

ARE EDUCATIONAL LEADERS IN COMPULSORY SCHOOLS INCLUSIVE? A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

In this paper we analyse inclusive leadership based on the indicators that seem to be necessary when considering the development of this type of leadership. To this end, we apply the LEI-Q questionnaire "Leading inclusive education in compulsory education centres"- teaching team, to a representative sample of teachers from Huelva and province (Andalusia, Spain) Cluster and factorial analyses were carried out. The perceptions of the participating teachers reflect that school management still has a long way to go towards more inclusive practices. Our research helps to clarify, which practices should be carried out by leaders in order to build an inclusive school.

Keywords

Inclusive Leadership, Compulsory Schools, Inclusive Education, Educational Leadership, Teachers

Introduction

Ensuring inclusive quality education in schools is an objective of all education systems worldwide (UNESCO, 2021). Inclusive education today is a fundamental challenge in response to the diversity of all the people who make up an educational community. Discussing inclusive education involves studying aspects that directly influence the construction of an inclusive

school: culture, shared vision, energizing resources, aligned education policies and structures, and inclusive leadership (Ainscow, 2012). The latter has become a relevant topic of study due to its great impact on the educational policies and practices implemented in schools (León, Crisol, & Moreno, 2018).

Promoting an inclusive school culture through policies and a school organization that supports the development of inclusive practices and actions is the basis for creating communities that champion collaboration and inclusive values (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Conrad & Brown, 2011; De Matthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Stevenson, 2007; Valdés, 2018). If this is the case, although not exclusively, the examination of school management is indispensable.

Studies related to inclusive education and leadership show that leaders are a key part of creating inclusive schools (Kungelmass & Ainscow, 2004; León, 2012; León et al., 2018; Ryan, 2016; Valdés & Gómez-Hurtado, 2019). In particular, the importance of formal leaders in the processes of school change and improvement is acknowledged (Hallinger & Heck, 2011; Seashore, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010), making them key actors for the development of management practices that promote good diversity management (Ainscow & West, 2006; Booth & Ainscow, 2015; DeMatthews, Billingsley, Mcleskey, & Sharma, 2020; DeMatthews, Serafini, & Watson, 2020; Fernández-Batanero & Hernández-Fernández, 2013; Ganon-Shilon, Finkelstein, Sela-Shayovitz, & Schechter, 2022; Leithwood, 2005; León, 2012; León et al., 2018; Ryan, 2016; Valdés, 2018; Valdés & Gómez-Hurtado, 2019; Yildirim, 2021). The research interest in analyzing the actions taken by management teams and their educational leadership policies as predictors of inclusive quality education thus comes as no surprise (Seyram Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2022).

Practices related to inclusive leadership are not well defined in the literature. In many cases, inclusive leadership is seen as drawing on practices from other leadership styles such as democratic, participative (Ryan, 2006), distributed or collaborative leadership (Ruairc, Ottesen, & Precey, 2013). On the other hand, inclusive leadership is not a leadership style per se, nor does it appear as a priority in the research; in most cases, the studies use the term pedagogical leadership to reflect this type of practices and actions (Bøe, Heikka, Kettukangas, & Hognestad, 2022; Bolívar, 2019; Bush, Bell, & Middlewood, 2019; Daniëls, Hondeghem, & Dochy, 2019; Gümüş, Bellibaş, Gümüş, & Hallinger, 2020; Sakr & O’Sullivan, 2022). In any case, what seems clear is that research has been approaching certain elements or indicators that seem to be necessary when considering the development of “inclusive” leadership: the construction of a shared vision of the institution; the creation of a shared understanding and/or definition of what is understood by educational inclusion; the collaboration of the whole community in educational activity and the management of diversity (Valdés & Gómez-Hurtado, 2019).

Inclusive education expects school leaders (formal, non-formal and intermediate) to exercise leadership through a shared responsibility and vision of diversity in the educational community (Ferdman, Prime, & Riggio, 2021; Odom, Buysse, & Soukakou, 2011). This calls for collaboration, involvement of the educational community, the struggle for the principles of equity and social justice, the social and educational commitment to diversity and the encouraging of inclusive practices (Valdés & Pérez, 2021). The key to this type of leadership lies in the ability of leaders to build an inclusive culture (León, 2012), as inclusion is only a fad until it becomes a matter of values and culture (Booth & Ainscow, 2015). In this way, inclusive leaders become essential agents to achieve this end (Alborno & Gaad, 2014; Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Booyesen, 2014; León et al., 2018; Ryan, 2016; Valdés, 2018). An inclusive culture means

breaking away from vertical relationships and moving toward a more horizontal, collaborative leadership where diversity is seen as an enriching value (Harris, 2005). Inclusive culture is understood as the set of norms, beliefs, symbols and values shared by the people who make up the school's educational community, providing the necessary cohesion to work harmoniously toward the achievement of common objectives (Plancarte Cansino, 2017; Valdés, 2020). An essential element of inclusive culture is identified with a school culture that celebrates diversity and upholds inclusion as a principle (Valdés & Pérez, 2021). Talking about promoting an inclusive culture from inclusive leaders involves fostering values such as equality, rights, participation, community, respect for diversity and trust (Booth & Ainscow, 2015; Valdés, 2020). It is therefore clear that school management teams should seek to create an inclusive culture (Ryan, 2012; Valdés, 2018), working on the professional development of teachers and energizing inclusive teaching-learning processes (Cardno, Handjani, & Howse, 2018; Woodcock & Marks, 2019).

However, while great importance is placed on school leaders in creating inclusive schools and practices, there is a gap in the literature, with few studies analyzing practices associated with formal leaders, school leadership, and their actual involvement and role in the development of inclusive cultures and practices in schools. There is an even greater paucity of studies that provide tools to assess, specifically, the actions of school leaders to promote inclusion in schools (Cardno et al., 2018; Poon-McBrayer, 2017; Szeto & Cheng, 2018; Valdés, 2018; Wang, 2018).

What the literature has identified are a series of characteristics of inclusive leadership associated, among others, with the education community's degree of involvement in the life of the school, the construction of a joint vision of the concept of inclusive education and the implementation of an inclusive culture and its connection with learning outcomes, among other aspects. In relation

to the latter, let us not forget that, as stated by Booth and Ainscow (2015), the effectiveness of inclusion lies in the participation, presence and success of the students. Basing our approach on the works of authors such as DeMatthews et al. (2020), DeMatthews et al. (2020), León et al. (2018), Ryan (2006), Valdés and Gómez-Hurtado (2019) and Yildirim (2021), among others, we developed a synthesis of the main characteristics of inclusive leadership with the aim of addressing our main objective (see Table 1):

Table 1.

