

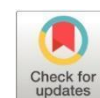


The attitude of English teachers towards educational inclusion

La actitud de los docentes de inglés ante la inclusión educativa

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Palabras clave:

Actitud, eficacia, educación, inclusión, obstáculos

Keywords:

Attitude, effectiveness, education, inclusion, obstacles

Resumen

Introducción. La educación inclusiva busca integrar a estudiantes con habilidades diferentes en escuelas regulares, valorando la diversidad y respetando las diferencias individuales. **Objetivo.** Evaluar la actitud del docente de inglés frente a la inclusión educativa a través de un cuestionario aplicado a docentes de inglés de Unidades Educativas céntricas del cantón Pujilí. **Metodología.** Se aplicó un cuestionario de 38 preguntas a 15 docentes de inglés del cantón Pujilí. **Resultados.** Se evidenció una actitud medianamente alta, de la misma forma que la percepción de la eficacia de los docentes para implementar la educación inclusiva. Además de que la prueba de Chi cuadrado de Pearson reveló una relación significativa entre las variables actitud y eficacia. **Conclusión.** Es fundamental proporcionar el apoyo y desarrollo profesional necesario para que los docentes puedan abordar eficazmente estos obstáculos y mejorar la implementación de prácticas inclusivas. **Área de estudio general:** Educación. **Área de estudio específica:** Idioma extranjero (Inglés).

Abstract

Introduction. Inclusive education aims to integrate students with different abilities into regular schools, valuing diversity and respecting individual differences. **Objective.** To evaluate the attitude of English teachers towards inclusive education through a questionnaire applied to English teachers from central educational units in Pujilí city. **Methodology.** A questionnaire consisting of 38 questions was administered to 15 English teachers in Pujilí city. **Results.** A moderately high attitude was evident, as well as teachers' perception of their effectiveness in implementing inclusive education. Additionally, Pearson's chi-square test revealed a significant relationship between the attitude and effectiveness variables. **Conclusion.** It is essential to provide the necessary support and professional development for teachers to effectively address these challenges and improve the implementation of inclusive practices.

Introduction

Worldwide English language teaching has become increasingly relevant in a globalized world. English has become the lingua franca of business, technology, science, and international communications (Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019). It is encouraging that governments, like the Ecuadorian one, are

recognizing the importance of this language in the personal and professional development of people and are taking steps to improve its teaching (Sevy-Biloon et al., 2020). Although positive progress has been made, challenges remain, such as a shortage of English teachers and historical limitations on teaching hours. Continuous evaluation and adaptation of teaching methods to meet the real needs of students is essential (Cifuentes-Rojas et al., 2019).

Both educators and educational policy makers recognize education as a fundamental human right for all members of society, regardless of gender, intellectual ability, or physical and mental disability. In this sense, if education is considered a basic human right, it is crucial that all people, regardless of their origin, have access to education (Butakor et al., 2020).

Inclusive education is considered a global reform strategy that seeks to integrate students with different abilities in regular schools. Previous research has shown that the success in implementing effective inclusive education practices largely depends on the positive attitude that teachers have towards inclusive education (Ahmmmed et al., 2012). Inclusive education is characterized by valuing diversity and respecting individual differences in the educational community. It recognizes that these differences stem from social, educational, and cultural factors, as well as individual abilities. Promotes a dynamic, open, and participatory educational process. Each school, considering its environment and context (urban or rural), develops its own educational program that adapts to the sociocultural reality and the diversity of its students (Callado et al., 2015).

Inclusive education is based on four fundamental premises: inclusion as a human right, as a means to achieve educational equality, the right of everyone to receive education alongside their peers in their cultural context, and the responsibility of society to guarantee the rights of all children, including their inclusion in a normalized school environment (Callado et al., 2015). The current legislative framework for inclusive education is based on the Human Rights Act, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the Declaration of Salamanca, as well as UK laws such as the Disability Discrimination 1995 and Children's Act 1995 (Boyle et al., 2013). Therefore, inclusive education should be seen as an inherent right of all children, instead of being considered a privilege (Butakor et al., 2020).

