

Article

Inclusive Pedagogy at University: Faculty Members' Motivations

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Abstract: The presence of students with disabilities in Higher Education (HE) is increasing. However, the permanence and success of these students at university is not granted. In this study, the voices of 119 faculty members from 10 Spanish universities who had been identified by their students with disabilities as inclusive were heard. For this purpose, a qualitative methodology was chosen, using the semi-structured individual interview as the instrument for data gathering. Two interviews were conducted with each participant to analyse the main areas of inclusive pedagogy (beliefs, knowledge, designs and actions). The results show the participants' conceptions of disability, as well as their main motivations for carrying out inclusive pedagogy, such as their professional vocation and their previous experiences with people with disabilities. The article ends with a series of conclusions that outline the profile of an inclusive faculty member. This information can help universities to improve their faculty training programs to obtain a more inclusive teaching staff, which can be translated into more sustainable and inclusive university systems.

Keywords: inclusive pedagogy; students with disabilities; faculty members motivations; higher education; qualitative research

1. Introduction

The access of students with disabilities to quality education is a basic right recognised in different regulatory documents [1]. Global policies such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [2] have fought against discrimination and in favour of the inclusion of vulnerable groups in education systems. In the case of HE, accessing university implies learning, empowerment and autonomy options and experiences, although it can pose a negative and stressful experience for students with disabilities [3,4].

This situation leads universities to reflect on ways to offer a quality service that meets the expectations of students within the framework of social justice and equality and which, as is proposed by the 2020 Strategy of the European Commission [5], allows students to develop and acquire skills and knowledge, removing any type of barrier. In addition, the lines to follow to achieve a sustainable university system include inclusive processes as an important key. To achieve a truly inclusive university, a social and sustainable inclusion model has to be applied in three areas of university: education, research and management [6].

Among the factors preventing students with disabilities from successfully completing a university degree, many are related to faculty members and how accessible their teaching is [7]. These barriers to learning are found in non-adjusted methodologies and evaluations, in the absence of reasonable adjustments and flexibility in teaching, in negative attitudes toward disability, and in poorly trained and poorly sensitised faculty members [8–10]. In some cases, the negative experiences derived from these factors lead students with disabilities to drop out of university [11]. Knowing the relevant legislation, the willingness to make reasonable adjustments, the use of adapted practices, knowing the characteristics of the disability, the beliefs about people with disabilities and the use and understanding of



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the term “disability” are key factors in the faculty that influence the success and experience of students [12]. Considering the relevance of the faculty member’s role in student learning, this article focuses on analysing the experiences of faculty members who have had a positive impact on the academic experience of their students with disabilities.

2. Literature Review

Regarding beliefs and attitudes toward disability, there may appear scepticism toward some types of disability, especially toward invisible disabilities, or the perception that offering reasonable adjustments poses a favourable treatment for students with disabilities, from whom less is required, thus creating an unfair situation for peers without disabilities [13,14]. Although most studies that allowed students with disabilities to give voice to their thoughts show that these highlight a lack of positive attitudes from faculty members, other studies show a favourable attitude toward the making of reasonable adjustments and an interest in receiving training in inclusive education [11]. As Leyser et al. [15] state, the conceptions, beliefs and perceptions that faculty members have toward students with disabilities depend on the knowledge and training they have in terms of disability.

One of the aspects that mark the difference with respect to the beliefs and attitudes toward disability is the idea that faculty members have about it [16]. Studies such as that by Lister et al. [17] show that the way of conceptualising and understanding the term “disability” among faculty members influences the educational actions they carry out. The label and stereotype associated with the term “disability” can have an impact on the expectations that faculty members have about their students, thereby causing, in some cases, the absence of empathy and sensitivity toward the needs of this group [10]. Thus, the conception of faculty members about disability is fundamental for the development of inclusive practices. However, not all faculty members share the same perceptions and beliefs [18]. Although the social model of disability has expanded over the years, the medical model is still present; thus, some people continue to consider disability as a problem of the person who has it and not of the environment [19,20].