Characteristics of inclusive leadership

Features	Description
Shared vision of inclusive education	The school must set inclusive education as an institutional objective by establishing a common concept of inclusive education, which requires the creation of a common inclusive language.
Promoting an inclusive culture	Establishing a strong commitment by all to inclusion, encouraging the participation and collaboration of the whole community.
Diversity management	Decision-making takes into account the attention to the diversity of all those involved in the school. Learning outcomes are important, but the outcomes of all are important. The school organisation is of vital importance in order to respond to the full diversity of the school.
Collaboration of all	Collaboration is one of the essential elements in building an inclusive school. The creation of networks within and between schools is a hallmark of inclusive schools.
Promoting inclusive values in the educational institution	Values related to inclusive principles aimed at overcoming exclusion and promoting participation.
Involvement of formal and informal leaders in the drive for inclusion	Inclusive leadership involves developing co-leadership that promotes the principles and characteristics of inclusion.

Source: Own creation.

These features of inclusive leadership are found within the dimensions studied in this research, and are reflected in the questionnaire designed *ad hoc* for this study (López-López, León-Guerrero, & Hinojosa-Pareja, 2022) and whose data we shall present in this paper. The idea is to get closer to the opinions that both managers and teachers have regarding the practice of

inclusive leadership in their schools. In this sense, we intend to identify a series of indicators of inclusive leadership which to a greater or lesser degree characterize the leadership exercised by the management teams in Andalusian schools.

Method

Context

The School Management Situation in Spanish Schools

With the arrival of the law that regulated the right to education in Spain in 1985, the development of educational policies in our country was associated with putting organizational structures into practice which could allow participation in management of the schools. The idea was to seek the participation of all the social agents involved in education (parents, teachers, pupils, and others), taking autonomy and decentralization as references. This situation was reflected in two types of government organ: unipersonal and collegiate:

a) Unipersonal: The management team of a school, responsible for planning, developing and executing school policies, consisting of the principal, deputy head and secretary, with specific functions assigned to each of these posts. For instance, the deputy head is in charge of what could be called the pedagogical organization of the school (staff development as well as the teachers' pedagogical and curricular activities). The principal's role is general organization, liaising with external education agents and the community and representing the Educational Authorities in the school. The secretary takes responsibility for the administrative and bureaucratic machinery of the school.

b) Collegiate. On the other hand, the collegiate organs are the staff council and the school board. The staff council, consisting of all the teachers in the school, is in charge of the aspects related to

pedagogical and organizational matters. The school board represents the basic organ of community participation in schools. The creation of this organ constituted a really important change in the formal structure of the organization of schools and is one indicator of the democratic level reached.

On the other hand, in Spain, school principals are not professionals, but rather they are elected from – and also partly by – the teaching staff of each school and representatives of the education authority. Their mandate lasts for 4

years and can be made compatible with teaching activity. To become a principal, it is necessary to meet certain administrative requirements, undergo specific training and submit a management project. The reality is that it is hard to find candidates for the post. In this case, there is an appointment by the educational authority. Some of the reasons may reside in a) excessive bureaucratization of management activity; b) the responsibility of assuming the leadership of an educational community, and c) the scant autonomy the principal has when dealing with the demands of their clients.

It must be considered that in Spain, under a policy of state interventionism, schools have developed schemes for democratic participation in management assuming approaches of a bureaucratic leadership model. In addition, changes and educational reforms reflected – above all and excessively – in the legislative scope, have identified school leadership as the main actor in this task. This way, the principal's position of power in the hierarchical organization of the school holds sway. Their privileged situation, with respect to the mechanisms of organizational influence and control, has made them the subject of scrutiny. The aim was to show that it is the principal who marks the difference and that putting certain skills for effective management into practice ensures the success of the educational institution as a whole.

Principals, aware of their power in the organizational structure of the school and as representatives of the Education Authority, take the regulations as a basis for action, giving priority to formal and bureaucratic components. Going further entails an enormous effort which very few are willing to undertake. However, while acknowledging their capacity to influence the development of school culture, the difficulties in creating and sustaining favorable provisions for the development of inclusive cultures in their schools are evident. If we add to this the fact that their training as principals does not include specific aspects associated with educational inclusion or, more generally, with the development of policies to address diversity, it seems likely that teachers will not find a clear relationship between school management and the practice of inclusive leadership in their schools.

Population/Sample

The data obtained are part of the project “School management leadership and its contribution to improving inclusion in compulsory education,” funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation.¹ The aim of the research project is to study the actions taken by school authorities to promote inclusion in Andalusian schools, as well as to foster inclusion through participatory action research processes. To this end, the research is based on a mixed-method research design (Creswell, 2014), as it combines the use of quantitative and qualitative methods. Specifically, it responds to what Wood and Smith (2018, p. 83) call the “mixed sequential explanatory method,” as it begins by characterizing the issues through broader quantitative data gathering and then uses qualitative approaches to add depth. The first phase is quantitative in nature through questionnaires. The second phase is focused on a more in-depth study of the issue in specific school contexts and promoting transformation processes designed to make the institution a more

inclusive environment through action research. And, in the third phase, we will seek to equip schools with tools to help encourage inclusion and innovation.

This study focuses on the first stage of the research, the quantitative phase. Specifically, we gathered data from the province of Huelva (Andalusia). According to data from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (2021), in Huelva and province during the 2019–20 school year, there was a staff of 8649 teachers at all non-university educational levels (ECE-Primary and Secondary) in a total of 201 public and private schools

(<http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/educacion>

).

The sample consisted of a total of 170 teachers from 42 schools. This represents a sample with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 7.4. We had hoped to achieve a higher response rate, but COVID regulations prevented researchers from entering the schools, and this entailed (as we shall discuss in the procedure) great difficulties.

The sample characteristics are described in the following Table 2 Notwithstanding the difficulties in sampling and the unusual and unorthodox procedure followed, due to the pandemic circumstances, the characteristics of the population are very similar to those of the sample obtained. In our community, the percentage of state-run schools is very high; teaching is a profession that is mainly feminized, with advanced ages and many years of professional experience. It also has stable teaching staff who are civil servants; the urban versus rural percentage is lower, despite the high concentration of primary and secondary schools in the capital city. Moreover, as in other research, the response rate was higher in primary schools than in secondary.

Data Gathering Instrument

The instrument applied was a questionnaire designated LEI-Q “Leading inclusive education in compulsory education centres”- teaching team validated by the research team (López-López et al., 2022; Table 2). This questionnaire is a tool to assess the extent to which the inclusive leadership exercised by school management supports inclusion and learning for all students. The questionnaire is addressed to teachers. The instrument is structured around two dimensions (Table 3):

1. Dimension 1. *School as an inclusive community*. The management team carries out initiatives that promote the opening of the school to the educational community and the environment, encourages participation, attends to diversity, establishes measures to encourage improvement and to overcome situations that hinder the success of all and equal opportunities.
2. Dimension 2. *Management of teaching-learning processes and professional development for teachers*. The management team generates conditions that favor the inclusion of all students in the teaching-learning processes and undertakes actions aimed at creating a professional learning community based on shared values and committed to the diversity of the student body.

