



Cultures, policies and inclusive practices according to university students

Culturas, políticas y prácticas inclusivas según estudiantes universitarios

- ID** **Dra. Ruth Clavijo-Castillo** is a professor and Dean of the Psychology Faculty at Universidad de Cuenca, Ecuador (ruth.clavijo@ucuenca.edu.ec) (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3617-9626>)
- ID** **Cristina Cedillo-Quizhpe** is a professor at Universidad de Cuenca, Ecuador (cristina.cedillo@ucuenca.edu.ec) (<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6948-6203>)
- ID** **Freddy Cabrera-Ortiz** is a professor at Universidad de Cuenca, Ecuador (freddy.cabrera@ucuenca.edu.ec) (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7539-0985>)

Received on: 2023-07-30 / Revised on: 2023-12-20 / Accepted on: 2024-02-16 / Published on: 2024-07-01

Abstract

Diversity in university students is a reality that we cannot ignore, and it has constituted a topic of interest in recent years. This article intends to analyze the progress of inclusive education at university level from the students' perception according to three dimensions of inclusive education: creation of cultures, generation of policies and development of practices. In order to meet the objective, *the Index for inclusion adapted to higher education* was applied to 848 university students. Data was processed using descriptive statistics. The results indicate a significant appreciation of dimension A: Creating inclusive cultures ($M = 2.00$; $SD = 0.39$) in a very similar extent to dimension C: Development of inclusive practices ($M = 1.97$; $SD = 0.48$), while Dimension B: Developing inclusive policies, remains the most underestimated dimension ($M = 1.84$; $DE = 0.43$). The results show the response that is required from the university, aiming to generate mechanisms that guarantee access, permanence and completion of higher education, as well as the need to promote policies with an inclusive approach that responds to the diversity of university students.

Keywords: education, inclusive, practices, policies, cultures, diversity.

Resumen

A nivel del contexto universitario la diversidad estudiantil es una realidad que no podemos desconocer y que constituye un tema de interés en los últimos años. Este artículo pretende analizar el desarrollo de la educación inclusiva, a nivel universitario, desde la percepción del estudiantado en tres dimensiones: creación de culturas, generación de políticas y desarrollo de prácticas. Para cumplir el objetivo se aplicó el *Index for Inclusion adaptado a la educación superior*, a 848 estudiantes de la universidad. Los datos fueron procesados mediante estadísticos descriptivos. Los resultados indican una apreciación significativa de la dimensión A: Crear culturas inclusivas ($M=2.00$; $DE=0.39$) en una medida muy similar a la dimensión C: Desarrollo de prácticas inclusivas ($M=1.97$; $DE=1.48$), mientras que la dimensión B: Elaborar políticas inclusivas se queda como la dimensión más desestimada ($M=1.84$; $DE=0.43$). Los resultados evidencian la respuesta que se requiere desde la universidad, apuntando a generar mecanismos que permitan garantizar el acceso, la permanencia y la culminación de la educación superior, así como la necesidad de promover políticas con enfoque inclusivo que responda a la diversidad del estudiantado.

Palabras clave: educación, inclusiva, prácticas, políticas, culturas, diversidad.

1. Introduction and state-of-the-art

There are more opportunities for accessing Higher Education (ES) since the processes of democratization and inclusion, guaranteeing the right that every citizen has. The purpose of achieving an education for all is based on the certainty that education contributes to eliminating inequalities caused by gender, income, disability status, ethnicity, religion, among others.

Although the literature has reviewed extensively the concepts of attention to diversity and educational inclusion, it is necessary to mention that diversity is an inherent characteristic of today's society, while inclusion is a principle that demands the ability to see diversity from respect for differences, requiring the participation of all people. Inclusion and diversity do not lie in thinking exclusively about individuals with particular characteristics, but in recognizing the other. It is a call to question, at a social and individual level, how we are understanding and interpreting the other (Montánchez et al., 2017).

For Langa and Lubián (2021), attention to diversity is part of the discourse of inclusion as characteristics that ensure quality education in the HE; in other words, Higher Education Institutions, recognizing their social responsibility, in addition to providing quality teaching and producing research, must "assume the social mandate of being a reference of values and human progress" (García et al., 2017 p. 5).

Attending to diversity in university classrooms is concomitant with the phenomenon of expansion of the HE. In 1970, 1 out of 10 people enrolled in university, while in 2017 they were 40 per cent of the relevant age cohort worldwide; however, despite the expansion of enrollment, there are still vertical and horizontal differences in HE (Salmi & D'Addio, 2020).

