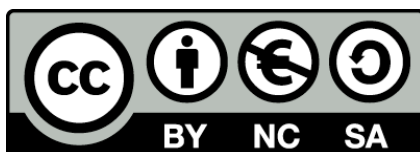




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Enrichment of interactions as a form of support for the most vulnerable students

Andrea Jardí Ferré



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DOCTORAL THESIS

Enriching interactions as a form of support for the most vulnerable learners

Andrea Jardí Ferré

2021



UNIVERSITAT DE
BARCELONA

Enriching interactions as a form of support for the most vulnerable learners

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The current thesis is composed by nine outputs, seven of them published in peer-reviewed journals, in accordance with the regulations approved by the Doctoral Committee of the University of Barcelona. During this PhD research, the candidate did a research stay at the Centre for Inclusive Education, University College London Institute of Education, UK, under the supervision of Dr. Rob Webster from September to December 2019, and at the University of Lleida, Spain, under the supervision of Dr. Cristina Petreñas, from June to July 2019. This research was funded by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training [grant number: FPU16/00284]. The research stays were funded by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training [grant number: EST18/00695] and Xarxa Vives d'Universitats [DRAC formació avançada]. Financial support for language review and attending conferences was received from the Department of Teaching and Learning and Educational Organization (University of Barcelona), the PhD programme in Education and society of the Faculty of Education (University of Barcelona), and the Learning Media and Social Interactions (LMI) research group (2017 SGR 379).

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Abstract

Improving educational support is a potential pathway on the educational systems' journey towards inclusion. Therefore, optimising the support provided by teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) within schools is a critical aspect for inclusive policies and practices, as well as the support provided by the instructors of after-school initiatives. To this end, this doctoral dissertation aims at *examining the interactions between teachers and non-teaching staff intervening in the educational support of the student body belonging to vulnerable groups in Catalonia*. This doctoral dissertation is organised into six phases that comprise five studies that resulted in nine outputs addressing the two main lines of research: "Non-teaching support during school hours" and "Non-teaching support during after-school hours". These nine outputs consist of two chapters of a book, five original empirical articles, and two dissemination articles.

In the first phase, a literature review was conducted to frame the present doctoral dissertation. This phase resulted in two chapters that define how supports are understood, emphasizing those that foster interactions between stakeholders. In the second phase, 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted with TAs, teachers and union representatives as well as a questionnaire (n = 101) to explore the role of Catalan TAs, their employment, and deployment. This study materialised into two articles. For the third phase, 40 semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and TAs from 14 inclusive Catalan schools. The third phase includes two studies, one that identifies the factors that characterise effective interpersonal partnerships between teaching assistants and teachers; and a second that shows how TAs and teachers manage situations of disruptive behaviour. A total of three articles were published about this phase.

The fourth and fifth phase comprise the studies about the support during after-school time. The sample for the fourth phase involved 1786 students, 126 instructors, and 238 teachers who responded to a questionnaire, and 46 debrief meeting reports from the after-school initiative teams. The outcome of this study was published in an empirical article, and it showed how this after-school initiative was deployed and which components can be optimised to improve their implementation. For the fifth phase, two questionnaires were conducted addressed at instructors (n = 158) and teachers (n = 191), six case studies with a total of 18 semi-structured interviews with teachers (n = 12) and instructors (n = 6), as well as 6 focus groups with students. The resulting article shows the interactions of this initiative in both school and after-school settings, emphasising the relevance of a collaboration between them.

Finally, the sixth phase consists of a global interpretation of all the results obtained, highlighting the main implications for theory, policies, and practices. This thesis provides a comprehensive view of the interactions studied between teachers and non-teaching staff. It provides detailed information on both the deployment of TAs and the present after-school initiative focusing on inclusive education, as well as on the interpersonal factors that influence teamwork or collaborative partnerships between the two. This helps to expand the knowledge on how to favour inclusive education.

