An inclusive pedagogy in Arts and Humanities university classrooms: what faculty members do

Abstract

This article shows the educational strategies developed by faculty members that their students with disabilities considered as excellent for carrying out an inclusive pedagogy in Higher Education. 119 faculty members from 10 Spanish public universities participated in the study, 24 of whom were from the field of Arts and Humanities. Through a qualitative methodology, individual semi-structured interview was used for data collection. The data was analyzed inductively through a categories and codes system. The results show how the participants considered students' opinions when designing their methods. Moreover, the study shows the teaching strategies that the participants used to ensure the participation of all their students. Lastly, the article describes how the participants attended the concerns of students with disabilities. Finally, we discuss these results with previous studies, and we consider the main elements for an inclusive pedagogy that may serve as an example for other faculty members.

Introduction

Throughout the last few decades, a large number of researchers have been concerned about the situation of non-traditional students in university environments. The studies in this line of research have aimed to identify the barriers that certain groups of students must overcome, the supports they require, the policies for their inclusion and the most suitable educational practices to respond to their needs (Brown, 2017; Gale and Hodge, 2015; Hughes, 2014). Usually, these studies have been focused on understanding and improving the academic experiences of students from diverse cultures and countries of origin (Blasco, 2015; Linder et al., 2015), transgender people (Wolff et al., 2017) and people with disabilities (Bumble et al., 2019; Spassiani et al., 2017; Vlachou and Papananou, 2018). Regarding to students with disabilities, the literature shows that they continue to encounter significant barriers that hinder their academic careers at the university (Anderson et al., 2018; Griful-Freixenet et al., 2017). In the context of Spain, where the study presented in this article was carried out, the situation is not different, and Spanish students with disabilities identify many different difficulties while attending university (Moriña et al., 2015).

However, although studies show that barriers and obstacles for students with disabilities are often similar, authors such as Gibson (2012) point out the importance of serving students according to their disability, rather than in a general way. This justification is

based on the individuality of the teaching processes being their different experiences depending on them. Mention should be made of invisible disabilities, that is, those that are not physically visible or manifested by students, such as learning difficulties or psychic disabilities. Studies such as those of Gibson (2012) or Mullins and Pryde (2013) reflect the doubly negative experiences that these students experience due to their disability. Sometimes, their veracity is questioned by their peers or faculty members. Actions such as listening to the voices of this student group would allow not only the suppression of such barriers, but also contribute to the increase of proposals for improvement towards the development of an education model, even in the University (Moriña, 2017b; Tangen, 2008).

Many countries are developing policies and actions that pursue the full inclusion of students with disabilities in all educational stages, including Higher Education (HE). There has been considerable progress in the field of attention to disability in the university legislation in the last few decades. Actions such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008) and the Europe 2020 Strategy for an Intelligent, Sustainable and Integrating Growth (2014) pursue the right to an equitable education for everyone. In Spain, Royal Legislative Decree 1/2013, on the rights of people with disabilities and their social inclusion, or Organic Law 7/2007 on Universities, explicitly mention the existing legal recognition of the inclusion of people with disabilities in HE institutions. With these legal actions, the guarantee of equality and access to opportunities and non-discrimination of people with disabilities is established, being included as a legal imperative towards institutions in general and towards faculty members in particular. In this way, the adjustments faculty members have to offer students must respond more to the existing legal requirement than to their goodwill, although sometimes the literature evidences the opposite (Moriña et al., 2015).

Although access to HE for students with disabilities is being ensured, their permanency is questioned by the lack of educational actions that attend their characteristics (Gibson et al., 2016). In addition to legislative measures and the provision of resources to educational institutions, it is necessary to analyze and improve the teaching-learning processes within the classrooms (Gale et al., 2017). In this sense, there is still much to do and many challenges to overcome for the development of practices based on the principles of inclusive education in HE (Moriña, 2017).

The studies that have shown the perspectives of students with disabilities identify that the main difficulties come from the faculty members. This opinion has been shared by students with disabilities from different countries, including Spanish students (Moriña et al., 2015). When we analyze the barriers and supports that students with disabilities identify at the university in the literature, we can see that the experiences of students from all over the world coincide. In relation to faculty members, they refer to actions that hinder participation and their lack of training in inclusive education and disability (Collins et al., 2018). In fact, the students usually feel rejection and negative attitudes from the faculty members (Mullins and Preyde, 2013; Strnadová et al., 2015). Students even mention that some faculty members refuse to make the reasonable adjustments that they need to pass the subject (Fuller et al., 2004; Gibson et al., 2016; Yssel et al., 2016). In view of this situation, universities must have informed, trained and aware faculty members (Vickerman and Blundell, 2010).

Furthermore, few studies in HE and disability in many countries around the world have shown the perspectives of faculty members, who admit to have little experience working with students with disabilities and little training and knowledge about inclusive practices (Black et al., 2014; Cook et al., 2009; Langørgen et al., 2018; Lombardi et al., 2015). However, they sometimes show willingness to make the reasonable adjustments and interest in receiving training in inclusive education (Becker and Palladino, 2016). Considering this information, it is necessary to pay further attention to the knowledge and skills of faculty members for the development of inclusive practices in the university. HE institutions have the responsibility to respond to the needs of all students (Doughty and Allan, 2008), with the faculty being a key element in this process.

As in the case of elementary education (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011), little is known about the processes of inclusion that are being developed at the classroom level in universities. The main objective of many studies has been to determine the difficulties encountered by students with disabilities, although there is a small number of authors who have focused on providing alternatives to these barriers. In fact, many studies have recommended measures to improve university policies in terms of inclusion (Leyser and Greenberger, 2008; Riddell et al., 2007; Thomas, 2016). Even others have been dedicated to train faculty members to attend to students with disabilities (Rohland et al., 2003; Sowers and Smith, 2004). However, it is necessary to know efficient practices that are being developed in the classrooms. Once we know the barriers that students with disabilities are facing in the university, and the difficulties that faculty members usually encounter in the teaching-learning process, in this article we aim to take a further step: what if the solutions to these difficulties are in the hands of those faculty members who develop an inclusive educational practice? In addition to keep improving institutional actions, legislation and processes to support students with disabilities, it is necessary to know effective inclusive practical experiences that take place in university classrooms.

