

Faculty members who engage in inclusive pedagogy: Methodological and affective strategies for teaching

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Abstract

In this article, 119 faculty members from 10 Spanish universities who engage in inclusive pedagogy reveal some of the methodological and affective strategies they use to motivate their students, including those with disabilities, and help them learn. The study described is a qualitative one in which one semi-structured interview was held with each participating faculty member. A system of inductive codes and categories was used for the data analysis. The results revealed that faculty members believe in and trust the capabilities of all their students. They meticulously plan their syllabus to ensure practical learning, using a diverse range of strategies and providing continuous feedback. They also adopt a student-centred teaching approach and attach value to emotional and affective aspects, as an effective strategy for learning. The study helped identify a series of practices regarding the components and methods required for constructing inclusive university communities.

Keywords: Higher education; disability; inclusive pedagogy; teaching; methodology; affective strategies

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Introduction

Faculty members play a key role in students' success, particularly in the case of those who are most vulnerable, such as students with disabilities (Veitch, Strehlow, & Boyd, 2019; Zhang, Rosen, & Li, 2019). What they do and how they teach influence students with disabilities' permanence and help avoid dropout. In this sense, pedagogic competencies of faculty members constitute a key element for improving the quality of teaching and learning in higher education (Kaynardag, 2017; Carballo, Morgado, & Cortés-Vega, 2019).

This study aimed to analyse *what* exactly faculty members who engage in inclusive pedagogy do to motivate and foster the learning of all students, even those with disabilities, as well as *how* they do it. The theoretical justification is organised around explaining what inclusive pedagogy actually is, inclusive teaching practices and methodological strategies, and inclusive teaching practices and affective strategies.

Inclusive Pedagogy at University

International organisations such as UNESCO (2017) have stated that quality higher education should strive to promote a culture of inclusion. To make this possible, it is important to respect students as individuals from a wide range of contexts, with different learning needs and diverse (and equally valuable) prior experiences. Byra (2006) found that inclusive pedagogy facilitates equal opportunities for all students to achieve success, and indeed, inclusive pedagogy has been defined as an approach to teaching and learning in which education professionals respond to learners' individual differences, in order to avoid excluding certain students (Florian, 2014; Klibthong & Agbenyega, 2018). One very clear idea emerges from this approach: everyone can learn under the right conditions.

Florian's contribution in the field of primary and secondary education (2014), and Gale, Mills, and Cross' ones in higher education (2017) together constitute a framework of analysis for inclusive pedagogy based on beliefs, knowledge, design and actions. Firstly,

inclusive pedagogy is related to the *belief* that all students have something valuable to contribute to the learning environment. Diversity is seen as an opportunity which enriches the teaching and learning processes. Secondly, as regards the *knowledge* dimension, Rouse (2009) highlights the need for teachers to know about teaching strategies, disability and special needs, how students learn, what students need to learn, classroom organisation and management, where to turn to for help when help is needed, how to identify and assess difficulties, how to assess and monitor students' learning, and the legal and political context. In some studies on higher education, faculty members have expressed a desire to receive pedagogic training in relation to instruction techniques for disability (Moriarty, 2007). The third dimension is the *design* of a pedagogy that values difference and of actions that truly work with students (Gale, et al. 2017). From the perspective of this dimension, a subject must be planned right from the start to be as accessible as possible and to satisfy the educational needs of the greatest possible number of students. The final element is linked to *actions* or practices that 'work with' rather 'act on' students and their communities. Hitch, Macfarlane, and Nihill (2015) define inclusive teaching and learning as methods by which pedagogy, the curriculum and evaluation are designed and developed to engage students in a learning process that is meaningful, relevant and accessible to all.

Inclusive Teaching Practices and Methodological Strategies

In the action dimension, studies on practices based on inclusive pedagogy have identified a number of effective teaching proposals, including: flexible teaching, active learning, faculty members who encourage students to share their beliefs, knowledge and experiences, ongoing feedback, high expectations and respect for different learning styles (Moriarty, 2007; Thomas, 2016). Other studies suggest that teaching for inclusion means developing practices based on universal design for learning (Lawrie et al., 2017), in which all students and all different forms of feeling, thinking and acting are respected. Some authors

propose specific pedagogical strategies that seek to involve all students: research-based approaches including simulations, problem-based learning, the flipped classroom (Altemueller & Lindquist, 2017), project-based teaching, case studies (Garmany, 2015; Nkhoma, Sriratanaviriyakul, & Le Quang, 2017) and the use of different technological resources for learning (Williams, Rooij, & Zirkle, 2016). Therefore, for all students, but especially for those with a disability, it is necessary for faculty members to have a repertoire of different strategies that include the diversity present in the classroom (Vacarella, 2015).

