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# Teacher attitudes and attention to diversity in inclusive education: a systematic review

*Actitudes docentes y atención a la diversidad en la educación inclusiva: revisión sistemática*

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**Cecilia Laura Quiñones**
https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1110-1729
cecilia.laura@unmsm.edu.pe
Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos. Lima, Peru

**Jean Pierre Quiñones Gomez**
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4502-3778
jean.quinones@unmsm.edu.pe
Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos. Lima, Peru

**José Angel Suarez Noa**
https://orcid.org/0009-0003-7487-9265
jose.suarezn@unmsm.edu.pe
Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos. Lima, Peru

**Alexander Mariano Felix Pacheco**
https://orcid.org/0009-0008-0086-2504
alexander.felix@unmsm.edu.pe
Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos. Lima, Peru

## Abstract

Inclusive education depends, to a large extent, on two interrelated factors: the institutional management of attention to diversity and teachers' attitudes toward inclusion. Within this framework, the objective of this systematic review was to synthesize the empirical evidence published between 2013 and 2024 on both factors and the relationship between them in school contexts. To this end, a search and selection of primary studies was conducted in specialized bibliographic sources and academic search engines, including Google Scholar, Dialnet, PubMed, ScienceDirect, and ResearchGate. After applying the eligibility criteria—empirical studies focused on teachers, related to attitudes toward inclusion and/or the management of attention to diversity, published between 2013 and 2024, and with verifiable information on their objectives, design, sample, and main findings—23 studies from 13 countries were included. The synthesis of the evidence shows that teachers' attitudes toward inclusion are mostly positive or ambivalent and only exceptionally negative. Furthermore, these attitudes are consistently related to teacher training, professional experience, and the degree of institutionalization of inclusive culture and policies in schools. Studies that jointly analyze institutional management and teacher attitudes identify positive correlations, generally of small to moderate magnitude, suggesting a relationship of reciprocal influence rather than unidirectional causality. It is concluded that strengthening both factors requires coordinated strategies for teacher training, leadership development, and teacher participation in decision-making aimed at inclusion.

**Keywords:** teacher attitudes, inclusive education, educational management.

## Resumen

La educación inclusiva depende, en buena medida, de dos factores interrelacionados: la gestión institucional de la atención a la diversidad y las actitudes del profesorado hacia la inclusión. En este marco, el objetivo de la presente revisión sistemática fue sintetizar la evidencia empírica publicada entre 2013 y 2024 sobre ambos factores y la relación existente entre ellos en contextos escolares. Para ello, se realizó una búsqueda y selección de estudios primarios en fuentes bibliográficas especializadas y buscadores académicos, entre ellos Google Scholar, Dialnet,

PubMed, ScienceDirect y ResearchGate. Tras aplicar los criterios de elegibilidad —estudios empíricos centrados en docentes, relacionados con las actitudes hacia la inclusión y/o la gestión de la atención a la diversidad, publicados entre 2013 y 2024 y con información verificable sobre sus objetivos, diseño, muestra y principales hallazgos—, se incluyeron 23 investigaciones procedentes de 13 países. La síntesis de la evidencia muestra que las actitudes docentes hacia la inclusión son, en su mayoría, positivas o ambivalentes y solo excepcionalmente negativas. Asimismo, estas actitudes se relacionan de manera consistente con la formación recibida, la experiencia profesional y el grado de institucionalización de la cultura y las políticas inclusivas en los centros educativos. Los estudios que analizan conjuntamente la gestión institucional y las actitudes docentes identifican correlaciones positivas, generalmente de magnitud pequeña a moderada, lo que sugiere una relación de influencia recíproca más que una causalidad unidireccional. Se concluye que el fortalecimiento de ambos factores requiere estrategias articuladas de formación docente, liderazgo directivo y participación del profesorado en la toma de decisiones orientadas a la inclusión.