In recent years, several studies have analyzed the educational practices of teachers of elementary education, which were characteristic for being inclusive teachers. In addition to analyzing their practices and actions, these studies considered the teachers' beliefs and knowledge underlying and motivating those practices. Thus, the concept of inclusive pedagogy emerged (Florian and Kershner, 2009).

Inclusive pedagogy differs from previous approaches, such as special education (still characteristic of educational systems) and inclusive education. It is about providing support for all, offering for each student what he/she needs (Florian, 2010; Veck, 2014). Inclusive pedagogy recognizes the individual differences of students, thus avoiding the stigma of acknowledging some as different. Authors who have studied other approaches, such as the Universal Design for Learning (UDL), have alluded to the inefficiency of making individual adaptations according to the type of disability in the university (Griful-Freixenet et al., 2017). The traditional model, based on offering a completely different educational action to respond to educational needs, continues to be present in many educational institutions. It is a reactive approach, where the need is first detected and then a response is designed. In addition, this approach creates a stigma in the student, pointing out that he or she is different by having to work differently from his or her peers. However, university students have expressed more positive emotions when working with inclusive educational approaches (Yuval et al., 2004). In fact, some studies have reported

that the application of the principles of the UDL can reduce the stress of students and improve their learning success (Kumar and Wideman, 2014).

One of the key elements of inclusive pedagogy is the students' participation. The faculty members must consider the opinion of their students, and trust that they will make good decisions about their own learning (Echeita et al., 2016). From this approach, students play an active role, by choosing how, where, when and whom they learn with (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). In this sense, university students with disabilities have pointed out that they prefer active and participatory teaching methods rather than traditional presentation strategies (Love et al., 2015). These results are reaffirmed in works such as those of Hughet et al. (2018), who reflect how the use of active and participatory methodologies, such as the Flipped Classroom, increase the students` motivation and the development of their skills.

Inclusive faculty members are also characterized for having relationships of trust with their students, promoting interest for learning, generating group learning spaces and being open to the participation of other agents in the classroom (professionals, relatives, colleagues, etc.) (Echeita et al., 2016). Moreover, inclusive pedagogy has an important base in the proven premise that adjustments made for some students are beneficial for all (Rose et al., 2006; Pliner and Johnson, 2004).

Knowledge about practices of faculty members based on inclusive pedagogy in HE is more limited than in other educational stages. We can quote the works of Gale and Mills (2013) and Gale et al. (2017), who analyze the concept of "social inclusive pedagogy" and the application of its principles in the university. In addition to areas of inclusive pedagogy already mentioned (beliefs and actions), these authors described how the teaching-learning processes are designed. Thus, social inclusive pedagogy is based on three principles (Gale and Mills, 2013: page 8):

(1) a belief that all students bring things of value to the learning environment;
(2) a design that values difference while also providing access to and enabling engagement with dominance;
(3) actions that 'work with' rather than 'act on' students and their communities.

These principles mean that all students contribute something to the learning of their peers, and their activity in the classroom is fundamental to achieving meaningful learning, as well as to maintaining their motivation and involvement. Furthermore, the design of teaching should consider the differences between students, rather than conceiving that all students learn in the same way. In addition, students' voices should be considered to enhance their academic experience, providing opportunities to decide how to work. This will have better results than applying changes or methods that faculty believes are most appropriate, without involving the students in these decisions.

With the aim of filling a gap in the literature about inclusive pedagogy in HE, and following the examples of other colleagues such as Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) or Rouse (2008), in this article we analyze the actions developed by a group of faculty members in the field of Arts and Humanities to achieve the educational inclusion of all their students.

Method

This article is framed within a broader research project funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness. The main goal of the four-year-long (2016-2020) *"Inclusive pedagogy in the university: faculty members' narratives"* (EDU2016-76587-R, IP. Anabel Moriña) was to analyze the knowledge, beliefs, designs and actions of faculty members who develop inclusive pedagogy.

As mentioned above, Spanish university students have identified faculty as the main barrier to their academic careers. The literature has focused on analyzing these barriers from the voice of students with disabilities, but there are fewer studies in which faculty members participate. For this reason, this study gives voice to faculty members who respond to these barriers, in order to show solutions to them, which have already been widely identified and described in other works.

In order to recruit faculty members who really developed inclusive educational practices, we felt that it was not enough to ask them about what they used to do in the classroom. In order to ensure that they were truly inclusive faculty, the selection process was based on the opinions of students with disabilities. These students from different universities proposed those faculty members with whom they had encountered no barriers to learning and who had encouraged their inclusion and participation. In this way, we ensured that all participants had experience teaching students with disabilities, and that they did so in an appropriate way.

Participants

119 Faculty members from 10 Spanish public universities participated in the study (the profile of the complete sample group of the study can be consulted in Moriña, 2019).

Regarding the participants from the field of Arts and Humanities, whose data we present in this article, we contacted 37 faculty members to ask for their collaboration. In the end, 24 faculty members participated in the study. Those faculty members who decided not to participate stated that they were unavailable due to illness or lack of time.

The recruitment of the participants was based on a single criterion: they had to be faculty members recommended by their own students with disabilities. To this end, we requested the collaboration of the Disability Support Services of the universities. After informing them about the project and its objectives and procedures, we asked them to share this information with the students with disabilities that were registered in their services. Via e-mail, the students were asked to recommend faculty members who had positively influenced their academic trajectories. For that purpose, we mentioned to the students some of the characteristics that these faculty members should show. In previous studies, these characteristics have been pointed out by students with disabilities as those that the ideal faculty should have (Moriña et al., 2015).