According to the literature, teaching methods should be diverse, since faculty members should be aware that students have different ways of learning (Seatter & Ceulemans, 2017). They should therefore employ a wide variety of teaching methods to guide students while they construct new knowledge (Postareff & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2008). The aim is to foster constructivist learning, actively engaging students in the construction of their own knowledge (Nie & Lau, 2010). Peer tutoring has also been shown to be an effective method for fostering learning (Byra, 2006), as has cooperative learning (Tombak & Altun, 2016). Both are support systems that are not possible when students work individually (Lavy, 2017).

Research in the field of higher education has concluded that what is truly effective is the adoption of a learner-centred approach, which has been found to correlate positively with educational success (Cunningham, 2013; Thomas, 2016). For their part, Kember and McNaught (2007) have proposed a series of key principles for effective teaching, including: the relevance of what is being taught must be established using real, current and/or local examples, relating theory to practice; for learning to be meaningful, a variety of learning tasks should be used which engage students; genuine and empathetic relationships must be established with students in order for interaction to take place; faculty members should motivate students by showing their own enthusiasm, encouraging students and offering interesting, fun and active classes; and each lesson should be meticulously planned yet

flexible, so that the necessary adjustments can be made in light of the continuous feedback received during class.

The effectiveness of these approaches has been corroborated by studies on higher education and disability. For example, Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) concluded that students learn more when faculty members use active and cooperative learning techniques, interact with their students and strive to engage them in the learning process. Kubiak (2015) found that students valued instruction which used dialog and discussion, as well as different technological resources. They also appreciated teaching which stimulated learning as a thinking activity, rather than simply a process of memorising and reproducing facts. Moreover, they also found learning in collaboration with peers useful and effective.

According to Almarghani and Mijatovic (2017), these strategies not only enrich learning, they also help engage and motivate students, which is necessary in higher education and is a key component in educational success. Furthermore, a positive correlation has been found between motivation and engagement themselves (Klauda & Guthrie, 2015).

Inclusive Teaching Practices and Affective Strategies

In this scenario of inclusive actions, it is also important to take into account the emotional and affective components linked to how teaching is carried out (Moriña, 2019). Thus, within the action dimension of inclusive pedagogy, studies have concluded that effective teaching strategies, while necessary, are not the only key aspect, and that positive interactions between faculty members and their students are also of vital importance, along with the concern shown by the former about the latter, personal connections, respect and taking everyone into consideration (Kezar & Maxey, 2014).

Over recent years, several studies focusing on the general student population have called for more attention to be paid to the emotional dimension of learning (Postareff, Mattsson, Lindblom-Ylänne, & Hailikari, 2017). Indeed, some authors have even referred to

the need for a pedagogy of care (Motta, & Bennett, 2018) or a pedagogy of emotion (Walker & Palacios, 2016). According to these authors, emotions influence students' cognitive resources, motivation to learn, learning strategies and self-regulation.

Studies that have given voice to students with disabilities have found that emotional connections between faculty and students when learning are important. Faculty members who adopt a positive attitude to disability and who are flexible, approachable, understanding and ready to help are highly appreciated (Moriña, Cortés-Vega, & Molina, 2015). Other students value faculty members' personal characteristics, i.e. how they relate to students (are they approachable or distant?), or as the students themselves put it: their 'human aspect'. In a study conducted by Stein (2014), when asked what elements contributed to their academic achievement, students identified, among others, the fact that faculty members were concerned about them (responded to their messages, were available during tutorials, made reasonable adjustments) and were affectionate.

In this context, students with disabilities, as well as the entire body of students, feel like valuable members of the university, members who truly belong and whose contributions are important (Lourens & Swartz, 2016). Through these emotional connections established between faculty and students, inclusive education contributes to the creation of a sense of belonging in university classrooms. This feeling is characterised by regular contact and a perception by students that their interpersonal relationships are stable, ongoing and based on affection (Thomas, 2016).

