



Challenges in continuing professional development on inclusion in early years in Spain

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Abstract

Through a school case study, this research identifies the macro- and micro-elements that influence the continuing professional development of nursery staff in a Spanish educational setting. Organizational theories are employed to highlight the professional learning experienced by nursery staff through types of learning (formal, informal, and non-formal) and organizational learning analysis (single, double, and triple loops of learning). Qualitative data was collected through unstructured interviews, observations, and document analysis and was gathered in two sessions of three months during one academic year. This study focuses on voices from the learning communities in one early year's classroom in a state school located in Andalusia, in the south of Spain. Twelve early years staffers—including teachers, teaching assistants, managerial team, and external professionals—and six parents and 24 children were observed, including two children diagnosed with special education needs (SEN). This case study shows that a dearth of essential elements such as communication and responsibility networks, a non-permeable system, and resource management policies result in a lack of capability to offer professional development to nursery staff to meet children's educational needs.

Keywords Inclusive education · Early years · Professional development · Spain · Bio-ecological model · Organizational theories

Introduction

Inclusion means offering educational opportunities to all children, and its implementation goes through a never-ending process of breaking down the barriers to participation (Ainscow et al., 2006a, 2006b; Tedam, 2014; Visser et al., 2012). Scholars such as Nutbrown et al. (2013) clarify that inclusion has an operational rather than

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conceptual focus. It refers to a state of becoming, where families and schools continuously encounter positive and challenging factors. The researcher assumes as the first premise that challenges in implementing meaningful education might be that inclusion is a complex and context-dependent matter. Inclusive education follows a historical path and exercises cultural tools. In the Spanish context, the term *inclusion* was introduced by the Organic Law 1/1990, La Ley Orgánica General del Sistema Educativo (LOGSE) (Boletín Oficial del Estado, BOE, 1990) and by the principles of the Salamanca Statement (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, 1994). As UNESCO (1994, p. 6) states, "inclusion promotes quality education and educational equity for all, without any type of barrier or exclusion." In terms of access, it is remarkable that in Spain 83% of the SEN (diagnosed with special education needs) population is included in ordinary schools (de España, 2021). Inclusion is becoming the primary educational principle for children with SEN or disabilities in the early years in the Spanish context (Giné et al., 2016). Following Spain's organic law 3/2020, 29th of December (BOE, 2021), local authorities are compelled to offer a place in a mainstream school to all children who turn three years old during the first term of the academic year (September to December). Although this policy is national, the condition is implemented differently in each autonomous community across the nation (Fernández-Enguita, 2009). It is essential to highlight that in Andalusia, where this research took place, the regional government has competencies in education and educational policy, also about the staff training by the Educational Law 17/2007, of the 10th of December (Junta de Andalucía, 2007).

As international scholars have argued, the professional development of nursery staff working in schools plays a crucial role in both the improvement in the educational development of children and in making early childhood education services available for children in vulnerable situations (Brunsek et al., 2020; Egert et al., 2018). After analyzing some of the relational factors, scholars have identified the necessity of positive attitudes and beliefs from staff about including children with SEN in their regular teaching to predict the willingness of the team to participate in any training (Avramidis et al., 2019). Scholars also have acknowledged staff suffering mental fatigue by many factors and making staff less likely to attend professional development (Langher et al., 2017). Previous experience teaching a mixed class in the early years predicted fewer positive intentions toward inclusion (Dias & Cadime, 2016). According to several scholars (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007; Lieberman, 1995; Schachter et al., 2019) and the teachers themselves (Baker, 2018), there are effective professional-development programs based on the active collaborative engagement of practitioners (Beaton et al., 2021; Toulia et al., 2021) and peer exchanges within a shared scientific framework (Peleman et al., 2018). At the same time, there are many other programs with nil or even negative results or that are not explicitly related to their needs when teaching children with SEN (Cooc, 2019).

Article 117 in the Andalusia educational legislation (de Andalucía, 2007), mandates the professional development of teachers. Teacher training centers provided by the regional administration will have specific expert teams that are identified as informal learning opportunities and professional development plans with

specific required actions to improve the formal qualifications of the staff working at state schools through non-formal education programs. Since the establishment of the educational Spanish organic law LOMCE (Ley Orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa) (BOE, 2013) and the latest educational policy (BOE, 2021), teachers have duties that include preparing adaptation plans for all students identified with SEN. Marqués-Graells, (2021) have identified that the training themes in the non-formal learning courses are mainly based on game-based methods or play-based methods. These defined strategies taught during the training sessions do not identify individual adaptation tools as their main subject. Furthermore, according to the Spanish Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2018), the Spanish policies do not address the issue of teachers being formally trained by agencies or by institutions of higher education in disability awareness or for example, in the use of augmentative and alternative communication approaches. Instead, the regional government has published educational materials as guides to elaborate tutorial plans and techniques to support residents with disabilities (de Andalucía, 2021a, b, c). At the same time, academic literature based on pilot studies at schools located in Andalusia shows that only a few programs are arising from collaborative work between universities and schools, such as in-service training on new technologies in the classroom (Márquez-García et al., 2020; Ruiz et al., 2018) or gaming as a learning tool (Higueras-Rodríguez et al., 2020). Furthermore, surveys demonstrate that only 28% of Spanish teachers feel well-prepared for teaching in a mixed-ability classroom, and only 37% have received training in teaching children with SEN in their latest professional-development activities (OECD, 2019). This data and our analysis indicate that staff need further support and are not receiving it through formal training.