**Palabras clave:** actitudes docentes, educación inclusiva, gestión educativa.

## Introduction

Attending to student diversity ranks among the most pressing challenges facing contemporary education systems (Murillo et al., 2010). Efforts to address it tend to converge on two complementary fronts: institutional management (the policies, culture, and inclusive practices a school puts into place) and teacher attitudes, understood as the cognitive, affective, and behavioral disposition educators hold toward inclusion (González & Triana, 2018). The literature suggests that these two fronts are not independent of one another: efficient institutional management creates conditions conducive to more positive attitudes, while teachers who hold favorable attitudes sustain and deepen inclusive policies in turn (Costea-Bărluțiu & Rusu, 2015). Even so, the empirical evidence on this relationship remains scattered across studies with widely varying designs, populations, and contexts, making it difficult to form an integrated picture.

Earlier reviews have tended to focus predominantly on teacher attitudes in isolation, or on specific national experiences, without systematically synthesizing the relationship between the management of diversity-related provisions and teacher attitudes across different geographic settings. The present review therefore aims to fill that gap by synthesizing primary studies published over the past decade (2013–2024) in Europe, Latin America, Central Asia, and other regions, with the goal of answering the following research question: What empirical evidence exists on teacher attitudes toward inclusive education, the institutional management of attention to diversity, and the relationship between these two variables?

## Methodology

This study was carried out as a systematic literature review, following the general principles of the PRISMA statement and taking into account the information-access conditions available to the research team. Studies were identified from two complementary sources. The first was a specialized bibliographic corpus on the management of attention to diversity and teacher attitudes toward inclusion, compiled beforehand through searches of academic databases. The second involved a verification and updating search across open-access academic search engines and repositories, including Google Scholar, Dialnet, PubMed, ScienceDirect, and ResearchGate. This search drew on the terms "actitudes docentes," "educación inclusiva," "atención a la diversidad," "gestión educativa," "*teacher attitudes*", "*inclusive education*" and "*inclusive practices*," combined through Boolean operators.

Eligible studies were required to draw their population from in-service or pre-service teachers at the basic or higher education levels. They also had to take an empirical approach to attitudes toward inclusive education and/or the institutional management of attention to diversity, have been published between 2013 and 2024, and provide verifiable information on their objective, methodological design, sample size, and main findings. Methodological handbooks, purely theoretical works, studies focused solely on students or populations other than teachers, and records whose minimum data could not be independently verified were all excluded.

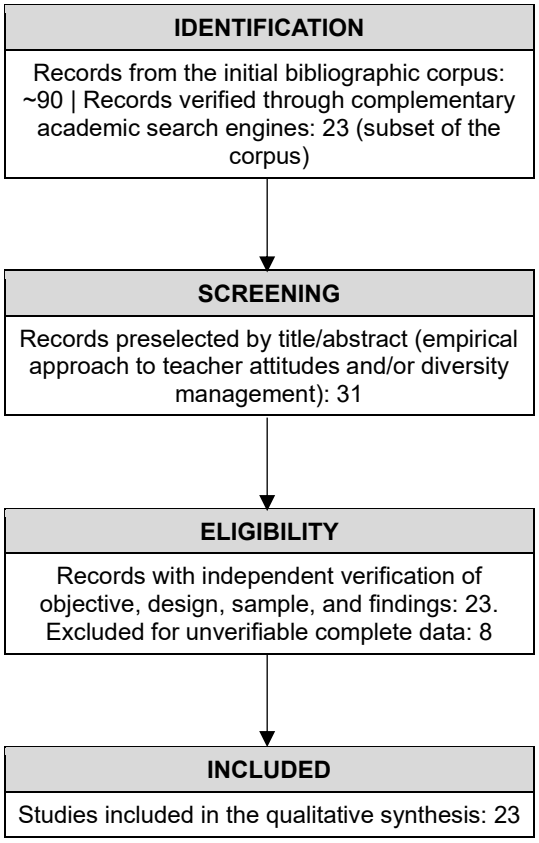
The initial bibliographic corpus comprised approximately 90 records. After a first pass through titles and abstracts, studies demonstrating an empirical approach to teacher attitudes toward inclusion or to the management of attention to diversity were preselected, narrowing the set to 31 candidates. The availability of information on objectives, design, sample, and main findings was then independently verified through the academic search engines mentioned above. As a result of this process, 23 studies met all the eligibility criteria and were incorporated into the synthesis, while 8 were excluded because independent verification of full data access was not possible within the timeframe set for the review, as shown in Figure 1. For each selected study, the authors and year of

publication, country, methodological design, sample or corpus size, and main finding related to the review question were recorded.