In short, research has shown that engagement by faculty members in inclusive education benefits all students, not just students with disabilities (Cunningham, 2013; McKay & Devlin, 2016). Thus, inclusive approaches to teaching and learning help establish the conditions under which students are more likely to stay at university and successfully complete their degrees.

The specific research questions were: What beliefs do faculty members hold regarding students and their role in the learning process? What key aspects do faculty members take into consideration when planning their subjects in order to foster the learning and participation of all students? What methodological strategies are used to engage in inclusive practices? What affective and emotional strategies contribute to students' effective learning and sense of belonging?

Method

The results presented in this article form part of a broader on-going research project entitled 'Inclusive education at university: Faculty members' narratives' (ref. EDU2016-76587-R), which analyses the beliefs, knowledge, designs and actions of faculty who practice inclusive pedagogy. Other results of this study can be consulted in Moriña (2019) or Carballo, Cotán, and Spínola (2019).

In this work, we explore only the results pertaining to beliefs and actions. The data analysed belong to phase 1 of the research, which took place from January 2017 to December 2018. In this phase, through individual interviews with 119 faculty members, we explore what teaching staff engaging in inclusive pedagogy do, and how and why they do it. In the second and current phase of the research we have selected some of the faculty members from the first phase in order to study their teaching practices in more depth. We are conducting in-depth interviews with these faculty members and their students, as well as classroom observations. Both interviews and observations are being videotaped. We intend to develop an open-access virtual repository so that all professionals can learn about these inclusive best practices and develop strategies to implement them in their daily practice.

Participants

Participants were selected for the study on the basis of them currently practicing inclusive pedagogy in their teaching. To guarantee the suitability of the sample, participating

faculty members were exclusively identified by students with disabilities. To access said students, two strategies were used. Firstly, ten disability support services in different universities were contacted and asked to send students information about the research carried out by the team and to request their voluntary collaboration in the task of identifying potential participants. Secondly, the snowball technique was used, with this question being asked directly to those students with disabilities with whom the research team had already made contact during previous projects. Colleagues were also asked to collaborate by sending information about the project to those university students they knew with disabilities.

All students received an email describing the project and asking them to recommend any faculty member who had made them feel included during their time at university. The email also offered a list of possible characteristics to help them identify said faculty members:

- They believe in the capacity and potential of all students.
- They facilitate learning processes.
- They teach actively, using different methodological strategies.
- They are concerned about their students' learning.
- They are flexible and willing to help.
- They motivate students.
- They are approachable and foster interactions between students.
- They make students feel they are important, that they are valued members of the class.

Four criteria were established for selecting the final sample: having or having had students with disabilities in their classroom; being from different knowledge areas; engaging in inclusive practices; being available to participate in the project.

Having completed the recruitment phase, a total of 186 faculty members were contacted, of which 5 declined to participate for different reasons (not having sufficient experience, not having time or being on sick leave, etc.) and 39 simply did not answer either

emails or telephone calls. The final sample group therefore comprised 119 faculty members from 10 public Spanish universities. Of these, 24 (20.16%) taught Arts and Humanities (Participants P1-P24), 14 (11.76%) taught STEM (Science, Technical, Engineering and Mathematics) (P25-P38), 16 (13.44%) taught Health Sciences (P39-P54), 25 (21.01%) Social and Legal Sciences (P55-P79) and 40 (33.61%) Education (P80-P119). As regards gender, 58.33% were men and 41.66% were women. The majority were aged between 36 and 60, with seven (7.78%) being less than 35 years of age and four (4.42%) being over 60. Most (68.35%) had over 10 years' experience, with only six (6.25%) having less than 5 and 24 (25.4%) having between 5 and 10. Finally, all faculty members had experience responding to needs arising from disabilities. Of these, the most frequent were sensory disabilities, i.e. visual and hearing impairments (40.97%), followed by physical disabilities (23.68%), mental illness (18.79%), poor health conditions (10.52%), and learning difficulties (6.01%).