Keywords: Teaching assistants, paraprofessionals, instructors, teachers, after-school, interactions, collaboration, teamwork, educational support, inclusive education

Resum

Millorar el suport educatiu és una de les vies potencials en el camí dels sistemes educatius cap a la inclusió. Per tant, optimitzar el suport que ofereixen docents i personal no docent de suport dins de les escoles, així com el suport que ofereixen els instructors de les iniciatives extraescolars és una qüestió fonamental per a les polítiques i pràctiques inclusives. Per això, l'objectiu d'aquesta tesi doctoral és examinar les interaccions entre el professorat i el personal no docent que intervé en el suport educatiu de l'alumnat que pertany a col·lectius vulnerables a Catalunya. Aquesta tesi doctoral s'organitza en sis fases que comprenen cinc estudis que van donar com a resultat nou productes sobre les dues línies principals d'investigació: "Suport no docent durant l'horari escolar" i "Suport no docent durant l'horari extraescolar". Aquests nou productes comprenen dos capítols d'un llibre, cinc articles empírics originals i dos articles de divulgació.

En una primera fase es va realitzar una revisió de la literatura per emmarcar la present tesi doctoral. Aquesta fase va resultar en dos capítols que defineixen com s'entenen els suports, emfatitzant aquells que fomenten les interaccions entre agents. En la segona fase es van realitzar 12 entrevistes semiestructurades amb personal no docent de suport, professors i representants sindicals, així com un qüestionari ($n = 101$) per explorar el seu paper a Catalunya i les seves condicions contractuals i el seu desplegament. Aquest estudi es va materialitzar en dos articles. Per a la tercera fase, es van realitzar 40 entrevistes semiestructurades amb professors i personal no docent de suport de 14 escoles catalanes inclusives. La tercera fase inclou dos estudis, un que identifica els factors que caracteritzen les relacions interpersonals efectives entre el personal no docent de suport i els professors; i un segon que mostra com el personal no docent de suport i els professors gestionen situacions de conducta disruptiva. Es van publicar un total de tres articles sobre aquesta fase.

La quarta i cinquena fase comprenen els estudis sobre el suport durant el temps extraescolar. La mostra per a la quarta fase va incloure a 1786 estudiants, 126 instructors i 238 docents que van participar a través dels qüestionaris i 46 informes de reunions de clausura dels equips del programa extraescolar. Els resultats d'aquest estudi es van publicar en un article empíric mostrant com es desplega aquesta iniciativa extraescolar i quins components es poden optimitzar per millorar la seva implementació. Per a la cinquena fase es van realitzar dos qüestionaris dirigits a instructors ($n = 158$) i docents ($n = 191$), sis estudis de cas amb un total de 18 entrevistes semiestructurades amb docents ($n = 12$) i instructors ($n = 6$), així com 6 grups focals amb estudiants. L'article resultant mostra les interaccions entre el context escolar i extraescolar, emfatitzant la rellevància d'una col·laboració entre tots dos.

Finalment, la sisena fase consisteix en una interpretació global de tots els resultats obtinguts, destacant les principals implicacions per a la teoria, les polítiques i les pràctiques escolars. Aquesta tesi proporciona una visió integral de les interaccions entre docents i el personal no docent estudiat. Proporciona informació detallada sobre el desplegament del personal no docent de suport i la iniciativa extraescolar analitzada des d'una perspectiva inclusiva, així com sobre els factors interpersonals que influeixen en el treball en equip o les relacions de col·laboració entre agents de suport. Això contribueix a ampliar el coneixement sobre com afavorir l'educació inclusiva.

Resumen

Mejorar el apoyo educativo es una de las vías potenciales en el camino de los sistemas educativos hacia la inclusión. Por lo tanto, optimizar el apoyo brindado por los docentes y personal no docente de apoyo dentro de las escuelas, así como el apoyo brindado por los instructores de las iniciativas extraescolares, es una cuestión fundamental para las políticas y prácticas inclusivas. Por ello, esta tesis doctoral tiene como objetivo examinar las interacciones entre el profesorado y el personal no docente que interviene en el apoyo educativo del alumnado perteneciente a colectivos vulnerables en Cataluña. Esta tesis doctoral se organiza en seis fases que comprenden cinco estudios que dieron como resultado nueve productos sobre las dos líneas principales de investigación: “Apoyo no docente durante el horario escolar” y “Apoyo no docente durante el horario extraescolar”. Estos nueve productos comprenden dos capítulos de un libro, cinco artículos empíricos originales y dos artículos de divulgación.

