficulties, ADHD, intellectual disability, autism, visual impairment, hearing impairment, speech disorders, and other disabilities.

3.2.2 Virgen Blanca School

In September 2014, Colegio Virgen Blanca changes ownership and begins a new stage under the tutelage of the **EDUCERE FOUNDATION**. They continue to keep Christian values and style in mind, and they have not forgotten the reason why their center emerged in the city, but adapting to the new times. The school is currently undergoing many changes to achieve this, moving to a single day at all levels from Early Childhood Education to Baccalaureate, implementation of uniformity, new active methodologies at all levels, use of ICTs, etc. Day by day they continue to carry out their work with the same enthusiasm as in the distant beginnings, knowing that the educational mission is truly important.

Their doors are open to all those who want to grow in an educational environment marked by adaptation to new social demands and promoting human and Christian values.

3.3 Idea

The school is rooted in a Catholic identity and is committed to the holistic development of each student, recognizing that there are various ways to nurture personal growth. To ensure transparency and shared understanding, the school's ideology is presented to all members of the educational community. They aim to provide an integral education grounded in a Christian perspective, while giving special attention to diversity and individual needs. Cooperative learning is encouraged as a means of reinforcing core values, and the development of a critical conscience is actively promoted. The school offers quality teaching supported by the ongoing professional development of teachers and the gradual integration of ICTs and innovative educational methodologies. Students are educated to develop attitudes of respect toward others and the physical environment and are encouraged to participate in activities that foster and improve coexistence. Ultimately, the school strives to offer an inclusive education that welcomes everyone, actively rejecting any form of discrimination based on race, religion, language, or social background.

3.3.1 Infant Education

The school offers two Early Childhood Education classrooms for 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds respectively. They continue to implement new methodologies that they started to offer quality and innovative teaching.

3.3.2 Multiple intelligences

The working method is based on Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences. It offers the possibility of reaching students in different ways considering their multiple ways of learning, giving special importance to previous work, play and manipulation; and always starting from the context closest to the children. Starting from the idea that each person does not have a single intelligence but rather has several and these acts together, they propose varied and stimulating activities that develop all the intelligence of the child in a balanced way.



3.3.1 Early stimulation

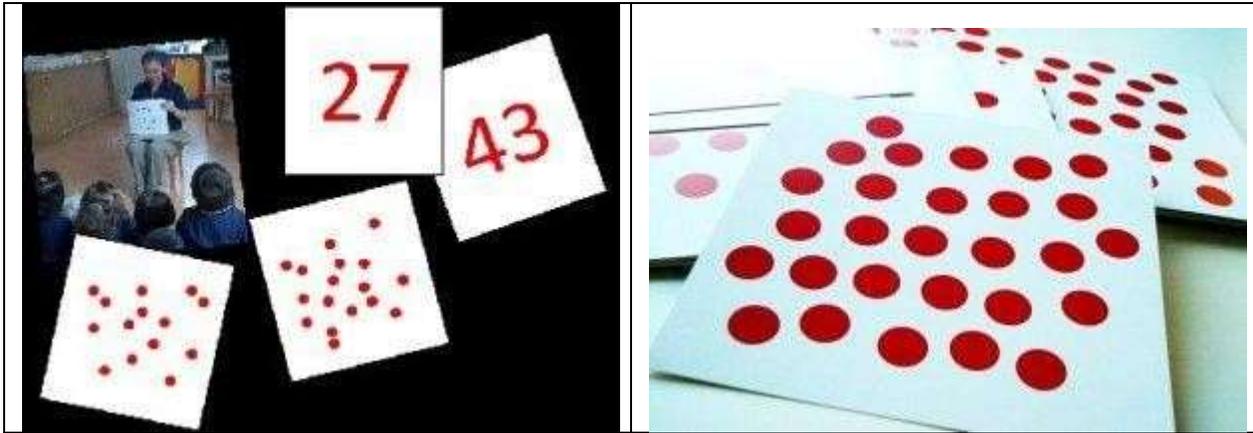
a) Basic development program

They follow an early stimulation program based on the Glenn Doman method, which is applied across various developmental areas. The core of this approach is the Basic Development Program (P.D.B.), which involves daily physical exercises such as crawling, brachiation, and balance activities aimed at stimulating children neurologically. Crawling and dragging exercises are used to promote visual convergence, which is essential for reading and other visual tasks, while brachiation exercises enhance visual and manual coordination, supporting effective writing skills. Through this program, students are encouraged to internalize these exercises as part of their daily routine—crawling, using the brachiation ladder, and performing vestibular exercises—helping to develop proper brain organization, eye-hand coordination, and laterality, all of which are crucial foundations for future literacy.



b) Math program: math bits

Mathematical ability is acquired more easily at an early age. It is important to teach mathematics as soon as possible, since the brain's ability to develop specific neurological circuits for mathematical language is lost with age. The mathematical bits consist of showing the child cards with dots to identify quantities and, subsequently, mathematical operations.