In Ecuador, thanks to the support of the regulations, there is an important advance in addressing diversity within universities. The Political Constitution of Ecuador (2008), in article 26:

It recognizes education as a right of people throughout their lives and an inescapable and inexcusable duty of the state, which must be democratic, inclusive, diverse, of quality and warmth, and will promote equity, justice, solidarity and peace. (p. 17)

On the other hand, the 2030 Agenda establishes the Sustainable Development Goals in its objec-

tive 4.3 which states "by 2030 there must be equal access for all men and women to technical quality, vocational and higher education included in university education" (UNESCO, 2017, p. 40).

In this context, university policies should focus on strengthening capacities and finding solutions to social problems, maintaining the momentum of the first years that continued to the dissemination of the Organic Law of Higher Education (LOES, 2010), i.e. working to improve enrollment coverage, aimed at ensuring similar opportunities, promoting equal access through "scholarships, economic aid, quota policies or educational credits that seek to reduce educational inequalities" (Ramírez, 2012).

Salmi (2020) states that traditionally excluded groups have lower completion rates. These exclusionary processes can be caused based on gender, social class, socioeconomic status, cult, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability status (Booth & Ainscow, 2015). Although these scenarios have been gradually changing in Ecuador and Latin America, there are still several pending issues. For Valenzuela and Yáñez (2022), the opportunities to access the HE is not distributed equally; the effects of education are observed throughout life, access and the completion of HE, which contribute to reduce the inequalities generated.

Attending to diversity implies seeking and cementing social possibilities, it entails eliminating differences, which in moments involves divergences in university classrooms (Gil & Morales, 2019). An inclusive HE transforms its organization and functioning to address diversity by promoting changes in inclusive policies, practices and cultures, which promote the recognition of diversity through exchange, active and critical participation.

The recognition of a university that works for inclusion must lead to identify its commitment to society, building spaces where everyone's participation is recognized, discarding all kinds of exclusions, a university that pays attention to students who may be more exposed to marginalization, failure, and consequently exclusion (Barrio de la Puente, 2008; Fernández & Pérez, 2016; Gallegos, 2015).

Inclusive culture is understood as the act of establishing attitudes and values related to diversity as something respectable, which directs institutional decisions and actions (García, 2017). Booth and Ainscow (2002) argue that inclusive culture welcomes principles that are later concretized through the poli-

cies that an institution manages seeking to address diversity. Solla (2013) reaffirms this approach, indicating that inclusion involves the preparation of an institutional model based on diversity.

For Latin America, moving towards inclusive university systems continues to require strong political will from a social justice perspective that promotes the creation of educational and social policies that review the elements that generate exclusion (Blanco & Duk, 2019). Policies that constitute the framework in which the necessary contributions are established, to deploy practices that respond to diversity (Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Ferrer, 2019). The policies form the platform on which an educational model is sustained that is specified in the practices and helps to generate an inclusive culture.

Gibson (2015) argues that policies have driven inclusive education initiatives focusing on resource distribution. It questions arguments that suggest that adequate funding will enable the success of inclusive education as the only solution to existing problems. Education is, intrinsically, a political issue, therefore, it is an eminently political decision, which allows an improvement and advancement in inclusive education (Benet-Gil, 2020).

The development of inclusive practices involves making the necessary supports that enable all people to access spaces, relationships, resources and progress in educational activities. Talking about practices requires eliminating processes that involve discrimination, segregation and that hinder equal opportunities (Darretxe et al. 2021; García, 2017; De los Santos-Gelvasio, 2022). An example of this is the fact of promoting inclusive practices for the student population considered unequal, with the purpose of using an integrative approach that allows overcoming the challenges associated with the permanence of this population in the HE and offering the necessary accompaniment (Gross, 2014). In this way, an inclusive university embraces diversity, attending to the difference and recognizing the importance of teacher training in inclusion (González, 2016; Ruiz, 2019).

The approach to inclusive education is currently the most appropriate initiative to face exclusion, as it defends human rights and is based on the principle of equity, equality and social justice (Arnaiz & Guirao, 2015; Ruiz, 2019; Simón & Carballo, 2019; Solla, 2013). An inclusive university educates by respecting student rights, increases participation, seeks

to reduce exclusion, creates a space of equity, guarantees equal opportunities for all, and restructures cultures, policies and practices (Hanne, 2017; Ferrer, 2019; Gil & Morales, 2019; Martínez, 2021). In this sense, the study proposes to know from the voice of the students of the University of Cuenca the appreciation of inclusive practices, cultures and policies, through the self-evaluation of the dimensions of *the Index for Inclusion*, with the purpose of having information on the presence of inclusive practices, values and policies that manifest themselves in the access, presence, collaboration, permanence and learning of the students (Arnaiz & Azorín, 2014; Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Echeita, 2013).

This work aims to know the current state of the formation of cultures, creation of policies and development of inclusive practices managed by University of Cuenca, from the view of students and teachers and with the aim of developing concrete actions to support the change towards the improvement of inclusive orientation practices in the HE.