Scholars have identified the primary characteristics of quality programs that include students with SEN that could be used as models for professional development (Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009). Regarding professional-development practices, in-service training programs on inclusion for early years staff could promote high-quality practices and changes in attitudes. These programs made participants feel more competent in implementing inclusive procedures (Baker-Ericzén et al., 2009; Pit-ten Cate et al., 2018). The school's culture also influences staff participation when training is implemented together with a professional learning community (Admiraal et al., 2021). However, research on the specific results of these programs based on empirical data on children's knowledge development or nursery staff outcomes is lacking (Holmqvist & Lelinge, 2020). Furthermore, despite the existence of studies and reports describing effective practices, there is limited research on the learning-acquisition process of professional development in the Spanish context (Paz-Albo Prieto, 2018). Therefore, this research offered the learning community the opportunity to express their experiences within their contexts, such as encounters inside or outside their workplaces that have impacted their professional development. This research was designed to answer the following question:

Which elements influence early years staff's professional development and organizational learning in relation to including children with SEN?

The objectives are:

- a. Identify the professional development strategies related to inclusion.
- b. Categorize the dynamics that influence early years educators' professional knowledge and organizational learning processes.
- c. Define the challenges to the professional development of staff.

Theoretical perspectives

This article aims to answer the research objectives relating to organizational theories applied to investigate the role of staff and individual and organizational learning related to inclusive practices within the nursery classroom. Two types of learning processes will be analyzed: individual and organizational. *Individual learning* is defined as an adaptation or innovation that takes place when actors have certain beliefs and assumptions, which then translate into decisions and actions (Anderson, 2020). As Flood (2018) indicates, it is not valuable if the learning processes and knowledge acquisition are merely analyzed as individual processes. The analysis of learning has been promoted as a form of equal access and social sharing— indeed, as a form of “inclusion.” According to organizational theories, training and learning activities in the workplace aim to increase organizational results based on transferring staff knowledge into the organization (Müller & Kunisch, 2018). Schwandt (1993) and Schwandt and Marquardt (2000, p. 8) describe *organizational learning* as “a system of actions, actors, symbols, and processes that enable an organization to transform information into valued knowledge which in turn increases its long-run adaptive capacity.” Every aspect of this world, such as inclusive practice in education, is related to multiple and dynamic variables, which are positioned in a complex ecological context between individuals and their social environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris., 2006; Daly et al., 2020; Farmer et al., 2019). The exosystemic and mesosystemic levels are defined as the collective development process through participation in professional learning teaching communities (Wedell, 2005). Therefore, this process, similar to the proximal techniques described within Bronfenbrenner’s model, has many “stages” from the individual to the organization (Song, et al., 2009). A UNESCO report (1972) explored how workers gained knowledge that was suitable for their jobs, highlighting that the training offered by traditional educational institutions was insufficient for learners. This report, along with the sharing of ideas with a pioneer such as Lindeman (1926), has encouraged individuals and organizations to become involved in their training, suggesting they develop spontaneous initiatives and that school staff shares the information with a broader society. UNESCO (1972) developed a classification that is still up to date (Faure et al., 1972; Souto-Otero, 2021). UNESCO identified three ways in which adult learners learn and acquire knowledge: formal, non-formal, and informal learning. First, *formal learning* takes place in the hierarchical structure characteristic of the educational system through instruction programs in educational institutions, adult training centers, or the workplace, where instructors are generally recognized by qualification or a certificate. Second, *non-formal learning* is organized outside the formal system; this learning is not usually evaluated and does not lead to certification. Third, *informal learning* is the result of daily work-related, family, or leisure activities (Faure

et al., 1972, p. 8). Emancipatory learning through informal learning is essential in this research for its focus on social transformation, social justice, and equity—which is the aim of inclusive practices in early childhood settings—and instructing a dynamic society formed by educators who resist exploitation (Fenwick, 2003; Foley, 1999).

Learning in the workplace is meaningful “through a process of single and double-loop models” (Argyris & Schön, 1978). In most cases, professionals and managers follow the single loop, which occurs when they react to a detected error based on previous values and experiences without adding and transforming ideas into new knowledge (Edwards & Rees, 2006). Hummelbrunner and Reynolds (2013) and Peeters and Robinson (2015) identified single-loop learning, which is “learning to adapt,” when dealing with the core question “are we doing things right?” Learning effectiveness has been conceptualized as the right to quality education for all. Scholars have acknowledged that when actors get into the double loop, they go through the reflective process of governing variables, values, and norms underlying organizational actions. Again, the recursive and relational context is considered (Tosey et al., 2012) asking “are we doing the right things?”. As previously noted, a teacher’s systematic reflections interpreted as a second and triple-loop of learning are more effective if they are shared collectively (Geerts et al., 2017; Kozleski & Handy, 2017) and wondering “What makes this the right thing to do?” (Taket, 1998).