c) Chess in the classroom

The goal of teaching chess is to transform the classroom into a mental gymnasium that nurtures critical thinking, values, and social skills. The "Chess in the Classroom" method is guided by key principles: understanding how chess pieces move within the mind, recognizing how chess fosters the development of mental abilities, and learning how it supports interpersonal relationships. Through this approach, children gain knowledge of the fundamental elements of chess, including the movements and capturing techniques of pawns, rooks, and bishops. In addition, they learn the importance of taking turns, as well as the need to respect and value others, reinforcing both cognitive and social development.

d) English in the classroom

To get children to integrate the English language in the stage of E.I. they have a specialist in that language who only speaks English in the classroom. They also have, thanks to the PIPE plan that is carried out in the center, with a native who supports the classroom. In the sessions they work on expressions, vocabulary and concepts of the English language through songs, stories, bits and the classroom mascot.

e) Teamwork

Cooperative learning is based on the organization of the class in small mixed and heterogeneous groups where children work in coordination with each other to solve tasks and deepen their own learning. To do this, they use groupings of two at various times, with the «twins» technique, where the pair of children must help each other with whatever they need. Another dynamic that they use is the «hands up, zero noise» technique.

f) Music stimulation

We want to introduce children to music by making them see that they have it inside that they discover that they have a voice to sing, a body to dance, and ears to listen. This musical initiation also collaborates in the harmonious development of all the child's faculties, favoring the growth of the personality. The fundamental instruments are going to be the voice and the body; songs to achieve auditory development: the relationships between sounds, singing, body movement and rhythm.

g) Primary Education

Primary Education is an educational stage that covers six academic years, from 1st to 6th Compulsory Primary Education and that in their School has two bilingual and concerted lines. The day is continuous with school hours from 9:00 to 14:00.

3.4 Bilingualism in Physical Education and Artistic Education (Plastic)

They are committed to learning English and this year they have launched the Plan for Educational Plurilingualism. They use new methodologies: cooperative learning, thinking routines, multiple intelligences. They intend to generate in their students the habits of effort and responsibility in the learning process, acquiring the resources and strategies to know how to learn, know how to do and know how to be. They offer a wide range of extracurricular activities, both sports in collaboration with the City Council of León and others that tend to develop other capacities in a playful way: **ALOHA, LEGO-ROBOTIX, ACTIVA-TRINITY**. They include Chess in the curriculum in 1st and 2nd grade as a very important pedagogical tool.

3.5 Uniform

The school provides a uniform policy and incorporates modern technologies, including digital boards in all classrooms to enhance the learning experience. In addition, it offers free afternoon workshops led by the center's own teachers, giving students opportunities to explore and develop new skills beyond the standard curriculum. The school also supports students with

convenient services such as an Early Bird program and a Dining Service, ensuring a well-rounded and supportive environment for students throughout the day.



3.6 Secondary Education

Compulsory Secondary Education is a compulsory and free educational stage, it extends from 12 to 16 years of age and includes four academic years. In general, male and female students will have the right to remain in the ordinary regime until they are eighteen years old in the year in which the course ends. The Virgen Blanca School has two lines from 1st to 4th of Secondary and like the rest of the teachings, they are also concerted. The day is continuous from 8:20 to 14:10.

3.7 High School

The Baccalaureate is the final educational stage offered at Colegio Virgen Blanca, provided as a concerted program, and holds great importance as it prepares students to face new challenges in their lives. Spanning two courses, this stage aims to deliver comprehensive intellectual and human education and training, equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary to perform social and labor roles responsibly and competently. Additionally, it prepares students for access to Higher Level Vocational Training and university studies, with last year's students achieving excellent results in the EBAU exams.

Indeed, this school serves a diverse student population that includes children with mild disabilities, speech delays, and hyperactivity, as well as those with behavioral and learning disorders such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia. Gifted students and those with high abilities are also part of the school community, reflecting its inclusive and supportive educational environment. The school accommodates various educational stages, including early childhood (ages 3–6), primary school students (ages 7–12), high school students (ages 13–16), and compulsory post-secondary students (ages 16–18), ensuring that the needs of all learners are addressed across different age groups and developmental levels.

3.8 Colegio Jesuitas

Jesuitas School is considered as an inclusive school. The school fosters inclusion and adaptation to personalized education. The Sacred Heart School of the Jesuits of León begins the course revolutionizing Early Childhood Education in substance and in form. In 2021-2022 a new project begins that implies, among many other changes, spaces reorganized by learning environments. An innovation/renewal project that is the result of several years of analysis, research and preparation, adapted to the diverse reality of the 21st century: the integration of new teaching-learning processes and solid methods of Jesuit teaching. The project has been baptized as CONTIGO + because it is a pedagogy that starts from the protagonism of each student, who is given learning opportunities according to their individual needs and interests. Teachers assume a new role, companions in their learning, and families are counted on as fundamental pieces. Everything and everyone adds up in this inclusive, equitable and quality education.