2. Methodology

2.1 Focus and design

This research used a quantitative approach, with cross-sectional design and descriptive scope that allowed to characterize cultures, policies and inclusive practices based on the perception of the students at the University of Cuenca.

2.2 Participants

The study population was composed by the students at the University of Cuenca; the sample was stratified and calculated with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 3%; it was composed of 848 students from the different faculties of the University under study. 60% self-identified as female, 38.8% as male gender and 0.7% as others. The ages ranged from 17 to 40 old ($M = 21.2; 2.7$); most were mestizos (86.8%), 71.6% were from the city of Cuenca and 28.4% from another city in Ecuador, 2% claimed to have a disability.

2.3 Instrument

The instrument used for information collection was the *Index for Inclusion* adapted to Higher Education, which comes from the original instrument proposed by Booth and Ainscow (2002). At the university level, the adaptation made by Salceda and Ibáñez (2015), encourages teachers and members of a university community to assess the real possibilities to increase learning and the partition of all students.

This guide assesses how inclusive an institution is through three dimensions: inclusive cultures, policies, and practices (each subdivided into two sections). The instrument is composed of 48 items and exhibits four response options, all three belonging to a scale (1= disagree, 2= quite agree, 3=totally agree). Option 4 determines whether more information is needed to answer the questionnaire.

Table 1. *Dimensions and sections of the Index for Inclusion adapted to Higher Education*

Dimensions	Sections	N° Items
A: Creating inclusive cultures	A.1. Building community	11
	A.2. Set inclusive values	8
B: Developing inclusive policies	B.1. Developing a university for all people	8
	B. 2. Organizing support to address diversity	7
C: Developing inclusive practices	C.1. Managing the educational process	8
	C.2. Mobilize resources	6
Total		48 items

2.4 Procedure

The survey was applied between May and July 2019, after receiving the respective authorizations. For applying the instrument, the pollsters went to each of the faculties requesting the collaboration of the students, after having signed the consents, they proceeded to fill the items. It should be noted that the University of Cuenca, has a committee of Bioethics - COBIAS, a body that approved the study and guaranteed the observance of ethical principles.

2.5 Data analysis

To process the results obtained, the SPSS software version 25 was used through a descriptive analysis, in which the distribution frequency for the three dimensions and sections is observed. Data analysis was developed using measures of central tendency and dispersion.

3. Results

The results obtained are described considering the same dimensions that the *Index* contemplates for

inclusion, namely: creation of cultures, development of policies and development of inclusive practices.

In general, there is a *regular* level of performance; dimension A presents a predominance in a measure very similar to dimension C, being Dimension B which presents a less favorable perception. It is also evident that the most deficient characteristics of each section correspond: in dimension A, section A.2. 'establish inclusive values'; in dimension B the lowest section corresponded to B.2. 'organize support to address diversity' and dimension C, in section C.2. 'resource mobilization'.

The students consider the university as a welcoming institution, a space where learning and participation opportunities are provided; however, it is necessary to establish values, and implement actions that seek to reduce discriminatory practices or reduce the barriers to learning that are still maintained in the university context.

Similarly, it is perceived that inclusive practices help to build learning, adapting content to attention to diversity and organizing groups that support inclusion, however, the data reveal that students are unaware of the resources of the faculty, therefore, these are not used or distributed fairly to support inclusion.

The least favorable assessment is oriented to the elaboration of policies, which according to the perception of the student is the least scored. The elements referred to deploy a university for all and the organization of supports to recognize diversity are

still pending policies for the university. In addition, gaps are perceived in the training, the development of research and the socialization of these actions so that students feel recognized and cared for in their diversity.

Table 2. General perception of the dimensions and sections evaluated

Dimensions and sections	Average	SD
A.	2.00	0.39
A.1.	2.04	0.39
A.2.	1.95	0.46
B.	<i>1.84</i>	<i>0.43</i>
B.1.	1.87	0.46
B.2	1.80	0.48
C.	1.97	0.46
C.1.	1.99	0.48
C.2.	1.94	0.51

The analysis for each of the dimensions will be presented to detail the results.

Dimension A presents two sections related to the organization of an inclusive, equitable and quality space (Table 3). In the first section A.1, the highest rated indicator, corresponded to A.1.11. 'The entire university community is proud to belong to this university', while the weakest, A.1.1. 'Everyone feels welcomed'. It can be noted that although students feel proud of belonging to the university, they manifest not feeling completely welcomed in the university space, since they presented lower scores with

indicators that focus on the fact of identifying with the philosophy and principles of inclusive education, as well as the promotion of actions linked to solidarity and cooperation. As for section A.2, the least evaluated items are the A.2.4 and A.2.5. referring to the actions carried out by the faculties to implement actions that reduce discriminatory practices, as well as the efforts to prevent social risks; however, they perceive that their teachers have high expectations of the student, a situation that improves their participation and learning.