Methodology

The research was conducted in one mainstream school in southern Spain, Andalusia, and the participating setting was a nursery classroom composed of 24 children from three to four years of age. The educational level corresponds with the first year of noncompulsory education at Spanish state schools (Segundo ciclo de education infantil). The case study is a valuable tool in contextual and complex multivariate conditions, uses multiple evidence, and defines broad research topics (Yin, 2003). This longitudinal study consists of detailed research, where phenomena—in this case staff professional development—are situated within their natural context, emphasizing explanatory factors of social or organizational processes (Hartley, 2004). The sample participants and location were selected through information-oriented purposive sampling (Brantlinger et al., 2005). The school was chosen because (a) it was externally recognized (by the local university and the regional government) for orienting their practices toward inclusion; (b) the school showed a desire to participate during a school year; (c) the school staff said they were working toward equal opportunities in child-learning; (d) staff said they were motivated to implement inclusive practices in their classrooms; (e) participants exhibited the potential to share a wide variety of information for research purposes. Ethical research procedures were conducted during the data collection and analysis (Hill, 2005).

The school in this study is a small public primary school catering to first to sixth grades. There were approximately 220 students ages 3–11 years old and 17 permanent teachers at school. The children with SEN under six years of age were allocated in the ordinary class, at one integration room and at the office for individualized

interventions. As an ordinary state school, children can obtain a place in the school if they live nearby, and they have a higher chance of admittance if their siblings are at the school, as living nearby does not guarantee admittance. The school and the local Down syndrome association have collaborated on an inclusive program for the past five years.

Study participants included 12 staff and six parents, including two with children with SEN, as shown in Fig. 1.

The head teacher selected participating parents who were interested in joining the study. Staff participants were chosen because they had direct contact with children with SEN in the three-year-old school group. Participant observations complemented by writing memos in which the author was documenting the analytical process and thoughts and the reviews of artifacts and interviews took place two sessions of three months during one academic year. During their daily interactions in their classrooms, corridors, and schoolyards, the children and teachers were observed. This group included the ordinary ratio for nursery classes that is a maximum of 25 children per class teacher (Ministerio de Educacion, 2010, 2021). Participants included a class teacher teaching 24 children, including two children with SEN, and the substitute teacher, who was observed only during a single semester when the class teacher was on sick leave. In addition, included two teachers who specialized in SEN and worked with the two children with SEN in an integrative classroom (two hours per day) were included: SENCo (a) and SENCo (b). The speech therapist and the psychologist performed individual sessions one hour per week with each child identified with SEN in early education at this school. The carer helped all children with SEN (20 children from the entire school) during the scheduled toilet training

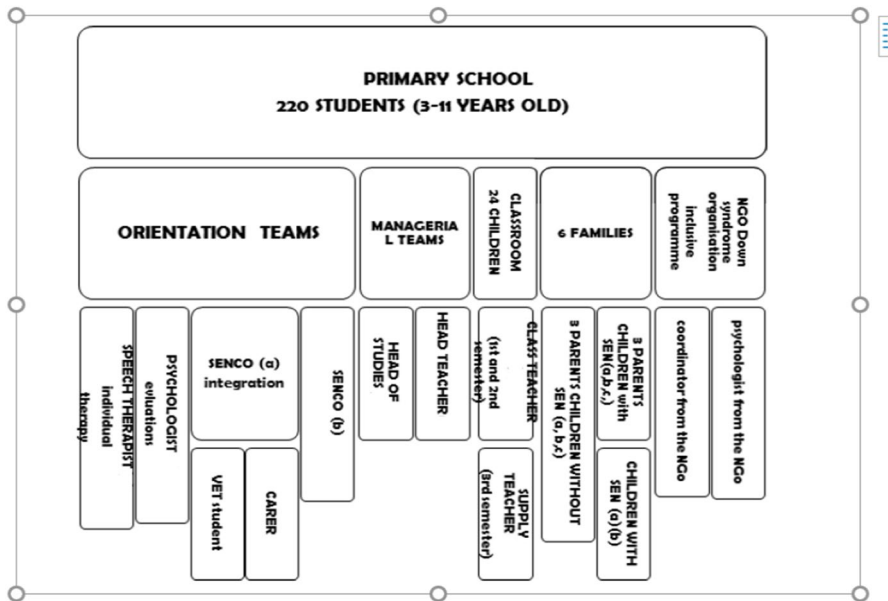


Fig. 1 Organigram of school study participants

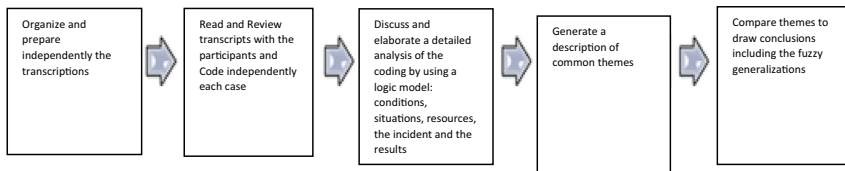


Fig. 2 Coding process

and eating sessions. The director of studies and head teachers were responsible for the teaching schedules. The child's family with SEN (b) with a diagnosis of Down syndrome paid for the services of the coordinator of the inclusive program from the local Down syndrome association to coordinate the child's goals with the school. Due to this agreement, the psychologist from the inclusive program worked with the teacher in the ordinary classroom for two hours per week.

