



Good practices in the organization of inclusive support in schools

Buenas prácticas en la organización de apoyos inclusivos en las escuelas

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Abstract

Inclusive support systems are a cornerstone of schools, capable of driving substantial and far-reaching changes in educational policies, cultures and practices. The overall aim of this study is to analyse good practices in the organisation of educational support systems that promote the inclusion of all pupils in mainstream primary school classrooms, based on the views of the educational community. This research is conducted using an inductive qualitative approach. A total of 329 professionals involved in the organisation of educational support systems across 25 primary schools participated in the study. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather the data. A qualitative content analysis was carried out using ATLAS.ti 25 software. The results show that the effective organisation of inclusive support systems requires clear planning that defines inclusion within the school, based on a comprehensive analysis of existing barriers. The need for mainstream and support staff to plan jointly, based on agreed improvement objectives, is highlighted. Furthermore, the practices proposed by the professionals include the creation of intervention protocols to address the identified barriers, co-teaching, curriculum prioritisation, flexible grouping and active methodologies, which are considered essential for optimising the organisation and functioning of educational support systems in the schools analysed.

Keywords: inclusive education, inclusive supports, primary education, educational innovation, co-teaching, active methodologies.

Resumen

Los sistemas de apoyo inclusivos son una pieza angular de las escuelas, capaces de impulsar transformaciones sustanciales y profundas en las políticas, culturas y prácticas educativas. El objetivo general de este estudio es analizar las buenas prácticas en la organización de los sistemas de apoyo educativo que favorecen la inclusión de todo el alumnado en las aulas ordinarias de educación primaria desde las voces de la comunidad educativa. Esta investigación se desarrolla bajo un enfoque cualitativo de carácter inductivo. Han participado 329 profesionales involucrados en la organización de los sistemas de apoyo educativo de 25 centros de Educación Primaria. Para la obtención de la información, se empleó la entrevista semiestructurada. Se siguió un proceso de análisis cualitativo de contenido a través del software ATLAS.ti 25. Los resultados evidencian que la organización efectiva de los sistemas de apoyo inclusivos requiere una planificación clara que defina la inclusión dentro del centro, fundamentada en un análisis integral de las barreras existentes. Se destaca la necesidad de que el profesorado generalista y el de apoyo programen de forma conjunta, basándose en objetivos de mejora consensuados. Además, las prácticas propuestas por los profesionales incluyen la creación de protocolos de intervención ante las barreras detectadas, co-enseñanza, la priorización curricular, los agrupamientos flexibles y las metodologías activas, consideradas esenciales para optimizar la organización y funcionamiento de los sistemas de apoyo educativo en los centros analizados.

Palabras clave: educación inclusiva, apoyos inclusivos, educación primaria, innovación educativa, co-enseñanza, metodologías activas.

1. Introduction

Inclusive education constitutes the driving force behind the systematic transformation of educational ecosystems toward teaching and learning paradigms that cultivate welcoming environments and optimize the holistic well-being of all learners (Arnaiz-Sánchez et al., 2024; Walton, 2025). Within Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda, 117 United Nations member states pledged to promote the comprehensive educational reforms necessary to achieve inclusive education for all students (UNESCO, 2017). Undoubtedly, this structural process demands the identification and systematic removal of institutional and pedagogical barriers within schools that prevent students from fully attending, participating, and learning within regular, mainstream classrooms (Ainscow, 2021; UNESCO, 2023). In Spain and other European nations, specific measures and initiatives designed to address diversity have proliferated, aiming to respond effectively to students' distinct individual characteristics (Arnaiz-Sánchez et al., 2019). However, these targeted measures frequently culminate in the inadvertent segregation of students into isolated schools, classrooms, or parallel programs (De la Fuente-González and Rodríguez-Martín, 2026), as specialized environments are constructed for their implementation, thereby failing to uphold the core principles of equity and genuine inclusion (Norwich, 2023).

A salient example of this systemic challenge is found in Organic Law 3/2020 of December 29, which amends Organic Law 2/2006 of May 3 on Education (LOMLOE, 2020), which persists in classifying students with special educational needs as “those who require educational support distinct from that provided in regular education” (Art. 71.2). In the Region of Murcia, the specific context where this research was conducted, such needs—defined as being “associated with personal disabilities and requiring extensive, generalized support, thereby necessitating specific human and material resources”—stipulate that students are to be enrolled in specialized special education centers when their “needs cannot be met within the framework of diversity-addressing measures in mainstream schools” (Decree 359/2009 establishing and regulating the educational response to student diversity, 2009, Art. 26).

Within this paradigm, amidst the manifold challenges facing the sustainable inclusion of diverse students in mainstream classrooms, educational support systems are increasingly conceptualized as transformative levers within schools (De La Torre and Martín, 2024). These systems constitute a fundamental cornerstone of institutional planning, curriculum programming, and school organization, capable of coordinating all measures, strategies, and resources required to eliminate structural barriers to student participation and learning outcomes (De Boer and Kuijper, 2021; Wermke and Beck, 2025).

A school's support infrastructure functions as a learning community that actively fosters participation and democratic interaction within mainstream classrooms (Flecha et al., 2024; Redondo et al., 2025). This framework, combined with the strategic deployment of inclusive and flexible grouping strategies, promotes robust pedagogical approaches in regular classrooms that dynamically adapt instructional designs to students' unique needs and learning paces (Alvídrez and Elías, 2024; Orlandini and Panzavolta, 2025). From this perspective, the application of active methodologies, such as peer-tutoring or collaborative group work, empowers students to progressively gain autonomy without direct, continuous teacher intervention (Schmidt and Thygesen, 2024). As Keles et al. (2024) state, educational support is most beneficial for students' holistic development when it concurrently targets academic learning, socialization, and socio-emotional maturation; furthermore, empirical evidence demonstrates that creating inclusive projects and school coexistence plans fosters student engagement and a profound sense of community and belonging (Shahzad et al., 2025). Similarly, cross-institutional collaboration with families remains a critical variable in establishing successful inclusive coexistence initiatives at the institutional level (Cortés-González et al., 2025).