It is clear that the attitude of the faculty toward disability largely depends on their conceptions, experiences and personal characteristics. Therefore, these characteristics will determine the level of motivation and commitment of faculty members when developing inclusive practices and becoming interested in attaining the inclusion of students with disabilities. It has also been demonstrated that faculty members who are personally in contact and involved with people with disabilities present more positive attitudes and greater willingness to teach inclusively in their classrooms [21]. Similarly, those faculty members who are more sensitised will participate more frequently in training activities about this topic [10,11].

The knowledge of the faculty about disability, as well as their beliefs, has been analysed in the school context with the approach of inclusive pedagogy, which, in addition to educational practices, also addresses these factors [22]. Inclusive pedagogy aims to ensure the participation of all students, taking into account their differences [23]. The aim is to prevent problems and stigma associated with the identification of students with disabilities as being different [3,4]. To this end, it is proposed that the study plans and programs should be flexible and include reasonable adjustments that respond to the learning needs that each student may present, as well as encourage and promote their participation [23]. In this conception of the curriculum, the role of the faculty becomes a key element for the creation and development of inclusive educational processes.

The philosophy of inclusive pedagogy is based on three fundamental principles: (1) diversity is recognized as an indispensable component of human development in any educational approach; (2) faculty members must have the conviction of their ability to teach all students; and (3) educators are encouraged to innovate and develop creative methods to collaborate with their students. Within the paradigm of inclusive pedagogy, diversity is perceived as a valuable strength rather than an obstacle, so faculty members are encouraged to offer a wide range of options tailored to the individual needs of each student [22]. The

contributions of authors such as Florian [22] or Moriña [24] describe inclusive pedagogy through four dimensions: (1) beliefs about disability and educational inclusion; (2) educators' knowledge; (3) teaching design; (4) actions and educational practice.

With the aim of contributing to the scientific field of inclusive pedagogy at university, the present study analysed the conceptions of 119 faculty members of different Spanish universities about students with disabilities, as well as their main motivations to carry out inclusive practices in their classrooms and work for the inclusion of these students. In this way, and beyond analysing the educational practices, we explain the reasons that lead faculty members to care about the success and correct learning of students with disabilities. We followed two research questions for this analysis:

1. How do faculty members who carry out inclusive pedagogy understand disability?
2. What are the main motivations that lead them to develop inclusive pedagogy?

3. Materials and Methods

The results presented in this article are part of a larger research project financed by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness. The main objective of the project is to analyse the knowledge, beliefs, designs and actions of faculty members who carry out inclusive pedagogy.

3.1. Participants

A total of 119 faculty members from 10 Spanish public universities from all fields of knowledge participated in the study. A single criterion was established to select the participants: they had to be proposed by their own students with disabilities to ensure that they were inclusive faculty members. Through this selection method, the study allowed students with disabilities themselves to give voice to their thoughts, taking into account the important role they play in inclusive education research. Therefore, students are the most appropriate agents to identify faculty members who achieve a good learning experience.

In order to contact students at the different universities, we solicited the collaboration of the disability support services of each university. These offices disseminated project information to all students with disabilities and encouraged them to send their proposals to the research team's email address. In order to select the faculty members, we presented the students with a list of characteristics that the faculty should have: believes in the potential of all their students; facilitates learning experiences; uses active and participatory methods; cares about each student's learning; is flexible and always willing to help; motivates; establishes good relationships with their students; and makes students feel valued in the classroom.

In addition, the snowball technique was adopted [25]. Students with disabilities who had already collaborated with the research team on previous projects were asked to recommend faculty members who had positively impacted their academic experience. Simultaneously, this information was also distributed to students and faculty members at other universities, with the aim of reaching out to other students with disabilities who could collaborate.