Table 3. Perception of Dimension A and its respective sections

Items: A.1.	Rate of answers		M	SD	Items: A.2.	Rate of answers		M	SD
	n	%				n	%		
1.1.	814	96.0	1.79	0.66	A.2.1	806	95.0	1.96	0.65
1.2.	815	96.1	1.99	0.59	2.2.	826	97.4	2.14	0.64
1.3.	765	90.2	1.88	0.65	2.3.	812	95.8	2.03	0.66
A.1.4	798	94.1	1.79	0.69	2.4.	752	88.7	1.77	0.7
1.5.	831	98.0	2.20	0.61	2.5.	743	87.6	1.80	0.69
A.1.6	797	94.0	2.02	0.67	A.2.6	815	96.1	2.01	0.65
A.1.7	816	96.2	1.99	0.7	2.7.	818	96.5	1.97	0.71

Items: A.1.	Rate of answers		M	SD	Items: A.2.	Rate of answers		M	SD
	n	%				n	%		
1.8.	829	97.8	2.34	0.63	A.2.8	806	95.0	1.90	0.67
1.9.	804	94.8	2.14	0.69					
1.10.	818	96.5	1.91	0.68					
A.1.11.	834	98.3	2.39	0.68					

Note. Taken from Clavijo and Bautista (2022).

In Dimension B (Table 4), measured through two sections: ‘Build community’ and ‘Set inclusive values’, there was a less favorable perception than the others. The results reflect that the strengths are linked to item B. 1.2. ‘the faculty is accessible to all people’ and in item B. 1.4. ‘the student entering the faculty receives the attention that guarantees their preparation for life and the world of work’; while the weakest indicator corresponded to B. 1.8. ‘When the student accesses the faculty for the first time, it helps him to adapt’. In this case, although the perception indicates that the university guarantees accessibility and training for all students, there is a need for induction processes that allow new students to adapt to the university as well as to supervise that the

complementary services offered in each faculty are socialized so that they can benefit from them.

Section B.2 presents the lowest assessment. We found scores below the midpoint of the scale (M=2) in all items except indicator B.2.2. ‘Research and teacher training in topics related to inclusive education is promoted’. A striking result refers to the response percentage of the total of indicators, in most of the cases, approximately 12% of participants did not answer these items. Considering that this section presents a less favorable perception, we consider that it is identified as the main point for the decision-making and improvement. If the university aims to develop inclusive education, it should support these indicators for inclusive policies, research, teacher training, student support and evaluation.

Table 4. Perception of Dimension B and its respective sections

Items B.1.	Rate of answers		M	SD	Items B.2.	Rate of answers		M	SD
	n	%				n	%		
B.1.1	783	92.3	1.90	0.69	B.2.1	738	87.0	2.00	0.61
B.1.2.	822	96.9	2.05	0.75	2.2.	748	88.2	2.01	0.68
B.1.3.	743	87.6	1.86	0.67	B.2.3.	762	89.9	1.78	0.69
B.1.4.	823	97.1	2.00	0.69	B.2.4.	785	92.6	1.86	0.68
B.1.5.	820	96.7	1.74	0.72	B.2.5	703	82.9	1.89	0.67
B.1.6.	747	88.1	1.82	0.67	B.2.6	740	87.3	1.61	0.69
B.1.7.	699	82.4	1.96	0.60	B.2.7	729	86.0	1.54	0.67
B.1.8.	802	94.6	1.66	0.71					

Note. Taken from Clavijo and Bautista (2022).

Dimension C (Table 5), corresponds to the promotion of inclusive practices, participation and learning of all students in the curricular and extra-curricular tasks. There are two sections to evaluate this dimension: each contains indicators focused on

the formation of groups, spaces and times that consider diversity, generation and use of resources, and accompanying processes.

The results indicate a more favorable appreciation, with a response rate above 85%. Thus, from

the perception of the students, considering that the university supports the participation of all, item C.1.5 'Students are actively involved in their own learning' stands out, which presents the highest estimate of this section. It is inferred that the teaching work is produced in collaboration with the students, who are actively involved in their learning processes.

The weakest perception refers to indicator C.1.3, referring to the 'organization of learning groups so that everyone feels valued'. This perception shows that students consider it important to work and learn on the basis of organizing groups within the classroom. In addition, these results recognize the utility and effectiveness of the supports, spaces

and contents in which the inclusive practice of the university is developed.

In the second section, item C.2.4, 'Teacher experience is fully used to enrich the educational process', showing that the teacher experience is recognized as an essential mechanism to move towards inclusive education processes. On the other hand, the perception on indicator C.2.2 'Faculty resources are distributed fairly to support inclusion' was the most notorious weakness, data that may be due to the lack of knowledge of the student on the use of resources to respond to diversity in each faculty.