The empirical study conducted by Sanahuja et al. (2022) demonstrates that there is no singular, universally valid support model across all educational contexts, given that multiple ecological factors influence its efficacy. Consequently, each school must autonomously define its support strategies based on its specific localized context and shared ideological beliefs regarding the operational definition of educational inclusion. Rooted in this premise, Ketikidou and Saiti (2025) and Redondo-Sama et al.

(2025) highlight the vital importance of defining the concept of inclusion within the school ecosystem and establishing a clear institutional course of action grounded in values aligned with inclusive principles that are collectively shared by the entire educational community. To effectively define inclusion, Arnaiz-Sánchez et al. (2019) note that schools must undergo rigorous self-assessment processes designed to identify both the systemic barriers that hinder inclusion and the facilitating factors that accelerate it.

In this regard, García et al. (2025) propose three distinct operational phases in the analysis, definition, and implementation of an inclusive approach within schools: awareness-raising, planning and implementation, and systematic evaluation. In turn, Soldevila et al. (2025) advocate for establishing continuous dialogue and cross-functional coordination within the educational community during this transformation to cultivate a democratic school culture (Alcaraz et al., 2026) that integrates the voices of all stakeholders—especially students—since they frequently encounter the most acute institutional barriers, as argued by Messiou (2019). Consequently, incorporating students' voices to analyze their specific needs and pedagogical preferences significantly improves the classroom climate and fosters positive, collaborative work dynamic, thereby enabling the development of an authentic inclusive ethos and organizational culture (De Boer and Kuijper, 2021).

As mentioned by Abellán et al. (2021), an optimized support system originates with the construction of a collaborative professional community, given that professional collaboration lies at the very heart of inclusive initiatives. Based on this, general education teachers and specialized support educators must collaborate closely to operationalize inclusive practices in regular classrooms that successfully reach all learners (Lakkala et al., 2021; Margas, 2023). This paradigm shift requires the support to move away from focusing exclusively on students with acute learning difficulties, redirecting their expertise toward supporting the classroom teacher and the students as a unified whole through collaborative planning, co-design, and co-organization. This professional realignment needs a profound rethinking of the responsibilities and functions embedded within the support teacher's professional profile, driven by a shared pedagogical commitment that addresses the diverse needs of the students. As various con-

temporary studies reveal (Abellán et al., 2022; Rönn et al., 2024; Simón et al., 2024; Torralba et al., 2025), co-teaching paradigms promote greater inclusion within the peer group, as they eschew the delivery of isolated, differentiated activities for specific students in favor of fostering student autonomy, improving the broader school climate, and enhancing social interaction and group cohesion.

This transformative approach demands a comprehensive organizational change that successfully channels the necessary human and material resources directly into regular classrooms (Arostegui et al., 2023). It also needs a flexible, fluid approach to temporal and spatial management within support systems through collaborative work and structured planning, which in turn generates sustainable support policies and programs (Sanahuja et al., 2022). Furthermore, it is critical to emphasize that the support provided in schools must be continuously reviewed to critically reflect upon and evaluate the actions executed and the objectives achieved (Simón et al., 2024). Specifically, research by Tejeiro (2024) indicates that maintaining rigorous records of support interventions in schools allows for optimized organization, precise monitoring of student progress, the strategic reorganization of resources, and the seamless implementation of continuous improvements in educational processes.

Based on the theoretical and empirical foundations detailed above, the general objective of this study is to analyze best practices in the organization of educational support systems that promote the inclusion of all students within regular elementary school classrooms, as perceived by the educational community.

Two specific research objectives derive from this overarching goal:

To describe the organizational elements that promote the creation of inclusive support systems.

To propose evidence-based organizational strategies that ensure the development and sustainability of inclusive support systems.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

Given the nature of the data, this study uses a qualitative research framework grounded in an inductive, interpretive research paradigm. This

methodological design aligns with the perspective of Flick (2018), who posits that qualitative inquiry seeks to comprehensively understand social meanings and underlying processes from the experiential viewpoint of the participants. Consequently, the interpretive paradigm is uniquely suited for analyzing complex educational phenomena, such as inclusive education, as it focuses specifically on the lived experiences, subjective perceptions, and nuanced meanings that educational actors attribute to their daily practices and idiosyncratic contexts.

2.2 Participants

A total of 329 stakeholders from the educational community across 25 schools in the Region of Murcia—comprising 12 mainstream primary schools and 13 special education schools—participated in this study, alongside representatives from nine regional Educational and Psychopedagogical Guidance Teams (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Sociodemographic data and percentages*

Educational Level	
Elementary	25 (100%)
Type of school	
Mainstream schools	12 (48%)
Special education schools	13 (52%)
Total	25 schools (100%)
Type of school	
Public	19 (76%)
State-subsidized	6 (24%)
Total	25 schools (100%)
Professional Profile	
Management Team	42 (12.8%)
Tenured Faculty	70 (21.3%)
Support Faculty	36 (10.9%)
Counselors	27 (8.2%)
Families	55 (16.7%)
Students	67 (20.4%)
Educational Support Staff	23 (7.0%)
Associations	9 (2.7%)
Total	329 participants (100%)

For sample selection, a non-probability purposive sampling procedure was deployed in strict accordance with the study's overarching research objectives. A formal, personalized invitation letter was dispatched to 27 eligible educational institutions, followed by direct telephonic contact from various members of the research team. Of the 27 initially targeted schools, two declined to participate, resulting in a final institutional sample of 25 schools.