Tabla 2

Sample characteristics

Gender	69.4% Women	30.6% Men
Age	30-39 years: 20.6%	
	40-49 years: 39.4%	
	50-59 years: 29.9%	
Years of experience	< 3 years: 37.8%	
	4-8 years: 20%	
	9-12 years: 17.8%	
	13-16 years: 13.3%	
	+16 years: 11.1%	
Specialities	Generalist teachers: 87.8%	
	Special education teachers: 12.2%	
Post	Teachers: 78.8%	
	Heads: 12.4%	
	Head studies: 4.7%	
	Secretary: 2.9 %	
	Counsellor: 1.2%	
School type	Rural: 60.6%	
	Urban: 39.4%	
School ownership	Public: 90%	
	Private: 10%	
Socio-economic levels	Medium: 59.4%	
	Medium-low: 30.6%	
	Low: 10%	
Stages	Primary teachers: 64.4%	
	Secondary teachers: 25.9%	
	Primary-Secondary: 9.4%	

Table 3

Dimensions and items of the LEI-Q questionnaire "Leading inclusive education in compulsory education centres"- teaching team.

Dimension 1. <i>The school as an inclusive community</i> . The management team...
1. Fosters initiatives that favour participation of community members in the educational process and in the life of the school.
2. Sets out an action plan drawn up in collaboration with other community members to foster school/community relations and respond to student diversity.
3. Promotes collaboration with the business world on an ongoing basis to strengthen the school-work environment relationship.
4. Encourages actions to collaborate with other schools, to get to know and share experiences.
5. Holds debates open to the community on situations of exclusion (racism, xenophobia, machismo, etc.).
6. Participates in actions undertaken by other community institutions/organisations of an educational nature (sports activities, anti-racism day, etc.).

7. Encourages awareness-raising actions for families on the importance and benefits of inclusion.
8. Promotes actions that facilitate communication and participation of all families in the educational activities undertaken inside and outside the school environment.
9. Sets out actions that promote the real representation of the diversity of families present in the school's governing bodies.
10. Fosters activities that promote mutual knowledge, exchange and coexistence among families and other members of the educational institution.
11. Anticipates measures to counteract the negative influence that the family situation may have on the success of their students (help campaigns, learning support, parenting school, etc.)
12. Has a procedure in place for information gathering on the needs of the teaching staff, students and other school personnel.
13. Encourages the different members of the educational community to take part in the evaluation of management performance.
14. Establishes mechanisms to promote student participation in the regulation of conflicts that arise in the educational environment.
15. Enables students to freely express their opinions and needs (with regard to their educational process, the rules and functioning of the school, the school's rules, and the way it operates...).
16. Promotes action-research projects in the school in order to guide improvement processes.
17. Proposes activities and designs strategies (seminars, courses...). to address teachers' perceptions, stereotypes, prejudices, etc. in order to ensure respect for student diversity and equal opportunities.
18. Encourages teaching staff to participate in educational activities organised by the local community.

Dimension 2. Management of teaching-learning processes and professional development for teachers. The management team...

19. Promotes a shared vision of the organisation, goals and activities among the teaching staff and the educational community in order to involve them in a common educational project.
20. Establishes protocols for dealing with conflicts through dialogue and negotiation between the parties involved.
21. Sets out penalties for the use of symbols and actions promoting exclusion.
22. Develops educational programmes to prevent discriminatory attitudes among students.
23. Generates opportunities for all members of the education community to effectively participate in decision-making.
24. The management promotes welcoming actions for all students.
25. Fosters activities that promote mutual understanding among the school's pupils.
26. Encourages collaboration among teachers to improve teaching by facilitating time and space.
27. Takes an interest in knowing the position of the teaching staff in relation to pupil diversity.

28. Promotes spaces for reflection among the members of the teaching staff on the equality conditions offered by the school.
 29. Raises awareness among teachers regarding the need to communicate situations of discrimination or exclusion that may occur in the school.
 30. Organises actions for teachers to reflect on their practice and to assess the possible impact of their teaching on school failure.
 31. Sensitises teachers to have high expectations for all students.
 32. Ensures that teaching planning is done in a co-ordinated way among the teaching staff.
 33. Promotes a flexible and revisable curriculum to respond to the needs of the students (academic, personal, social, etc.).
 34. Promotes an evaluation of curricular materials in order to prevent them from contributing to the exclusion of pupils.
 35. Is interested in ensuring that all pupils are represented in the content being taught.
 36. Encourages the continued development of activities that promote solidarity, empathy and assertiveness among pupils in the classroom.
 37. Encourages teachers to set out various criteria and procedures for assessing learners.
 38. Promotes the evaluation of teaching practices to determine the extent to which they support pupil inclusion.
 39. Ensures that the assessment has been carried out in a co-ordinated and interdisciplinary manner.
 40. Favours participation of the student body in assessment processes.
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Source: López-López, *et al.* (2022)

Teachers were asked to respond on a Likert-type scale from 1 to 4, with the following options:

1. Not yet implanted: there is little or no evidence that the statement is actually occurring in practice.
2. Partially in place: there is some evidence that the statement holds true regarding the school, but there are a number of practices that need improvement.
3. Substantially implemented: there is sufficient evidence that the statement is true regarding the school, but there are still actions that could improve it.
4. Fully implemented: there is sufficient evidence that the statement is true regarding the school and, therefore, it would be hard to find ways to improve it.

Cronbach's alpha for the full scale applied to the 170 teachers in the province of Huelva was .97 for 40 items; Dimension 1= .93 for 18 elements and Dimension 2= .96 for 22 elements.

Procedure

Initially, application of the questionnaires was to be face-to-face and on paper. It was carried out during the 2020-21 academic year. For selection of the sample, and in a first stage, schools at all levels of non-university education were randomly selected (using the SPSSv25 statistical package) from among the 201 centres in Huelva and province (<http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/educacion>). In a second stage in each school selected, a number of teachers was also randomly selected, depending on the size of the school. The research team contacted the schools, but access was denied due to Covid regulations still in force. So, the decision was taken to create a form on the Google form platform, which was then sent to the selected schools, with a summary message that was disseminated through WhatsApp groups and Seneca (work platform for Andalusian schools). After two months of virtual and telephone contact to remind and motivate participating teachers, we obtained a very low response rate (only 23 questionnaires). We then decided to send and contact all the centres, with each researcher on the team being responsible for a group of between 15/20 schools. After this second phase of fieldwork, during another two months, and after multiple reminders, 170 questionnaires were finally obtained.