Inclusion in schools implies that all children are educated in their local school, where all necessary facilities would be provided to ensure that children with additional support needs are not disadvantaged in their educational and social development compared to their peers. Since teachers are responsible for implementing the practical aspects of inclusion policy, it is necessary to investigate teachers' attitudes toward inclusion and their efforts to support children with special needs in regular classrooms (Boyle et al., 2013).

Inclusive education is a continuous process of educational transformation that seeks to guarantee equity, supported by equity indicators such as those proposed by UNESCO. Measuring their success involves considering quality, results, and educational experiences, as well as evaluating teaching practices (Schuelka, 2018). Its causes are found in the need to promote equal access to education, the recognition of human rights and diversity, and the creation of fairer and more inclusive societies (Ahmmed et al., 2012).

By implementing inclusive education, positive effects are generated both at the individual and social levels. Students with disabilities or special needs benefit from receiving an education adapted to their needs, which promotes their comprehensive development and improves their future opportunities (Unianu, 2012). Additionally, inclusive education fosters diversity, respect, and tolerance in society, creating a more inclusive and cohesive community in which all individuals can fully participate and contribute meaningfully. Being inclusive means fostering camaraderie and the participation of all students in the school culture and curricula. However, the state of implementation of inclusive education varies widely between countries, as well as within schools themselves (Haug, 2017a).

UNICEF, for its part, mentions that to close the educational gap for children with disabilities, it is dedicated to four main areas; Firstly, it promotes inclusive education through debates and events aimed at policymakers and the public. In addition, it conducts research and organizes events to highlight the needs of children with disabilities, collaborating with government partners. It also works to strengthen education systems by training teachers, administrators, and communities and provides technical assistance to governments. Finally, UNICEF supports the implementation of policies through monitoring and evaluation in partner countries, seeking to close the gap between educational policy and practice (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2022).

The reason for this research is that, currently, there is a significant gap in the education and training of educators in terms of how to meet the individual needs of these students in the classroom (Kielblock, 2018). Therefore, it is estimated that not all teachers may be prepared to teach students with special needs or disabilities both globally and in Ecuador. This lack of adequate preparation can result in barriers to learning and development for

students with special needs, this can lead to overlooking external factors such as social disadvantage, which also influences whether a child is identified as someone with special educational needs (Keil et al., 2006).

Therefore, it is essential to address this problem with the following questions: what are the obstacles to inclusive education according to the English teachers of the Pujilí canton?, and what is the level of effectiveness of teachers in the implementation of inclusive education?; in order to comply with the general objective of the study, which is to evaluate the attitude of the English teacher towards educational inclusion through a questionnaire applied to English teachers of central Educational Units of the Pujilí canton.

The issue of educational inclusion has been studied in various countries because education is considered a universal right, which implies a constant effort to improve its quality. However, educational quality is sometimes compromised because not all students require the same attention. In this sense, educational inclusion becomes relevant, since there is a part of the world population made up of people with disabilities who need special attention, especially from an early age in educational institutions so that they can integrate into the real world despite its limitations. Below are some examples of studies that have been carried out focused on educational inclusion and the attitude or role of the teacher.

The work of Kuyini et al. (2020), aimed to analyze teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in relation to inclusive education, as well as their attitudes towards this educational approach and how they are linked to their concerns about it. Data collected from 134 primary school teachers in two regions were analyzed using techniques of descriptive statistics, t-tests, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and correlation procedures. The results reveal that the Ghanaian teachers who participated in the study have concerns regarding inclusive education, show fewer positive attitudes, and have moderate levels of self-efficacy in the implementation of said educational approach. These findings underscore the importance of having specific competencies and contextual effectiveness in the field of inclusion, both of which are critical to achieving success in this educational approach.