This research was planned as a qualitative single instrumental and descriptive case study (Creswell et al, 2007; Yin, 1993, 2011), to analyze complex phenomena that are rooted in their context and the multiple data sources were interviews, physical artifacts, archival records, documents such as learning diaries from teachers, physical artifacts, and direct observation (Yin, 2009). Moderate participant observation was used; the researcher was identifiable, interacted with the participants, and engaged in activities, but did not participate in the teaching activities (Baker, 2006) as agreed with the school staff based on a trusted relationship in which the researcher's role was performed as an assistant and helper (Oswald et al, 2014). In the data interpretational analysis process (Gall et al., 2003), we employed a taxonomic approach, as illustrated in Fig. 2, in the case study analysis. The coding process was linear and took five different stages. The first step was compiling the data from the notes, document reviews, interview data, observations, artifacts such as teachers' reports, and photos taken during the visits and later transcribed from different sources verbatim. The researcher typed and formatted and transform them into computer files using the qualitative data analysis software Nvivo to assist during the transcription and the analysis of the data (Alam, 2020; Gall et al., 2003). In the second step, the researcher was together with the participants revising the content of the transcriptions. In the third and fourth steps, the researcher developed dividing chosen sections into key issues or themes to explain the cases (Adu, 2019). In the fifth step, each theme emerged from different sources in which that the researcher has learned from the case study (Saldaña, 2014). Presenting fuzzy generalizations (Basssey, 1999) provides a depth of insight into one particular early-year setting and the varied dynamics at play within it. The theoretical lenses employed by the author/s permitted a depth of insight into several elements of both provisions of professional learning opportunities and also the dynamics that influence their availability and appeal to individual members of staff. The use of these lenses will be beneficial to readers who would wish to undertake similar case study analyses of similar educational provisions and the professional learning needs of those who work within them.

Data analysis and discussion

Professional development strategies related to the inclusion of children with SEN

In Spain, to work at state schools a staff member must be a civil servant (Ministerio de Educacion, 2011), and in those roles, the respondents explained, the authorities offer free formal learning professional development programs. The staff received formal training from the regional government, at the regional teaching training center or the local universities, or by the working unions (the Unión General de Trabajadores, UGT, or Comisiones Obreras), mainly through distance learning. Still, participants shared their opinion of unhelpful content learned. After participating in the free university course on disabilities, the SENCo (b) and class teacher highlighted that the training content was not suitable for or adapted to early education. They stated that the content was based on unrelated topics such as sexual education for adolescents with disabilities and new assisted technologies used for children with multiple disabilities. The teacher (a) pointed out that themes were too broad because "regional authorities were responsible for offering different activities related to the strategic lines of their educational system"; they stated that policies were not matching the needs of the school.

Furthermore, the head teacher was critical of the system, stating that being a civil servant means neither being evaluated nor obliged to be trained and, therefore, "civil servants did not acknowledge that they had to revise their practices." SENCo (a) reflected the necessity of training, particularly for those working in the same position for many years:

Each of us studied in different times, and a person that has learned 20 years ago needs to actualize their concepts. Therefore, I think a lot needs to be done regarding the people in charge of training us! These are the ones who need to take responsibility and lead the changes... they need to bring in new perspectives.

The staff also said the amount of further training was linked to the level of changes implemented at the school. In this case study, the staff said they haven't experienced any structural changes in the last 30 years; school staff agreed and pointed out that it is difficult to implement changes because external agencies do not know how schools are organized and what works best. Moreover, staff from the nongovernmental organization (NGO) also reported that when they offered non-formal education by specific workshops in inclusion for school staff, not a single teacher chose to participate. The coordinator of the inclusive program from the NGO claimed:

Knowing their lack of knowledge ... the training was about teaching children with intellectual disabilities, explaining the characteristics of these students and some strategic tools. The training was focused on regular teachers, and in special circumstances, for teachers who work in specific classes. The majority of them were special needs educators... no response from the

ordinary class teachers... We don't know if they assumed that they already had the training or were just not interested.

In this case study, teachers were not feeling responsible for the children's curricular adaptation; therefore, there was no participation. Teachers also said they were under constant pressure to cope with the big group and their job was already demanding. They also said there were no rewards for non-formal training, and teachers felt stressed due to demanding work resulting from the high ratio of children to adults (24:1). The topics are not based on classroom praxis as "having accomplished teachers is not recognized." Ingvarson (2010, p. 48) reported similar responses from the Australian context.

None of the things I have participated in have been rewarded. It was using my time, effort, and money... it would be great to get some in-service training or during working hours, which would directly affect you and your work. The training should be free ... in my days, you got the food at the training for free. The training as courses about disability are the ones you do in your free time. You do not receive travel expenses. Sometimes it is not that we are thinking about getting a new diploma... we do it for our knowledge.