Once students from all universities had submitted their proposals, we contacted the faculty members by email or telephone. We explained how and why they had been selected as inclusive academics and asked them to participate in the project. In the end, we were able to contact 164 faculty members, of whom 39 did not respond to the email and another 6 declined to participate in the project for personal and work-related reasons. Thus, we obtained a final sample of 119 faculty members from 10 universities.

Of this sample, 40 belonged to the field of Education Sciences; 25 to Social Sciences and Law; 24 to Arts and Humanities; 16 to Health Sciences; and 14 to Science, Engineering and Mathematics. In terms of gender, 69 were men, and 50 were women. In relation to age, the majority of participants were between 36 and 60 years old. Only 7 participants were less than 35 years old, and 4 were over 60 years old. In terms of teaching experience, 89 had more than 10 years of experience, 24 had between 5 and 10 years of experience, and only 6 had less than 5 years of experience.

3.2. Research Instruments

A qualitative approach was followed. Two semi-structured individual interviews were designed for data collection. These interviews were validated by a group of experts who did not participate in this research. Following the dimensions of inclusive pedagogy outlined by Moriña [24], four analytical categories were explored: knowledge, beliefs, designs and actions. The first interview explored the faculty's beliefs and knowledge about disability and the processes of inclusion at university. The second interview explored the educational designs and actions that the participants implemented to achieve participation and success for all students. The questions that guided this interview were the following: When we talk about disability, what ideas come to your mind? What do you think it is that has led you to take an interest in students with disabilities?

The interviews lasted approximately 90 min. Most of the interviews were conducted in person ($n = 89$). Only 18 faculty members were interviewed via Skype and 12 by telephone, due to long geographical distances or incompatibility of schedules. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

3.3. Data analysis

The data were processed by using a structural analysis based on an inductive system of categories and codes [26]. MaxQDA12 software was used for this analysis. Firstly, an analysis was conducted by teams of two researchers; then, another analysis was carried out by the whole team. The second analysis was used to categorise the questionable information from the first analysis. Table 1 shows the categories and codes that were used for the analysis of the data presented in this article.

Table 1. System of categories and codes.

| Category | Code | Sub-Code |
|--|--|--|
| Conceptions about disability | Disability as a personal difficulty | Limitation/difficulty |
| | Disability in the educational environment | Diversity of capacities/ functional diversity |
| Motivations to carry out inclusive pedagogy | Vocation/commitment | Educational needs |
| | | Equal treatment |
| | Care for the students | Pedagogical justice |
| | | Teaching vocation |
| Previous experiences with people with disabilities | Previous experiences with people with disabilities | Value of diversity |
| | | Social inclusion |
| | | Personal and professional improvement |
| | | Professional experiences |
| | | Personal experiences |
| | | Related fields of knowledge |
| | | Own disability |

3.4. Ethical Issues

A model of informed consent was used to guarantee the confidentiality of data treatment. This document was signed before the start of each interview. In the informed consent, the research team committed to providing participants with a copy of the final report with the results obtained. All the information was gathered and processed anonymously and confidentially, and participation in this study was fully voluntary. Participants were informed that they could leave the study at any time. In this case, their data would be deleted and excluded from the research report. To ensure the anonymity, participants' information was anonymised before data analysis.

4. Results

4.1. Conceptions about Disability

The conception and understanding that faculty members have about disability can influence the way in which they interact with people with disabilities, as well as the way in which they attend to their needs. In a general way, the participants of this study had a very positive view of disability, showing different perspectives in their testimonies.

4.1.1. Disability as a Challenge

A minority of faculty members understood disability as a limitation, i.e., a lack of certain capacities that prevents the person from conducting some actions. However, they underlined the positive part of it: personal growth. For the participants, the students had to make greater efforts than the rest of the people to achieve the same goals, overcoming the difficulties derived from the disability. Thus, they used the word “challenge” over “limitation”.