During the data gathering process and subsequent analysis, the participants' anonymity and confidentiality was guaranteed.

Data analysis

Our study aims to assess the extent to which inclusive leadership is exercised by school management according to the perceptions of teachers. Specifically, which inclusive leadership indicators are perceived and to what extent they are developed. In order to identify clusters (associated with the degree of compliance with the inclusive leadership indicators), hierarchical clusters were calculated. First, in an exploratory way to find out how many clusters there are in the participant sample and secondly to find out to which group each case belongs. Next, the means of the variables studied for each dimension (school as an inclusive community and management of the teaching-learning processes and teacher professional development) were compared to help define the features of the groups, which were validated using the Kruskal-Wallis test for independent samples. Finally, a scatter plot was obtained to analyse the distance of each group on the basis of the two dimensions studied. To do so, a principal components factor analysis with two fixed factors was carried out, with varimax rotation. All analyses were carried out with the SPSSv25 statistical analysis software.

Results

The results are presented according to the research objectives:

Calculate The Cases Belonging To Each Group

A hierarchical cluster analysis was carried out using Ward's method represented through the dendrogram (Figure 1). The first column of the graph identifies the cases observed belonging to each group and at the top of the graph the distances between them. The greater the distance, the less homogeneous the groups are. Therefore, in order to find homogeneous groups among them, we decided to stop the process between distance 5 and 10 (dashed vertical lines) by identifying

three leadership groups. Group 1 comprised 74 teachers (43.5%), group 2 comprised 51 teachers (30%) and group 3 comprised 45 teachers (26.5%).

The results obtained after comparing the means of the variables that make up the two dimensions studied are shown below (Dimension 1: *School as an inclusive community*; Dimension 2: *Management of teaching and learning processes and teacher professional development*) in the three groups identified. In addition, the Anova obtained for each of the items is shown, being significant in all of them for both dimensions

As can be seen in Table 4, the mean comparisons for dimension 1 "School as an inclusive community" show that cluster 1 is a type of leadership that substantially integrates these measures, as the means are around values 2 and 3 and therefore there is evidence of the majority of the actions proposed. In relation to the literature, we can say that traits associated with inclusive leadership are identified, such as a shared vision of inclusive education, the promotion of an inclusive culture, diversity management, and formal and non-formal leadership through an inclusive approach. However, there is room for improvement, which seems to be related to the promotion of collaborative actions and teacher participation in inclusive activities. Cluster 2 groups a set of teachers who perceive that most of these actions are in place, as all items are above average, although we note that point P3 is the lowest scoring item. Thus, the promotion of "...collaboration with the business world on an ongoing basis in order to strengthen the school-work environment relationship" should be particularly improved. Comparing these data with the literature, we observe that the items studied in the dimensions that are above average are mainly related to the implementation of characteristics associated with inclusive leadership, such as promoting an inclusive culture, managing diversity and fostering inclusive values. However,

reference is also made to the need for an improvement in inter-school collaboration, specifically cooperation and participation with other entities in the working environment.

Finally, cluster 3 reflects that most of the actions are partially implemented, and there is little evidence that they are being developed; this group has the lowest scores, all of them below average. These data show that there is a group of teachers who consider that their school still reflects poorly in the development of inclusive leadership.

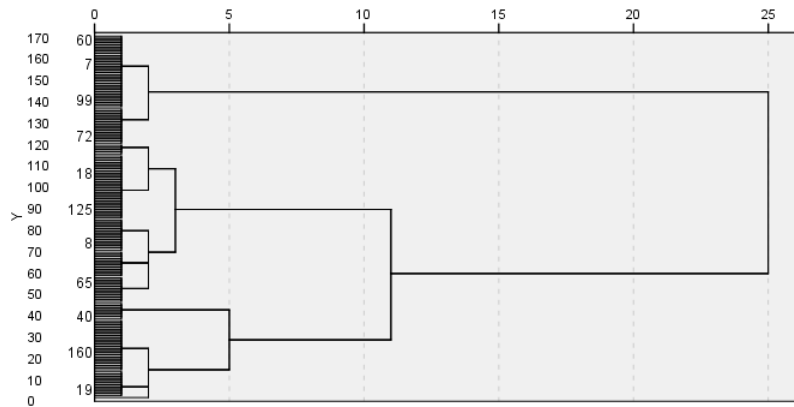


Figure 1.

Hierarchical cluster analysis with Ward's method represented through the dendrogram.

Dendrogram using a Ward link. Re-scaled distance cluster combination

Nota. Analyse the features that each leadership style has in common

Table 4.

The school as an inclusive community.

Media	Ward Method			Total	ANOVA
	1	2	3		F*
P1	3.22	3.75	2.56	3.20	34.762
P2	3.22	3.73	2.40	3.15	54.215
P3	1.89	2.78	1.69	2.11	18.880
P4	2.50	3.27	1.89	2.57	36.984
P5	2.82	3.37	1.96	2.76	38.058

P6	3.28	3.71	2.42	3.18	48.180
P7	2.91	3.75	2.20	2.97	62.312
P8	3.28	3.84	2.58	3.26	45.223
P9	2.88	3.63	2.07	2.89	60.325
P10	2.95	3.76	2.22	3.00	67.593
P11	2.99	3.73	2.18	2.99	66.679
P12	3.05	3.61	2.11	2.97	49.229
P13	2.64	3.61	1.93	2.74	59.521
P14	2.91	3.71	2.36	3.00	52.468
P15	3.28	3.86	2.62	3.28	42.870
P16	2.95	3.65	1.91	2.88	72.943
P17	2.59	3.61	2.04	2.75	64.494
P18	2.89	3.78	2.47	3.05	42.883

F* is significant (sig=.000) for all items.

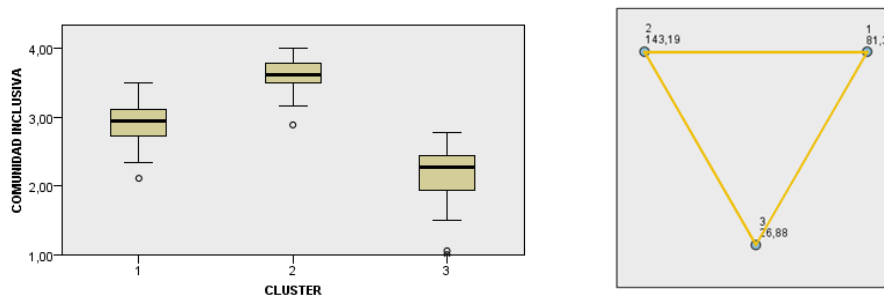


Figure 2.