The purposive selection of the sample was guided by three distinct inclusion criteria: (1) being a primary school located within the same geographical catchment area as the reference special education center; (2) operating a Specialized Open Classroom (*Aula Abierta Especializada*); and (3) having at least one student enrolled who, in accordance with Article 71.2 of Decree 359/2009, is officially classified as having extensive and generalized support needs that

necessitate specific human and material resources. Concurrently, deliberate efforts were made to recruit a participant cohort of professionals who, while operating at the same educational level, exhibited maximum variation in terms of professional profile, institutional ownership (public or private-subsidized), and geographic distribution.

2.3 Data Collection Techniques

For data collection, semi-structured individual interviews and group interviews were selected as the primary instruments, as they are widely recognized as ideal techniques for exploring in depth the complex perceptions and intersubjective meanings constructed by participants within their specific

educational contexts. These qualitative interviewing methods facilitate the elicitation of highly nuanced information regarding personal experiences, institutional values, and subjective interpretations associated with the socio-educational environment, thereby providing direct access to the participants' individual perspectives.

A total of 209 individual interviews were successfully conducted across the 25 participating schools (see Table 2). The interviews were administered face-to-face on-site, with each session lasting approximately 60 minutes. To ensure data fidelity, all sessions were audio-recorded with prior consent and subsequently processed using verbatim transcription protocols for systematic analysis.

Table 2. *Individual and group interviews conducted in the study*

Group	Individual interviews	Group interviews	Total participants interviewed
Management team	38	2	42
Full-time faculty	50	4	70
Support Faculty	28	2	36
Counselors	22	1	27
Families	55	0	55
Students	35	8	67
Educational Technician Assistant	18	1	23
Associations	9	0	9
Total	209	18	329

A semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix 1) was used, containing targeted questions operationalized across the core thematic dimensions of educational support systems. Representative items included: How is the educational support system strategically planned at your school? How is the operational structure of the educational support system organized? How do specialized support teachers and general education teachers coordinate their practices within the support system? List three priority actions regarding educational inclusion in mainstream classrooms for students who require highly personalized attention.

This protocol was validated through expert judgment involving four senior researchers from the institutional research team under a blinded peer

review mechanism. Once the constructive refinements were integrated, the final interview guide was formally validated by establishing a rigorous content equivalence and structural alignment between the overarching research objectives and the specific questions posed (Robles and Rojas, 2015).

2.4 Data Analysis Plan

To systematically process the corpus of collected data, we initially generated verbatim transcriptions of all individual and group interviews conducted during the data collection phase. Subsequently, these transcripts were organized and formatted into distinct text documents. Once this initial proces-

sing was completed, the entire textual material was imported into an active project within the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) ATLAS.ti (version 25 for Windows), a tool that systematically facilitated the structured organization, coding, and multi-layered analysis of the qualitative data.

The analytical procedure was executed in strict accordance with the foundational principles of qualitative content analysis (Vives and Hamii, 2021). During the initial phase, the transcripts underwent rigorous, immersive reading to familiarize the research team with the narrative content and to derive a comprehensive, holistic understanding of the participants' discourses. Following this, a systematic open and axial coding process was performed (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), which allowed for the isolation of relevant units of meaning directly aligned with the study's research objectives. These emerging units were progressively aggregated into provisional open codes to organize the incoming raw data.

In the second phase, these initial codes were iteratively reviewed, compared, and refined through a continuous process of constant comparative analysis across the entire dataset. This analytical procedure enabled the clustering of conceptually related codes into broader, higher-order categories, culminating in the final categorical matrix deployed in this study. Consequently, the codebook was constructed through a purely inductive approach, ensuring that the thematic categories emerged directly from the experiential data rather than being forced into a pre-established or *a priori* theoretical framework.

To guarantee the internal consistency, reliability, and credibility of the analytical process, a rigorous strategy of investigator triangulation was

applied (Latorre et al., 2005). Three independent members of the research team separately reviewed the transcripts and executed the initial assignment of codes. Subsequently, formal calibration meetings were held to cross-examine the coding structures, discuss potential interpretive differences, and reach inter-coder consensus regarding the operational definitions of each emerging code and subcode. This collaborative verification process refined the categorical system and enhanced coding density and consistency across all analyzed text segments.

Furthermore, during the advanced interpretation phase, intricate semantic networks were constructed using ATLAS.ti to visually map the conceptual relationships, hierarchies, and linkages between categories, codes, subcodes, and their corresponding quotations. These semantic webs facilitated the identification of structural patterns, conceptual cross-currents, and recurring thematic elements embedded within the participants' discourses, thereby contributing to a deeper, more robust understanding of the organizational phenomena under analysis.

As a direct outcome of this systematic analytical workflow, 121 relevant, rich quotations were isolated, coded, and contextualized according to their thematic essence. This empirical evidence served as the qualitative foundation for formulating concrete, actionable proposals aimed at optimizing the structural organization of educational support systems and cultivating more inclusive practices within mainstream elementary schools.

The following section presents the comprehensive category and codebook operationalized during the data reduction, organization, and classification processes (Table 3).