Difficulty, challenge, complexity. . . Above all, someone who needs help, someone with great will. I think they are very valuable people, because they could be depressed at home; however, they are here. So, on the one hand, I think it's a challenge, a difficulty; and, on the other hand, it takes a lot of courage to do things, a courage that not many people without disabilities have, because we have never valued our lack of such barriers. (Faculty 77, Social and Legal Sciences)

Another idea from the conception of disability as difficulty was pointed out by those who used the term “need”, indicating the need for extra support and opportunities to develop potential and succeed.

The need to adapt, to include, to take him/her into account, to welcome him/her, to pave the road for him/her; thus, the need to provide opportunities and resources that help them to have an easier life in that sense, because people don't decide to have a disability. So, I believe that the attitude of a faculty member cannot be other than welcoming them and offering them everything they need. Faculty 90, Education Sciences)

4.1.2. Disability as a Diversity of Capacities

In contrast to the conception of disability as limitation, other faculty members understood disability as among a diversity of capacities. They used the term “functional diversity” instead of “disability”, suggesting that the latter implies a lack of capacities. One of the participants argued that this state is inherent to any person, since no one has all capacities. In short, everyone has different capacities:

Well, conceptually, I used both terms, disability and functional diversity, because they currently coexist. In this university, we support functional diversity, because language creates realities. From that, “dis” is a prefix that reduces capacities, and that's not true. Who is 100% in everything? I'd love to meet that person. It's not true. The thing is that, they are either hidden or normalised [. . .]. They are people just like everyone else, but with different self-improvement capacities, in a positive manner, not in a negative manner, as we tend to see it. (Faculty 78, Social and Legal Sciences)

4.1.3. Disability in the Academic Scope

In the field of teaching and learning, and within the previous perspective, faculty members commented (as is shown with detail later on in this article) that people with disabilities do need some adjustment or support to achieve adequate learning. However, these differentiations were not exclusive of people with disabilities, since any other person may require such adjustments at some point. Therefore, they did not treat students differently based on disability; they rather offered each student what they needed in order to learn.

Well, I think that disability is a complex concept. I may be based on the idea that people are not disabled, but everyone has a certain condition of diversity. So, there are people who need

some reinforcements in certain spaces, scopes, teaching methodology, evaluation, etc., and other people who also need reinforcements in other aspects. (Faculty 91, Education Sciences)

4.2. Motivations to Carry out Inclusive Pedagogy

The motivations of the participants to work in favour of the inclusion of students with disabilities is a key aspect that we analysed in this study. In contrast to multiple testimonies all over the world showing negative attitudes of faculty toward disability, the participants of this study showed different reasons, opinions and beliefs that led them to carry out inclusive pedagogy in their classrooms.

4.2.1. Vocation for Teaching and Pedagogical Justice

One of the ideas shared by all the participants was that teaching is the main duty of their job. Such teaching must be quality teaching for all students, regardless of their individual characteristics. In many cases, they did not refer to a specific interest for students with disabilities, but to a general interest for the learning and satisfaction of all students. The participants were characterised by their vocation for teaching. They commented that when a faculty member has a vocation for his/her work, he/she cares about all his/her students, ensuring that they have a good experience and establishing a positive relationship with all of them.

It's my job and my duty. My duty is to ensure that all my students are interested and learn, regardless of their capacities. If my students fail my subject, it is my fault, because I didn't manage to facilitate their learning or teach them well. I don't have a special interest for disabled students; in fact, I don't like this word. I have the same interest for all my students, because it's my duty, and it's also rewarding. (Faculty 26, Sciences and Engineering)

Participants also asserted that students with disabilities should not be treated differently for having a disability. The relationship with all the students was the same, as well as the teaching and even the evaluation. What these faculty members did indicate was that although students with disabilities are equal to the rest of the students, in some cases, they may require certain support or adjustments, which the participants were willing to make to guarantee the success of the student; however, this was not a reason to give a special or favourable treatment. Many of the participants commented that they did not have a special motivation for working with students with disabilities, since they considered them to be the same as all the other students.