Box plot and node plot dimension "The school as an inclusive community"

The box plot shows the distributions of the score of the variable "School as an inclusive community" in each of the three clusters, and we can see how cluster 2 has a median score and a higher distribution than the other two clusters (1 and 3), as was the case with the mean scores obtained in the items that make up this variable. A chi-square was obtained for the three groups of 134.56, $gl=2$ ($p<.000$). The graph below shows the contrast information for each pair (post hoc tests); each of the nodes represents a cluster (1,2,3) and each of the lines represents the contrast performed. The yellow lines are contrasts that were found to be significant and the values below each node represent the mean ranges. In this case, there are significant differences between the three groups ($p=.000$) in favour of group 2, as its rank is considerably higher than

that of group 1 and group 3. Group 3 is the least likely to lead the school as an inclusive community (see Table 5).

Table 5.
Management of teaching and learning (T-L) processes and teacher professional development (T-P-D)

Media	Ward Method			Total	ANOVA
	1	2	3		F*
P19	3.18	3.88	2.40	3.18	65.661
P20	3.30	3.84	2.62	3.28	52.446
P21	2.85	3.57	2.49	2.97	20.499
P22	3.03	3.84	2.67	3.18	43.779
P23	3.03	3.80	2.51	3.12	56.153
P24	3.50	3.86	2.91	3.45	27.680
P25	3.22	3.82	2.58	3.23	54.449
P26	3.24	3.80	2.51	3.22	51.513
P27	3.32	3.90	2.62	3.31	51.670
P28	2.96	3.82	2.16	3.01	77.245
P29	3.49	3.92	2.82	3.44	44.474
P30	2.99	3.84	2.49	3.11	49.791
P31	3.00	3.76	2.22	3.02	61.796
P32	3.46	3.96	2.69	3.41	54.395
P33	3.50	3.94	2.82	3.45	43.584
P34	3.24	3.82	2.36	3.18	68.549
P35	3.24	3.86	2.36	3.19	63.371
P36	3.47	3.96	2.60	3.39	73.776
P37	3.46	3.92	2.98	3.47	31.195
P38	2.99	3.84	2.38	3.08	62.394
P39	3.38	3.90	2.56	3.32	54.591
P40	2.50	3.61	1.96	2.69	67.431

F* is significant (sig=.000) for all items.

As with dimension 1, cluster 1 with respect to the management of T-L and T-P-D processes can be identified as substantially implemented. There is evidence that these actions are being taken, but there is still room for improvement.

Cluster 2 presents the highest scores, above average, and can be defined as a group of teachers who perceive the management of the T-L and T-P-D processes as fully implemented. Cluster 3 is the one with the lowest scores in this dimension and could therefore be defined as meaning that

the measures included in this dimension are partially implemented. In group 1, therefore, we observe that, of the characteristics related to inclusive leadership identified in the literature, those that are more related to teaching-learning processes and teacher professional development, such as having a shared vision of the school, diversity management and the promotion of an inclusive culture, are developed. Again, collaboration is an area for improvement in this group. Group 2 refers to a group of teachers who directly perceive that the features of inclusive leadership are reflected in their school, confirming the existence of a shared vision of inclusive education in the community, management of diversity according to individual student characteristics, the promotion by formal and non-formal leaders of an inclusive culture based on community collaboration and participation, and a strong commitment to inclusive education as a priority objective of the institution. Finally, group 3 consisted of teachers who do not consider that these characteristics of inclusive leadership are present in their school, at least not clearly.

In figure 3, we see that the highest median belongs to cluster 2 and the node graph summarises all the contrasts obtained, all of which are significant, showing that there are significant differences between the three groups ($p=.000$) in favour, once again, of cluster 2.

Analyse the dispersion of each group on the basis of the two dimensions studied: School as an inclusive community and management of teaching-learning processes and teacher professional development.

The KMO indicates that the factor analysis is valid ($KMO=.95$; it should obtain values close to 1) and also Bartlett's test of sphericity shows that it is significant ($P=.000$). Two factors are obtained that explain 52.83% of the variance (Table 6).

The first factor explains 30.16% of the total variance and saturates all items related to the management of teaching and learning processes and teacher professional development. The second factor obtained explains 22.67% of the total variance and saturates the items belonging to the dimension "School as an inclusive community". The scatter plot (figure 4) projects both factors, F1 on the X-axis and F2 on the Y-axis. The three clusters obtained are represented in the factorial plane, identified by colours.

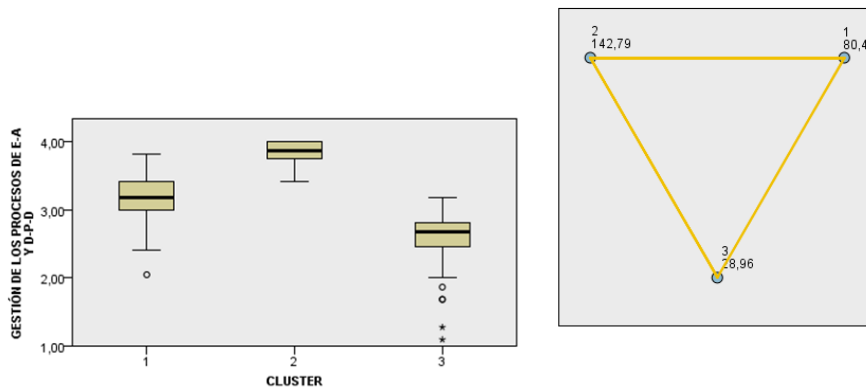


Figure 3.

Box plot and node plot dimension "Management of T-L and T-P-D processes"

Table 6.

Factor analysis according to dimensions

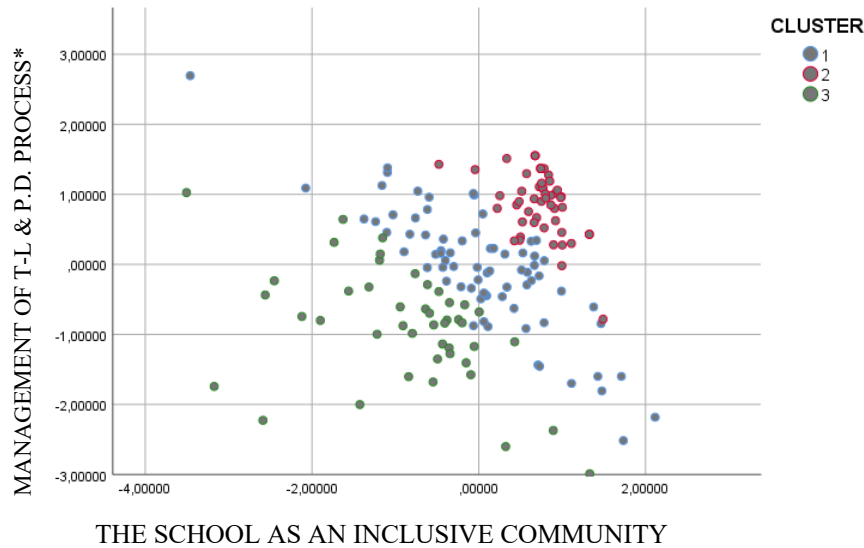
Items	Factors		Items	Factors	
	1	2		1	2
P32	.772	.204	P15	.484	.453
P27	.762	.256	P12	.483	.434
P39	.746	.281	P21	.444	.273
P29	.745	.228	P8	.242	.735
P31	.738	.285	P10	.292	.729
P33	.730	.229	P9	.279	.720
P28	.720	.317	P7	.362	.686
P26	.707	.283	P1	.220	.684
P36	.702	.363	P2	.333	.664
P38	.683	.417	P4	.146	.646
P35	.680	.350	P6	.319	.636
P23	.678	.368	P13	.425	.603
P34	.656	.382	P14	.381	.598
P25	.652	.405	P18	.362	.576