Table 3. *Categories and codes used for the analysis of the information*

Category 1. Organizational elements for creating inclusive supports	
Codes	Subcodes
Code 1. Planning for inclusive support (Support_Plan)	(Support_Plan_Initial_Assessment) Initial assessment of students to identify classroom needs and characteristics
	(Support_Plan_Goal_Setting) Setting improvement goals for students based on the initial assessment
	(Support_Plan_Instructional_Planning) Classroom instructional planning based on each student's needs and improvement goals
	(Support_Plan_Goal_Review) Periodic review of progress toward improvement goals
Code 2. Management of Resources in inclusive support (Support_Management)	(Support_Management_Resource_Allocation) Allocation of school resources based on needs and improvement goals
	(Support_Management_Teacher_Organization) Organization of the teaching staff based on classroom needs and characteristics
	(Support_Management_Consensus_on_Roles) Consensus on the roles and tasks performed by the teaching staff
	(Support_Management_Curricular_Flexibility) Flexibility in spaces and schedules
Category 2. Organizational Proposals for Inclusive Support	
Codes	Subcodes
Code 3. Pedagogical strategies for organization of inclusive support (pedagogical strategies_support)	(Pedagogical_Strategies_Support_Protocol_Design) Designing flexible protocols for educational intervention
	(Pedagogical_Strategies_Support_Active_Methodologies) Application of active methodologies to organize support
	(Pedagogical_Strategies_Support_Curricular_Prioritization) Prioritizing competencies and content based on students' needs and goals
	(Teaching_Strategies_Support_Flexible_Groupings) Flexible groupings to organize inclusive support
Code 4. Coordination strategies for the organization of inclusive support (coordinationstrategies_support)	(Strategies_for_coordination_support_Co-teaching) Co-teaching by teachers in the classrooms where they provide support
	(Strategies_for_coordinating_support: Collaborative technologies) Use of collaborative technologies to coordinate support
	(Support_Coordination_Strategies_Volunteer_Participation) Participation of volunteers, such as family members or external agents, as support assistants

3. Results

The results are presented in accordance with the specific objectives formulated in the study.

3.1 Results for Specific Objective 1: Describe the organizational elements that promote the creation of inclusive supports

A total of 67 different quotations were isolated regarding the structural and organizational elements that actively promote inclusive support infrastruc-

tures. To address this specific research objective, the qualitative analysis was operationalized through two interconnected open codes: *Planning for Inclusive Support* and *Resource Management in Inclusive Support* (see Figure 1).

Regarding the first code, *Planning for Inclusive Support*, a significant portion of the participants emphasized (N= 15, 22.4 %) the importance of conducting a diagnostic baseline classroom assessment designed to systematically identify existing pedagogical barriers and environmental facilitators.

A thorough analysis of the challenges faced by classrooms is key to diagnosing the school's needs and addressing the exclusionary factors that hinder inclusion. (Counselor 10, Mainstream Primary School)

Other participants (N= 13, 19.4 %) noted that establishing targeted improvement goals for each individual classroom and student directly optimizes the organization of school-wide inclusive support systems. Furthermore, they argued that these formalized goals facilitate the collaborative measurement of academic objectives and the seamless adaptation of the curriculum to the unique needs and learning profiles of each student.

Planning is determined by a preliminary classroom analysis in which improvement goals (for both the classroom and the student) are established based on the students' needs, characteristics, and preferences. (Support Teacher 3, Mainstream Primary School)

Along these same lines, the informants consider collaborative classroom instructional design to be essential, provided it directly integrates the needs and characteristics of students who have undergone prior diagnostic evaluation. Concurrently, they highlighted the value of incorporating students' voices regarding their own interests and preferences—both in terms of pedagogical methodology and thematic content (N= 11, 16.4 %).

Tutors, together with support teachers, propose objectives for the classroom and its students based on their needs and characteristics, following an

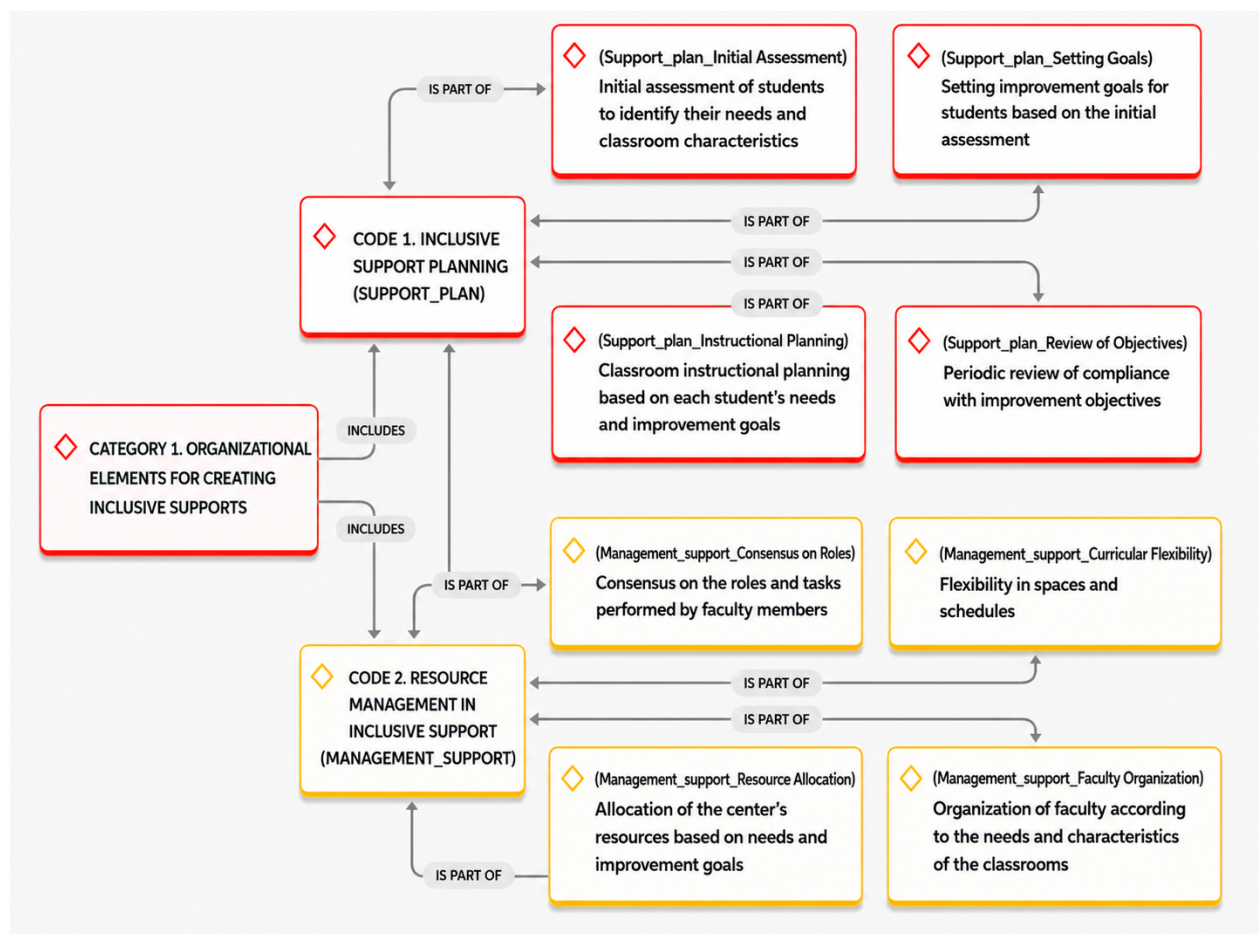
initial analysis. We jointly assess these objectives and establish the most appropriate teaching-learning process to achieve them. (General Education Teacher 7, Mainstream Primary School)