Table 5. Perception of Dimension C and its respective sections

Items Section C.1.	Rate of answers		M	SD	Section C.2.	Rate of answers			
	n	%				n	%	M	SD
1.1.	815	96.1	2.04	0.65	2.1.	754	88.9	1.93	0.67
1.2.	812	95.8	1.98	0.65	2.2.	743	87.6	1.79	0.70
C.1.3	808	95.3	1.87	0.70	2.3.	731	86.2	1.90	0.64
C.1.4.	792	93.4	1.93	0.65	2.4.	806	95.0	2.07	0.65
1.5.	822	96.9	2.14	0.61	2.5.	810	95.5	2.02	0.65
C.1.6	830	97.9	2.07	0.65	2.6.	790	93.2	1.99	0.68
1.7.	775	91.4	2.03	0.69					
1.8.	813	95.9	1.90	0.71					

Note. Taken from Clavijo and Bautista (2022).

4. Discussion

The aim of this research was to analyze the dimensions of the Index from the perception of the students at the University of Cuenca, finding differences between sections and indicators, both in the rate of responses and in the evaluation of each item.

4.1 Discussion of culture

Regarding the dimensions included in the Index, the study revealed a greater perception in dimension A; in general, the students perceive their faculties as spaces that reflect the foundation of a community and, above all, the fact of establishing

inclusive values that allow the university to move towards inclusion.

The data allow establishing that students recognize the university culture, a situation that reflects in the indicators that point to the positive interrelations presented between teachers and students. It coincides with Ferrer (2019), who characterizes an inclusive culture as a space that is strengthened through participation and the creation of links between members, through the development of actions by teachers that address diversity, avoiding exclusion and lowering barriers to learning.

In this dimension, the best valued indicator focuses on the pride felt by the 'entire university community of belonging to this institution', an item that relates to membership, i.e. students and faculty

learn together and are part of the university. In this line, Ferrer (2019) argues that the relations between teachers and students constitute a main variable of inclusion that it is favored when the two members develop a sense of belonging to the institution.

Ocampo (2014) indicates that one of the fundamental elements by which students identify with their university is that the HEs in 21st century seek conditions that allow them to be a timely, inclusive and equitable institution, generating a sense of belonging and identification with it. Currently, the model of educational inclusion based on education for all demonstrates a greater degree of acceptance not only by students but by multiple social and political sectors that feel identified with social responsibility and the vision of the university subject of this research.

Generally, the notion of inclusive education encompasses participation, presence and learning. Speaking of presence is to refer to the place where the student is educated with warmth and quality (Darretxe et al., 2021; Ferrer, 2019). University students who feel identified with the institution will contribute to the construction of policies and practices to reach an inclusive culture. For Ocampo (2014), being part of the university involves defending constructs of diversity, differences and heterogeneity.

According to the authors cited, to ensure quality learning and guarantee that students feel welcomed by the institution, each faculty must be flexible in their curricular designs, as must stimulate training spaces, where students are recognized for their human and symbolic value (Benet-Gil, 2020; Ferrer, 2019; Ocampo, 2014). Starting from this recognition could improve the perception in relation to feeling identified with the institution, since the student requires not only that the admission systems to the HE be democratized, but that once inside, they can benefit from inclusive values that have been established by the institution.

4.2 Discussion on the results of inclusive policies

On the one hand, the fact that the institution is accessible and constitutes a space that guarantees the training of students is positively valued, while the formation of supports to respond to diversity is negatively appreciated. It is striking that actions are perceived to a lesser extent to identify situations of abuse

of power or *bullying*, as well as teaching alternatives and differentiated tutoring. In practice, regulation is necessary to reduce exclusion processes. In this sense, Terigi (2014) argues that it is difficult to turn regulations into educational policies that make the law a reality. In other words, it is not enough to be an accessible institution; inclusive educational policies also imply understanding, experiencing and embodying in the regulations the complexity of the educational process.

Bartolomé et al. (2021) on educational inclusion indicate that although it is true that the university tries to guarantee education, making it inclusive requires an innovation of the educational policies of all HEs. Inclusion does not only imply promoting strategies that increase the participation of excluded groups that have fewer opportunities, it is also about promoting laws and regulations that guarantee and lead to inclusive universities (Benet-Gil, 2020; Ferrer, 2019). Education systems through the creation, approval and monitoring of legislation and regulations are the ones that are called to embody authentic inclusive processes.

Inclusive policies will define the bases of how the inclusive education process should be carried out, in some ways they are a key element since it empowers the review and supervision bodies of the higher education system by providing them with evaluation tools that regulate the level of compliance and quality of their inclusive policies (Bartolomé et al., 2021).