Context of the Participating Spanish Universities

Participants in the study were faculty members from ten different Spanish public universities. In Spain, the legislation that governs the higher education system aims to harmonise said system with those others which exist within the European Higher Education Area. Consequently, official university degree courses are divided into three stages: Undergraduate (lasting 4 years), Master's (lasting 1 or 2 years) and Doctorate (lasting between 3 and 5 years).

For years now, in addition to face-to-face learning, Spanish universities have also been using virtual learning platforms (Blackboard or Moodle) as resources to support the teaching and learning process.

Faculty member training in Spain is voluntary and provided free of charge. All universities have training centres which regularly run courses on different topics, including teaching methodologies, new technologies, languages and social skills, among others.

Nevertheless, training on inclusive education and attention to disability is practically non-existent.

Finally, all universities have student support services, which also include a specific service for students with disabilities. By law, universities are obliged to offer these services, as well as to make any reasonable adjustments required by this student group. Over recent years, access for students with disabilities within the university sphere has gradually improved (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2019).

Instruments and Procedure

One semi-structured interview was carried out with each participating faculty member. The mean duration of each interview was one hour, thirty minutes. The majority of interviews were held face-to-face (n=89). Nevertheless, for the purposes of convenience, 18 faculty members conducted their interviews via Skype and 12 did so over the telephone.

Some of the questions asked during the interviews were as follows: How do you think students learn? What aspects are key when planning how to teach your subject? What strategies do you use to motivate students with disabilities and foster their participation? Which of the methodological strategies that you use do you think are most effective? How do you relate to your students? How important is this relationship?

Audio recordings were made of all interviews and faculty members gave their written consent to being recorded and for the data provided to be used for research purposes. The study also met the ethical requirements established by the Spanish Ministry of the Economy and Competitiveness.

Data Analysis

All the information was transcribed and analysed using a progressive qualitative data analysis technique, in which an inductive system of categories and codes was generated which enabled meaning to be attached to the information gathered. For example, in the category 'key

aspects of subject planning', four codes emerged: well-organised subjects, practical content, use of varied activities and continuous feedback. To handle the large quantity of data collected, the computer program MaxQDA14 was used during the analysis process.

Results

Faculty members practicing inclusive pedagogy used a variety of different strategies to help foster all students' learning and engagement. Participants in the study coincided in stating that any action carried out in order to help students with disabilities benefited the entire class.

During the analysis, several different teaching components were identified that fostered students' inclusion. Some examples include: beliefs regarding students and their own teaching profile in the learning process; planning of subjects to promote learning and engagement; methodological strategies to encourage learning; and finally, affective and emotional strategies that contribute to learning.

Faculty Beliefs about Students and their own Teaching Profile in the Learning Process

All participants shared a common basic assumption: they all believed in their students and their capabilities. For them, it was vital to make students see that they trusted them and their ability to learn. They were demanding and strove to ensure that their students believed in their own potential, were self-exacting and learned what they needed to become competent professionals in the future. They worked hard to convey the idea that things should either be done properly, or not at all. In order to fulfil these goals, faculty members said they thought it was vital for students to pay attention, dedicate the necessary time to their studies and do their part to ensure successful learning. Students with disabilities were viewed as being the same as any other student. Likewise, these faculty members believed in the potential of students with disabilities and had high expectations of them:

P62: I think the most important thing is to continually show them that they are capable of more.

In addition to trusting in their students' capabilities, however, participants also endeavoured to let them know that they were the main figures in the process, that their jobs depended on them as students, and that it was only through teaching them that a faculty member's actions had meaning:

P14: They are at the centre of everything, in other words, 'I'm here for you; the day you are no longer here, I won't have a job', and that's really all there is to it.

P107: Another important thing is to show students that you care. And not only that you care what they think and that you value their point of view regarding certain things, but also that their learning is of vital importance to you.

Participants also demonstrated their belief that students were at the centre of the process by attaching importance to this fact in the teaching and learning process. They therefore sought to engage students through actions aimed at fostering their participation and active role in the learning process. Their goal was for students to assume responsibility for their own learning:

P42: You have to make students feel they are a vital part of their own and others' learning. In other words, if you give students responsibility and make them see they can be A-students and excellent professionals, and that most of this depends solely on them, then they start to feel like the protagonists of their own learning process.

One final idea that was espoused by all participants was their passion for teaching and the need to convey this to students. Participants stated that they believed students became more engaged when they were aware of the passion felt by academic staff for teaching, i.e. when faculty members revealed their own enthusiasm, motivation and excitement about their subject.