- They believe in the capacities of all students.
- They facilitate the learning processes.
- Their teaching methods encourage student activity and participation in the classroom. They use different teaching methodological strategies.
- They care for the learning of all their students.
- They are flexible, willing to help.
- They motivate the students.

- They establish close relationship with their students and favor the interactions among them.
- They make their students feel important, as part of the class.

Once the students received the information from the Support Service of the universities, they sent an e-mail to the research team with the information about the faculty members they recommended and the reasons to propose them.

On the other side, we used the snowball technique (Petersen and Valdez, 2005; Voicu and Babonea, 2011). The research team contacted university students with disabilities who had previously collaborated in other projects. In addition, we disseminated the information among faculty members and students of the different universities to reach other students with disabilities who could recommend inclusive faculty members.

Once we had the data of the faculty members selected by their students, we contacted them via phone call and/or e-mail. We informed them about the objectives, method and procedure of the research and requested their participation. We also informed them that they had been chosen by their own students with disabilities.

Regarding the profile of the participants, 12 of them taught in faculties of Fine Arts, five in the area of Language, Literature and Translation, two in Philosophy and Letters, one in Sociology and four in Geography and History. With regard to gender, 14 of them were men and 10 were women. With respect to the age of the participants, five of them were between 30 and 40 years old, seven were between 41 and 50 years old, six were between 51 and 60 years, and two were over 60 years old. Four participants decided not to state their age. Finally, there was also a variety regarding the years of teaching experience. Seven participants had less than 10 years of experience in the university, whereas 10 participants had between 11 and 20 years of experience. Four faculty members had between 21 and 30 years of experience, and only three participants had more than 30 years of teaching experience. Initially, we consider it important to consider the age of the participants, in order to know if there are differences in their practices due to their age or experience. However, no significant differences were observed between teachers according to age.

Research instruments

The data presented here corresponds to the first phase of the research. This phase was conducted using a qualitative methodology. As the data-gathering instrument, we used the individual semi-structured interview. Two interviews were conducted with each participant. The main purpose of the interview on educational actions was to know which practices and strategies were developed by the faculty members to attend to the diversity of their students, including students with disabilities. Some of the questions that guided this interview were the following: What are your initial considerations when designing the teaching project of your subject? What do you do to know the specific needs or difficulties of a student to follow your subject successfully? What do you do to help them overcome those difficulties? Do you usually consider the opinion of your students to redesign the teaching project during the development of the subject? What educational methods and strategies do you consider to be more effective for all students to learn, and why? Do you use the same strategies for students with disabilities?

These questions, focused on educational actions, were generated from the principles of inclusive education, which students with disabilities themselves consider fundamental, such as: considering the opinion of students, knowing and considering the difficulties they encounter, developing different methods that minimize those difficulties, or adjusting for students with disabilities when necessary.

The length of each interview was around 90 minutes. They were guided by different researchers of the team individually. Most of the interviews were carried out face-to-face, whereas, due to geographical distance or unavailability, three of the participants were interviewed online, via Skype, and another two via phone call. Regardless of the way in which the interviews were conducted, all the information was recorded in audio and subsequently transcribed verbatim.

Data analysis

A structural analysis of the data was performed using a categories and codes system created inductively, following the proposal of Miles and Huberman (1994). The analysis was conducted using the data analysis software MaxQDA12. The researchers were organized in pairs to analyze all the information. Then, one last analysis was carried out by the whole team as a single group. This analysis served for the categorization of the information in which doubts had arisen about how and where to include it. Table 1 shows the categories and codes generated for the analysis of the information presented in the results section of this article.

Category	Code
Teaching-learning process design	Climate Materials Faculty member-student relationship Knowing the students / identifying needs Flexibility in the design Negotiation with the students in the design
Methodological strategies	Organization Active methods Significant learning Team work / cooperative learning Theory-practice combination Role of the faculty member Assessment

Table 1. System of categories and codes for the data analysis

Through these categories, which included all the information obtained in the interviews, we divided the information into different thematic areas. Thus, for the analysis of the information presented in this article, we selected two categories.

One of them contained information on the design of the planning of the subject. In this category, we were interested in knowing how participants considered the characteristics of students in order to re-design their planification and adjust it to the students at the beginning of the course. This category included aspects such as how to establish an initial relationship with the students and create a climate of confidence, how they collected information about what each student wanted to do in class and how they gave the opportunity to participate in the design of the programming, or the level of flexibility that the syllabuses had.

On the other side, a second category on methodological strategies gathered all the information about the teaching methods: their previous organization, the level of activity and participation of the students, the different strategies used and the level of learning expected, the role of the faculty in the development of these methods and the different forms of evaluation of learning.

Ethical issues

With respect to the ethical issues of the research, an informed consent report was used. Through this document, the research team committed to provide a copy of the results report to the participants. Thus, the faculty members had the opportunity to modify or delete some information.

In this document we inform the participants about the objectives of the research, the way in which they had been selected by their students, the research techniques and how the data would be treated and published. In this sense, through this document we undertook to maintain the anonymity of the participants in the research report, and not to publish their personal information and identities if they did not want to.

Lastly, it was guaranteed that if any participant wished to leave the process during the course of the research, their data would be deleted and would not be used.

Results

The results are presented in three sections that show the key elements that the participants included in their teaching activity to ensure the participation of all their students. Firstly, we present the planning strategies for the subject matter attending to the diversity of the students at the beginning of the course. Secondly, we show the diverse methodological options that the faculty members developed in their classrooms to foster the participation and motivation of all their students. Finally, we highlight how the participants conceived teaching for students with disabilities specifically, and which actions they carried out when they need an alternative option.