4.3 Discussion of practice

Bearing in mind that the objective of inclusion is to face exclusion and social fractionation, universities need to build and promote not only policies, but inclusive practices in all their spaces.

The results of this dimension show that students positively perceive the organization of the training processes, in particular those practices that favor the participation and support of teachers in learning. The inclusive practices developed in the university are focused on reducing barriers to participation and learning, management that comes directly from the action of teachers. In this regard, Vélez (2013) points out that the educational implications perceived as positive are related to the appreciation of diversity as a human category, therefore, educational inclusion presumes a social change in

relation to how legislation is perceived, but above all in the inclusive practices developed by teachers.

Ferrer (2019) emphasizes a series of criteria to select good practices that promote an inclusive culture, criteria linked not only to the students but to the educational community as a whole. Promoting autonomy, skills to reduce exclusion and discrimination, as well as strengthening the community through the creation of links between its members will be elements that strengthen the participation and learning of all. In this regard, the Hanne study (2017) highlights that, from the perception of students, it is necessary to promote policies and actions that are adapted to contextual realities, that consider the diversity of the students and are transversal in the different university services.

Faced with the lower perception, related to the fair distribution of resources available to the faculty to support inclusion, Ferrer (2019) argues that resources are required for creating barrier-free environments, which guarantee the access of new students, participation in school and extracurricular activities, and finally teachers trained in competencies to respond to diversity. Likewise, Vélez (2013) argues that as teachers are key pieces in the path of inclusive education, resources are required to enable their training and preparation, since the trained teacher depends on the attention and response to diversity. The fact that teachers present a series of training needs to respond adequately to diversity make them perceive as inadequate their intervention, coinciding in this case with the perception presented by the students in this research.

Walking towards educational inclusion implies not only knowing the legislation related to the attention to diversity, but training to attend to it, a premise that requires a mandatory permanent update, teaching experience and generation of resources (Vélez, 2013; Azorín, 2017). This is also highlighted by Gallegos (2011), referring to the allocation of resources for training in inclusive education, especially in the first years of the career, where a greater number of students are identified with this need, and we must guarantee their permanence. Likewise, De los Santos-Gelvasio (2022) highlights the need for contextualized training and an adequate follow-up to the attention to diversity, with the objective of developing diverse strategies that are articulated to the environment and deepen knowledge while attending to the needs of the students. Ocampo (2014) points

out that besides the resources of a HE, what matters is the establishment of spaces for collaboration and training among peers, that would allow more timely relationships that improve learning.

Practices that enable students to learn together occur because the university is open to diversity and this constitutes a main variable of inclusion (Ferrer, 2019). In this sense, Azorín (2017) argues that the voice of students currently becomes an interesting line of research, not only to know their perception about attention to differences, but to generate information that makes it possible to incorporate the demands of students in the inter-learning process.

Students are one of the main agents of the educational process, therefore, it is advisable to consider the recommendation of Azorín (2017), who justifies the willingness of investigating inclusion from the perspective of all those who make up the university community, for this author to attend the diversity of the students is not only the responsibility of the teachers.

5. Conclusions

With the aim of analyzing the progress of inclusive education at the university level from the view of the students in the three dimensions contemplated by the Index for inclusion, we can note some conclusions.

The mention of equality of opportunities and equality that is expected is concrete in the generation of inclusive policies, which universities must embody in legal and regulatory frameworks that express actions aimed at equality of opportunities in an effective and real way, that favor access and continuity of a chosen career. Values that guide inclusive practices and policies should be evaluated and thought through to test whether the higher education context addresses diversity.

In this study these dimensions have been evaluated from the student's appreciation, who show the need to improve admission policies, allocation of resources, support to the diverse population, i.e. to have effective policies to ensure an inclusive HE.

Knowing policies, inclusive culture, but above all valuing inclusive practices as institutional strategies and classroom context that constitute supports to organize learning, become an important facilitator on the road to an inclusive university, as it allows to review practices, rethink classroom plans, reconsider

the classroom as a collaborative space where students, teachers, administrators, authorities participate.

On the other hand, valuing inclusive policies from the voice of the students makes it possible to know the guidelines of the university to respond to diversity. These policies are constituted in the framework that protects and endorses educational practices and also allows to generate an inclusive culture, characterized by environments in which all students feel welcomed and accepted with respect for their differences.

From the data obtained from the appreciation of the participants, we consider that although there are inclusive policies at the country level and within each university, supported not only in the regulations created to support the development of inclusive systems, we believe that socialization processes are necessary, as well as the development of practices that cover the plurality of the population, social inequality and support to students with disabilities.