En una primera fase se realizó una revisión de la literatura para enmarcar la presente tesis doctoral. Esta fase resultó en dos capítulos que definen cómo se entienden los apoyos, enfatizando aquellos que fomentan las interacciones entre agentes. En la segunda fase se realizaron 12 entrevistas semiestructuradas con personal no docente de apoyo, profesores y representantes sindicales, así como un cuestionario ($n = 101$) para explorar su papel en Cataluña, sus condiciones de empleo y su despliegue. Este estudio se materializó en dos artículos. Para la tercera fase, se realizaron 40 entrevistas semiestructuradas con profesores y personal no docente de apoyo de 14 escuelas catalanes inclusivas. La tercera fase incluye dos estudios, uno que identifica los factores que caracterizan las relaciones interpersonales efectivas entre el personal no docente de apoyo y los profesores; y un segundo que muestra cómo el personal no docente de apoyo y los profesores gestionan situaciones de conducta disruptiva. Se publicaron un total de tres artículos sobre esta fase.

La cuarta y quinta fase comprenden los estudios sobre el apoyo durante el tiempo extraescolar. La muestra para la cuarta fase incluyó a 1786 estudiantes, 126 instructores y 238 docentes que participaron a través de los cuestionarios y 46 informes de reuniones de clausura de los equipos del programa extraescolar. Los resultados de este estudio se publicaron en un artículo empírico mostrando cómo se despliega esta iniciativa extraescolar y qué componentes se pueden optimizar para mejorar su implementación. Para la quinta fase se realizaron dos cuestionarios dirigidos a instructores ($n = 158$) y docentes ($n = 191$), seis estudios de caso con un total de 18 entrevistas semiestructuradas con docentes ($n = 12$) e instructores ($n = 6$), así como 6 grupos focales con estudiantes. El artículo resultante muestra las interacciones entre el contexto escolar y extraescolar, enfatizando la relevancia de una colaboración entre ambos.

Finalmente, la sexta fase consiste en una interpretación global de todos los resultados obtenidos, destacando las principales implicaciones para la teoría, las políticas y las prácticas escolares. Esta tesis proporciona una visión integral de las interacciones entre docentes y el personal no docente estudiado. Proporciona información detallada sobre el despliegue del personal no docente de apoyo y la iniciativa extraescolar analizada desde una perspectiva inclusiva, así como sobre los factores interpersonales que influyen en el trabajo en equipo o las relaciones de colaboración entre agentes de apoyo. Esto contribuye a ampliar el conocimiento sobre cómo favorecer la educación inclusiva.

1. Introduction

Ensuring presence, participation and achievements for all the students within regular classrooms is one of the main landmarks of any educational system (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). As we can observe through the terminology used in state- or regional-level laws and regulations in our surrounding countries, educational policies aimed at inclusive education are increasing (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2019). As examples of that, we have regional and state documents such as “De l’escola inclusiva al sistema inclusiu” (Catalonia, 2015a) or “Paso a paso: Atención a la diversidad en la educación primaria” (Spain, 2015), which preceded to legislations that clearly support the inclusive model —see Decree 150/2017 (Catalonia, 2017) or LOMLOE organic law (Spain, 2020). This concern in promoting policies, practices and cultures that favour inclusion is not exclusively from the state, as it is encouraged by international organisms such as the United Nations (2016) with the General Comment about the Article 24, the Right to inclusive education, enacted by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the complaints from the OECD (2007), the UNESCO’s (2009) guidelines about inclusive policies in education, the recommendations for special needs and inclusive education from the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2011), highlighting the goals of the European Strategy “Europe 2020” (European Commission, 2010) or the Incheon Declaration (UNESCO, 2015), where the Education 2030 Framework for Action was seen. This framework emphasizes inclusion and equality as foundation principles for quality education and learning. As it is highlighted in the “Guide for ensuring inclusion and equity in education” (UNESCO, 2017):