Teaching planning and first contact with the students

Planning the teaching process prior to the beginning of the course was one of the main elements for the faculty members. They highlighted the importance of organizing the subject before initiating the course. Likewise, they considered it essential to share this information with their students. They knew that it was important for students to have an initial calendar in advance to let them know what, how and when was going to be done, which was essentially helpful for some students with disabilities (for example, for those

who must be absent from some classes for medical visits). In addition to the dates established in the academic calendar, the faculty members provided all the information related to the methodology, the materials and the evaluation systems.

> I think it is better to give them the information in advance, so that they know what we are going to do, how we are going to do it, what we want to achieve and how we are going to evaluate that (Faculty 7).

Furthermore, the participants considered that it was essential to know their students. These faculty members used the first contact with their students to find out their personal interests, what they expected to learn and how they wanted to do so. Thus, they had the opportunity to adapt the program to the proposals of their students, promoting their motivation and involvement for learning. This is an action that they used to do with all the students, not just those with disabilities. To this end, some participants performed an initial evaluation to know their previous knowledge, interests, motivations and expectations with respect to the subject.

> Usually, at the beginning of the course I do some sort of pre-evaluation. [...] they tell me what they know, their preferences, etc. This way I get an idea of who they are and then, we begin. I try to see their level, what they want to do, what they like, what they do, what brought them to this faculty, what they want to learn... Then, from that point, we get to work (Faculty 2).

Thus, the participants could adapt their teaching methods to the characteristics of their students. This way, the faculty members obtained an initial knowledge about the diversity of the students, their personal differences, their motivations and their learning styles. Participants were aware of the existence of different learning styles in their students. That is, the cognitive and physiological traits by which learners perceive and understand information and interact within learning processes. Once they knew their characteristics, they decided to apply a methodological variety that suited and responded to all of them.

> Each group is an entirely different world. They have their personality. There are groups with great efficiency, others work harder, others are more creative... Therefore, the methodology to be used is a personalized methodology. We can hardly present a work project to the class, but we know that, in the end, each and one of them will assimilate it in a different way (Faculty 2).

According to these faculty members, the beginning of the course and the first contact with the students was an opportunity to know their opinions about the subject matter, which, in turn, would allow them to adapt their teaching to the preferences of the group. With this goal, they stated that this action was fundamental to promote the motivation and interest of their students toward their own learning.

Efficient teaching methods and strategies for everyone

Once we knew their first steps with the students at the beginning of the course, we wanted to know how they developed their subjects. At the methodological level, the vast majority of the participants did not apply only one teaching strategy. Methodological variety was fundamental to improve the possibilities of all students to participate.

Moreover, some of them commented on how they organized each class in a different way. Introducing new methods and variations that responded to the preferences of the students and avoiding monotonous sessions helped the participants to keep a high level of motivation.

Despite recognizing that teaching theoretical content was necessary for the assimilation of the subject matter, the faculty members considered that the active role of the student in the classroom was a fundamental aspect for an effective learning. Through participatory and interactive methodologies, the faculty members achieved the involvement of the students in the teaching-learning process, acquiring a leading role and promoting their commitment. According to the participants, this active learning is one of the premises of inclusive teaching, since it aims to provide the students with more autonomy and turn them into the leaders and builders of their knowledge. They were also characterized for leaving the masterclass (traditional methods) and fundamentally theoretical lectures aside.

> I think that participatory lectures are very useful, I mean, all those that favor the participation of the student and, somehow, make them feel a certain level of autonomy about the process. In my opinion, they are fundamental. I believe that the ones that are hard, for both faculty members and students, are the theoretical lectures and master classes (Faculty 5).

Some of these strategies were, for instance, directed management (which fostered participation in the classroom and encouraged group reflection and learning) or problem-solving. The latter was considered by some as one of the most effective methods, since it allows students to apply the theoretical contents to practical cases, ensuring the comprehension of the concepts and establishing a content-reality relation.

> The theoretical part, which is the usual master model, is perhaps the least effective methodology. However, presenting complex activities in the classroom, such as assignments with problems to solve, is the most interesting aspect from the learning perspective. I think that this is one of the key methodologies nowadays; in my case, it is the one with which I spend more time (Faculty 15).

Another fundamental aspect according to the participants was team work. They indicated that this type of methodology was ideal, not only for an adequate learning, but also for the inclusion of all students and the strengthening of social relations. Moreover, they considered that it was an opportunity to recognize the differences between students as an enrichment of the learning process, and not as difficulties. Thus, each student could contribute their value to the class work and learn from others, with the feeling of being part of the group.

> Well, cooperative learning, projects... Everything that is done in groups, where each student contributes what they can; they are all different... I think that this works very well and favors inclusion significantly, more than any type of individual learning (Faculty 17).

Among these active and participatory methods, a fundamental key commented on by the participants was the fostering of reflection and critical thinking. They considered themselves as guides of the learning process, with the constant intention of making students question the contents and build their own knowledge. Thus, the faculty members believed that they ensured a greater motivation with the subject matter. One of the Arts faculty members commented that one of her fundamental goals was to educate critical professionals through practical teaching that connects with the professional reality.

> I really like it when my students achieve self-criticism. I don't tell them "this is how it is"; on the contrary, it is fundamental for them to be critical. The first thing I propose is to visit several sculptures and get them to do a datasheet, where they must perform a critical analysis and gather a set of suggestions and what they would have modified. I do this because, when they begin to do their own projects, they must apply that criticism to themselves, since what you demand from others you must demand from yourself (Faculty 1).

Along with that critical thinking, the participants considered that it was fundamental for the students to identify in the learning processes a practical utility for their professional life. A common characteristic of university students is their interest for acquiring knowledge and skills that are directly related to the work they will carry out in the future. Therefore, the connection of the subject with the working world was another key element for the adaption of teaching to the interests and motivations of all students. To such end, the faculty members proposed numerous practical activities in which students could apply the theory learned, by working and creating in workshops, with a simulation of business creation or even with the participation of external professionals who shared their experiences.