Van Der Klick et al. (2017) identified that the lack of participation in non-formal and formal learning resulted from the lack of time and resources. One teacher stated, "they should do a course called how to teach and not die trying."

Regarding non-formal learning during the staff working hours, the school planned three hours of compulsory weekly meetings scheduled in the library (for teachers and school leaders) on Monday evenings with semi-structured workshops. In the specific case of learning disabilities, until the children reached primary class, staff started speaking about the areas identified for discussion as deficient. The diversity plans that were the main topic at these meetings started only after the teacher of a child in primary class (six year olds) detected that the child was not following class activities. In response, the staff team elaborated a "compensating measures" plan. However, as Holloway (2019) states, teachers in this school are shaped into ideal teachers, with homogeneous practices, which are transformed into parameters for evaluating teaching practices. Eventually, this results in the undervaluation of teaching knowledge, and teachers are alienated by losing control of their practices. During these meetings, many plans and projects were proposed that did not seem to correspond to the reality of the school. According to the head teacher, in the annual organizational project, each school was required to design, select, and implement a plan involving SEN. The school inspector evaluated the plan annually (results were always positive). The psycho-pedagogical orientation team also reviewed the information. After the content analysis of school policies, it was clear that objectives stated goals such as improvements to practices the school already performed optimally, and the evaluations did not respond to the challenges. Similar to the observations of Leithwood et al. (2008) and Sallán et al (2021), staff were not strongly motivated to make in-job changes without the direction of a manager. The managerial team was purposefully selected according to seniority and to maintain "school practices."

At the same time, staff options of informal learning supported by the state were limited. Staff agreed that the regional authorities chose topics aligning with political and some disabilities organizations' intentions. They said the regional council and the associations for children with specific needs, such as the autism association, promoted special units in ordinary schools. Staff involved in the training to work in these specific units (psychologist, carer, and speech therapist) received "free rooms for meetings," "money for travel," and a job promotion by becoming a part of the future staff of these "integrative settings" in state schools. Outside of working hours, the teacher, psychologist, and speech therapist were involved in communities of practice in which experts or multidisciplinary teams talked about clinical practices and about how to integrate children with disabilities into special classes (Wenger, 1998). These communities acted similarly to "critical friends" (Kuh, 2016). The speech therapist explained that the "Andalusia system of professional development of teaching staff" offered free working rooms that were available from the beginning of the academic year, in order to promote working groups in specialized fields. The speech therapist said they had started as a group of friends with experience working at schools that were working with children with a diagnosis of autism. The psychologist stated, "It was beneficial to work with other professionals, discuss your problems, and share different coping strategies." They said the coordinator played the role of motivator for the group, and each session was long, lasting at least an hour and a half to two hours. The team also visited special schools and special education classes to learn how they implement activities. They shared many personal experiences, and sessions became a forum for dialogue where participants said, "I have a child like this, and this is the way to treat him." They said they understood each other very well and shared feelings about working under stress. Together, they said, they raised awareness of these challenges. They also created a program for children with autism to implement in a specific setting. "It was a normal curriculum, but adapted, and it was for children from primary education to all levels," said the psychologist.

On the other hand, most of the staff—SENCo (a)(b), carer, speech therapist, head of studies, and the team from the inclusive program—stated that they acquired the most valuable competencies through informal learning activities. For example, they enjoyed reading articles from the internet about the information on practical activities; the substitute teacher responded they liked to read about "programs that work." They agreed they expanded their professional knowledge by choosing books from the local library that presented information clearly, and they watched YouTube videos (Forsyth, 1998). SENCo (a) said they learned from reading the latest research during their civil service training: They were required to prepare several chapters to defend in front of the evaluation court and select the most recent peer-reviewed journal articles. The staff—carer, SENCo (a), and the staff from the NGO—found another valuable example of informal learning such as meeting friends who were teachers and who had the same duties very useful as they could compare ways of doing things, confirm beliefs, and find out how other schools were operating. The carer explained: "We have regular meetings with all the educators working in the special school, and we are friends; some of them have an internet blog, and we explain things freely." SENCo (a) highlighted, "my friends are teachers, and you usually get together with them and talk, and many have the same experience as

me, where you want to do your job well and try to adapt to the system." They meet in groups comprised of professionals who occupy the same roles at their schools and who have the same interest in integrating specific disabilities. Analysis of the respondents' responses did not indicate opportunities to meet and learn how to include those with SEN in the ordinary classroom nor to challenge the systemic culture.

Dynamics that influence early years educators' professional knowledge and organizational learning processes

In relation to the community of learning, the researcher interviewed parents and external professionals from the nearby NGO to study the dynamics that influence staff professional development. Findings indicated the parents' community did not communicate with teachers, attending only compulsory parents' meetings. Parents of children with SEN reported that a call from school could be a sign of bad behavior by their children. SENCo (a) said they saw the value of getting the parents involved, although pointed out that too many missed a lot of meetings. There wasn't anyone who checked why parents missed meetings or encouraged them not to do so. Those parents who missed meetings confirmed that they participated in consultations only when they saw their children had great difficulties, as they got enough information through the notes the teacher left in their children's school bags. There were usually notes from the school organization and a summary when a book on the curriculum started a new topic. In the early education classroom, where children from three to four years of age are taught, the curricula content was guided by textbooks; they had six books per semester for students to complete. Pedagogical manuals that parents buy annually came with a complete description of a full-day activity plan teachers were following. The publisher is chosen by the school, and they use the same brand for all the schools.