P30	.648	.305	P19	.475	.563
P37	.634	.257	P11	.482	.560
P20	.621	.400	P16	.492	.551
P24	.603	.279	P17	.473	.535
P22	.571	.317	P5	.240	.516
P40	.538	.418	P3	.120	.417

The factorial plane is interpreted by reading it from left to right and from top to bottom. In this sense, the further the cases are positioned to the right, the more the school is promoted as an inclusive community. And the higher they are placed in the upper part of the factorial plane, the more they are associated with measures that favour the management of teaching and learning processes and teachers' professional development.

The distance between the cases reflects the dispersion between the cases. Therefore, cluster 2, identified in red, is the most homogeneous group, i.e. they have obtained more similar scores and are associated with schools identified as inclusive community and also promote the management of teaching-learning processes and teacher professional development. Teachers perceive that the characteristics of inclusive leadership are in place. Cluster 1, represented in blue, is the group that is in an intermediate situation; the cases are more dispersed and are located in the central area of the factorial plane. There are management actions and an understanding of the school as an inclusive community, but many of them still need to be improved. It is confirmed that in group 1 some characteristics of inclusive leadership associated with the shared vision of the community, management of diversity and the concern of formal leaders for inclusive education are beginning to emerge, but there are still other aspects more linked to day-to-day actions, such as the creation of more collaborative practices, which need to be improved. Cluster 3, identified in green, concentrates cases that are more dispersed. The majority of these cases are located in the lower left zone of the factorial plane and are associated with schools that show little evidence

of developing initiatives and management that favour inclusion. According to these data, we can say that this group 3 of teachers clearly perceives that there is no inclusive leadership in their schools, as the characteristics of inclusive leadership are not perceived in the actions and attitudes of those who participate in the schools.



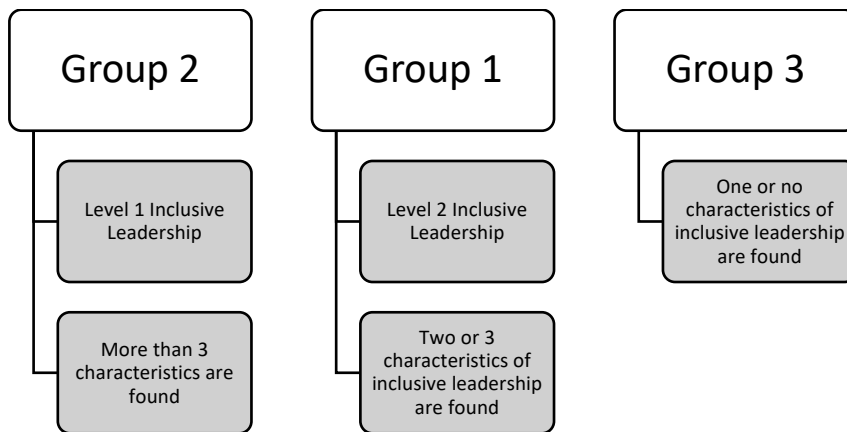
*MANAGEMENT OF TEACHING-LEARNING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Figure 4.

Scatter plot. Cluster representation in the factorial plane.

In short, three teachers' perspectives on the implementation of inclusive leadership in their schools can be clearly identified. Group 1 (cluster 1), which is identified as having a medium degree of implementation of inclusive leadership, is a group where there are some actions that make it possible to perceive some characteristics of inclusive leadership linked above all to the shared vision of inclusive education, diversity management and formal leadership as a promoter of inclusion. Group 2 (cluster 2), which is identified with the group of teachers who consider that in their schools there is clearly inclusive leadership based on a shared language and vision,

inclusive formal and non-formal leadership, diversity management that responds to the individuality of each person, the promotion of an inclusive culture, although one of the most relevant aspects, collaboration, needs to be improved. Finally, group 3 (cluster 3) identifies with a group of teachers who do not see inclusive leadership in their schools. Thus, we can identify the three groups as follows (Figure 5):



Source: Own creation.

Figure 5.

Identifying characteristics of inclusive leadership at levels from a teacher's perspective

Discussion

Different levels of development of inclusive leadership characteristics

Inclusive leadership involves the implementation of competencies and practices of school leaders (Valdés and Gómez-Hurtado, 2019). Most studies focus on the formal leaders of schools, the management teams (Ainscow and West, 2006; Day, 2005; Harris and Chapman, 2002; León, 2012; Valdés, 2018), who in order to carry out an inclusive leadership style that addresses the diversity present and promotes the principles of inclusive education must commit to building an inclusive culture (Valdés and Gómez Hurtado, 2019), acquire a social commitment, foster

inclusive values and create an inclusive community, establish a common language (Booth and Ainscow, 2015) and base their practices on collaboration (Ainscow, 2009).