The project is being implemented this year in the 1st and 2nd years of Early Childhood Education and next year in the 3rd year of Early Childhood Education. During the summer, the center has addressed the reorganization of the old classrooms for the first two years and next summer will be the 3rd. With the new project, everything is integrated into a large space, divided into the center by a glass room (Teachers Coordination Fishbowl) and the Calm Zone, a space dedicated to the emotional development of children. On one side, the red color marks the 1º EI area and on the other, the green one, the 2º EI area. Each one of them has different areas where the students are grouped throughout the day to develop the activities. The beginning and end of the day is always celebrated in the assembly, in the "stands area". Welcome and reflection, to meet with the group, with your tutors and with yourself. Hence, school children are distributed in different visually delimited areas.

The new pedagogical approach, based on an active and innovative methodology, offers greater flexibility in time, adapted to the needs and circumstances of each student, who receives personalized treatment. Teaching is carried out by a team of tutors,

one for each line. In this school there are three lines of EI, so there are three teachers per course who develop shared teaching. Teachers have been progressively introduced to the new methodology, developing cooperative work activities; discovering routines and thinking strategies and tackling project-based learning. In fact, these teachers have developed their own projects and materials.

With all the changes underway, the Sagrado Corazón school team aims to promote inclusive, equitable, and quality education by offering meaningful learning opportunities tailored to the individual needs and interests of all students. Their vision includes creating learning experiences that foster critical thinking and the development of multiple intelligences, while also generating spaces for reflection and self-assessment that help students become aware of their own learning processes. The school is committed to educating in values across all academic and curricular areas, preparing students for global citizenship by cultivating adaptability, openness to change, and the ability to transform their environment. Additionally, the school supports the growth of interiority and spirituality, encouraging openness to experiences of transcendence. It strives to be a forward-looking institution grounded in Gospel values, fostering active methodologies that develop student autonomy, curiosity, creativity, and scientific thinking. The CONTIGO+ initiative seeks to implement a new approach to education inspired by the vision of Jesuit centers, maintaining a strong Christian identity while ensuring high-quality, inclusive, and innovative education. As emphasized by the school's director, Cristina Fernández, this vision involves ongoing pedagogical innovation, active methodologies, and personalized attention to diversity. Echoing this commitment to growth and transformation, Father Arrupe SJ reminds us that "a community that thinks their school doesn't need change causes the school's agony in the long term... as painful as it is, the tree must be pruned so that it regains strength," underscoring the necessity of continuous formation and structural adaptation to meet new educational challenges.

a) Library

The second and third grade children have already released their Library card. Together they have discovered a place full of stories and adventures where they can go whenever we want to read.

b) Environment

The theme of Green Tuesdays chosen for the month of May has been related to forests and felling of trees; every week they have looked for solutions to the problem and they have discovered ways to counteract it, for this reason, the first grade students have decided to create a small forest in class and observe how it grows every day.

c) Cooking

On the occasion of the project "For tastes... flavors", throughout the stage of early childhood education they have become authentic chefs and have carried out different workshops in the kitchens of their school. The 1st grade students have learned how bread is made, what ingredients it has and, most importantly, how delicious it is. In 2nd grade they made healthy oatmeal, banana, and chocolate cookies... In 3rd they have done a Mindful Eating workshop, exploring food through their senses. Thus, they have been able to see what happens to the water when they add different spices, listen to chewing or food in our mouth, detect different aromas, identify sweet, salty, sour, umami flavors, and experience different temperatures and textures.



d) Music

Thanks to the collaboration between primary school students and their classmates, younger children in the infant stage had the opportunity to experience and explore the sounds of various wind instruments.

During an observation session that included an interview with a male teacher, the topic of inclusion within the Spanish educational system was discussed in depth. The conversation covered a range of topics including different types of disabilities, individualized education programs, curriculum and exam adaptations, and inclusive practices. The school follows an inclusive model in which students with and without disabilities learn together, promoting equal access to education. Adaptations such as oral, written, and computer-based exams are offered, alongside continuous assessment methods. Instructional materials are tailored to individual learning needs, and teachers frequently adjust exercises, even modifying the level of difficulty of exam questions to support student understanding. They take into account attention spans and use repetitive tasks when necessary to reinforce learning. Moreover, teachers apply diverse teaching methods aligned with various learning styles—such as auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile approaches—especially in subjects like mathematics. They also draw on theories of multiple intelligences to identify and support the strengths of each student. It is evident that the teaching staff is committed to meeting a broad spectrum of educational needs. However, there remain challenges, particularly in the area of assistive and adaptive technologies, which require further development and integration into classroom practice.