The teacher showed reluctance to acknowledge differences and diversity and showed insecurity about how to communicate the values of inclusive practice to parents. The teacher believed it wasn't necessary to share with parents that children with SEN are in the class. This school, often mainly motivated by the classroom teacher, held parents accountable when moving their child with SEN into a full-time special class. This resulted from teachers lacking insight into the children's assessments, which value the children's multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1991). There was no individual curriculum adaptation in group instruction until the substitute teacher arrived.

Another example of a tentative informal workplace learning project was driven by an external disability's organization. Parents of children with SEN said they had tried for many years to get extra support (e.g., teaching assistants) in ordinary classrooms until the regional authorities authorized a program that approved organizations such as the Down Syndrome Organization to liaise with state schools. The "inclusive program" allows staff from NGOs to work with the children who were part of their organization, and the parents would pay for it. Their team intended to work within the ordinary classrooms and collaborated and mentor the class teacher to include the children in everyday

activities. In this classroom, one day a week for one hour and a half, the psychologist from the NGO worked with the child with SEN (b) in the early intervention program. However, the teacher interpreted their support as endangering the system and avoided collaboration. The teacher wanted the child to spend more hours in the integrated setting, and, therefore, they felt that the NGO psychologist was disturbing the class. The fear and frustration between the teacher and the NGO psychologist were visible. The professional status of the class teacher affects what the NGO can do. The psychologist from the NGO said:

The teacher is the one to rule the class, and she only let the people from the organization be there if she sees that you intend to do another activity with the child with SEN, and then she will ask you to move to another part of the room.

Another failed informal workplace learning was an opportunity for learning partnership and coaching opportunities from the infant vocational education program and the school. The class teacher also avoided any collaboration with trainees as they believed trainees were obstructing her teaching and were not helpful. They said that with three-year-old children, one needs a lot of organization and control, and sometimes when trainees were in the class, the children would go to them, and the class would be disrupted. The inflexibility of the organization was a primary challenge as there were no negotiating procedures and no communication with the teacher about the value of the inclusive program from the NGO (Bailey et al., 1998). As per Engelbrecht et al. (2013), communication required an aim to encourage the development of pro-inclusion attitudes. Attitude is changeable; therefore, teachers must be asked about the children's needs to implement inclusion.

For this reason, teachers had to be accomplished in terms of having well-planned information and support structures. The teacher got angry about the timetable given by their leaders, as they believed children with SEN had to be integrated into subject hours and not in the assembly. They denied collaborative work, and the class teacher's status affected what the NGO professional could do. It is clear that different values existed concerning inclusion, and there were mixed messages from professionals to children. Wenger et al., (2002) stated that the community of practice is not always related to learning.

Some cases could result in challenging situations related to unequal power relationships. For example, in an organization with a hierarchy of authorities, having an influential role such as a solo-teaching position can create a potential for subordination (Rollinson, 2008). On the other hand, SENCo (a) and the head teacher appreciated the possibilities of working with vocational education and training (VET) students, particularly with those with previous experience as the one in this case study; in the same way, they valued the chance to collaborate with professionals (Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

Define the professional development of staff, using concepts of single, double, and triple loops of learning

This section draws parallels between Bronfenbrenner and Morry's theory (1998, 2006) and Argyris and Schön's ideas and brings them together to inform the

analysis and discussion. In addition, the aspect of time defined by Bronfenbrenner (1995) will also be contemplated in this section, including the meso-time conceptualized in the single and double loop of learning from Argyris and Schön (1978), and the macro-time identified with the third loop of learning (Garratt, 1986).

Related to the single loop of learning, as specified by Argyris (1985), the staff context and surroundings in their professional learning impact the result of the organization. The knowledge acquisition of a significant part of the school staff was by mature professionals (civil servants) with more than 35 years of experience in the same school, linked with the single loop of learning connected to the rituals of exclusion. Members of the organization respond to changes in the internal and external environment of the organization by detecting errors, which they then correct to maintain the central features of organizational theory-in-use (Argyris & Schön, 1978, p. 19). The system was simple, and the psychologist was the one to prepare a report specifying where children would be located each hour of the day and, in early education, mainly defining a minor curriculum adaptation. This meant that children were compared with "the others" and an assumption that they would have difficulties was made. The teacher was alone with the large group and, as a correlation, the greater the challenges with the child in following the fixed pedagogical instructions of the academic books, the more hours the teacher requested of the head teacher for giving individual attention at the integrative setting.