As a methodological limitation, it should be acknowledged that this review lacked direct institutional access to indexed databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and PsycINFO, as well as an exhaustive record of the search strings applied on each platform. The strategy therefore combined a previously compiled bibliographic corpus with complementary verification through academic search engines and open-access repositories. While this procedure supported the development of a well-grounded thematic synthesis, it does not guarantee the same degree of comprehensiveness as a systematic search across multiple databases.

**Figure 1**

*Flow diagram of the study selection process (adapted from PRISMA)*




**Note.** Own elaboration following the general logic of PRISMA (Page et al., 2021). The counts reflect the verification process documented by the review team; updating them following a formal replication in institutional databases is recommended

## Results and discussion

The 23 included studies were published between 2013 and 2024 and originate from 13 countries: Spain (7), Peru (5), Chile (4), Ecuador (2), Mexico (2), and one study each from Kazakhstan, Romania, and Cuba, plus one multinational study. Non-experimental quantitative designs predominated (17 studies), followed by qualitative (3), mixed-methods (1), quasi-experimental (1), and documentary/theoretical designs (1). Sample sizes in the quantitative studies with a direct teacher sample ranged from 45 to 1,275 teachers.

**Table 2**
*Characteristics and main findings of the included studies (n = 23)*

| Author(s) and year | Country | Design | Sample | Main finding |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Domínguez et al. (2016) | Spain | Quantitative | 62 inspectors | The findings show that secondary-level educational inspection continues to favor an integrationist approach over a fully inclusive perspective. |
| Sáenz & Chocarro (2019) | Spain | Qualitative | 20 schools | More strengths than weaknesses were identified with respect to inclusion, although differences emerged among leadership teams, teaching staff, and support groups. |
| Vélez-Miranda et al. (2020) | Ecuador | Quantitative | 45 teachers | A weak positive correlation was observed between educational inclusion and student integration mechanisms. |
| Tárraga-Mínguez et al. (2020) | Ecuador | Quantitative | 66 teachers (15 schools) | Attitudes toward inclusion are ambiguous and poorly defined, pointing to a need to strengthen teacher training. |
| Agavelyan et al. (2020) | Kazakhstan | Quantitative | 416 teachers | Neutral attitudes toward inclusion were linked to a lack of specialized training. |
| Araya et al. (2020) | Chile | Mixed methods | 49 rural teachers | Inclusive practices showed an intermediate level of implementation, accompanied by limited specific training. |
| Castro et al. (2022) | Chile | Quantitative | 556 teachers | A weak relationship was observed between self-identification as an inclusive teacher and empathy, with no significant differences by type of school. |
| Alva (2018) | Peru | Quantitative | 555 students | A significant relationship was found between tutorial guidance and attention to student diversity. |
| Sánchez (2020) | Peru | Qualitative (case study) | 1 school | Deeply held beliefs and conceptions among the teaching staff act as obstacles to implementing inclusive practices in the classroom. |
| León et al. (2023) | Peru | Quantitative | 230 teachers | A significant relationship was found between teacher perception and inclusive education, underscoring the need to strengthen professional competencies. |
| Campa-Álvarez et al. (2020) | Mexico | Quantitative | 124 teachers | A strong, bidirectional correlation was identified between inclusive practices and inclusive culture (r = .741). |
| Sharma et al. (2021) | Multinational | Quantitative (scale validation) | Pre-service teachers (multiple countries) | Teacher attitudes and self-efficacy perceptions predicted the use of inclusive practices. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Triviño-Amigo et al. (2022) | Spain | Quantitative | 1,275 teachers | Teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to address inclusion were related to age and years of professional experience. |
| Aramendi et al. (2023) | Spain | Quantitative (ex post facto) | 218 basic vocational-training teachers | Awareness of attention to diversity was related to the implementation of cooperative work. |
| Mora-Teves et al. (2023) | Peru | Quasi-experimental | 80 teachers | Formative assessment significantly improved attention to diversity, with an 80% versus 0% difference between the experimental and control groups, respectively. |
| Costea-Bărluțiu & Rusu (2015) | Romania | Quantitative (preliminary) | University faculty | Attitudes toward disability constitute a fundamental condition for promoting inclusive interactions. |
| } | Spain | Quantitative | Pre-service teachers | Attitudes toward disability constitute a fundamental condition for promoting inclusive interactions. |
| Tárraga et al. (2013) | Spain | Quantitative | Teacher-training and Special Education master's students | Attitudes toward inclusive education are generally favorable, though they vary depending on the level of teacher training. |
| Granada et al. (2013) | Chile | Quantitative | Teachers | Teacher attitudes toward inclusion were related to professional experience and prior training. |
| Pelegrín & Alonso (2019) | Cuba | Documentary/theoretical | Not applicable | The study proposes a model of educational management for attention to diversity driven from school leadership. |
| Valdés et al. (2022) | Chile | Qualitative | School leadership policies | New public management principles shape the way leadership policies address educational inclusion. |
| Fernández & Hernández (2013) | Mexico | Case study | School administrators and teachers | School leadership emerged as a key factor in promoting effective educational inclusion. |
| García-Herrero et al. (2024) | Spain | Quantitative | Pre-service and in-service teachers | The quality of teaching work and ongoing training were related to more equitable management of diversity. |