> Sometimes I bring colleagues who are artists and they tell my students what they are living. I also tell them about my own experience, with some details whenever it is relevant (Faculty 1).

Finally, it was also interesting to know how these faculty members, characterized for being inclusive, conceived assessment. In this sense, they valued the continuous work and effort of the students throughout the entire course. As they used active and participatory methodologies, the participants had the opportunity to conduct a formative assessment throughout the course. Thus, they fostered the involvement of the students for the whole process and removed the pressure of evaluating them in a single final exam.

> Imagine, if you have 20 or 30 students and try to work a little bit, not only through master lectures, but by directing debates, intervening, observing each of them, taking notes... I'm sure it wouldn't be necessary to evaluate them in another way, right? You immediately see how they get it, who understands, who doesn't, who is interested and learns... I think this can be seen straightaway (Faculty 20).

In essence, the educational practice of the participants was characterized by offering methodological variety and promoting the active learning, participation and motivation of the students. All of them highlighted these principles as indispensable when attending to diversity. Moreover, they assured that this was a suitable approach for all students, which

did not entail the need to make distinctions between students with disabilities and those without disabilities. Regarding this latter idea, it is important to highlight the belief of the participants that all students are equal and that the teaching-learning process must be based on the principle of equal opportunities.

> When they have to work, create and present before the class and such, it is when they memorize and learn the most, obviously. (…) I think that for any student in general, with or without disabilities, we are all the same here (Faculty 13).

Differentiations for students with disabilities?

It is very interesting to delve into the idea of how the participants understood disability, and to what extent teaching was the same for all students or, on the contrary, was different for students with disabilities. When we asked the participants about students with disabilities, they commented that the fundamental premise was to talk to them with continuity and directly, in order to know what they needed and how they could improve their academic experience.

> The fact that students with disabilities may express themselves on their own and say "look, I will need this like this" or "this way is more convenient for me". In fact, the whole classroom can be dragged into it, voluntarily; it can be offered also to every student (Faculty 10).

As stated by this faculty member, it was an action to be developed with all the students, not only with those with disability. They intended, throughout the course, to foster the participation of all students in the selection of methods, contents, activities and resources to be used in the subject.

> Also, the fact that they can propose something is quite effective, since what they usually offer is closely linked to what is being required from them. So, they simply ask "can I do it this way?"; if you really see that it's ok, then it can be done (Faculty 10).

These student proposals would be developed as long as they allowed the learning objectives to be achieved. Considering the characteristics and capacities of each student could be an essential aspect to achieve inclusion in the classrooms. Although most of the methods and strategies they used did not make distinctions between students with disabilities and those without disabilities, they recognized the need to make modifications for students with disabilities in certain cases. Some of the adjustments consisted in extending the time given to complete the assessment activities, providing the materials at the beginning of the course and offering the material in different formats (text, visual, audio, presentations, etc.). This practice of adjusting the teaching components to the students was again positively valued as a benefit for all students, and not only for those with disabilities.

> Also, the more freedom you give them, the more options you give to diversity, I guess. In fact, if you offer written material, or in video format... That also allows each of them to choose a little bit (Faculty 20).

These adjustments were never considered as a special treatment for some students, since the faculty members were willing to make all the necessary changes for any student who would require them. The key was to adapt to the students, rather than making them adapt to the teaching methods. Thus, there were common characteristics among the participants, such as flexibility, empathy and the concern for achieving a good academic experience for the students.

> For instance, I give them less assignments and more time, I let them choose the day they want to do the presentation, etc. Obviously, I also do this with those who come to class and work hard. Some students work in the morning, then they come to class, and they study at night. They do this because they don't have enough money to pay for university, so I think these people deserve some respect (Faculty 11).

Rethinking the subject attending to the opinions of each student was considered, from the perspective of the participants, as an essential and imperative aspect for the assimilation of quality learning. Therefore, offering spaces for participation and practices based on equal opportunity and accessibility were fundamental aspects to work with the diversity of students from the approach of inclusive pedagogy.

As can be observed in the results presented, the participants did not make any distinctions between groups of students, not even between those with and those without disabilities. For this group of faculty members, their students were diverse, not only in terms of skills, but also regarding motivations, knowledge, experiences and learning styles and preferences. To achieve the inclusion and success of all their students, the fundamental key, according to all the participants, was the active role and decision-making capacity of the students in their own learning.

Conclusions and discussion

In this article we have presented the educational actions and strategies used by a group of faculty members of the field of Arts and Humanities to achieve the participation and academic success of all their students. Other studies have focused on testing inclusive strategies in the university and assessing their impact on the students (Kumar and Wideman, 2014; Yuval et al., 2004), or carried out training experiences for faculty members in inclusive education (Rohland et al., 2003; Sowers and Smith, 2004). The aim of this study was to show the opinions of faculty members who develop inclusive practices, driven by their beliefs about diversity and their involvement in the success of all their students. Faculty members have been pointed out as the main barrier in the academic career of students with disabilities (Mullins and Preyde, 2013). This study sheds some light on this reality, demonstrating that there are faculty members who do consider all their students individually, understanding diversity as a learning opportunity and an enriching element of the classroom.

Firstly, we can conclude that a fundamental key to develop an inclusive pedagogy is to know the students. In agreement with the ideas of Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011), these faculty members ask their students how they can help them, and trust their students to make the right choices about their own learning. In order to be able to adjust the teaching-learning process to the personal interests of the students, it is essential to know

them. Moreover, it is fundamental to consider and activate the previous knowledge of the students (Griful-Freixenet et al., 2017). Furthermore, it is important to provide them with the program and relevant information at the beginning of the course. For students with disabilities, it is crucial to have access to the material in advance in order to understand explanations and assimilate the information, as well as having a previous planning to organize their work. In fact, this action, as well as many others, is beneficial for all students (Rose et al., 2006).