When I analyzed the double loop of learning, an alternative format arose to evaluate effectiveness by correlating it with the inclusion of children, which, in this case study, was interpreted by participants as the staff having time for introspection, consultation, and self-reflection (Hummelbrunner & Reynolds, 2013; Schön, 1987). The team, such as SENCo (a) and the substitute teacher, had offered their free time and effort. They promoted discussions questioning assumptions and developing new learning within the organization (Argyris and Schön, 1978). The substitute teacher explained that they "tried to embrace children together," and when they took the children to the playground, they would sing together. They brought their personal pedagogical tools from home. From their first day, they reviewed, through feedback, what the children had learned with the other teacher. Most children responded to what they did not understand, so she explained it through a story. In this case study, it becomes evident that dynamic processes and organizations need to allow the staff the possibility of self-organizing to keep pace with rapid changes (Thomson et al., 1999). They created an internal environment conducive to co-evolution and thus built coherence out of new interactions and ideas. In this regard, the decision-making and initiative-taking were decentralized and shared between all organization members responsible for the company's effectiveness (Rassool & Morley, 2000). The meaningful change was facilitated by learning and experimentation (Mangolin, 2011). The substitute teacher, the psychologist from the NGO, and SENCo (a) worked toward the concept of Argyris and Schön's (1974) double loop of learning, reflecting on their actions and the consequences and going back to the initial assumptions and beliefs from which their actions derived and considering alternative action strategies. The NGO psychologist took notes from the documents in which the child with Down syndrome was participating in the regular classroom,

and those notes were shared with the SENCo (a) and parents. Reflecting on her experience, SENCo (a) said:

I don't have any problem improving some things I do individually, and, in a group, I know which way this works for the children with SEN. I have a lot of children, and I think maintaining close relationships with them is a big help.

Shared reflections of their actual experiences are included in the children's reports with different intentions, principally to communicate effective practices. For example, SENCo (a) said:

I was told to use a certain activity from this book with a child. However, I thought if the child was not able to pick up the pencil, how can he be expected to draw? He needs to learn to draw with his hands.

The head teacher and the class teacher also used examples from their own experience to indicate how the practices could improve.

The coordinator from the inclusive program and SENCo (a) agreed that teachers, in general, did not individualize activities for children with SEN; they were the ones to do so:

You need to be there to see the child doing something of their level and see the child doing things that aren't productive for him/her. Teachers need to learn to adapt. I understand they try, and they don't have the materials or the time to look for topics and adapt them to that. We also explain the children's level to them, and some of the strategies come from us. I think the lack of training of the teachers slows down our ability to do our own job too.

For example, SENCo (b) decided to change the working materials of the child with SEN(b) in April:

I use the registration and take notes and observe how they behave, and I put notes in a diary. I highlight the things that need to be worked on further and improved. I like to evaluate my work, and I think I am very active in their learning process. If there is a mistake, I do not think it is solely the fault of the child, I need to review the things the children don't like doing and explore other ways to get them motivated. I have been using this diary since October, and I see the development of the children, and I write the date of the activities and their responses, the ways we have worked, and their behavior. I have one for each child. I do the planning concerning that information, writing the activities and objectives, writing the log with the daily information, the needs, the kind of activities as the motor skills visual perception phonological cognition, the activities, and the weekly plan. No one told me what I needed to do. I want to give details about his progression, what the pupil has gained, and [what] the reinforcements are... I think it is super important to keep reinforcing the child for him to gain effective development.

According to interactionism and in relation to the triple loop of learning, people who change from one setting to another have to adjust, enabling each person

to determine how well the norms they know can be translated into the new situation; this is called "situational adjustment" (Becker, 1962). When individuals arrive suddenly at the social reality of a new place, it is crucial to understand the forces created and controlled collectively in the new institutions as externals (Barnes, 2014). The participants were then able to question and reconstruct anything in their practices and diversify them. This is possible only occasionally, as in this school the norms are manipulated by the collective, which has to identify, agree, and sustain them (Barnes, 1995). The triple loop of learning is a process in which the staff has taken significant risks in trying to keep children with SEN in the ordinary system with a high impetus to create transformational learning in the organization (Bateson, 2000). Moreover, the existential domain is included in the third loop because of a change in attitudes, habitus, and values (Peschl, 2007). Hummelbrunner and Reynolds (2013, p. 9) identified that the third loop must respond to the core question "what makes this the right thing to do?" Respondents offered critical value, reflecting on the rules and customs that guide the dominant environmental patterns and meet new programs with equity and emancipation. SENCo (a) and the substitute teacher agreed that their ways of thinking and overall ideology were changing and that the school should change too. They decided that it was crucial to understanding the meaning of inclusion: An educational system should respond to every kind of student, not only the ones with SEN:

The whole educational system together with the schools needs to be adapted to the pupil, their individual needs, and their personality, culture, religion, and diversity. Schools need changes in practices to be more inclusive and adapt to the new society.

SENCo (a) sees significant differences between a young person who has recently received their degree and a person who has been working for 30 years without any further training in inclusive education and curricular adaptations. At the same time, "individualized attention is a great challenge if you have 24 children and have to give each of them what they need," said SENCo (a). "I need to know the child well, and the child needs to know me, and when the child is confident with my work, I can implement an inclusive school. I have noticed a lot of changes in both children."

The substitute teacher said they were all working toward the same concept: "We are in a society where we want to integrate these children in a way where they are normal, and if we want to integrate them, it is important to work with them in the class." Previous literature confirms that values and beliefs are essential in changing change practices.