Likewise, Saloviita (2020) proposed in his research to investigate the attitudes of primary school teachers in Finland to assess their intellectual disposition towards inclusive education. To carry out the objective, a questionnaire related to various demographic variables of the participants was applied. The sample included 824 classroom teachers, 575 subject teachers, and 365 special education teachers. Special education teachers scored above the midpoint. Around 20% of teachers were strongly against inclusion, while 8% were fervent supporters. The study concluded that collaboration between different types of teachers and the promotion of an inclusive school environment are essential to guarantee an equitable and quality education for all students.

Another study that is linked to inclusive education is that of Moberg et al. (2020), whose objective was to analyze and compare the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education in two culturally different countries: Finland and Japan. In this study, a sample of 362 Finnish teachers and 1518 Japanese teachers were used who participated in a survey consisting of 19 statements on a six-point Likert scale. Finnish teachers expressed concern about the effectiveness of teachers in implementing inclusion, especially with students with disabilities. In contrast, Japanese teachers had a more positive outlook on the benefits of inclusion, both for students with and without disabilities. More research on the implementation of inclusive education in various cultural and historical contexts is needed to improve its universal understanding.

Agavelyan et al. (2020), in their study, the main objective is to examine the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education in Kazakhstan and to identify the factors that impact their favorable attitude towards inclusion. The Revised scale of Feelings, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education was used to collect data, and non-parametric statistical analyses, such as Spearman's correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis, were used to process the survey results. The experience of interaction with people with special educational needs did not influence the formation of a positive attitude toward inclusion. However, educators working in rural schools who feel confident teaching children with special educational needs presented a more positive attitude towards inclusion. The unwillingness of teachers to implement inclusive education and the need for special training are highlighted in the analysis of the responses.

In the study by Avramidis et al. (2019), a questionnaire was used to assess attitudes toward inclusion, self-efficacy for inclusive practice, and attitudes toward peer tutoring. 225 general teachers and 69 special education teachers in Greece participated. The results showed that general teachers had neutral attitudes towards inclusion, while special education teachers had more positive attitudes. Furthermore, general teachers were found to have lower self-efficacy in inclusive practices, except for the aspect of behavior management. General teachers viewed peer tutoring as an effective strategy to include students with diverse needs. It is concluded that it is necessary to provide teachers with professional development programs that promote positive attitudes and improve their sense of self-efficacy in the implementation of peer tutoring.

Methodology

The research that has been carried out adopts a mixed approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative elements that allow obtaining a more complete and in-depth understanding of the subject of study. Quantitative methods provide numerical and statistical data that allow for the analysis of patterns and trends, while qualitative methods allow the experiences, perspectives, and opinions of participants to be explored in more

detail, in this case by describing and interpreting the statistical results that were carried out.

The research method used in this study is descriptive and correlational, with the aim of describing the variables of interest in detail and establishing relationships or associations between them. By combining this detailed description with the correlational analysis, it was possible to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between the variables, contributing to a more complete understanding of the subject of study and providing valuable information for future research.

In this study, an intentional non-probabilistic sampling method has been used to select the participants. 15 teachers who work in the educational centers of the center of the Pujilí canton have been chosen as a representative sample. The use of an intentional approach made it possible to select those teachers who have relevant experience and knowledge in the subject of study, which guarantees the obtaining of quality information and enriches the research results.

The instrument used was developed by Kielblock (2018), in his doctoral thesis and has been validated in different countries. The first section consists of 38 questions that explore the attitudes of the participants toward inclusive education for all. The second section of the instrument is made up of 18 questions that assess the perceived effectiveness of implementing inclusive education for all, these two sections are evaluated using the scale validated by Kielblock. Finally, the third section of the instrument deals with the personal information of the participants and contains 8 questions.