Well, what has driven me is reality; if I have a student in my classroom with some diversity, I must try to treat them all the same, so that everyone acquires the competencies they must develop. It's my duty to help them to attain these competencies, and everyone requires different support, but there are no differences in the treatment to people with and without disabilities, that is, there is no especially favourable treatment. Perhaps, at some point, there may be some positive discrimination, although only in extreme cases. (Faculty 101, Education Sciences)

Continuing in the line of pedagogical justice, the faculty members commented that a priority was to leave no student behind. If there was a student who did not advance at the same pace as the rest of the students, they made the necessary changes to help them with their learning and keep up with the class. Thus, the participants considered that they had to provide every student with the tools and resources they needed, based on the diverse reality of the university context.

What I do not want is someone being left behind in the class, and I believe that this is beneficial for everyone. If I have one or two students who do not advance, I must make sure they improve, doing something different so that everyone advances. So, from a selfish perspective, it is beneficial that the entire group goes well, since that way I will manage to get everyone to advance and obtain a better result in the group. What I can't afford is to leave these few students behind because their results are not within the group dynamics of the entire class. (Faculty 16, Arts and Humanities)

4.2.2. Students with Disabilities as the Core of Motivation

Although all the participants recognised the principles that guided their practice (previously described), many of them highlighted students with disabilities as their main motivation. Having students with disabilities in the classroom led them to care about improving their teaching practice, be trained and become interested in how to improve the academic experience and social inclusion of students with disabilities.

I was motivated by the case of a blind student. It was my first case, and we were in the subject about learning to read old documents. The problem was that my colleagues believed it was pointless, but I didn't see it that way. So, I tried to adjust the subject matter in a way that he could write. For me, it was extra work, because I didn't know how to face this reality. We spent many hours of tutoring thinking how we could do it, because the theory is easy, and he just studied it and that was it. But, how would he learn to read? Converting a document to Braille is very different from interpreting a document from the 15th century, it has to be touched and observed. I took it for granted that he would never learn, but eventually he did learn. This was my first experience, I set it as a challenge. (Faculty 22, Arts and Humanities)

Of all the experiences lived when having the opportunity to work with people with disabilities, the faculty members stated that these students provided great value to the class, in addition to a learning for the faculty member and for the rest of the students. The participants showed great admiration and respect for these students, pointing out that, despite the limitations of an environment that was not entirely accessible, they had great potential and great capacity for effort, perseverance and personal growth. In fact, these positive characteristics of people with disabilities posed a motivation for the faculty members to do their best to adjust their teaching and improve their practice in order to make it more inclusive: *"I think it's that attitude of personal growth, that spirit they have for showing that there are no barriers for them. And I believe that this is what inspires us"* (Faculty 10, Arts and Humanities).

In addition to the admiration, other concepts emerged during the interviews with many of the faculty members, such as empathy and sensitivity. These are capacities that most of the participants mentioned in their testimonies. Thus, inspired by the sensitivity shown by the students with disabilities in the face of situations of exclusion or the difficulties they could find, the faculty members were committed, fair and highly motivated for personal and professional growth.

I have a well-developed empathic capacity, and I have my system of values, which is a bit peculiar. [...] I hate injustice, and I get angry when I see it. Eventually we see that they are people who don't have difficulties to do what they came to do at the university, that is, to study, learn, develop competencies and leave as prepared professionals. However, they are not treated well in many cases, and that makes me mad. They are not treated fairly, sometimes by excess and others by default. (Faculty 110, Education Sciences)

Lastly, the participants carried out inclusive practice driven by the difficulties that students with disabilities have, in some cases, to establish relationships and be included in the class group. Some of the participants commented that for them, it was a priority to guarantee the social inclusion of the student and to ensure that the level of participation was the same as that of the rest of the students.