P108: You have to convey your passion for what you are teaching and believe in

what you are teaching too, because if you yourself are de-motivated, then there's no way you can motivate your students.

How to Plan Subjects in order to Foster Learning and Participation

As regards the organisation of their subjects, for these faculty members the most important aspect was to have everything well-planned from the beginning. Although they sometimes left room for improvisation, since they understood it was vital to be flexible, they also believed that classes should be well structured and thoroughly prepared.

P116: I believe that students generally tend to appreciate a well-structured subject, they like things to be organised so they know what they'll be learning. So, everything has to be well organised, they have to know exactly when they need to do this and that...

Participants took all their students into account when planning their subjects. They strove to make sure the contents were more practical than theoretical. They believed it was necessary for teaching to have a practical use, and that students should be able to apply what they learn in their professional capacity in the near future. Moreover, this orientation towards practical contents had a direct impact on students' motivation and promoted learning.

P82: Professional use, that's key. I believe that content and the learning that takes place in the classroom has one basic purpose, and that is that students should know how to apply it to their professional activities.

When striving to relate theoretical content to practical activities in order to foster learning, participants often used examples and real case studies that served to illustrate more abstract or theoretical concepts:

P68: Using examples or things that they see as feasible in the real world, i.e. the world beyond the blackboard. Presenting them with case studies, examples, etc. Applying what we see in class to real cases. I think that is what motivates them

most.

Another resource they often used to motivate students consisted of carrying out different activities during class. Their maxim was that sessions should be dynamic and active, and that it was important to use a varied range of activities which helped capture students' attention. Also, in the same way that they used different activities and methodologies, they also used different resources, including technological ones:

P73: At the moment, for example, I am giving them QR codes so they can have a look at the complementary material at home, on their mobile phones. This is why it's useful to understand how new technologies can be used. Another thing I do is play videos of trials. The idea is to ensure dynamic classes.

One interesting result of this study is that participants commented that they did not use any specific strategy to motivate students with disabilities. On the contrary, they all remarked that these students were generally even more motivated than the rest of their classmates. It was not therefore necessary to use any 'additional' strategies:

P9: I haven't had to do anything, because they are usually very motivated students.

Finally, in the teaching and learning process, participants highlighted the need to provide continuous feedback and positive criticism. They recognised that often, at university, the feedback given was based on pointing out the negative aspects of everything and said they thought learning was more effective when the comments provided to students were constructive.

Methodological Strategies which Contribute to Inclusion

Although they did not all use the same strategies, faculty members who engage in inclusive pedagogy did have one thing in common: they all agreed that learning should be active and student-centred. Some faculty members tended to use project-based learning more, while others used the flipped classroom, cooperative learning, gamification, practical case

studies or guided discovery. In short, all coincided in stating that learning should not just take the form of traditional lectures (although sometimes they did use this format) and the methodological strategies used had to be varied. These faculty members believed that learning should be participatory, active and fun.

P26: I try to ensure that my students enjoy themselves. I try to ensure that they learn, and that learning becomes fun.

They understood that it was necessary to use a range of different methodological strategies, since this enabled them to respond to students' different learning styles. Moreover, by using these different strategies they motivated not only students, but themselves also:

P94: I use all kinds of learning styles: guided discovery, problem-solving, task assignment, etc. I use them all, depending on the content to be taught. I use them as a strategy and, to be quite honest, I also do so because I'd be bored rigid if I only used one teaching style.

Affective and Emotional Strategies that Contribute to Student Learning

One key aspect for participants was the need to create a classroom climate based on respect and elements that highlight positive over negative aspects. Faculty members coincided in that this climate was vital to ensuring that students felt safe in the classroom context and were open to participating and asking for help when necessary from either academic staff or classmates.

P53: There needs to be a great deal of respect, where everything is accepted and there are no moral or ethical judgments. The classroom should be a place where people feel totally free, accepted and at ease.