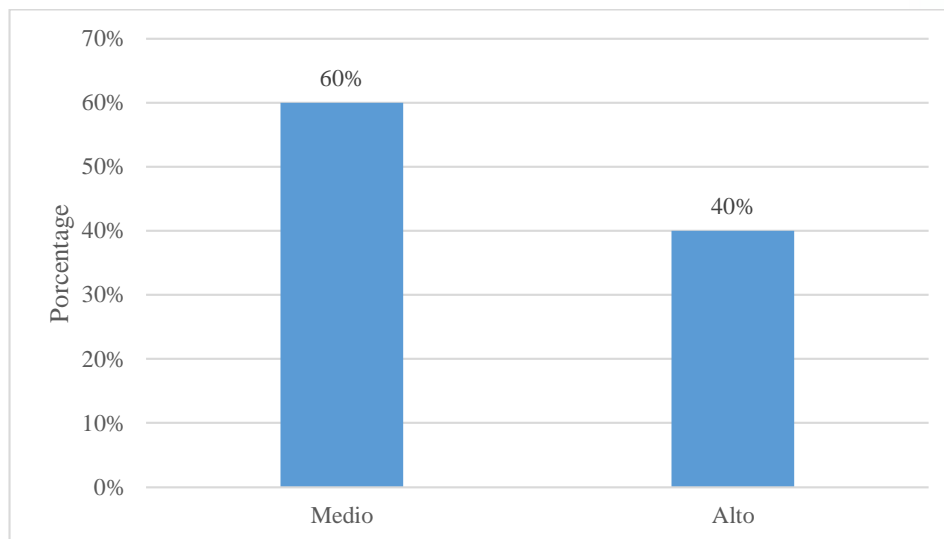
Once collected, the data obtained through the survey were processed using Excel computer tools and the SPSS version 25 program for statistical analysis. Pearson's Chi-Square test and a crossover of variables were performed for the analysis of the results. These tests allowed us to examine the possible relationships and associations between the variables involved in the research, which were the attitude and the effectiveness in the implementation of inclusive education, providing a more complete and detailed vision of the results.

Discussion

From the application of the questionnaire to the English teachers of the central educational centers of the Pujilí canton, a moderately positive attitude towards educational inclusion is evidenced with 60%, and a high of 40% as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1

Level of attitude of the English teacher towards educational inclusion



This interpretation suggests that most English teachers have a positive, though not necessarily strongly positive, attitude toward educational inclusion. Furthermore, it implies that they are open to the idea of integrating students with special needs or different abilities into the classroom but may require further support or training to implement inclusive practices effectively. The result of this study agrees with the article published by Van Steen & Wilson (2020), in which it was observed that teachers show a favorable attitude towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in regular schools.

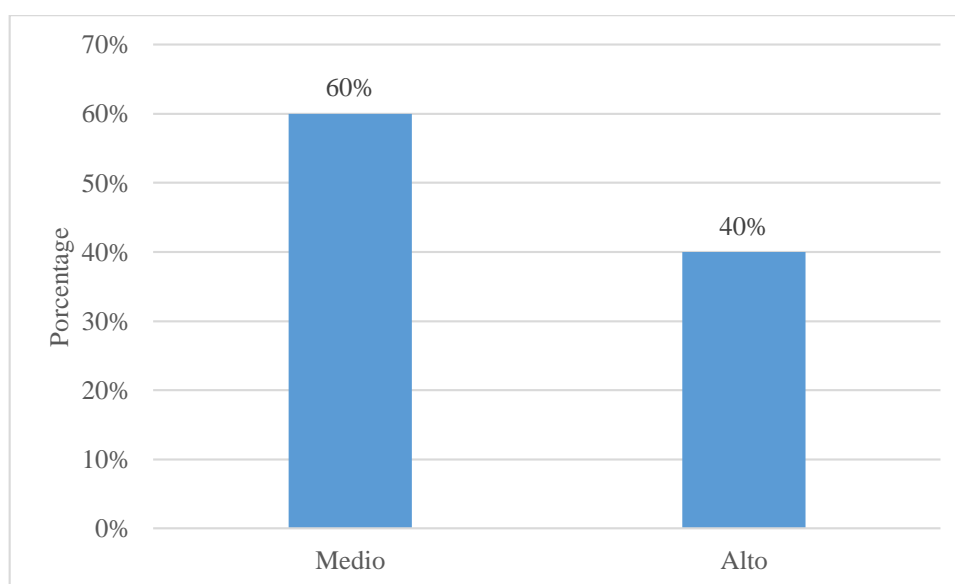
It is important to bear in mind that a moderately positive and high attitude are favorable indicators since they show that teachers recognize the importance of educational inclusion and are willing to adopt inclusive approaches in their teaching. It is even more important within rural areas, as indicated by Agavelyan et al. (2020), where teachers who feel confident in teaching children with special educational needs presented a more positive attitude towards inclusion. However, it may also be necessary to provide them with additional resources, training, and support to further strengthen their attitude and ability to implement inclusive strategies in the classroom.