The Framework stresses the need to address all forms of exclusion and marginalization. It specifically calls for addressing inequalities related to access, participation, and learning processes and outcomes, paying particular attention to gender equality. This includes efforts to enable education systems to serve all learners, with a particular focus on those who have traditionally been excluded from educational opportunities. Excluded learners include those from the poorest households, ethnic and linguistic minorities, indigenous people, and persons with special needs and disabilities. (p. 22)

Educational systems must adapt to diverse types of learners, enabling participation, equal opportunities, respect for differences and social justice. In this context, inclusion has been defined as the process of addressing and responding to the diversity of the needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, as well as reducing exclusion within and from education (UNESCO, 2005). Equity is also an on-going process about ensuring fairness in our society, ensuring that the education of all learners is seen as having equal importance (UNESCO, 2017). Inclusion and equity principles applied into practice spread the message that “every learner matters and matters equally”. Developing cultures, policies and practices that are inclusive and equitable requires focusing on how educational support is organized and deployed (Petreñas et al., 2020).

Inclusion and equity are an educational system matter rather than an individual student or classroom issue. The whole picture should be considered to overcome all the possible inequalities. To this end, Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) suggests that, to study students’ development, we must analyse both, their immediate environment as well as their interactions with a larger environment. Moreover, this theory provides a holistic approach, which is really useful to understand the dynamic nature of interactions and support needs. The systems theory of social settings (Tseng & Seidman, 2007) is derived from Bronfenbrenner’s theory, and it also frames this doctoral dissertation. This theory conceptualizes social settings as systems consisting of social processes (i.e., interactions between people or groups), resources (i.e., human, economic, physical, temporal), and the resources organization (i.e., how resources are deployed or allocated). However, these authors placed relationships and main interactions since connections between stakeholders can become key professional influences and support sources. Therefore, interactions between teachers and teaching assistants, as well as teachers and instructors of out-of-school organisations, are of relevance for educational support.

1.1.Educational support from an inclusive approach

Nowadays, we understand educational support as a help process that regularly takes place in the learning process of all the students. This educational support is a structural matter

which is determined by the cultures, policies and practices of each school and community. Therefore, it would not be only an additional or intensive support for specific groups of students and given in a direct way by specific professionals. Within an inclusive approach, the support is organised proactively from the educational system instead of being based on the students' deficits. This implies actions at the level of both organization and how the classroom works, as well as the school and community, in addition to specific measures at student level. As conceptualized in the Index for inclusion, 'support' does not mean providing additional people to work with particular individuals. The concept is broader and includes:

All the activities which increase the capacity of the schools to respond to students' diversity. Providing support to individuals is only part of the attempt to increase the participation of students. Support is also provided when teachers plan lessons with all students in mind, recognizing their different starting points, experiences and learning styles or when students help each other. (Booth & Ainscow, 2002, p. 6)

It is important to consider the perspective from which support is understood because it will determine how, what, when and where of that support. Does the starting perspective carry out a pathological view of the difference? Is it focused on the deficit or on reducing contextual barriers? Are individual differences static? What role does interaction play? Is it seeking to compensate students' difficulties or is it seeking to accelerate the learning processes? To understand all these nuances that define and determine educational support, Puigdemívol & Petreñas (2019) propose a useful framework based on three main axes: attribution, strategies and support agents. The axis of *attribution* can be used to observe if any measure is more focused on the deficit and limitations of the student or if it tends to take more into account the entire context with which the students interact and the existing obstacles that determine the disability. That is to say, it will inform to whom the difficulties or support needs are attributed. With the axis *strategy*, the orientation and purpose of the support can be assessed, if the support actions are more adaptive, with reduced expectations, or if they seek to accelerate learning. Finally, the third axis, *support agents*, defines the level of involvement of different support agents, if the support is more focused on the expert or considers the participation of multiple agents. The more the axes

tend towards social attribution, acceleration strategies and including the community, the more inclusive the support will be. Therefore, this framework helps us to see how inclusive a measure or support is.