Evaluating the dimensions considered in the Index for Inclusion allowed us to know the status in which the University of Cuenca is located regarding the attention to diversity, which entails a first step to undertake improvements and changes towards inclusive education. Advancing in inclusive education is moving towards a more equitable university and aware of the value of diversity; a higher education that considers inclusion as a principle that allows it to grow and enhance diversity and that not only reduces it to an exercise in rhetoric.

References

- Arnaiz, P. & Azorín, C. (2014). Autoevaluación docente para la mejora de los procesos educativos en escuelas que caminan hacia la inclusión. *Revista Colombiana de Educación*, 67, 227-245. <https://bit.ly/3WXtvmM>
- Arnaiz, P. & Guirao, J. (2015). La autoevaluación de centros en España para la atención a la diversidad desde una perspectiva inclusiva: ACADI. *Revista Electrónica Interuniversitaria de formación del Profesorado*, 18(1), 45-101. <https://bit.ly/48dHomd>
- Azorín, C. (2017). Análisis de instrumentos sobre educación inclusiva y atención a la diversidad. *Revista Complutense de Educación*, 28 (4), 1043-1060. <https://bit.ly/3ODNntO>
- Barrio de la Puente, J. (2008). Hacia una Educación Inclusiva para todos. *Revista Complutense de Educación*, (1) 13-3. <https://bit.ly/3owdeXG>
- Bartolomé, D., Martínez, L. & García, V. (2021). La inclusión en la educación superior ecuatoriana: algunas iniciativas. *Revista Espacios* (42) 57- 68. <https://doi.org/10.48082/espacios-a21v42n09p05>
- Benet-Gil, A. (2020). Desarrollo de políticas inclusivas en la educación superior. *Convergencia Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, (27) 1-31. <https://bit.ly/3UDXX7E>
- Blanco, R. & Duk, C. (2019). El Legado de la Conferencia de Salamanca en el Pensamiento, Políticas y Prácticas de la Educación Inclusiva. *Revista latinoamericana de educación inclusiva*, 13(2), 25-43. <https://bit.ly/3SY6dOD>
- Booth, T. & Ainscow, M. (2015). *Guía para la educación inclusiva. Desarrollando el Aprendizaje y la participación en los centros educativos*. Madrid: OEI y FUHEM. <https://bit.ly/3lu2wc7>
- Booth, T. & Ainscow, M. (2002). *Índice de Inclusión. Promoviendo el Aprendizaje y la participación en las escuelas*. UNESCO: CSIE. <https://bit.ly/3IHXIWW>
- Constitución Política de la República del Ecuador. (2008).
- Clavijo, R. & Bautista, M. (2022). *La educación inclusiva en la Educación Superior: Situación actual y necesidades de formación de los docentes de la Universidad de Cuenca (Ecuador)*. [Tesis de Doctorado]. Programa de Doctorado en Educación-UNED. <https://bit.ly/46JghQH>
- Darretxe, L., Álvarez, M., Alonso, I. & Boloki, N. (2021). Voluntad política a favor de la educación inclusiva y equitativa: inicios y desarrollo analizando su significado. *Revista Archivos Analíticos de Políticas educativas*, 29(64). <http://bit.ly/3YZvPuF>
- De los Santos-Gelvasio, A. (2022). Inclusión y atención a la diversidad en el aula rural multigrado: un estudio de caso. *RECIE. Revista Caribeña de Investigación Educativa*, 6(2), 15-34. <https://bit.ly/3SCKSsO>
- Echeita, G. (2013). Inclusión; y exclusión educativa. De nuevo voz y quebranto. *Revista Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación*, 11(2), 100-118. <https://bit.ly/3lu2wc7>
- Fernández, N. & Pérez, C. (2016). La educación superior latinoamericana en el inicio del nuevo siglo. Situación, principales problemas y perspectivas futuras. *Revista Española de Educación Comparada*, 27, 123-148. <https://bit.ly/3SLYphU>
- Ferrer, A. (2019). Identificando buenas políticas y prácticas para una educación inclusiva. *Revista*