Similarly, a sub-cluster of data (N = 7; 10.4%) indicates that educational support must be continuously reviewed through structured monthly or quarterly formative assessments. These systematic evaluations allow the educational community to measure empirical progress, track longitudinal student development, and critically analyze the pedagogical procedures that have been deployed.

Support must be a dynamic process. It must be maintained throughout the school year and not left until the end of the year to evaluate the student, keeping in mind that there is constant progress and change. (Support Teacher 3, Mainstream Primary School)

Regarding the second code, *Resource Management in Inclusive Support*, multiple references emerged (N = 9; 13.4%) highlighting the necessity of strategically deploying organizational, human, and material resources in direct alignment with the specific needs, characteristics, and preferences of both the classrooms and individual students.

The management of school resources can be overseen by the administrative team. If school resources were organized based on students' needs, characteristics, and even their priorities, that would be wonderful. (General Education Teacher 9, Mainstream Primary School)

Figure 1. *Semantic network of the first specific objective*

Professionals also highlighted the strategic importance of allocating and structuring the teaching staff in direct alignment with the specific needs and characteristics of individual classrooms to optimize the efficacy of educational support systems (N = 6; 9.0%). Likewise, they mentioned that this staff organization should remain fundamentally flexible, considering the specific subject matters, thematic units, and pedagogical areas where each educator can best contribute their specialized expertise, thereby enriching collaborative instructional planning and maximizing the impact of educational responses.

The school should conduct an analysis of the human resources at its disposal to organize classrooms based on the professionals it employs. There may be a teacher specializing in autism or a professional who has worked at other schools using active methodologies, and all this knowledge is lost if we are unable to assess the strengths of each

of our professionals. (Counselor 4, Mainstream Primary School)

Furthermore, several references emerged (N = 4; 6.0%) regarding the pressing need to establish operational consensus and systematically delineate the specific roles, duties, and tasks of both general education teachers and specialized support educators within the school's overarching support architecture.

Support is effective when we clarify tasks so that each professional clearly understands the roles they must perform and takes responsibility for educational support. (Support Teacher 7, Mainstream Primary School)

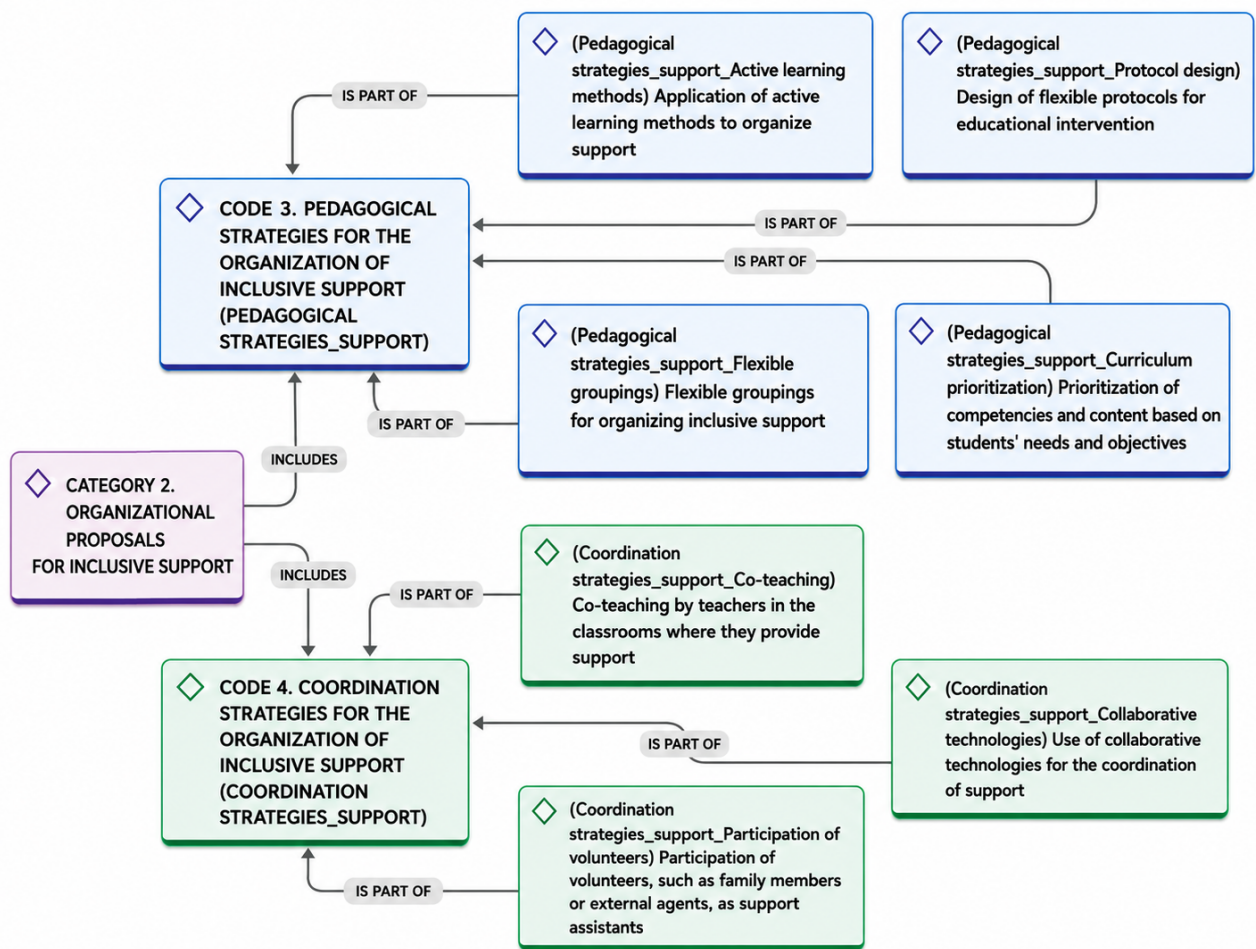
Finally, the participants emphasized the necessity of injecting flexibility into institutional spaces and scheduling frameworks to successfully attain the pedagogical objectives established for the classroom (N = 2; 3.0%).