**Note.** Own elaboration based on the studies included in the review

**Teacher attitudes toward inclusion**

Most studies report teacher attitudes that are positive or ambiguous, and only rarely openly negative. European and Latin American studies with large samples document favorable perceptions of inclusion (Triviño-Amigo et al., 2022; Castro et al., 2022), whereas studies conducted in settings where inclusive policies are less institutionalized report neutral or ambiguous attitudes linked to a lack of specialized training (Agavelyan et al., 2020; Tárraga-Mínguez et al., 2020). Teacher training and prior experience working with students with disabilities consistently emerge as predictors of more favorable attitudes (Novo-Corti et al., 2015; Costea-Bărluțiu & Rusu, 2015; Sharma et al., 2021).

**Institutional management and inclusive culture**

Studies focused on the institutional dimension highlight the role of school leadership (Fernández & Hernández, 2013; Valdés et al., 2022) and school culture (Campa-Álvarez et al., 2020; Sáenz & Chocarro, 2019) as enabling conditions for inclusion. The relationship between inclusive practices and inclusive culture reported by Campa-Álvarez et al. (2020) suggests that these two dimensions reinforce one another within the institution rather than operating independently.

**Relationship between institutional management and teacher attitudes**

Studies that examine both variables together, institutional management and attitudes, report positive associations, generally of small to moderate magnitude (Vélez-Miranda et al., 2020; León et al., 2023). This is consistent with evidence that interventions centered on assessment and pedagogical practice, such as formative assessment, produce significant and measurable improvements in attention to diversity (Mora-Teves et al., 2023), suggesting that institutional management can be shaped through concrete teaching interventions and not solely through long-term policy change.

## Conclusions

The evidence synthesized in this review indicates that teacher attitudes toward inclusive education are, for the most part, positive or ambiguous, and that their strength is heavily shaped by the training teachers have received and their prior experience with student diversity. The institutional management of attention to diversity, expressed through inclusive culture, policies, and practices, emerges as a dimension inseparable from these attitudes: studies examining both variables together report relationships of mutual reinforcement rather than one-directional causality.

Based on this synthesis, three lines of action stand out with consistent empirical support: strengthening initial and continuing teacher training in inclusion, promoting school leadership capable of translating inclusive policies into classroom practice, and developing formative assessment mechanisms that allow for direct, short-term intervention on attention to diversity. As a limitation, this review combined a specialized bibliographic corpus with complementary verification through open-access academic search engines, so a formal replication of the search in institutional indexed databases is recommended before generalizing its conclusions. Future reviews could widen the time window and apply methodological quality assessment tools (e.g., design-specific checklists) to weigh the contribution of each study within the synthesis.

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| Jean Pierre Quiñones Gómez | Formal analysis, validation, visualization, and writing (proofreading and editing). |
| José Angel Suárez Noa | Resources, supervision, and writing (proofreading and editing). |
| Alexander Mariano Félix Pacheco | Software, validation, and writing (proofreading and editing). |