3.9 IES Lancia

IES Lancia is a high school that embraces a diverse student population, including individuals with mild intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorders (with two students identified as having severe forms), hearing impairments, and low vision. The school also supports a student diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome and several students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Among its students is one individual with Treacher Collins syndrome (TCS), a rare genetic condition characterized by craniofacial abnormalities that affect the development of the cheekbones, jaws, palate, and mouth, potentially causing breathing and feeding difficulties. Despite these physical challenges, the student demonstrates typical cognitive functioning. In addition, the school accommodates learners with specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia, who receive targeted support in a dedicated pedagogy office with the assistance of a specialized teaching aide. A speech therapist is also available on staff to further address communication-related needs. The academic staff actively adapts both curriculum and assessment methods to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities—for instance, by simplifying exam questions or modifying content delivery. Simultaneously, gifted students are provided with differentiated instruction through enrichment tasks and advanced assignments. The school strives to prepare all students for either higher education or direct entry into the workforce, offering options such as grade repetition with tailored curriculum or methodological adaptations when necessary. In more complex cases of academic difficulty, a specially designed curriculum may be implemented. During a concluding meeting, the discussion centered on the future of inclusive education in public schools and the essential steps required for its successful realization. A key proposal was the incorporation of specialized modules on inclusive and special education into ongoing professional development for in-service teachers. It was emphasized that educators must be equipped with a foundational understanding of various disabilities to respond effectively and compassionately to the needs of diverse learners. Despite the school's progressive efforts, several challenges remain, including gaps in curriculum adaptation, infrastructure, equipment availability, and the integration of assistive technologies. There is also a pressing need for continuous teacher training to enhance pedagogical practices and ensure inclusive methodologies are implemented consistently. Ultimately, the convergence of inclusive pedagogy and facilitative teaching practices holds great potential for improving both academic performance and educational equity among all students.

3.10 Colegio La Asunción

a) Installations

The facilities of the Colegio La Asunción de León are located at Avda, Mariano Andrés nº 193 in the capital of León. In 1949, the community of Religious of La Asunción moved from Serranos to the facilities they currently occupy in the neighborhood that now receives the name of the community itself: La Asunción. The College is located to the north of the city, between the University and the Hospital de León.

The school, which teaches from Early Childhood Education to Baccalaureate, is located on a large estate surrounded by green areas where the La Asunción University Residence is also located. The center, which has been granted ICT level 5 by the Junta de Castilla y León for its Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) integration plan, is equipped with three multimedia classrooms with workstations for students and with a Wi-Fi infrastructure that allows networking throughout the building. All classrooms have a projector and in each Infant and Primary Education class there is also a digital whiteboard and a computer.

The center also has several multipurpose classrooms; computer equipment throughout the building and specifically in several classrooms; Biology, Physics and Chemistry laboratories; Plastic classroom and gym with changing rooms. Surrounded by large green areas, in the semi-covered sports center students can practice different sports.

b) Ideology

The Colegio de la Asunción de León is a Catholic educational center, open to all, governed by the Congregation of the Religious of the Assumption. The Province of Spain of said Congregation is the titular entity of the center, being the Provincial Superior with her Council the ones that mark the different strategies (educational, economic, pastoral, etc.). The Ownership Team depends on this superior body, which, advised by different teams, ECON.P and the Pastoral-Laity Area, are in charge of coordinating and animating the management of the centers: pedagogical and pastoral coordination, human resources, economic management, etc. These government bodies manage another 8 Educational centers and three Social Works belonging to the same province of the Congregation of the Religious of the Assumption. The center is of two lines in the educational stages of Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, Compulsory Secondary Education and Baccalaureate, all of them under an Educational Agreement with the Ministry of Education of the Junta de Castilla y León. The organization chart of the center structures the different individual positions (directors, administrator, team coordinators...) and the collegiate bodies (Management Team, Faculty, School Council, rest of the center's work teams and groups).

c) Mission

The reason for being and existing is to educate students in an integral way, in accordance with the Ideology of the Assumption, providing quality education, so that they become free, responsible and committed people in the transformation of society according to the gospel values.

d) CEP

The Center Educational Project is a document that collects basic information on the educational action that Colegio La Asunción de León develops in its daily activity.

The main components of our educational project reflect a comprehensive and values-based approach, considering the social and cultural context of our school community. These include clearly defined values, objectives, and action priorities; an analysis of the school's environment; the general organizational structure of the center; and pedagogical and curricular proposals for Early Childhood, Primary, Secondary, and Baccalaureate education. The project also incorporates the Internal Regime Regulations, a Coexistence Plan, and a Plan for Attention to Diversity. At its core, the project is guided by a clear mission, vision, and set of values. The mission is to educate students in an integral way, rooted in the Ideology of the Assumption, providing quality education to help them become free, responsible, and committed individuals dedicated to transforming society in accordance with Gospel values. The vision, shaped by an analysis of the present context, focuses on promoting the Assumption Identity to foster belonging and societal engagement, achieving educational excellence through well-qualified staff, exploring sustainable economic models aligned with our charism, and strengthening our presence as a leading educational institution. Our guiding values, inspired by the Gospel, are central to all actions and decisions: respect for the dignity of every person, the promotion of freedom as the basis of moral responsibility, a family spirit that shapes relationships, a love for time that inspires ongoing renewal, faith-culture dialogue as the foundation of all training, personalized education that fosters honesty and transcendence, effort and responsibility as essential pillars of formation, a commitment to beauty, kindness, and care for the world as a lifestyle, and a deep sense of solidarity that drives action to overcome inequality. Together, these elements form a cohesive and forward-looking educational framework that seeks to form individuals capable of transforming both their lives and the society around them.