As Lewis (2016) states, there is a great need to better understand how leadership affects the development of inclusive schools. In line with the overall aim of this research, which was to identify the features of inclusive leadership in schools as an inclusive community and the management of teaching-learning processes and teacher professional development from the teachers' perspective, three levels of development of the characteristics of inclusive leadership have been identified. They can be summed up as follows (table 7):

Table 7. Inclusive Leadership Levels

Level 1. More than 3 characteristics of inclusive leadership are present.	Level 2. Two or 3 features of inclusive leadership are developed.	Level 3. One or no characteristics of inclusive leadership are present.
<p>Cluster 2 correspondence. Understands the school as an inclusive community. The management team carries out initiatives that promote the opening of the school to the educational community and the environment, encourages participation, attends to diversity, establishes measures to encourage improvement and to overcome situations that hinder the success of all and equal opportunities. In addition, it is a leadership style that manages teaching-learning processes and teacher professional development. In other words, the team generates conditions that favour the inclusion of all students in the teaching-learning processes and undertakes actions designed to create a professional learning community based on shared values and committed to the diversity of the student body.</p>	<p>Cluster 1 correspondence from. They carry out initiatives that enhance the openness of the school to the educational community and the environment, but do not promote collaboration or the participation of teachers in inclusive activities (P3, P4, P5, P7, P9, P10, P11, P13, P14, P16, P17, P18). In terms of management, they do not integrate spaces for reflection, pupil participation, evaluation of teaching practices or sanctioning mechanisms to avoid exclusion (P28, P30, P38, P40).</p>	<p>Cluster 3 correspondence. Identifies with a type of leadership that promotes some practices on general measures of participation and collaboration of the educational community with respect to the attention to diversity, but is not interested in the openness of the school to its surroundings and does not establish measures to protect situations that hinder the success of all and equal opportunities (P3, P4, P5, P13, P16, P40). Ultimately, it is a type of leadership that develops few initiatives and actions that favour inclusion.</p>

Source: Own creation.

The first level of leadership shows characteristics of inclusive leadership, understood as leadership that is generally based on distributed and democratic leadership (Dasci & Gokmenoglu, 2022). We agree with Morrisey (2020) in that shaping leadership for inclusion requires different types of leadership that can respond to diversity and build an inclusive school. Distributed leadership practices involve shared thinking that encourages attention to diversity and addressing the challenges of inclusive education (Lambrecht *et al.*, 2020). The sharing of tasks among the inclusive community created and the empowerment of all those involved through shared practice and commitment are essential aspects of building an inclusive school (Heikka and Waniganayake, 2011; Woodrow and Busch, 2008). Putting inclusive values into action and supporting a sense of belonging for all in the community promotes inclusive education in schools (Booth and Ainscow, 2015). The openness of the school to the community is an important requirement in these centres, and the participation of the environment in which the school is located is of great importance (Carrasco and Díaz, 2021). The management teams encourage student participation based on the cooperative work carried out by the adults (Boekhorst, 2015; Montes and Ziegler, 2010). The role of leaders is key to building participatory schools. In line with other research, it is observed that empowering teachers and turning them into leaders is a relevant aspect in the construction of this inclusive leadership (Day *et al.*, 2009; DeMatthews, 2015; Sonmez and Gokmenoglu, 2022; Taylor and Sidhu, 2012), also opening the doors to families, avoiding concentrating leadership in a single individual so that everyone feels part of the activities taking place in the school (Ryan, 2006).

This level 1 of inclusive leadership is committed to basic principles of inclusion such as participation in its different forms (Loreman, 2017) and the reduction of exclusion, discrimination and barriers to learning and participation by addressing the diversity of

characteristics and promoting measures that enable the success, participation and presence of all (Booth and Ainscow, 2015). We agree with Stubbs (2008) that inclusive education involves the creation of a solid framework, a basic structure underpinned by inclusive principles, implementation in the specific context of the school, and ongoing community involvement and reflection. This inclusive leadership style is committed to promoting inclusive principles by advocating a common vision of inclusive education in the community. The research conducted shows that in this first leadership style, the management of teaching-learning processes and teacher professional development is carried out, i.e. leaders are concerned with favouring the teaching-learning processes of all students using different practices and mechanisms to respond to all demands (Valdés, 2020), creating a professional learning community that has shared values towards the development of an inclusive school, taking into account the importance of their own training to acquire an inclusive outlook (Shields and Hesbol, 2020).

The second level of inclusive leadership that emerges from our research highlights collaboration and openness to the community and the environment as an essential factor in building an inclusive school, yet these leaders do not implement actions or mechanisms that lead to teacher participation and collaboration in the development of inclusive activities. In this way, they do not provide spaces for reflection, student participation and evaluation of teaching practices, nor do they develop sanctioning mechanisms to avoid exclusion. Although the research refers to collaboration as a key factor in the development of inclusion (Ainscow, 2009) and leaders are aware of this, the actions that are taken are not consistent with the actions of leaders as perceived by teachers. In contrast to the findings of Hitt and Tucker (2016), leaders are not concerned with conveying a vision or making a connection with the environment (DeMatthews, Billingsley *et al.*, 2020) to build an inclusive school.

The third level of leadership refers to a type that carries out some practices and measures of participation and collaboration in the educational community in order to respond to the attention to diversity in the schools. However, these mechanisms are internal to the schools and do not open the doors to the surroundings. Furthermore, actions or practices that protect situations that may hinder the success of all and equal opportunities are not promoted, so segregating practices continue to exist (Lewis, 2016), leading us to see the subtle discrimination that continues to exist causing serious problems in people's overall development (Jones *et al.*, 2016).

We agree with Thompson & Matkin (2020, p. 27) that when society minimises differences we tend to silence the many benefits they can actually bring to the educational and civic context.

Building an Inclusive School: Characteristics of Inclusive Leaders

Can we really talk about levels of development of inclusive leadership characteristics? Can one be more or less of an inclusive leader? Can we commit to inclusion half-heartedly? The reality is that this issue of inclusive leadership is just beginning to be studied and the research reveals that there is not enough evidence showing specific practices or features of inclusive leadership, but rather that it draws on different forms of leadership to build an inclusive school (Harris and Chapman, 2002; Muijs *et al.*, 2007; Murillo *et al.*, 2010; Fernández-Batanero and Hernández, 2013). According to Ryan (2006), this is due to the variegated literature on inclusive leadership. Nevertheless, a whole line is being developed that advocates different competencies and practices of inclusive leadership (Crisol and Romero, 2020; Gómez-Hurtado *et al.*, 2021; León *et al.*, 2018; Valdés and Gómez-Hurtado, 2019; Valdés, 2023). What is clear is that the

leadership role in the development of inclusive schools is a key factor (Ainscow, 2012; León, 2012; Seyram Klibthong, 2022; Valdés and Fardella, 2022; Woodcock and Marks, 2019).

Inclusive education entails a series of values and principles that are based on the defence of education for all without distinction for any reason. School inclusion is a worldview; it is not only an educational perspective or philosophy but rather a way of understanding life and dealing with it. So, is it possible to be more or less inclusive? No, but we must not forget that inclusion is a process (Booth and Ainscow, 2015) that develops over time, little by little; where leaders play a fundamental role. So, it makes sense that we can speak of levels of development of the characteristics of inclusive leadership.