Participants stated that it was important for all students to feel that they belonged to the class, and to foster this feeling they used different strategies to promote emotional engagement. In this sense, they recognised the need to connect with students, and to do so

used a range of strategies to bridge the gap between them, the most important being to foster close relations with students, beyond mere academic ties. In the case of students with disabilities this was even more necessary, and participants said they used any resources available to facilitate this. For example, they learned the names of all students in their class because they believed this fostered cohesion and made students feel part of the group. They also took the time to get to know their students. These strategies aimed to ensure that students saw them as a source of support, rather than as a barrier.

P101: Look, there's one simple strategy ...well, there are global strategies such as getting on with your students, respecting them, being patient with them, etc.

Moreover, participants also let students get to know them, sharing personal information about their private life. Their classes were not just about the specific subject contents; rather, there was opportunity for personal relationships. Emotional connection was also another key element in the classes given by participants, since it was upon this that a close, supportive relationship was gradually built.

P61: And it's this, this emotional connection, this letting yourself been seen as you really are, that encourages them to come to you for help.

The aim of connecting with students and fostering close relationships with them was simply to develop a sense of belonging, thereby humanising teaching, because as participants themselves stated, if there was anything that motivated students with and without disabilities to learn and to stay at university it was this feeling of being at the centre of the process, the feeling that people believed in you and treated you with affection and respect. When faculty members believed in their students, took them and their feelings into consideration, conveyed their concern through their actions and made a concerted effort to ensure they learned, they were laying the groundwork for effective learning and for promoting a sense of belonging to the university community.

P58: I believe that what motivates them most is feeling that you take them into consideration. The thing that helps them most not give up, not drop out, is the feeling that you care, are concerned about them and are willing to help them overcome the obstacles on their path. In short, it's knowing that they can count on you for support.

Conclusions and discussion

The majority of studies carried out to date on higher education, disability and inclusive education have identified faculty members as a barrier (Martins, Morges, & Gonçalves, 2018; Moriarty, 2007). This article, however, focuses on faculty members who have helped and contributed to inclusion. This is the first study on inclusive pedagogy in the university context that takes into account different dimensions, such as beliefs, design and actions, since most other authors (Florian & Beaton, 2017; Moscardini, 2015) have focused on educational stages prior to university level. Studies focusing exclusively on the university sphere are scarce, and those that do exist, such as the ones by Gale et al. (2017), concentrate more on the theory of inclusive pedagogy. Moreover, even those that do analyse this pedagogical approach, such as the study by Moriarty (2007), tend to describe the barriers encountered by students with disabilities, but do not examine what faculty members who engage in inclusive pedagogy actually do, and how and why they do it.

The findings presented here reveal a group of faculty members concerned about the learning and motivation of all their students, including those with disabilities, who are seen as being just like other students. Cunningham (2013) and McKay and Devlin (2016) coincide in stating that basing one's actions as a faculty member on the principles of inclusive education benefits all students. The same conclusion can be drawn from the results of this study. Participants, who were selected by students with disabilities due to their best practices in relation to inclusion, could easily have been identified by any other student also, since their

testimonies reveal a group of proactive professionals who are passionate about teaching, take an active interest in ensuring that their students learn, prepare their classes meticulously and use methodological and affective strategies to place students at the centre of the teaching and learning process. Thus, the profile of faculty member that emerges from this study coincides with that described in other works which outline what good academic staff do or which identify the most effective teaching strategies (Almarghani & Mijatovic, 2017; Bain, 2004; Kember & McNaught, 2007). The novelty here is that the focus is on students with disabilities and on faculty members who succeed in including them.

In this sense, our exploration of inclusive pedagogy revealed a series of beliefs and actions which participating faculty members hold and engage in with a view to fostering the learning and sense of belonging of all students. Firstly, they believe in all their students. They show them they are important to them, and that they trust in them and their capabilities. It is vital that students with disabilities believe in their own potential and that their faculty members take an active interest in their learning and have high expectations of them. This motivates them and encourages them to remain at university until the completion of their degree (Klauda & Guthrie, 2015; Stein, 2014).

In relation to planning, even before the academic year begins, participating faculty members have planned their entire course meticulously, and their classes are all well prepared. They are also firmly committed to practical contents that prepare students for their future professional tasks. Moreover, each session is planned with a variety of different activities, making use of a range of technological resources, without overlooking the importance of continuous, constructive feedback. These findings are consistent with those reported by other studies, such as the ones by Thomas (2016) and Williams et al. (2016), and provide clues regarding how to plan to include all students.