Secondly, it is necessary for faculty members to make use of a methodological diversity that responds to the large variety of learning styles, motivations, interests and capacities (Mullins and Preyde, 2013). The basis of inclusive pedagogy is to ensure the success of the students through their participation in the classroom, from the recognition of their individual differences (Florian, 2010). This is what the participants of this study do. They base their teaching on the active participation of their students and team work, with the latter being also an important practice for social inclusion (Scanlon et al., 2018). Through group learning, spaces and opportunities are generated for students to learn from each other, which is a characteristic of inclusive faculty members highlighted by Echeita et al. (2016). In fact, the students themselves usually demand the use of active and student-centered learning methods, over traditional methods such as masterclasses (where faculty talks and explain the concepts and the students just listen and take notes) (Bain, 2004).

Likewise, a common characteristic of all the participants of this study was that they always showed a relation between the contents of the subject, the real life and the professional world. It is a fundamental practice to make sense of what is being learned, as well as to motivate the students toward the learning of tools that will be useful in their professional life. To this end, the faculty members usually carry out activities such as visits to other centers, simulations or professional projects, and even visits from other professionals to share their experiences. In agreement with Griful-Freixenet et al. (2017), these practices are very beneficial for the learning and academic experience of all university students.

One last key aspect of the methodology is related to the assessment strategies. The students, with and without disabilities, have stated in other studies that a continuous assessment is more beneficial for them than final exams, and that it is also an opportunity to obtain a constant feedback of their work from the faculty member (Kumar and Wideman, 2014). Exams are usually a source of stress for students with disabilities when their personal characteristics are not considered (Spassiani et al., 2017). Moreover, continuous assessment throughout the entire course is substantially important for learning (Yorke, 2003), since it increases participation, recognizes the continuous work of the students and allows them to better express what they know. Similarly, in those cases in which the faculty members of our study give an exam, they are fully open to make the reasonable adjustments that students with disabilities require. This conclusion is in line with that of Becker and Palladino (2016), in opposition to what students have stated in other studies, who highlighted the faculty's lack of willingness to make adjustments (Riddell et al., 2007; Vickerman and Blundell, 2010). This type of adjustment in the assessment is highly valued by students with disabilities (Anderson et al., 2018).

Lastly, getting to know the students and their interests at the beginning of the course and designing participatory methods is not enough. Throughout the course, new difficulties

may appear and the students may also bring other proposals to the classroom. Therefore, another conclusion of this study lies in the importance of creating and maintaining a close relationship and fluid communication between the faculty and the students, taking their opinion into account (Vickerman and Blundell, 2010; Yssel et al., 2016). In this sense, students state that maintaining positive relations and feeling that they are listened to and understood by their faculty members contributes to their success and inclusion (Gibson et al., 2016).

With the aim of favoring their motivation and participation, it is important to offer the students, with and without disabilities, the opportunity to propose and suggest changes in course methods, materials and contents. In the case of students with disabilities, they can encounter some difficulties in the use of some materials or activities. As recognized in inclusive pedagogy, although the practices used are designed for the maximum number of students possible, sometimes it is necessary to adjust something for some of them (Florian, 2010). These faculty members consider the personal characteristics of their students and make all the necessary adjustments when someone requires it, in order to achieve adequate learning.

Other studies have shown numerous difficulties that faculty members encounter in providing an appropriate response to students with disabilities. These difficulties may be related to the lack of time and institutional support (Langørgen et al., 2018), lack of knowledge and training (Black et al., 2014; Lombardi et al., 2015) and even to negative attitudes toward disability (Mullins and Preyde, 2013). However, this study shows that there are faculty members who design and develop inclusive educational practices considering diversity. Furthermore, this is the only study focused specifically on analyzing how faculty members of Arts and Humanities attend to students with disabilities, although some authors have tackled this field of knowledge in previous educational stages (Almqvist and Christophersen, 2017).

Moreover, we intend to pave a road toward the creation of equitable educational environments in HE, leaving behind the work for reasonable adjustments and moving toward a model based on a more flexible and open conception of education. Collins et al. (2018) also indicate how faculty members are advancing toward adjustment-based work in the subject for all students rather than the implementation of individual adjustments, since it is beneficial for everyone. In this sense, we agree with Anderson et al. (2018) on demanding the creation of more flexible curriculum designs.

All of the faculty members who participated in this study had previous experience with students with disabilities in their classrooms. What is evident from their testimonies is that in most cases no major significant adaptations are necessary for the students to achieve the learning objectives (Florian, 2010). In contrast to the model of individual curricular adaptations of special education, others such as inclusive pedagogy or the UDL opt for flexible designs and participatory methods that reduce the need for individual adjustments. Participants have found that aspects such as class participation, group learning or continuous assessment benefit all students, with and without disabilities. However, some adjustments are sometimes necessary, which usually focus on the formats of materials (changing font sizes, colors, digital and print formats, compatibility with screen readers), assessment tests (written, computer-based, tests, oral tests), ways of carrying out activities (individual, in a group, different options for the design of what

should be submitted to faculty), different deadlines (flexibility when a student needs more time) or forms of presentations (e.g. a video instead of an oral presentation in the classroom when a student has difficulty speaking in public) (Ouellett, 2004).

In any case, these are adjustments that any faculty member can make, always taking into consideration the voice of each student, who are best able to communicate what they require. As the UDL states, diversity does not only have to do with disability, so teaching must adjust to all the different characteristics of the group of students: learning styles, preferences, previous experiences, personality, abilities, etc. Therefore, by offering a variety of methods and materials we ensure that each student can choose how to work, depending on their characteristics. If teaching is rigid and has only one form of work, students who fail to adjust to it will be left out of the teaching-learning process.

Considering all these aspects, and coinciding with the inclusive educational approach, we can affirm that the key lies in offering a variety of options, as well as offering an active role to students. Therefore, we can conclude that teaching should not differentiate between students with and without disabilities, but should be tailored to all students considering their differences.