3.11 Strategy and Objectives

The school has drawn up a new Strategic Plan, 2019/2025, based on Mission, the Institutional Strategic Plan of the Province and the framework documents of the Religious of the Assumption. This new plan will mark the direction of management lines and will be the starting point for all the actions. Its execution and deployment will allow them to continue being a reference center in León for their educational quality, warmth in dealing with all their stakeholders, especially with their students and families, for their commitment to the culture of innovation and with the transformation and improvement of society.

3.12 Inclusive Education

The school's plan is grounded in the general principle of Attention to Diversity, which affirms that every student within the compulsory education stage has the right to receive an adapted education that allows them to progress according to their abilities and needs, whether special or not. The student body is highly diverse, including students with varying levels of curricular competence—some having mastered prior learning stages, while others exceed expected levels—as well as students at different developmental stages, with distinct learning rhythms, physical and psychological conditions, and socio-family environments ranging from stimulating to limited. Motivation and interest levels also vary greatly, from those closely connected to school life with a positive self-concept, to others who lack confidence and struggle with engagement. Furthermore, students exhibit a range of learning styles—active, reflective, theoretical, pragmatic—using diverse cognitive strategies or relying on mechanical approaches. They also come from varied socio-cultural contexts, including both disadvantaged and enriched environments, ethnic or cultural minorities, and immigrant backgrounds. In response to this diversity, the Attention to Diversity Plan addresses

all relevant groups and aspects, including guidance and orientation services, support for gifted students, foreign students, those from socio-cultural and/or economic minorities, students with special educational needs, those enrolled in the Learning and Performance Improvement Program, students facing learning or educational compensation challenges, and those with language difficulties. The school's approach is deeply rooted in its Educational Project, which outlines the principles and philosophy behind its commitment to diversity. Its vision is to "ensure a solid education for our students that enables them to think and make responsible decisions." The Management Team of each center oversees the development, coordination, and implementation of the Attention to Diversity Plan, involving the entire Senate, input from school counselors, and support staff when available. Academically, the school emphasizes a "personalized and close education that responds to the diversity of the student body and offers academic and professional guidance." This commitment is further reinforced by the foundational principle: "Educate based on the value of the person," underscoring the school's dedication to meeting each student's unique needs with respect and inclusivity.

This educational institution comprises three academic levels—primary, middle, and high school—and adopts an inclusive model that integrates both students with and without disabilities. Among its diverse student body are individuals with specific learning disabilities, including dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia, who receive targeted support to address their unique academic challenges. At the same time, the school accommodates gifted students by offering differentiated instruction and opportunities to ensure their intellectual needs are met and their potential fully realized. The inclusive framework of the school reflects a commitment to educational equity, fostering an environment in which all learners, regardless of ability, are provided with resources, instructional strategies, and support systems that can promote academic success and personal development.

3.13 I.E.S. San Andrés

The I.E.S. San Andrés is a Secondary Education Institute whose offer includes Compulsory Secondary Education, Bachiller and five Formative Cycles of Professional Formation of the Computer Science and Administration families. Colegio Público Comarcal San Andrés is in Spain, Castile, and León. The place has been categorized as a School. To give an idea about San Andrés name, San Andrés del Rabanedo is a municipality located in the Province of León, Castile and León, Spain. The municipality includes the districts of San Andrés del Rabanedo, Trobajo del Camino, Barrio Pinilla, Villabalter and Ferral del Bernesga. IES SAN ANDRÉS offers the possibility of studying Compulsory Secondary Education, Baccalaureate and Training Cycles of the professional families of "Computer Science and Communications" and "Administration and Management". It teaches courses financed by the Ministry of Education and F.P. and co-financed by the European Social Fund, anticipating the choice of itineraries in 3rd and 4th of ESO. The IES of San Andrés del Rabanedo is committed to professional entrepreneurship classrooms for students. The educational center offers a series of conferences for its students with the aim of expanding knowledge about vocational training. The Department of Training and Labor Orientation of the IES San Andrés has organizes a series of training actions that promote the development of personal, social and professional skills of vocational training students and that promote the improvement of skills such as creativity, resilience, of decisions, critical thinking, or active learning, all of them, fundamental for the next and future social and labor insertion of the center's students.

The modalities of the Baccalaureate are the following:

Sciences.
Humanities and Social Sciences.
Arts (not studied at IES San Andrés).

Students who are in possession of the Graduate Certificate in Compulsory Secondary Education will be able to access Baccalaureate studies.

The baccalaureate is organized in...

1- Core subjects
2- Specific subjects

Students will be promoted from the first to the second of Baccalaureate when they have passed the courses taken or have a negative evaluation in a maximum of two subjects. After completing the second year, students obtain the Baccalaureate Certificate, which allows them to Access University. To access university studies, one should pass the university entrance exam.

San Andrés El Rabanedo is an all-inclusive school comprising primary, middle, and high school levels, committed to accommodating a diverse student population, including individuals with disabilities and those without. The school supports students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorders, intellectual and sensory impairments (including hearing and visual disabilities), behavioral challenges, as well as gifted and immigrant students. A team of specialized staff—including school counselors, a psycho-pedagogue, a speech therapist, and a sign language interpreter—works collaboratively to address students' academic, emotional, and communication needs. The counselors play a key role in identifying students' challenges, conducting psychoeducational assessments to evaluate intellectual functioning, and producing psycho-pedagogical reports, which are subsequently submitted to educational inspectors. Although the school promotes inclusion, some practices still reflect a more traditional educational model. Teachers largely adhere to conventional methods, which many perceive as more manageable or better suited to their pedagogical preferences; however, this reliance on traditional instruction is increasingly questioned in the context of inclusive education.