Support is provided to help reduce the mismatch between personal skills or resources and environmental demands. For this reason, the concept of *barriers to learning and participation* (Booth & Ainscow, 2002) is also relevant since, without denying the existence of deficits —see the glossary of the International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health (WHO, 2001)— puts the focus in the contexts where the obstacles that must be reduced or removed are located. This concept focuses the attention on what must be done to improve education for all ensuring inclusion and equity in education. Therefore, an inclusion-oriented school is expected to apply all those measures, strategies, tools and/or material and human resources in order to remove the potential barriers that may limit the participation or progress of its students, before they have an effect on them. Nevertheless, due to the dynamic nature of the support needs, of the learning processes and of society itself, it would be almost impossible to identify and prevent everything that, at some point in the educational process of any student, can generate or be an obstacle. However, inclusive educational support proactively seeks to prevent and minimize such situations.

Once the contextual, accelerating, community and dynamic nature of the support is located, it is necessary to say that it should promote the autonomy of the user, so the degree of intensity of the support should be able to be adjusted. What is more, quality support should be able to be reconceptualized or removed as students gain autonomy. The dependence on a support could be explained by its design: some supports do not focus on eliminating the barriers that generate the need, since they focus on the student's deficit, so that, once the support is withdrawn, the problem that generated the need for support persists causing dependency. To systematically implement this gradient of intensity of support, one of the most significant advances in schoolwide inclusive school reforms is the multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) with embedded response to intervention (Sailor, 2015).

This systematization of supports allows their articulation and graduation in three tiers based on the idea that any person will need support, but with different intensity. Furthermore, this support should be based on both, what has been shown to work through research and the evidence of student progress (Fuchs et al., 2003; Johnson et al., 2006). Therefore, interventions designed based on scientific evidence are adjusted depending on how effective the support is. The three tiers are the following: primary, which would be the general education program; the secondary, which consists of the intervention of small groups of limited duration, focused on some objectives; and the tertiary, which involves individualized and intensive actions. Multi-tiered systems of support are implemented in different countries such as the United States, Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, but in many cases, focused on behaviour management (Armstrong, 2019; Berkeley et al., 2020; Braun et al., 2020). This MTSS was also launched in Catalonia (Spain) with the Decree 150/2017 on inclusive education. In this Decree, the Primary Tier supports are called universals; Secondary Tier, additional; and Tertiary Tier intensives.

It should not be forgotten that the ultimate goal of support is to improve human functioning through greater independence, better personal relationships, greater opportunities to contribute to society, increased participation in school and community contexts and activities, a greater perception of personal well-being or life satisfaction. Therefore, the voice of the people involved must always be considered in first person, their preferences and priorities (Messiou, 2019; Mortier et al., 2011). This more systemic and ecological approach is based on both, the community approach and the MTSS, which requires, thus, a readjustment of the roles of all the stakeholders involved in educational support, including students themselves (see Eagle et al., 2015; Freeman et al., 2015; Gómez-Zepeda et al., 2017; Loftus-Rattan et al., 2021; Puigdemívol et al., 2017). These go beyond those specialists that have traditionally been considered stakeholders of support (e.g., special education teachers, psychologists, or therapists) and also extend beyond the walls and school hours. In this doctoral thesis, we focus on the collaboration between teaching assistants and teachers during school hours, as well as instructors and teachers in an after-school publicly funded initiative.

1.2. Non-teaching support staff during school hours

The service provided by Teaching Assistants (TAs) —also called Teacher Assistants, paraprofessionals, paraeducators, teacher/teaching aids, special needs assistants, learning support assistants, classroom assistants, learning support officers, etc.— seeks to address one of the forms of exclusion and marginalization that has traditionally affected the population with disabilities: the access to education in general educational systems (United Nations, 2016). In many countries such as Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, and the USA— see Webster & de Boer's (2021) special issue on Teaching Assistants; Breyer's (2020) transnational comparison, the OECD report (Masdeu, 2015) or Sharma & Salend's literature review— TAs are supporting students with disabilities. In fact, they have become one of the most common and requested ways of supporting those students within regular schools (Blatchford et al., 2009; Butt, 2016b; Giangreco & Doyle, 2007; Sharma & Salend, 2016). However, despite ensuring the students' presence within mainstream classrooms, this is insufficient to truly state that all students are included in general settings as their participation and achievements are cornerstones for inclusive education.