- Participación Educativa. Agenda 2030* 6(9), 164-172. <https://bit.ly/3y0MeCY>
- Gallegos, M. (2011). La inclusión educativa en la Universidad Politécnica Salesiana. *Alteridad*, 6(1), 118-126. <https://bit.ly/3UuRnjZ>
- Gallegos, M. (2015). *La Educación Inclusiva una respuesta a los postulados del Buen Vivir. En la Educación Inclusiva una respuesta a los postulados del Buen Vivir*. Ediciones Abya-Yala. <https://bit.ly/3DwVu2U>
- García, J. (2017). Evolución legislativa en España. *Revista Nacional e Internacional de Educación Inclusiva*, 10(1), 251-264. <http://bit.ly/3kZi940>
- García, M., Buenestado, M., Gutiérrez, P., López, M. & Naranjo, A. (2017). Apuntes para la inclusión en la comunidad universitaria. ¿Qué es una Universidad inclusiva? Colección Diversidad. Universidad de Córdoba. <https://bit.ly/3wEQO9Z>
- Gibson, S. (2015). When rights are not enough: What is? Moving towards new pedagogy for inclusive education within UK universities. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 19(8), 875-886. <https://bit.ly/49ALkhU>
- Gil, J. & Morales, M. (2019). Diversidad y Educación inclusiva en las Universidades: Cambiar estigmas y conceptos. *Revista Metropolitana de Ciencias Aplicadas*, 2(1), 160-165. <http://bit.ly/3YdSkvL>
- Gross, M. (2014). Inclusive practices for the student with a visual impairment condition in the university environment. *Alteridad*, 9(2), 108-117. <https://bit.ly/49D6M69>
- González, A. (2016). *Propuesta de aplicación del "Index for Inclusion"*. Conference: XIII Congreso Internacional y XXXIII de Universidades y Educación Inclusiva. Universidad de Murcia. <https://bit.ly/3wCPTkd>
- Hanne, A. V. (2017). Estudiantes indígenas y Universidad: realidades y retos ante la diversidad cultural. Caso de la Universidad Nacional de Salta. *Alteridad*, 13(1), 14-29. <https://bit.ly/49zQlaI>
- LOES. (2010). Ley Orgánica de la Educación Superior. Suplemento del Registro Oficial No 298. Quito, Ecuador.
- Langa, D. & Lubián, C. (2021). La atención a la diversidad en las universidades españolas a través de los discursos de sus líderes. *Revista complutense de educación*, 32(1), 79-88. <https://bit.ly/3SCnsUn>
- Martínez, M. (2021). Inclusión educativa comparada en Unesco y OCDE desde la cartografía social. *Educación XXI*, 24(1), 93-115. <https://bit.ly/3SCnueX>
- Montánchez, M., Carrillo-Sierra, S. M. & Barrera, E. (2017). Inclusión educativa: Diversidad a partir de la otredad. *De la Base de la Pirámide*, 271-282. Ediciones Universidad del Zulia. <https://bit.ly/42B8Uch>
- Ocampo, A. (2014). *Los desafíos de la inclusión en la educación Superior Latinoamericana en el siglo XXI*. Disertación en la Conmemoración del día Internacional de la Discapacidad. Valparaíso. Chile 3(3), 65-85. <http://bit.ly/3HrkEnE>
- Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Ciencia y la Cultura, UNESCO. (2017). Educación para los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible. <https://bit.ly/4bARJMO>
- Ramírez, R. (2012). *La Educación Superior para el Desarrollo Sostenible*. Coloquio Internacional de Gestión Universitaria. <https://bit.ly/3SYTKEf>
- Ruiz, R. (2019). *Políticas y prácticas pedagógicas inclusivas para la generación de una cultura inclusiva*. 1a. Ed. Universidad del Tolima. <https://bit.ly/3pECt9x>
- Salceda, M. e Ibáñez, A. (2015). Adaptación del *Index for Inclusion* al ámbito de la educación superior: Estudio preliminar. *Intangible Capital*, 11(3), 508-545. <https://bit.ly/49whFXe>
- Salmi, J. (2020). "Higher Education and Inclusion, Background paper prepared for the 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report Inclusion and Education: All Means All". UNESCO. <https://bit.ly/3HZo9SU>
- Salmi, J. & D'Addio, A. (2020): Policies for achieving inclusion in higher education, *Policy Reviews in Higher Education*, 5(1), 47-72. <https://bit.ly/3ODqUN9>
- Simón, C. & Carballo, R. (2019). Educación inclusiva en la Universidad: el papel del profesorado. En Carmen Márquez Vázquez (coord.), *¿Avanzamos hacia universidades más inclusivas?: de la retórica a los hechos* (pp. 99-120). <https://bit.ly/30lpyRn>
- Solla, C. (2013). *Guía de Buenas Prácticas Inclusiva*. Save The Children. <https://bit.ly/3kWFSGN>
- Terigi, F. (2014). La inclusión como problema de las políticas educativas. Educación y políticas sociales: sinergias para la inclusión. En M. del C. Feijoó y M. Poggi (coords.), *Educación y políticas sociales. Sinergias para la educación*. 217-234. <https://bit.ly/3Y0m7I6>
- Valenzuela, J. & Yáñez, N. (2022). Trayectoria y políticas de inclusión en educación superior en América Latina y el Caribe en el contexto de la pandemia: dos décadas de avances y desafíos. <https://bit.ly/3uzXokO>
- Vélez, L. (2013). La educación inclusiva en docentes en formación: su evaluación a partir de la teoría de facetas. *Folios. Segunda época*, 37, 95-113. <https://bit.ly/3kIO2Of>