The school's organization should not be rigid; spaces and schedules must be flexible, and the resources available to schools must be dynamic and adaptable. In this way, the school can be restructured according to classroom needs. (Counselor 11, Mainstream Primary School)

3.2 Results for Specific Objective 2: Establish organizational proposals that ensure the creation of inclusive supports

To address this objective, 54 quotes were identified and divided into two analysis codes: Pedagogical strategies for organizing inclusive support and Coordination strategies for organizing inclusive support (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Semantic network for the first specific objective



Within code 3, *Pedagogical Strategies for Organizing Inclusive Support*, various references (N = 12; 22.2%) highlighted the compelling need to design structured intervention protocols that facilitate highly contextualized adaptations tailored to the unique needs and characteristics of individual students.

Establishing action protocols with students enables the teaching team to respond to the diversity present in the classrooms. These protocols, as part of the Diversity Support Plan, become a collaborative school-wide initiative to provide an inclusive response to everyone. (Counselor 3, Mainstream Primary School)

Furthermore, numerous contributions (N = 10; 18.5%) underscored the deliberate use of active instructional methodologies as a primary pedagogical strategy for organizing and scaffolding inclusive support systems.

Active methodologies in support settings create inclusive spaces because they transform the dynamics of the regular classroom and personalize learning, adapting time and space to students' individual paces. A great example of this is learning through activity corners. (Support Teacher 7, Mainstream Primary School).

Additionally, several references (N = 8; 14.8%) emphasized the strategic prioritization of concrete skills and core competencies based on students' specific educational needs and individualized milestones. This strategy is systematically used as an organizational criterion within the pedagogical design of inclusive support infrastructures.

Curricular prioritization is agreed upon jointly by the various professionals. We take assessment reports into account and prioritize the improvement goals that are most urgent and meaningful for the student. (General Education Teacher 9, Mainstream Primary School).

Similarly, multiple responses (N = 7; 13.0%) pointed to the operational utility of establishing flexible grouping configurations based on students' differentiated proficiency levels across specific subject matters or localized learning scenarios.

In each subject, we group students based on their proficiency level. There are students who are at Level 1 in language arts (the highest level) but at Level 3 in math (the beginner level). Thus, these flexible groupings allow students to learn at their own pace and move up to the next level as their abilities improve. (Principal 8, Mainstream Primary School)

Regarding Code 4, *Coordination Strategies for Organizing Inclusive Support*, a substantial number of professionals articulated the pressing need to establish integrated co-teaching frameworks within the organization of support systems, wherein the general education classroom teacher works in close coordination with the specialized support professional (N = 6; 11.1%).

Co-teaching involves an equitable sharing of responsibilities. Regular and support teachers must jointly plan, schedule, and implement the teaching-learning processes. In regular classrooms, many students benefit from having two professionals in the classroom who are willing to organize an inclusive learning environment. (General Education Teacher 13, Mainstream Primary School).

Concurrently, several informants (N = 6; 11.1%) highlighted the integration of digital technologies as vital coordination mechanisms that assist educators in managing and aligning support measures. These technological platforms enable shared digital monitoring, collaborative instructional planning, and the continuous updating and formative review of individual student interventions.

Collaborative digital tools help us systematize information about each student. These platforms complement in-person meetings, and we use them to better coordinate support measures. (General Education Teacher 8, Mainstream Primary School).

Finally, to a lesser extent (N = 5; 9.3%), participants suggested the active involvement of community volunteers, such as family members or external stakeholders, to operate as instructional support assistants, thereby fostering closer, symbiotic ties between the school and its broader socio-cultural ecosystem.

At our school, we collaborate with the senior center, establishing a collaborative volunteer project. (General Education Teacher 11, Mainstream Primary School).

4. Discussion and Conclusions

This research has provided a deeper, more robust understanding of the multi-layered organizational factors that facilitate the sustainable development of inclusive support systems within mainstream elementary schools. Beyond merely identifying isolated practices, the empirical results demonstrate that genuine inclusion depends, to a large extent, on an institution's capacity to construct dynamic organizational structures capable of continuously analyzing their localized reality, coordinating shared educational responses, and organically adapting pedagogical actions to students' evolving needs. From this pers-

pective, educational support is no longer conceptualized as an array of specialized, segregated resources directed exclusively at specific students, but rather as systemic organizational mechanisms operating at the service of the entire educational community.