Lastly, this study also aims to contribute further knowledge to the new field of inclusive pedagogy in HE, by adding experiences of inclusive faculty members to those provided by the works of Gale and Hodge (2015) and Gale et al. (2017). We also hope that these results can serve as an example for other faculty members to work for the inclusion of all students. The educational principles that we have presented may help faculty members around the world to attend to diversity without restrictions, considering the participation, learning and academic success of each student as the core of their teaching activity.

Limitations

We must mention some limitations that arose throughout the research process. The first limitation is related to the fact that some interviews could not be conducted face-to-face. Although it would have been ideal for the interviews to be carried out face-to-face (due to the rapport established between the interviewer and the interviewee, the creation of an adequate environment and the non-verbal language), some participants were not available for it. Therefore, some interviews were conducted via Skype or phone call. However, we consider that, given the nature of the study, this had no influence on the answers of the interviewees or on the development of the interviews.

Another limitation lies in the discussion of the results of other studies similar to ours. The number of studies about inclusive pedagogy in HE is limited, especially regarding the field of Arts and Humanities. Therefore, a research line to explore is inclusive pedagogy and its practical development in university levels. Likewise, and more generally, we encourage the realization of further studies that show the opinions and experiences of faculty members regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities and attention to diversity.

References

Almqvist CF and Christophersen C (2017) Inclusive arts education in two Scandinavian primary schools: a phenomenological case study. *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 21(5): 463-474.

Anderson AH, Carter M and Stephenson J (2018) Perspectives of university students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Journal of autism and developmental disorders* 48(3): 651-665.

Bain K (2004) *What the best college teacher do*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

Becker S and Palladino J (2016) Assessing Faculty Perspectives about Teaching and Working with Students with Disabilities. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability* 29(1): 65-82.

Black RD, Weinberg LA and Brodwin MG (2014) Universal design for instruction and learning: A pilot study of faculty instructional methods and attitudes related to students with disabilities in higher education. *Exceptionality Education International* 24(1): 48-64.

Blasco M (2015) Making the tacit explicit: rethinking culturally inclusive pedagogy in international student academic adaptation. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* 23(1): 85-106.

Brown R (2017) Higher education and inequality. *Perspectives: policy and practice in Higher Education* 22(2): 37-43.

Bumble JL, Carter EW, Bethune LK, Day T and McMillan, ED (2019) Community Conversations on Inclusive Higher Education for Students With Intellectual Disability. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals* 42(1): 29-42.

Collins A, Azmat F and Rentschler R (2018) 'Bringing everyone on the same journey': revisiting inclusion in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*: 1-13.

Cook L, Rumrill P D and Tankersley M (2009) Priorities and understanding of faculty members regarding college students with disabilities. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* 21(1): 84-96.

Doughty H and Allan J (2008) Social capital and the evaluation of inclusiveness in Scottish further education colleges. *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 32(3): 275-284.

Echeita G, Sandoval M and Simón C (2016) Notas para una pedagogía inclusiva en las aulas In: *Actas IV Congreso Iberoamericano de Síndrome de Down.* Salamanca, Spain, 16-17 March 2016. Available at: https://www.uam.es/personal_pdi/stmaria/sarrio/DOCUMENTOS,%20ARTICULOS,%20PONENECIAS,/Echeita,%20Sandoval%20y%20Simon.%202013.%20Congreso%20SD.pdf (accessed 04 December 2018)

European Commission (2010) *Europe 2020 Strategy for an Intelligent, Sustainable and Integrating Growth*. Brussels: European Union.

Florian L (2010) Special education in the era of inclusion: The end of special education or a new beginning? *The Psychology of Education Review* 34(2): 22-29.

Florian L and Black-Hawkins K (2011) Exploring inclusive pedagogy. *British Educational Research Journal* 37(5): 813-828.

Florian L and Kershner R (2009) Inclusive Pedagogy. In Daniels H, Lauder H and Porter J (eds) *Knowledge, Values and Educational Policy: A Critical Perspective* (Critical Perspectives on Education). Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge, vol 2, pp. 173-182.

Fuller M, Healey M, Bradley A and Hall T (2004) Barriers to learning: a systematic study of the experience of disabled students in one university. *Studies in Higher Education* 29(3): 303-318.

Gale T and Hodge S (2014) Just imaginary: Delimiting social inclusion in higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 35(5): 688-709.

Gale T and Mills C (2013) Creating spaces in higher education for marginalised Australians: Principles for socially inclusive pedagogies. *Enhancing learning in the social sciences* 5(2): 7-19.

Gale T, Mills C and Cross R (2017) Socially inclusive teaching: Belief, design, action as pedagogic work. *Journal of Teacher Education* 68(3): 345-356.

Gibson S (2012) Narrative accounts of university education: socio-cultural perspectives of students with disabilities. *Disability & Society* 27(3): 353-369.

Gibson, S, Baskerville D, Berry A, Black A, Norris K and Symeonidou S (2016) 'Diversity' 'Widening Participation' and 'Inclusion' in Higher Education: An International study. *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning* 18(3): 7-33.

Griful-Freixenet J, Struyven K, Verstichele M and Andries C (2017) Higher education students with disabilities speaking out: Perceived barriers and opportunities of the universal design for learning framework. *Disability & Society* 32(10): 1627-1649.

Hughes K (2015) The social inclusion meme in higher education: are universities doing enough? *International Journal of inclusive education* 19(3): 303-313.

Huguet C, Pearse J, Noè L, Valencia D, Ruiz N, Heredia A and Avedaño MA (2019). Improving the motivation of students in a large introductory geoscience course through active learning. *Journal of Geoscience Education*: 1-13.

Kumar KL and Wideman M (2014) Accessible by design: Applying UDL principles in a first-year undergraduate course. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 44(1): 125-147.