My motivation is that they have to complete their studies like everyone else and to ensure that they don't feel weird in the classroom, right? It's fundamental for them to be equal to the rest, to participate in everything, giving all they can, and to be part of the team, right? [...] they mustn't feel different from the rest. (Faculty 41, Health Sciences)

4.2.3. The Impact of the Professional and Personal Experiences on the Teaching Practice

Another aspect that influenced the concern of the faculty members for offering inclusive education was their previous experiences with diversity. On the one hand, many of the

participants had had professional experiences with disability before teaching at university. For instance, some of them, from fields of knowledge such as education, had taught in pre-university educational stages. Other faculty members had worked in jobs related to accessibility, policies and communication systems for people with disabilities, etc. Other participants were healthcare professionals who had had direct contact with people with disabilities in their jobs at hospitals. All of them had had some experience that helped them to develop a special sensitivity and which marked their later professional journey and their teaching style with these students.

I spent over twenty years in an ICU. I get more involved with patients with some type of disability, such as paraplegia or tetraplegia. Specifically, with a 16-year-old boy, who had an accident doing acrobatics at the beach and became tetraplegic, and dependent on mechanic ventilation. We had him hospitalised in the ICU for one year, and eventually we could take him home; his parents were taught how to take care of their son under those conditions, as he was completely dependent for everything, even to breathe. (Faculty 39, Health Sciences)

Other participants stated that they had such sensitivity due to the fact that the fields of knowledge and research in which they worked were strongly related to disability, such education, social work, sports and health. Therefore, they had greater knowledge about disability, as they researched about it and taught subjects related to it.

When I entered the university, the first subject they gave me was “Physical Education for Students with Special Needs”. So, I had to start studying and preparing the subject, as it had been a long time since I last saw that subject matter. I began to study it and it really caught my attention, and then I started my thesis on people with Down’s syndrome, and I continued that research and teaching line whenever I could. When I’ve had students with disabilities, I’ve always observed that they greatly enriched the subject. (Faculty 89, Education Sciences)

Another reason that aroused sensitivity and interest for people with disabilities was the fact that two of the participants had disabilities; thus, empathy toward students who also had disabilities was much greater, as they understood the difficulties they encountered in their university studies.

Well, I’m deaf in one ear. I’ve never worried about whether I have some type of. . . but I’ve always worried more about those topics, because I believe that it can hinder your day-to-day life; if you have a hearing or visual impairment, this shouldn’t prevent you from doing things. So, I think that we must provide whatever means necessary to attain their inclusion in all aspects. (Faculty 74, Social and Legal Sciences)

Lastly, another 14 faculty members stated that they had cases of close people with disabilities, such as relatives and friends. They commented that these experiences made them more sensitive than other colleagues who, without these experiences, did not know how to act or did not have the adequate attitudes in the presence of these students.

Actually, my first contact with the world of functional disability was my best friend, who has child brain paralysis. So, since I was little, I started to become interested in helping this girl, who was part of my class group, but I saw that the others didn’t get close to her, and I cared about her because it made me sad to see her all alone; I did my best to include her in the group. In the personal scope, I also believe that I am who I am thanks to what my childhood friend has taught me and to the fact that I’ve seen how she improved herself. This gave me tools and resources that I wouldn’t have had otherwise and which have made me also a fighter, preventing me from giving up in the face of situations that. . . well, must be lived. That stigma and those impressions are the ones that taught me an inclusive education with a friend with a disability. (Faculty 44, Health Sciences)

5. Discussion

Numerous studies have highlighted the difficulties encountered by faculty members in responding effectively to the needs of students with disabilities in HE institutions [3,22]. These difficulties include a lack of time and institutional support, lack of training to deal with diversity in the classroom and even negative attitudes and conceptions towards disability [8]. In fact, faculty members have been identified as the main obstacle in the academic journey of students with disabilities [3,4,12]. In contrast to the widespread concept about the multiple barriers generated in university teaching for people with disabilities, we present a different reality, showing that there are educators who take into account all their students individually and who see diversity in the classroom as an enriching element and a learning opportunity. The participation of students with disabilities in this study allowed us to ensure that the participating faculty members had actually developed inclusive and effective practices for all their students. Therefore, the results of this study can serve as an example to educators and institutions by showing characteristics of faculty members that contribute to the inclusion and academic success of all students.