Regarding the first specific objective—to describe the organizational elements that promote the creation of inclusive support infrastructures—the findings strongly suggest that a comprehensive initial classroom assessment constitutes an indispensable prerequisite for developing effective inclusive practices. The participating professionals reached a clear consensus that the most critical organizational decisions cannot be formulated based solely on individualized clinical diagnostics; instead, they require a macro-level understanding of the social and instructional dynamics present within the classroom and the broader school ecosystem. This finding is particularly significant because it represents a profound paradigm shift away from deficit-centered models and toward ecological approaches focused on identifying institutional barriers and neutralizing them through contextual facilitators. In this regard, the data reinforce the theoretical arguments of Ainscow (2024), Arnaiz-Sánchez et al. (2019), and UNESCO (2023), who maintain that advancing educational inclusion needs a critical analysis of the structural conditions that generate exclusion within the educational settings themselves.

Likewise, the participants did not view this contextual assessment solely as a static, initial diagnostic phase, but rather as an ongoing, iterative process of formative observation and pedagogical adjustment. This insight is highly relevant because it underscores that the organization of inclusive supports cannot adhere to a rigid or permanent logic. Because students' developmental and academic needs evolve dynamically throughout the school year, intervention strategies must possess reciprocal fluidity. Educational inclusion is thus intrinsically linked to the institutional capacity to continually review internal practices and modify those structural conditions that limit students' presence, active participation, learning outcomes, and overall well-being (García et al., 2025; Redondo-Sama et al., 2025; Walton, 2025).

The study also reveals that shared goal-setting and collaborative instructional planning are fundamental mechanisms for dismantling traditional support structures historically anchored in the stu-

dent-deficit model. The findings suggest that teacher coordination must purposefully evolve into structured collaborative planning sessions that serve as democratic spaces for constructing shared professional meanings around inclusion (Alcaraz et al., 2026). This structural alignment enables general education teachers and specialized support educators to cultivate a common understanding of core educational milestones and the co-teaching strategies required to achieve them (De Boer and Kuijper, 2021; Lakkala et al., 2021; Margas, 2023; Wermke and Beck, 2025).

This issue takes on particular urgency when considering that many contemporary support systems continue to be organized around parallel, isolated initiatives that operate with loose conceptual coupling (Abellán et al., 2021). In contrast, the participants described institutional scenarios where collaborative planning successfully drives the fragmentation of professional responsibilities that has historically characterized specialized, segregating support models (Arostegui et al., 2023; De La Torre and Martín, 2024). Therefore, the results indicate that professional collaboration should not be treated merely as an optional working methodology, but rather as a non-negotiable structural condition necessary for transitioning toward highly inclusive forms of school organization.

Another highly relevant dimension identified in the analysis is the critical value attributed to the systematic monitoring and formative evaluation of support measures. The informants emphasized that the ultimate efficacy of any implemented measure depends on the institutional existence of formalized opportunities for joint review and critical reflection—a finding that strongly aligns with previous empirical literature (Abellán et al., 2022; Rönn et al., 2024; Simón et al., 2024; Tejeiro, 2024)—while adding a vital qualitative nuance. Rather than evaluating student progress in isolation, the participants heavily stressed the need to critically audit the teaching methodologies and organizational structures themselves. In this way, evaluation operates as a powerful vehicle for institutional learning and continuous optimization, reinforcing the concept that inclusion is an ongoing process of structural transformation within the school culture.

Furthermore, the results highlight the strategic importance of agile resource management. Although contemporary debates on inclusive edu-

cation typically focus on the numerical inadequacy of human and material resources, the qualitative discourses gathered in this study suggest that the strategic distribution, allocation, and coordination of these assets may be just as critical as their absolute quantity (Ainscow, 2024; García et al., 2025). The participants emphasized that systematically auditing professional strengths, flexibly assigning classroom responsibilities, and fostering cross-functional coordination among school leadership teams optimize available institutional resources and exponentially increase their direct impact on student learning (Ainscow, 2024; García et al., 2025).

This interpretation directly converges with recent research highlighting inclusive leadership as a catalyst for the development of authentic inclusive school cultures (De la Torre and Martín, 2024). However, the results suggest that leadership is not restricted to administrative or top-down managerial oversight. Rather, it plays a vital mediating role between the specific needs identified within the classroom context and the micro-organizational decisions adopted by the institution. Consequently, the capacity of school leadership teams to design flexible, collaborative professional networks emerges as a determining variable in the success of inclusive support systems.

The clear delineation of professional roles and responsibilities constitutes another major finding of this inquiry. The participants detailed how role ambiguity between specialized support educators and homeroom teachers frequently leads to a counterproductive duplication of efforts, acute coordination friction, and even counter-inclusive delegation practices that restrict the development of shared accountability for student learning. In this regard, while the results align with prior literature (Abellán et al., 2021; Lakkala et al., 2021), they further demonstrate that role definition only yields positive outcomes when embedded within a deeply rooted collaborative culture. A rigid, bureaucratic delineation of responsibilities threatens to reinforce historical dynamics of classroom segregation, whereas an operational clarification explicitly geared toward cooperation fosters professional shared responsibility and collective efficacy.

Similarly, spatiotemporal flexibility emerged as a mandatory condition for translating theoretical inclusive principles into everyday pedagogical practice. The participants noted that excessively rigid

school schedules and physical spatial arrangements severely constrain opportunities for authentic curricular adaptation and make it difficult to accommodate heterogeneous learning paces. This finding, strongly validated by previous research (Norwich, 2023; Schmidt and Thygesen, 2024; Torralba et al., 2025), highlights a pervasive structural tension within contemporary schools: the coexistence of progressive discourses favoring inclusion alongside rigid school organizational architectures that continue to enforce homogeneous, standardized teaching models. Consequently, the results indicate that achieving genuine inclusion requires systemic changes not only at the methodological level but fundamentally at the macro-structural level.