The student body, ranging in age from 12 to 18, benefits from a broad curriculum that includes vocational pathways in informatics and economics. Despite the school's inclusive vision, the implementation of inclusive practices remains uneven. For instance, while there is a special education teacher who offers support in a separate classroom, co-teaching models—where the special education teacher collaborates with the general education teacher in mainstream classrooms—are also employed to foster an inclusive learning culture. However, in practice, students with learning disabilities, autism, and intellectual disabilities are frequently removed from the general classroom for targeted instruction, particularly in core subjects like math and language, which are also taught in the afternoon. While curriculum adaptations are in place for these students, teachers often encounter significant challenges in modifying exams to accommodate diverse needs. Consequently, many opt to administer standard assessments, citing the additional workload associated with creating adapted materials. This highlights a broader issue regarding teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward differentiation and inclusion. As noted by the school counselor, educators hold varying perspectives on student needs, with some expressing skepticism about the efficacy of group work or alternative pedagogical strategies, particularly with students they perceive as disengaged or lacking motivation.

Nevertheless, there are examples of pedagogical innovation within the school. One mathematics teacher, for example, utilizes Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) to simultaneously teach subject content and language skills, aligning with the approach described by Simone Smala (2013), which emphasizes the integration of disciplinary and language instruction through the use of a second language as the medium of teaching. Despite this, the broader adoption of such methodologies remains limited. Additionally, while assistive and adaptive technologies are technically available at the school, their practical use in classrooms is minimal, largely due to a lack of training or perceived relevance among teachers. Overall, although San Andrés El Rabanedo School demonstrates a foundational commitment to inclusion, further progress is needed in terms of teacher training, pedagogical innovation, curriculum adaptation, and the effective integration of assistive technologies to ensure that all students—regardless of ability—are supported in reaching their full academic and personal potential.

3.14 Data Analyses

3.14.1 Thematic Analysis of Inclusive Practices in Six Spanish Schools

Inclusive education is a pedagogical approach that promotes equity and access for all learners, regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, or social conditions. In Spain, several schools exemplify innovative and inclusive practices. This thematic analysis explores six such institutions—CEIP San Isidoro, Virgen Blanca School, Colegio Jesuitas, IES Lancia, Colegio La Asunción, and IES San Andrés—focusing on their inclusive practices, methodologies, and challenges. The themes explored include pedagogical approaches, attention to diversity, teacher roles, and institutional support for inclusiveness and many others.

a) Individualized Instruction and Curriculum Adaptation

A central tenet of inclusive education is the adaptation of curriculum and instruction to suit diverse learning needs. All six schools implement personalized educational strategies. San Isidoro School emphasizes differentiated instruction through small-step sequencing, adapted materials, and continuous individualized assessment. IES Lancia and San Andrés offer curricular modifications and methodological adaptations, with San Andrés applying CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). Colegio Jesuitas integrates individualized project-based learning, embracing Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. These adaptations align with inclusive principles that reflect students' interests, abilities, and cultural backgrounds (UNESCO, 2020).

b) Pedagogical Approaches and Active Methodologies

All six schools emphasize active and participatory methodologies to cater to diverse learning needs. CEIP San Isidoro adopts a student-centered approach, sequencing learning in small steps and using adapted materials to address individual needs. Similarly, Colegio Virgen Blanca integrates Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligence, offering varied activities to stimulate different learning styles. Colegio Jesuitas' CONTIGO+ project reorganizes classrooms into learning environments,

promoting flexibility and personalized education. These practices align with Smala's (2013) emphasis on differentiated instruction to accommodate diverse learners.

c) Teacher Collaboration and Professional Development

Teacher collaboration is a recurring theme in the inclusive models of these schools. Collaborative teaching is evident in Colegio Jesuitas, where tutors co-teach using shared pedagogical strategies. San Andrés incorporates co-teaching between general and special educators. Professional development is emphasized across several schools, particularly in training for inclusive pedagogies. This supports findings that sustained professional collaboration enhances teacher efficacy in diverse classrooms (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

d) Teacher Roles and Collaborative Practices

Special education teachers play a critical role in adapting lessons and developing IEPs. At Colegio Virgen Blanca, teachers collaborate with speech therapists and use cooperative learning techniques like "twins" pairing. Colegio Jesuitas employs co-teaching, where general and special education teachers work together in inclusive classrooms. These practices underscore the importance of teamwork, as highlighted by Smala (2013), who advocates for interdisciplinary collaboration to support diverse learners.

e) Diversity and Psycho-Pedagogical Support

All schools demonstrated sensitivity to the psychological and social diversity of their students. Virgen Blanca and La Asunción integrate early stimulation and social-emotional learning. IES Lancia and San Andrés provide psycho-pedagogical assessments and counseling. Such support is crucial for social-emotional well-being and academic success (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006).