Other studies, such as that by Carballo et al. [20], have shown that faculty members who lack training, knowledge and experiences related to disability present ideas based on the medical model and beliefs that consider disability a problem and an obstacle that hinders the personal, social and academic development of the person [13,19]. On the contrary, most of the participants in this study understand disability in terms of the social model, identifying it as a social problem where the main challenges are identified in inadequate spaces, resources and processes, gaining a more positive image of disability [13]. Therefore, the beliefs and knowledge of faculty members about disability will influence aspects such as their teaching styles, their expectations toward the learning of their students and their interest in and commitment to facilitating the participation of students with disabilities in the classroom [23].

This conception of disability among the participants of this study is justified by the analysis of their interests and motivations to carry out inclusive practices in their classrooms. Many of the faculty members who consider the diversity of their students are not driven by a special interest for a specific group of people but by a commitment to the learning of all students and a vocation for teaching [27]. In fact, practices such as making reasonable adjustments in the evaluation are an obligation in Spanish universities [25], although this is not known by all faculty members and it usually depends on the good will of each professional. In line with these opinions, authors such as Kendall [4] state that all the actions that the faculty carry out for students with disabilities will benefit all students. Moreover, students with disabilities from different countries have claimed that they do not want to be treated differently with respect to the rest of their peers or have lower learning demands or goals [14]. Many faculty members consider that making reasonable adjustments by modifying methods, materials or evaluations implies giving a favourable treatment to students with disabilities, which is unfair to their peers without disabilities. In other studies, such as that by Kendall [3,4], faculty members have shown either a lack of predisposition to make the necessary adjustments or difficulties to make these adequately. But there are studies that have shown a faculty goodwill to teach inclusively [28]. From the perspective of inclusive pedagogy addressed in this study, as defined in the Literature Review section, the faculty members considered it necessary and fair to make adjustments whenever the students required it, which is in line with the results of Becker and Palladino [11]. As is recognised in inclusive pedagogy, despite the implementation of practices aimed at the maximum number of people, in some cases, it is necessary to make adjustments to some people [22]. In this sense, it is essential that faculty members recognise the diversity present in their classrooms as an enriching element, not as an obstacle. This implies adopting a positive attitude towards student diversity and seeing it as an opportunity to improve both personally and professionally. In addition, it is essential to make reasonable adjustments in assessment and to be willing to adapt methods, materials and assessments according to

the individual needs of students, without perceiving this as unfairly treating students with disabilities unfairly.

Furthermore, the experience of having students with disabilities in the classroom for the first time poses a difficult and revealing situation for the faculty, as they become aware that they are not ready to adequately attend to their needs and that they require specific training to that end [11,16]. This is another main conclusion of this study in this sense, since the experiences of having students with disabilities pose a motivation for faculty members to become more interested in learning about inclusive teaching and ensuring an adequate academic experience for these students [20]. Moreover, knowing students with disabilities makes faculty members develop greater sensitivity, empathy and admiration, inspired by the effort and self-improvement capacity of these students in the face of barriers that other people do not encounter at university. It is precisely those capacities and traits that according to the opinion of students with disabilities, the ideal faculty must have [14]. Other studies have also highlighted the need for sensitive, empathetic faculty members who care about all their students [10,11].

Another characteristic of inclusive faculty that emerged from the results of this study is that they conceive diversity as an enriching element and not as a problem that limits the teaching–learning process. In fact, the presence of students with disabilities in the classroom provides multiple benefits, since it is an opportunity to re-think and optimise the teaching practices and improve personally and professionally [29]. From this finding, it becomes necessary for faculty members to adopt a positive perspective on diversity in the classroom, seeing it as an enriching aspect rather than a challenge. The presence of students with disabilities offers an opportunity to improve educational practices in general, providing benefits to all students and contributing to a more inclusive and enriching educational environment for all. Using diverse methodological strategies, implementing Universal Design for Learning or developing learning processes through emerging technology, are actions that can help us in this achievement.