Regarding the second specific objective, the organizational proposals articulated by the participants help illuminate how these theoretical elements can be operationalized into concrete institutional practices. Among these strategies, the development of formalized, shared action protocols stands out. Far from being dismissed as mere bureaucratic instruments, the informants perceived these protocols as vital tools that promote institutional coherence, pedagogical alignment, and continuity in educational responses across different grade levels. This perception is particularly instructive, as it highlights the need to strategically combine classroom-level pedagogical flexibility with common, structured organizational frameworks that guide collective teacher actions (Arnaiz-Sánchez et al., 2024; García et al., 2025; UNESCO, 2023).

Furthermore, the heavy emphasis placed throughout the interviews on active methodologies, flexible grouping configurations, and deliberate curricular prioritization reflects a conceptualization of inclusion that is inextricably bound to student engagement and democratic participation (Alvídrez and Elías, 2024; Schmidt and Thygesen, 2024). The results suggest that these strategies are valued not merely for their psychometric potential to boost academic performance, but primarily for their capacity to construct shared learning opportunities and to safeguard the permanent presence and active socialization of all students within the daily life of the mainstream classroom (Keles et al., 2024; Shahzad et al., 2025; UNESCO, 2017). From this perspective, inclusion is re-defined as the transformation of everyday educational experiences for the collective whole, rather than the sporadic imple-

mentation of parallel, targeted measures for specific marginalized individuals (De la Fuente-González and Rodríguez-Martín, 2026).

Furthermore, professionals highlighted the urgent need to prioritize essential competencies and core thematic content based on students' immediate needs and individualized milestones, which allows for a highly personalized and scaffolded educational response (Lakkala et al., 2021; Margas, 2023). This approach promotes a more flexible organization of the curriculum designed to explicitly address classroom diversity. This architecture facilitates personalized attention that remains fully consistent with structural curricular flexibility and adaptive alignment with students' idiosyncratic learning paces (Arnaiz-Sánchez et al., 2021; Norwich, 2023; Pieri, 2020).

The practice of co-teaching deserves specialized analytical attention, as the participants identified it as one of the instructional mechanisms possessing the greatest transformative and inclusive potential. Although the international literature has extensively documented its general benefits (Arostegui et al., 2023; Sanahuja et al., 2022), the results of this study suggest that co-teaching fundamentally challenges and blurs the traditional, segregated boundaries between general education and specialized support. When both professionals equitably share the cognitive and operational workload of planning, direct classroom intervention, and formative assessment, the historical pattern of referring students out of the room gradually disappears, thereby strengthening an institutional ethos of collective responsibility for all learning processes.

Finally, the intentional expansion of institutional support networks through the structured integration of families, community volunteers, and external social agents reinforces an ecological, holistic vision of inclusive education. The qualitative narratives demonstrate that the educational response to student diversity cannot rest exclusively on the shoulders of classroom teachers; instead, it demands the mobilization of multiple community actors capable of enriching the students' opportunities for socialization, participation, and experiential learning. This finding strongly converges with the arguments of Flecha et al. (2024) and Cortés-González et al. (2025), who contend that building authentically inclusive schools requires strengthening the symbiotic relationships between the educational institution and its surrounding socio-cultural ecosystem.

Taken together, the empirical and qualitative insights derived from this study lead to the solid conclusion that inclusive support systems do not depend solely on the numerical availability of material assets or the mechanical application of specific methodologies; rather, they hinge upon an institution's capacity to cultivate organizational cultures rooted deeply in professional collaboration, curricular flexibility, and continuous structural reflection. The findings suggest that inclusion must be conceptualized as an ongoing institutional process of holistic transformation that simultaneously and non-linearly reshapes organizational frameworks, pedagogical practices, and professional relationships. Moving toward more inclusive support infrastructures inevitably involves radically re-evaluating how schools organize their human resources, distribute their professional responsibilities, and engineer educational responses capable of guaranteeing the democratic participation and learning of all students.

Consequently, further empirical research is urgently needed to track the longitudinal implementation and sustainability of these inclusive support systems across diverse educational landscapes. This study urges the international educational and scientific communities to conduct comprehensive, multi-method organizational audits of schools to systematically identify hidden systemic barriers and isolate enabling factors, with the ultimate objective of engineering highly adaptive, inclusive educational environments.

Finally, it is essential to acknowledge the inherent boundaries of this study. This research was contextually bounded by its focus on a specific geographic territory—the Region of Murcia (Spain)—and a specific targeted sample of educational stakeholders. For this reason, future research lines must scale up the participants and expand into diverse cross-cultural and international geographic contexts to facilitate macro-level verification and enhance the external validity of these organizational models.

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Author Declaration – CRediT Taxonomy

Authors	Contributions
Javier Abellán-Rubio	Conceptualization, methodology, research, data curation, formal analysis, visualization, writing—original draft, writing—revision and editing, resources.
Dra. Pilar Arnaiz-Sánchez	Conceptualization, methodology, research, project management, funding acquisition, supervision, validation, formal analysis, writing—revision and editing, resources.
Dr. Salvador Alcaraz	Methodology, research, data curation, validation, resources, formal analysis, writing—revision and editing, supervision.

Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence

The authors DECLARE that, in the preparation of the article “*Best Practices in Organizing Inclusive Supports in Schools*,” the ChatGPT tool (OpenAI) was used exclusively as an aid during the preliminary search and filtering of scientific literature. Its use was limited to the initial identification of search terms, keywords, and potential references related to the study's topic in major databases and academic platforms. However, the authors located, verified, selected, and critically reviewed the references ultimately included in the manuscript.