This result provides relevant information for the design of professional development and training programs for teachers, as well as for the implementation of educational policies that promote inclusion. It may also be useful to identify the reasons behind a less positive attitude in some cases, to address possible barriers or concerns that teachers may have regarding educational inclusion. As in the case of the work carried out by Kuyini, et al. (2020), in which there is concern regarding inclusive education because the evaluated teachers show fewer positive attitudes.

In relation to the self-perception of the effectiveness of teachers in the implementation of inclusive education, a result like an attitude was obtained, in this case, 60% of teachers perceive its implementation as moderately effective, while 40% consider it high as seen in figure 2.

Figure 2

Level of self-perception in the effectiveness of the implementation of inclusive education



This result suggests that most teachers have a positive perception of their ability to implement inclusive education, despite not being totally high, it indicates that teachers have a certain degree of confidence in their teaching staff to attend to the diversity of students in the school. classroom, but could benefit from further professional development and support to improve their effectiveness in implementing inclusive strategies.

It is important to highlight that the perception of efficacy is a relevant factor since it influences the motivation and attitude of teachers toward inclusive education. By perceiving themselves as moderately or highly effective, teachers have a positive basis to continue improving and committing to educational inclusion. However, it is necessary to consider that the perception of effectiveness may vary depending on different factors, such as the experience of the teacher, the training received, the resources available, and the institutional support.

Teachers who are considered moderately effective may require further support and professional development opportunities to strengthen their skills and feel more confident in implementing inclusive practices. In the study conducted by Moberg et al. (2020), compares teachers from two different areas where while some show concern about the

effectiveness of implementing inclusion, others show a positive perspective on the benefit of said implementation in their education.

This result highlights the importance of providing teachers with the necessary tools and support to improve their effectiveness in inclusive education. This may include training programmers, sharing of good practices, collaboration between colleagues, and access to appropriate educational resources. In addition, it is essential to create an institutional environment that values and supports the inclusive work of teachers.

After knowing the level at which these categorical variables (attitude and efficacy) are found with respect to English teachers, it was considered necessary to carry out a test to determine their association. For this, a Pearson's Chi-square test was applied, where its value was 7.824, and the level of significance reported is the same as $p < 0.05$. These results indicate that there is a significant relationship between the attitude and the effectiveness for the implementation of inclusive education of teachers. In this sense, it is important to present the crossing of variables through a contingency table, the relationship between the variables as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Variable crossing - Effectiveness Rating for Implementation of Inclusive Education

		Half		High		Total	
Teacher Attitude Rating	Medio	8	89%	1	17%	9	60%
	Alto	1	11%	5	83%	6	40%
Total		9	100%	6	100%	15	100%

Note: The table shows the crossing of the variables Teacher attitude * Effectiveness in the implementation of inclusive education

The analysis of the table reveals a significant relationship between the attitude and the effectiveness of teachers in the implementation of inclusive education. The results indicate that when teachers have a medium attitude, their effectiveness in the implementation of inclusive education is also medium, reaching a percentage of 89%. Likewise, it is observed that when teachers have a high attitude, their effectiveness in the implementation of inclusive education is also high, with a percentage of 83%.