These last sentences highlight how responsibility, professional status, communication, and collaboration are essential clues to promote learning about inclusion: SENCo (a) and the substitute teacher shared a feeling of empowerment when they had the opportunity to share their experience with others of the same status. SENCo (a) helped the substitute teacher coordinate activities and advice. The substitute teacher collaborated with the staff from the NGO, and they observed and listened to each other and participated in mutually planned activities. They used different tools and went outside the book to learn through various games, songs, and stories. They

pointed out that the supply teacher's temporary contract was ending in June and the next September the class teacher will be back to the class.

Conclusion

This Spanish case study showed how the main relevant learning strategies were neither formal nor non-formal, staff valued as in other previous studies, the informal learning strategies by collaborative work (Kyndt et al, 2016). The value of using a thematic project in which the staff collaborates, taking the time to learn from each other. The pity is that instead of focusing on including the children on the same grounds, shifted into the practice of "integration" among young children with autism in specific settings. In regard to informal learning, external professionals focused on multidisciplinary team sessions, including teachers, speech therapists, and psychologists. The sessions involved school visits, brainstorming, peer observation, and a presentation of a final project report based on their collective process of learning, practices of integration, or from special needs settings. At the same time, this case study shows how the experience of working with children with SEN does not necessarily result in expertise in inclusive practices at the classroom level. The key actor working daily with the children, the class teacher clearly shows how the collaborative work intended by the inclusive program does not work. In this case, to effectively change inclusion at an ordinary classroom level, a new system will need to be implemented with monitored collaborative work among professionals of equal status within the organization. Another challenge is for teachers to accept that SEN professionals can be committed to implementing inclusion even if they cannot transfer their years of experience working with children with disabilities to an "inclusive" mainstream school. Norwich (2002) introduces the term "connective specialization" (p. 484), referring to "the inter-dependence of different specialisms and the sharing of a relationship to the whole." Some of the staff used strategies and tools to acquire relevant knowledge related to the inclusion of children. In this case study, communication was seen to flow in various directions; the vertical communication between the managerial team and other staff was limited; there were some instructions, such as which textbooks to use. Horizontal communication at the same level was performed particularly by people of similar status, such as the SENCo and the substitute teacher; and diagonal communication flowed between people from different areas of the organization not on the same hierarchical level, such as the psychologist and the teacher. The "grapevine" rumors within an organization appear as an informal line of communication, for example, when multiple opinions about children's diagnoses corresponded with prejudice or about how difficult it was to get the psycho-pedagogical evaluations and why. Managers did not control this information, yet it was transmitted throughout the organization. This communication route appears when formal communication is absent or unclear (Patronis, 2007).

Tacit knowledge, skills, and know-how (Eraut, 1999) are possessed by each of the participants, as all of them were knowledgeable about their own specializations. It was also reflected in their writing, such as in the reflective diary of SENCO (a). A step further could be taken if those reports could be shared, if they

decide to include the children's information in the regional web system and read it, which could enhance the culture of sharing and participation (Fisher, 2011). Through such "mediating artifacts" (Eraut, 2007), staff could jointly collect information about children to develop a legal document that states the needs of the children. This would move their reflections from the subjective to the intersubjective by giving them a collective basis (Eraut, 2007). To implement more inclusive practices, it is clear that the responsibility of monitoring and evaluation needs to be clarified by the school staff. The SENCo (a) recommended as valuable tools observation and elaborating the narrative in class diaries about pedagogical practice and classroom experiences. The rest of the staff could use reflective journals to write ideas down and question and reflect on their experiences. As a result, they could become more willing to take risks and learn to generalize from a particular person to the larger group. The perception of their role would change, and satisfaction in their work would be improved (Loreman et al., 2005). They would be able to identify in which activities the children would join together, and different areas of development could be addressed—not about specific individuals, but assuming personal responsibility for the learning of all students (Loreman et al., 2005). This study demonstrates that although teachers may have positive attitudes, environmental barriers result in children lacking support. Gal et al. (2010) define the potential solutions as an alternative model of practice, whereby institutions should become responsible for identifying barriers to inclusion, and solutions should be their aim. The school observed in this study shows how rituals form the work structures within the school and how, when individual staff encountered disruptions, the SENCo (a), speech therapist, or substitute teacher tried different communication strategies, but no change was made in the system. The staff aware of the meaning of inclusive practices and more critical toward the system are the ones without direct responsibility for the children with SEN (such as the SENCo) or in an insecure position (such as substitute teacher).

This study demonstrates that teachers such as the SENCo(a), substitute teacher, and class teacher worked extra hours, although they received positive feedback from families and children. However, observers at higher political and research levels need to recognize their value. Key professionals can maintain their motivation but up to what point? This research demonstrates that the will is there, and, with knowledge, inclusion can and should be promoted. The early years are vitally important, as a child goes through a transition process, and the educational environment is new. It is expected that the growing demand, as children's needs become more complex, needs to be managed with the best resources. A flexible system within the school and local authorities, collaborative strategies, and distributive leadership are necessary (Bolívar & Moreno, 2006).

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Declarations

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