f) Attention to Diversity and Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Inclusive schools prioritize tailored support for students with disabilities. IES Lancia modifies exams and curricula for students with autism, ADHD, and dyslexia, while Colegio La Asunción implements individualized education programs (IEPs) for gifted students and those with learning difficulties. However, IES San Andrés faces challenges in exam adaptation, with teachers resorting to traditional methods due to perceived inefficacy of group work. This reflects Gómez and Buendía's (2009) observation that institutional barriers can hinder inclusive practices.

g) Use of Assistive and Digital Technologies

While all schools commit to innovation, assistive technology use varies. La Asunción has strong ICT integration, while San Andrés possesses assistive technology that is underused. Effective inclusive education requires both the availability and active use of assistive technologies (Al-Azawei, Serenelli, & Lundqvist, 2016).

h) Inclusive Culture and School Ethos

A strong ideological commitment to inclusion is evident in religiously affiliated schools like Virgen Blanca, Jesuitas, and La Asunción. They embed values of empathy, cooperation, and diversity within their curricula. Creating an inclusive school culture ensures that all members feel respected and valued (Booth & Ainscow, 2011).

h) Institutional Support and Challenges

While some schools excel in resource provision (e.g., Colegio La Asunción's ICT infrastructure), others struggle with assistive technology. IES San Andrés reports underutilization of available tools due to teacher reluctance. CEIP San Isidoro's psycho-pedagogical team exemplifies effective institutional support, offering continuous evaluation and adaptive measures. These disparities highlight the need for systemic training, as recommended by Gómez and Buendía (2009), to ensure consistent implementation of inclusive practices.

i) Challenges and Recommendations

Despite achievements, challenges include resistance to active methodologies, lack of teacher training, and limited use of adaptive technology. Teacher beliefs about inclusion vary significantly across schools. Recommendations include enhancing pedagogical reform, training in adaptive technology, and building inclusive leadership (UNESCO, 2020).

4. Findings and Discussions

Inclusive education in the six observed schools in León, Spain, presents a multifaceted and contextually rich implementation characterized by individualized pedagogy, collaborative teacher roles, and institutional supports, alongside persistent challenges. The findings and discussions below synthesize the observed inclusive practices, highlight associated challenges, and identify directions for future research, framed within contemporary literature.

All six schools demonstrated a strong commitment to tailoring instruction to diverse learner needs through curriculum adaptations and personalized educational strategies. CEIP San Isidoro prioritizes differentiated instruction employing small-step

sequencing and adapted materials with continuous individualized assessments, ensuring responsiveness to individual learning trajectories. IES Lancia and IES San Andrés implement curricular modifications, including Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) at San Andrés, facilitating language acquisition alongside subject learning. Colegio Jesuitas adopts project-based learning grounded in Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, reflecting an interdisciplinary and pluralistic pedagogical approach that accommodates varied student talents and interests (UNESCO, 2020).

These adaptations resonate with international principles advocating for learner-centered curricula that address cognitive and cultural diversity (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). The diversity of approaches reflects an understanding that a 'one-size-fits-all' curriculum is inadequate for inclusive education. However, observed barriers, particularly at IES San Andrés, where traditional examination methods persist due to skepticism towards group work efficacy, underscore the tension between innovation and entrenched pedagogical norms (Gómez & Buendía, 2009).

The schools emphasize active, participatory, and inclusive pedagogies to engage students. Approaches such as the student-centered sequencing at CEIP San Isidoro and the diverse activities aligned with multiple intelligences theory at Virgen Blanca align with Smala's (2013) advocacy for differentiated instruction that addresses learner heterogeneity. Colegio Jesuitas' CONTIGO+ project, which reorganizes physical learning spaces, highlights environmental flexibility as an integral to pedagogical innovation.

Such methodologies foster learner engagement and social participation, which are critical for the success of inclusion (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006). The integration of active methodologies also supports emotional and cognitive development, facilitating equity in learning opportunities.

Collaboration emerges as a pivotal enabler of inclusive practice across the observed schools. Co-teaching models, such as those at Colegio Jesuitas and IES San Andrés, involve general and special education teachers collaboratively planning and delivering instruction, which is consistent with best practices for inclusive education (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Collaborative practices extend to interdisciplinary teams, including speech therapists at Virgen Blanca and cooperative learning strategies like "twins" pairing.

Professional development focused on inclusive pedagogies powered these collaborative engagements, enhancing teacher self-efficacy and collective efficacy in managing diverse classrooms (Mudhar et al., 2023). Nevertheless, disparities in collaboration quality highlight the importance of sustained institutional support for professional learning communities.

Schools recognize psychological and social diversity as integral to inclusive education. Integration of early stimulation and social-emotional learning at Virgen Blanca and La Asunción addresses developmental needs proactively. Meanwhile, IES Lancia and San Andrés provide psycho-pedagogical assessments and counseling services, underscoring the significance of addressing social-emotional well-being for academic success and inclusion (Ainscow et al., 2006).