These findings support the idea that there is a positive association between attitude and teacher effectiveness in inclusive education. In other words, as teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education improve, their effectiveness in implementing this educational practice also increases.

This result is relevant and argues in favor of the importance of fostering positive attitudes towards inclusive education among teachers. A favorable attitude creates an environment conducive to the effective implementation of inclusive practices, which is reflected in

greater effectiveness in teaching and support for students with diverse needs. This translates into the need for collaboration between teachers to promote an inclusive environment guaranteeing the quality of education as mentioned by Saloviita (2020).

By recognizing the relationship between attitude and effectiveness, educational decision-makers can direct efforts toward strategies that promote and strengthen positive attitudes among teachers. This could include training and awareness programs, fostering empathy and diversity awareness, and creating supportive environments that value and promote inclusive education (Haug, 2017b).

On the other hand, with the applied questionnaire it was possible to recognize several obstacles to educational inclusion that can arise according to the reality of the locality, the educational center, teachers, and students. One of them is the difficulty perceived by teachers to adapt their teaching to the individual needs of students in an inclusive environment. This involves managing disruptive behaviors, adapting learning tasks, classroom discipline, and appropriate academic challenges (Kuyini et al., 2020).

In addition, there are concerns about the availability of adequate staff both inside and outside of the school to support teachers in addressing the unique educational needs of students. Collaboration with parents and the communication of information about laws and policies are also key elements in the successful implementation of educational inclusion (Sulasmí & Akrim, 2019). On the other hand, there are obstacles related to student labeling, where there is a perceived need to categorize students based on characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, disability, language, and socioeconomic status (Agavelyan et al., 2020). This perspective can limit the expectations and learning opportunities of the students.

Another challenge is the belief that the differentiated practices required in inclusive education are difficult to achieve. This includes the creation of effective work groups, the control of aggressive behaviors, and the adaptation of the teaching to the individual differences of the students. Some people consider that inclusion represents a negative change in the educational system, which generates resistance and affects the attitude and willingness of teachers to work in an inclusive environment (Saloviita, 2020). It is also sometimes perceived that external support services are a waste of time, and that the philosophy of inclusion cannot be implemented in practice.

Finally, the difficulty in accommodating the differences of all students in an inclusive classroom and the challenges in collaboration with other professionals also represent obstacles to the successful implementation of inclusive education. It is important to address these obstacles and provide support and professional development for teachers to overcome them. Answers to these questions can reveal specific challenges teachers face

in implementing inclusive practices, helping to identify areas where further support and training is needed.

Conclusions

- In conclusion, the results obtained from the application of the questionnaire to English teachers in the central educational centers of the Pujilí canton reveal a moderately positive attitude towards educational inclusion, as well as a self-perception of efficacy in the implementation of inclusive education also in a medium level. In addition, a significant relationship has been found between the attitude and the effectiveness of teachers in the implementation of inclusive education.
- These findings highlight the importance of fostering positive attitudes and improving teacher effectiveness in implementing inclusive practices. To achieve this, it is necessary to address the identified obstacles, which include the management of disruptive behaviors, collaboration with parents, adaptation of learning tasks, the communication of information about laws and policies, discipline in the classroom, the creation of effective work groups, control of aggressive behaviors, the appropriate academic challenge and collaboration with other professionals.
- In this sense, it is essential to provide the necessary support and professional development so that teachers can effectively address these obstacles and improve the implementation of inclusive practices. These results offer a renewed basis for research and the implementation of interventions that promote equitable educational opportunities for all students, both in the Pujilí canton and in other educational contexts around the world.
- In general, it is recommended that, in order to improve educational inclusion, it is necessary to strengthen teacher training, improve communication and dissemination of information, implement effective behavior management strategies, adapt learning tasks, promote appropriate academic challenges, and encourage collaboration among students. professionals. These recommendations will help create inclusive educational environments that ensure equal opportunities for all students.

Conflict of interest

Authors must declare whether there is a conflict of interest in relation to the submitted article.

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