Lastly, we conclude that personal experiences also have a strong influence on the behaviour, beliefs and attitudes of faculty members toward students with disabilities. In a similar way, as the presence of students with disabilities in the classroom produces changes in the attitudes of faculty members, the same occurs when the experiences are personal. The fact of having greater knowledge about disability from relatives or close people with disabilities makes faculty members have a more positive attitude and great interest in helping students who need support, as they know the barriers that they may encounter during their university studies [15,21].

HE institutions are required to adequately attend to all their students, offering quality education without barriers. In addition, more and more initiatives are being introduced to promote sustainable development in universities themselves [6]. To this end, it is essential to improve the educational processes implemented in university classrooms, where professors are primarily responsible.

As has been shown in other studies about university students with disabilities, the beliefs and knowledge of faculty members play a fundamental role in the success of these students, since they will largely determine the educational practices they will employ in the classroom and their interest in carrying out more inclusive teaching [20]. In line with other studies that allowed students and faculty to give voice to their thoughts, in view of the results shown in this article, we can recommend universities to develop policies and programmes for the initial and continuous training of faculty members in inclusive education and disability [16]. Such training promotes the change in attitudes and improves the perception and sensitivity toward people with disabilities. Similarly, we recommend training in inclusive educational practices and approaches such as Universal Design for Learning [12], where faculty members learn to use flexible teaching and evaluation methods and resources that enable and promote the participation of all students [23], as well as emotional intelligence [1], with the aim of establishing good relationships with the students.

6. Conclusions

This study has identified the motivations and conceptions that some faculty members considered inclusive by their students with disabilities have for designing inclusive educational practices in HE institutions. Four main conclusions were drawn from this study. The first conclusion obtained in this study identifies that diversity in the classroom is considered an enriching element and a learning opportunity that allows for the development of inclusive and effective educational practices for all students. Faculty members who are considered inclusive show a high level of commitment to the learning of all students and not just a specific group. In this sense, this motivation stems from the need to facilitate the participation of all students in the classroom, which influences the provision of reasonable accommodations according to the individual needs of students.

The second conclusion identified in this study is that the conception of disability identified here is based on the social model. From this approach, the problem lies in the social context (lack of adaptation of spaces, resources and processes) and not in the person. This conception influences faculty members' teaching styles, expectations towards students' learning and commitment to the participation of students with disabilities in the classroom. Another of the conclusions obtained in this study is that having students with disabilities in the classroom allows faculty members to develop greater sensitivity, empathy and admiration for this group. In this sense, the findings reveal that faculty members feel inspired by the effort and ability of these students to overcome obstacles, which contributes to changing attitudes and beliefs towards their own concept of disability.

Finally, the fourth and last conclusion identifies how faculty members conceive disability as an element that enriches the educational process and not as an obstacle that limits the teaching–learning process. This conception is a defining characteristic of inclusive faculty members. For them, the presence of students with disabilities in the classroom offers multiple benefits and provides the opportunity to improve educational practices, both personally and professionally.

7. Limitations and Future Research

The main limitation identified was the impossibility of carrying out some interviews in person. In this sense, geographical distance or the personal and professional commitments of the participants did not allow us to have face-to-face interviews in some cases. Although it would have been ideal to conduct them in person, some participants were not available for this, so it was decided to conduct them on Skype or via telephone. However, this did not affect the responses or the development of the interviews. Another limitation was the low participation of faculty members from Health Sciences and Science, Engineering and Mathematics. This situation could be attributed to the lower presence of these faculty members in training actions and research related to inclusive pedagogy in HE. It would be interesting to promote future studies with these faculty members in order to obtain a more complete and holistic view of inclusive pedagogy at university, including more data from some fields of knowledge where information is still limited.

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