Several voices have shown their concerns over accepting this practice as a solution without considering further contextual support (Giangreco, 2021; Giangreco et al., 2010; Lim et al., 2014; Webster et al., 2011). Giangreco (2021) used Maslow's Hammer as a metaphor to explain the overreliance on TAs without considering other potentially more appropriate measures that can be added or used instead. In fact, the DISS project, a large-scale study on the deployment and impact of support staff in the UK, showed differences between the quality of the support offered by teachers and TAs, the latter being of less quality. For these reasons, there are studies that recommend using qualified teachers rather than TAs, especially when providing specific support (Bairbre et al., 2020).

Several articles show the tasks that TAs carry out; among other tasks, they are providing one-on-one direct support, personal care, literacy instruction, behaviour-related support, social skills' instruction, community-based instruction, non-instructional support such as clerical roles and fostering peer support. (Bosanquet et al., 2016; Butt, 2016b; Carter et al., 2009; Giangreco, 2013; Lewis & McKenzie, 2010; Patterson, 2006; Sharma & Salend,

2016). However, some of these tasks, if they are not shared with teachers, can lead to one of the issues in the deployment of TAs, the excessive dependence they experience (Biggs et al., 2016; Butt, 2016b; Giangreco et al., 2005). This is even more relevant when TAs provide direct support to students, as always having an adult nearby restricts peer interactions and fosters TAs being perceived as the main party responsible for the student assigned. To counter this heavily reported “Velcro effect” (Giangreco et al., 2005), TAs should be assigned to a classroom rather than to a particular student.

In fact, prior research shows the importance of maintaining a certain distance with students individually, to scaffold their learning for independence, and the way in which students interact with each other to ensure effective proximity (Butt, 2016b; Feldman et al., 2015; Radford et al., 2015). Scaffolding consists of “modelling, prompting and providing hinting help to transfer responsibility to the learner so that they can use [strategies] independently when an adult is not present” (Radford et al. 2015, p.4). For this reason, the deployment models that should be implemented are those that enhance teamwork, reciprocity, and student independence (Brock & Carter, 2016; Radford et al., 2015; Slater & Gazeley, 2018). Regarding alternative and more inclusive models of deployment, Brock et al. (2016) showed that TAs can promote collaboration between students, instead of only providing direct support to some students. Thus, adults can model students to support their peers, ensuring favourable interactions. To implement the aforementioned recommendations, Butt (2016b) recommended the *Teacher Assistant As Facilitator* (TAAF) model, where TAs help relatively more autonomous students to relieve the teaching staff, so they may support students who require more specialized and intensive support. Additionally, in this model, TAs are always placed in the same classroom, which provides more opportunities for coordination and fostering partnership.

Nonetheless, the impact of TAs not only depends on the roles and responsibilities assumed by TAs; these are just one aspect that should be clarified. Webster, et al., (2011) gathered the factors that affect the impact of TA provision within the *Wider Pedagogical Role* (WPR) model. Thus, in order to gauge TA practices, they suggested also considering: 1) the characteristics of TAs and their employment conditions; 2) *preparedness*, including the training and professional development of TAs and teachers,

as well as day-to-day preparation; 3) *deployment*, that contemplates the number of TAs, the tasks carried out, teacher and TA interaction with the whole class and one-to-one interaction with a pupil. Finally, it is not until 4) *practice*, when the way TAs operate is taken into consideration. Therefore, the WPR model clearly shows that practices are influenced by a wide range of factors; that is, the effectiveness of TAs utilisation does not depend on the TAs themselves.

Hence, it is no wonder that the employment conditions of TAs, as well as their training and supervision are frequently topics of study that show that TAs are usually poorly employed and rarely receive adequate training and supervision (Giangreco, 2021; Giangreco et al., 2010; Sharma & Salend, 2016). Their employment and working conditions are commonly worse than those affecting the teaching staff in terms of fair salary, supervision, paid coordination and break time, agency, limited career paths, job security and variable training (e.g., Breyer et al., 2020; Butt, 2016a; Hancock & Eyres, 2004; Masdeu, 2015; Mowrey & King, 2019). In fact, in several countries there are no nationally specified requirements for becoming a TAs, being the hiring authorities (sometimes local authorities) or schools who outline their specific requirements (Breyer et al., 2020; Masdeu, 2015). For this reason, head teacher teams play important roles in hiring and managing TAs in such countries.