The teachers surveyed in our study refer to some characteristics that coincide with those highlighted in the literature on inclusive leadership. At all three levels, to a greater or lesser extent, there are aspects that are typical of leadership that is committed to the development of school inclusion. These are:

- a) Shared vision of inclusive education Upholding inclusive principles and values is the cornerstone of inclusive education (Booth and Ainscow, 2015). Leaders are promoters of the creation of this joint vision.
- b) Distributed or shared leadership. A commitment to shared or distributed leadership is another aspect that characterises inclusive leadership. The sharing of tasks, the empowerment of all members of the educational community and the construction of joint thinking are fundamental aspects in the development of school inclusion (Woodrow and Busch, 2008).
- c) Community collaboration and participation. All three levels speak of the importance of opening the school to the school community and developing mechanisms for

collaboration, although this openness and collaboration appears to a greater or lesser extent depending on the level. Collaboration is an essential element in school inclusion (Ainscow, 2009). Openness of the school to the whole community is a prerequisite for an inclusive school (Loreman, 2017).

- d) Creation of an inclusive culture. The creation of an inclusive culture underpinned by inclusive principles and values is fundamental to the promotion of less segregating practices and underpinned by deficit-centred principles. The creation of a solid structure that is committed to inclusiveness (Stubbs, 2008).
- e) Responding to all diversity. Leaders are concerned with providing an appropriate response to all learners, ensuring the presence, participation and success also of the most vulnerable groups (Valdés, 2020).

However, among the difficulties that educational leaders may encounter in developing school inclusion is the context and existing educational policies in the community studied, i.e. Andalusia. On the one hand, and as described in the context, school heads are subjected to interventionist policies and excessive bureaucratisation of processes. And on the other, policies based on the deficit model continue to be maintained, developing specific measures for attention to diversity that respond to individuality, without taking into account whether these measures are becoming segregating elements that harm rather than benefit pupils. In view of all this, we believe that it is complex for teachers to perceive diversity policies, as well as the variability of their perceptions. Diversity measures and educational programmes should be directed more towards transformation of the methodologies and didactic resources used and the reorganisation of support, considering these elements as important evidence in the construction of an inclusive school (Ainscow, 2012). In other words, more preventive measures that have a more general

focus on all pupils and less of a minority focus on the most vulnerable groups such as pupils with specific educational support needs.

Conclusions

The analyses carried out show us the reality of Andalusian schools in the province of Huelva, and it is worrying that in many schools (almost 70% if we add groups 1 and 3), according to the teachers' perceptions, there is still a long way to go to achieve truly inclusive practices. The clusters reveal 3 typologies of inclusive leadership, with two of these groups of schools being quite far from a true response to diversity. These values and the practices that are identified as absent in the exercise of leadership give us a basis for design of improvement plans.

As we have argued, inclusion is a major challenge and schools are making varying degrees of effort to introduce it into their agendas. However, this process is not without its difficulties, hurdles and barriers. On the other hand, it is not achieved in a short period of time because it involves multiple factors, including social factors (participation, collaboration, attitudes...), as the results show. Time and determination are needed in the drive for inclusive educational environments.

In this line, we clearly visualise the role of leaders, whether formal or informal, in the achievement of creating truly inclusive schools. We have highlighted the key elements in the development of inclusive leadership. This appears as a central axis around which education policies and intervention programmes that are designed from now on can pivot. For the authors, and based on the review and results obtained, the development of inclusive leadership entails the creation of a collaborative and inclusive culture, the management of diversity responding to the characteristics of all people, the establishment of a common language, a shared vision of school inclusion, participation of the whole community and the implementation of formal and non-

formal leadership that strongly supports inclusive values. Teachers believe that we are on the way and the first steps are beginning to be taken. There are schools that have intentions, others that are making a major commitment to the development of inclusive schools and others that are still on the "starting block". For this reason, we consider it essential to reinforce the training of both teachers and management teams. We are aware of the enormous challenge posed in schools. Identifying the teachers of inclusive leadership is only one step, and not the most difficult one, on the road to inclusive education. The teaching profession faces a great challenge; it must count on the support of school administrations, and collaboration and help between them; and the involvement of the community and the environment, since the school cannot achieve it alone.

As we have justified in the literature review, inclusive culture and teacher professional development are key aspects in identifying whether a school is implementing or embarking on a commitment to inclusive education. Inclusion entails the construction of a culture based on inclusive values, which involves actions to respond to the diversity that makes up the community. Many international policies and regulations are being designed to ensure quality education for all. The Spanish reality is no less so, although its schools still have a lot of work to do from the point of view of the educational agents themselves.

Our study has sought to open up a new line of study of the practices of educational leaders in the area of inclusion, given the dearth of research in this area. This has been a limitation in contrasting the results. We must also take into account the limited sample size and social desirability bias (De Campos and Marín, 2017). In the case of the sample, we believe that one possible cause has been the circumstances and consequences of the pandemic (much more severe in challenging contexts). As shown in some studies (López-Noguero, *et al.*, 2021), it has led to an overflow in many schools, which did not have the technological resources or the

training to meet the needs of their pupils. Collaborating with studies was not part of their multiple tasks and difficulties. A reality that we hope will soon change. According to Ramos-Pla, et. al, (2021) the role of principals was crucial in redirecting the situation and completing the academic course satisfactorily. The principals scored their leadership resources remarkably high in the former normality and maintained proactivity at a similar level during the crisis. However, other resources scored lower during the same period. As a direct result, there was a high degree of adaptation to this situation from the principals. The results indicate that principals do not lead in the same manner in times of crisis as in normal times. Age, experience, and type of school influence the results only in former normal situations but not in times of crisis. Nevertheless, Ganon-Shilon et al. (2022) referred to the importance in pandemics of leaders creating a shared vision and direction towards an inclusive school, promoting resilience, fostering a shared culture and encouraging school collaboration and trust with the whole education community. In particular, Pollock (2020) or Karakose, et al., (2021), highlighted the need for a digitally-focused leadership response to issues arising from the pandemic.

Going forward, we believe it is essential to continue with the dissemination of the results in the Andalusian scope, as well as to continue working on the qualitative research that is currently underway. In doing so, we believe that we can offer useful information to schools to establish lines of action to improve the attention to diversity in their schools and the interventions of their leaders. It would be equally necessary and interesting, along these lines of improvement, to incorporate content into the training programmes for head teachers that clearly reflects a commitment to diversity management in which the bureaucratic component plays less of a role in organisational dynamics in favour of more cultural links between school

members. We hope to complete this study and contribute to the sustainable goal of "quality schools for all" (Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda).

Note 1.

Project reference: Ministry of Education and Science. PID2019-106250RB-I00 / SRA (State Research Agency / 10.13039/501,100,011,033).

Acknowledgements

Translated by Neil Macowan Language Services.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This research has been supported by the Ministry of Education and Science, under Grant PID2019-106250RB-I00/SRA (State Research Agency / 10.13039/501100011033. Research title is *School leadership and its contribution to improving inclusion in compulsory education*, whose head researchers were López-López, M.C. and León, M.J.

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