Langørgen E, Kermit P and Magnus E (2018) Gatekeeping in professional higher education in Norway: ambivalence among academic staff and placement supervisors towards students with disabilities. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*: 1-15.

Leyser Y and Greenberger L (2008) College students with disabilities in teacher education: faculty attitudes and practices. *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 23(3): 237-251.

Linder C, Harris JC, Allen EL and Hubain B (2015) Building Inclusive Pedagogy: Recommendations From a National Study of Students of Color in Higher Education and Student Affairs Graduate Programs. *Equity & Excellence in Education* 48(2): 178-194.

Lombardi A, Vukovic B and Sala-Bars I (2015) International Comparisons of Inclusive Instruction among College Faculty in Spain, Canada, and the United States. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability* 28(4): 447-460.

Love TS et al. (2015) STEM Faculty experiences with students with disabilities at a land grant institution. *Journal of Education and Training Studies* 3(1): 27-38.

Miles MB and Huberman AM (1994) *Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Moriña A (2017a) Different theoretical perspectives on inclusive education in higher education: challenges and opportunities. *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 32 (1): 3-17.

Moriña A (2017b) 'We aren't heroes, we're survivors': higher education as an opportunity for students with disabilities to reinvent an identity. *Journal of further and higher education* 41(2): 215-226.

Moriña A (2019) The keys to learning for university students with disabilities: Motivation, emotion and faculty-student relationships. *PloS one* 14(5): 1-15.

Moriña, A, Cortés MD and Molina VM (2015) What if we could imagine the ideal faculty? Proposals for improvement by university students with disabilities. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 52: 91-98.

Mullins L and Preyde M (2013) The lived experience of students with an invisible disability at a Canadian university. *Disability & Society* 28(2): 147-160.

Nightingale C (2006) *Nothing about me, without me: involving learners with learning difficulties ordisabilities*. London: Learning Skills Development Agency.

Organic Law 4/2007, of 12 April, amending the Organic Law of 6/2001, of 21 December, on Universities. Boe, 13 April 2007.

Petersen R and Valdez A (2005) Using snowball-based methods in hidden populations to generate a randomized community sample of gang-affiliated adolescents. *Youth violence and juvenile justice* 3(2): 151-167.

Pliner S and Johnson J (2004) Historical, theoretical, and foundational principles of universal instructional design in higher education. *Equity & Excellence in Education* 3: 105-113.

Riddell S, Weedon E, Fuller M, et al. (2007) Managerialism and equalities: tensions within widening access policy and practice for disabled students in UK universities. *Higher Education* 54: 615-628.

Rohland P, Erickson B, Mathews D, et al. (2003) Changing the Culture (CTC): A Collaborative Training Model to Create Systemic Change. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability* 17(1): 49-58.

Rose DH, Harbour WS, Johnston CS, Daley SG and Abarbanell L (2006) Universal design for learning in postsecondary education: Reflections on principles and their application. *Journal of postsecondary education and disability* 19(2): 135-151.

Rouse M (2008) Developing inclusive practice: a role for teachers and teacher education? *Education in the North* 16: 6–11.

Royal Legislative Decree 1/2013, of 29 November, approving the Revised Text of the General Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and their Social Inclusion. Boe, 3 December 2013.

Scanlon E, Schreffler J, James W, Vasquez E and Chini JJ (2018) Postsecondary physics curricula and Universal Design for Learning: Planning for diverse learners. *Physical Review Physics Education Research* 14(2): 1-19.

Seale J (2009) Doing student voice work in higher education: an exploration of the value of participatory methods. *British Educational Research Journal* 36(6): 995-1015.

Sowers JA and Smith MR (2004) Nursing faculty members' perceptions, knowledge, and concerns about students with disabilities. *Journal of Nursing Education* 43(5): 213-218.

Spassiani NA, Murchadha NÓ, Clince M, Biddulph K, Conradie P, Costello F, Cox L, Daly O, Middleton C, McCabe K, Philips M, Soraghan S and Tully K (2017). Likes, dislikes, supports and barriers: the experience of students with disabilities in university in Ireland. *Disability & Society* 32(6): 892-912.

Strnadová I, Hájková V and Květoňová L (2015) Voices of university students with disabilities: inclusive education on the tertiary level–a reality or a distant dream?. *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 19(10): 1080-1095.

Tangen R (2008) Listening to Children's Voices in Educational Research: Some Theoretical and Methological Problems. *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 23(2): 157–166.

Thomas L (2016) Developing inclusive learning to improve the engagement, belonging, retention, and success of students from diverse groups. In Shah M, Bennett A and Southgate E (eds) *Widening higher education participation. A global perspective*. Oxford: Elsevier, pp. 135-159.

United Nations Enable (2008) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Available at: https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html (accessed 16 February 2019)

Veck W (2014) Inclusive pedagogy: ideas from the ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. *Cambridge Journal of Education* 44(4): 451-464.

Vickerman P and Blundell M (2010) Hearing the voices of disabled students in higher education. *Disability & Society* 25(1): 21-32.

Vlachou A and Papananou I (2018) Experiences and Perspectives of Greek Higher Education Students with Disabilities. *Educational Research*: 1-16.

Voicu MC and Babonea A (2011) Using the snowball method in marketing research on hidden populations. *CKS Challenges of the Knowledge* 1: 1341-1351.

Wolff JR, Kay TS, Himes HL and Alquijay J (2017) Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Student Experiences in Christian Higher Education: A Qualitative Exploration. *Christian Higher Education* 16(5): 319-338.

Yorke M (2003) Formative assessment in higher education: Moves towards theory and the enhancement of pedagogic practice. *Higher education* 45(4): 477-501.

Yssel N, Pak N and Beilke J (2016) A door must be opened: Perceptions of students with disabilities in higher education. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education* 63(3): 384-394.

Yuval L, Procter E, Korabik K and Palmer J (2004) *Evaluation report on the universal instructional design at the University of Guelph*. University of Guelph: University of Guelph.