Tailored support for students with specific educational needs—autism, ADHD, dyslexia, giftedness—is a common feature, with adjustments in assessments and instruction reflecting responsiveness. However, inconsistencies in exam adaptations, especially underutilization at IES San Andrés due to methodological resistance, indicate systemic challenges in fully embedding inclusive procedures (Gómez & Buendía, 2009).

Assistive and digital technologies play varied roles across schools. Colegio La Asunción exemplifies robust ICT integration, facilitating access and participation, while IES San Andrés possesses but underuses assistive tools, largely due to teacher reluctance and insufficient training. The effectiveness of inclusive education is predicated on both the availability and active utilization of such technologies (Al-Azawei, Serenelli, & Lundqvist, 2016).

This variation highlights the need for strategic investment in technological resources paired with professional development to maximize their potential in inclusive settings.

An inclusive ethos permeates the religiously affiliated schools, embedding values of empathy, respect, and diversity into their curricula and school community life. This 'inclusive culture' concept is vital for fostering environments where all students feel valued and supported (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). Institutional support ranges from effective psycho-pedagogical teams at CEIP San Isidoro to disparities in resource allocation and technology use in other schools.

Such institutional variability underscores that inclusive education requires systemic commitment beyond individual teacher efforts, including consistent resource allocation, administrative backing, and leadership development (Gómez & Buendía, 2009).

Despite notable achievements, schools face challenges including resistance to active methodologies, insufficient teacher training, unequal use of adaptive technologies, and resource disparities. Teacher beliefs about inclusion varied, influencing the fidelity and sustainability of inclusive practices.

Recommendations to enhance inclusivity include:

1. Investing in continual, differentiated teacher professional development encompassing inclusive pedagogy and technology use.
2. Strengthening collaboration between general and special education teachers.
3. Establishing ongoing curriculum evaluation mechanisms to respond dynamically to student needs.
4. Encouraging community engagement to foster inclusive values and support.

Such strategies align with global calls for comprehensive frameworks integrating pedagogy, leadership, and community to advance inclusive education (UNESCO, 2020; Booth & Ainscow, 2011).

5. Conclusion

The observational analysis of six inclusive schools in León, Spain, underscores the significant strides and ongoing challenges in the implementation of inclusive education within the Spanish context. The study highlights the central role of individualized instruction, curriculum adaptation, and active pedagogical methodologies in cultivating inclusive environments. Schools such as CEIP San Isidoro, Colegio Jesuitas, and IES Lancia exemplify innovative practices—including differentiated instruction, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and collaborative teaching models—which align with internationally recognized frameworks for inclusive education (UNESCO, 2020; Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006). These practices are further bolstered by institutional supports, such as psycho-pedagogical teams, specialized personnel, and sustained teacher professional development (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

Nevertheless, the study also reveals persistent systemic challenges. These include the inconsistent application of assistive technologies, resistance to progressive pedagogical change, and regional disparities in the distribution of educational resources (Sandoval, Simón, & Echeita, 2019). For example, while some schools demonstrate effective integration of co-teaching and inclusive technologies, others—such as IES San Andrés—continue to rely on traditional methods, hindered by limited staff training and attitudinal barriers. These findings emphasize the need for systemic educational reforms, including enhanced teacher preparation, equitable resource allocation, and stronger enforcement of inclusive policies (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2022).

Ultimately, inclusive education in Spain remains a dynamic and evolving endeavor, requiring the collaborative engagement of educators, policymakers, families, and communities. Future research should broaden its scope to include longitudinal data and diverse stakeholder perspectives to refine inclusive strategies further. This study contributes to the global discourse by identifying effective practices and actionable recommendations for enhancing equity and accessibility in multilingual and multicultural educational contexts.

6. Limitations

The study presents limitations inherent to qualitative observational research within a limited geographic and temporal scope. The one-month internship period, while intensive, constrained prolonged engagement with school communities and longitudinal data collection. Sampling six schools' limits generalizability; the selected schools may not reflect the full spectrum of inclusive education practices in Spain.

Reliance on observations and self-reported interviews introduces potential biases, including social desirability and observer effects. Additionally, variability in teacher willingness and openness during interviews may have influenced data richness. The study's emphasis on school-level practices without expansive stakeholder perspectives (e.g., students, families) also narrows contextual understanding. Despite these constraints, the study provides valuable, nuanced insights into the complexities of inclusive education in León.

7. Future Research Directions

Building on these findings, future research should employ longitudinal designs to examine the sustainability and evolution of inclusive practices over extended periods and expand sample sizes and diversity by including both rural and urban schools to enhance representativeness. Additionally, it is important to incorporate multiple stakeholders' perspectives—such as those of students, families, and community members—to provide a holistic assessment of inclusion. Investigating systemic factors like policy implementation, leadership roles, and resource distribution that impact inclusive education is also crucial, alongside exploring the efficacy and scalability of technological integration in diverse inclusive settings. Furthermore, examining teacher attitudes and beliefs over time will help understand their development and influence on inclusive pedagogy. These research directions align with emerging literature that emphasizes the need for multifactorial, context-sensitive investigations to inform policy and pedagogical innovations in Spain and beyond (Nilholm, 2021; Batterham, 2004).

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