The teaching approach adopted by the faculty members participating in our study is

student-focused and places special emphasis on ensuring that learning is active and constructivist (Thomas, 2016). Although inclusive pedagogy is not the same as active learning, active learning approaches do have features that make learning inclusive. Indeed, faculty would do well to focus on the engagement and motivation aspects of active learning, as vital elements for inclusive teaching.

Participants do not use just one single methodological strategy, since they believe that their teaching should adapt to different learning styles (Postareff & Lindblon-Yläle, 2008). Their practices are based on universal design for learning. Inspired by the results of this study, universities are recommended to encourage other faculty members to include the universal design for learning approach in their teaching practices (Lawrie et al., 2017), since this approach encompasses all students, including those with disabilities.

Participating faculty do not only have complete mastery of the content within their discipline, they are also competent pedagogues. Therefore, the results of this study do not confirm the findings reported by Moriarty (2007), in which the author concludes that the majority of faculty members teach in the way they themselves were taught, and for the most part have no knowledge of either pedagogical techniques or student diversity. Nevertheless, our study does coincide with proposals made in the literature regarding how to teach effective classes (Seatter & Ceulemans, 2017). In line with Gale et al.'s (2017) recommendation, the faculty members participating in our study 'work with' rather than 'act on' their students. Moreover, as other authors have also concluded (Postareff et al., 2017), participants are clear about the fact that, within these methodological strategies, emotional and affective components are of vital importance to learning. They therefore take care to establish good relations with students, and are approachable and affectionate in their interactions (Pekrun, & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2014). Through their actions, they aim to create a classroom community in which all students feel welcome and can develop a sense of belonging.

Although, as Kaynardağ (2017) points out, Spanish universities do not require faculty members to have any formal pedagogical training, the participants in our study nevertheless have a high level of pedagogical competence, since they know about and use different methodological and affective strategies which adapt to different learning styles and motivate students. They are faculty members who, in short, engage in best practices which benefit students with disabilities. Moreover, as previous research has shown (Moriña et al., 2015; Cunningham, 2013), inclusive actions are also beneficial to all students. These methodological and emotional teaching skills should be taken into account by universities when designing training policies, and universities should also consider running courses to train faculty in both teaching methodologies and strategies that foster emotional and affective connections.

Lastly, these faculty members have much to teach the university community. Although it is not the first time that someone has pointed out the need for universities to implement policies and actions designed to foster inclusion (Martins et al., 2018; Norris, Hammond, Williams, & Walker, 2020), the approach to inclusive pedagogy described in this article corroborates this need and shows one possible way of moving forward towards this goal. We can learn from these faculty members. In other words, they are good role models. Their beliefs and practices offer a set of guidelines for imagining, designing and constructing an educational and social scenario in which all students can participate and benefit from a teaching and learning process conceived by and for them.

Limitations and Further Research

One of the limitations of this study was the time spent recruiting participants. The process was slow and lasted a whole year, mainly due to negotiations with the support services in the different universities in order to communicate the project to students with disabilities (who were responsible for identifying faculty members engaging in inclusive

pedagogy). Participation in this process was fairly low and eventually it was necessary to contact different universities and other people not originally included in the initial project in order to expand the sample group.

Another limitation was the time spent gathering data, since faculty members were overburdened with research and teaching tasks and it was often not easy for them to find time to conduct two long interviews.

A third aspect that could be considered a limitation is that no separate analysis was conducted in accordance with either university or field of knowledge. Nevertheless, this was not the aim of the study, and nor were any significant data found which would enable a differential analysis on the basis of these criteria.

Despite these limitations, however, we believe that our study is novel and fills in a gap in the research carried out to date on higher education and inclusive pedagogy. The findings presented here highlight the value of what faculty members engaging in inclusive pedagogy actually do, and show us what *we* can do and how *we* can motivate students with and without disabilities and foster their learning.

Future research should strive to further explore this field by carrying out classroom observations in order to provide direct, first-hand accounts of these best practices and analyse in more detail the actions carried out by these faculty members. Moreover, interviews could be held with students with disabilities in order to determine the most effective strategies that contribute to their learning and participation. Finally, it would also be useful to listen to the voices of the rest of the student body, in order to identify and explore in more detail the best practices engaged in by faculty members.

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