Nonetheless, the supervision of TAs is usually assumed by school psychologists, SEN-Co, special education, support teachers or teachers (French, 2001; Giangreco et al., 2010; Irvin et al., 2018; Luiselli et al., 2017; Stacey et al., 2013; Webster et al., 2010). These studies showed, among other things, how TAs were supervised, the challenges they faced and conclusions offering a series of relevant recommendations. Irvin's et al. (2018) study showed noteworthy paradoxes: more supervision was provided when teachers perceived TAs as more skilled, and the more supervision they provided, the more they realised those TAs should not be assuming those tasks.

As for training requirements, despite the existence of induction plans, considering the countries which information is reported in articles, only the US and Slovakia require initial qualifications; in Finland, there is a specific vocational education training, although

other qualifications, such as practical nursing, are admitted to work as TAs (Breyer et al., 2020; Butt & Lowe, 2012; Masdeu, 2015). Despite not requiring any particular qualification, some countries do recognize the existence of higher level TAs — e.g., the Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) in the UK (Graves & Williams, 2017) or the higher level Learning Support Assistants (LSA) in Australia (Butt, 2016a).

In order to prepare TAs for their job, appropriate training should be based on teamwork approaches involving both teaching and non-teaching staff (Bosanquet et al., 2016). School-to-school as well as university-school networks have a great potential for professional learning and supporting schools in this journey towards inclusion (Azorín & Ainscow, 2018; Tenorio et al., 2020). That is, training can be approached in many ways including online modules (e.g., Da Fonte & Capizzi, 2015), even teachers are proved to be effective trainers (Brock & Carter, 2016). In fact, Brock & Carter's (2013) systematic review of paraprofessional-delivered educational practices showed that, no matter the working experience TAs have, they could successfully implement educational practices if they were effectively trained and supervised. However, this argument should not be used to over-delegate more responsibilities to them falling into the *training trap* (Giangreco, 2021) based on the idea that, with little training, TAs will have full competence to support students as if they were qualified teachers. Instead, the author stressed on optimising alternative supports. In fact, with a relocation of resources, schools implementing an inclusive organization can obtain better results (Giangreco et al., 2011; Petreñas et al., 2013). Schools committed to inclusive education need to understand the complex interrelationship between context, resources, opportunities, and challenges in order to find sustainable improvement proposals (Rappoport, et al., 2019).

1.3. Non-teaching support staff during after-school hours

Bringing the principles of equity and inclusion into education policies and practices also requires engaging other educational settings that go beyond school time. In fact, supports implemented in expanded learning time should be considered to better understand how equity is fostered (Included, 2012). Rodríguez et. al. (2012) pointed out that this type of support implies an increase in the interactions between students, which helps to accelerate learning processes. The most common approaches described by Stonehill et al. (2011) include: out-of-school programs, expanded learning time (ELT) schools, summer schools,

and year-round schools. Those that support students after school time are the out-of-school and ELT initiatives. The differences between them are that out-of-school initiatives usually operate out of school grounds with a small number of students while ELT initiatives increase the number of hours within schools for all students. Therefore, ELT initiatives are a landmark according to inclusive education principles because they welcome all students, without purposefully generating homogeneous groups. This may avoid labelling and stigmatising those students who attend this support (Dougherty, 2015). Although there still is no research on the matter conducted in after-school settings, research shows that supporting students in homogeneous groups during school hours has negative effects for the lower achievement groups (Francis et al., 2017; McGillicuddy & Devine, 2020).

Additionally, according to the OECD (2015), the initiative that has been studied can be considered a “centre-based out-of-school-hours care service” because they support students, and this is not only aimed at leisure. Another widespread form of support in after-school hours with specific characteristics are the initiatives based on mentoring. Rodhes (2002) defined this as a “relationship between an older, more experienced adult and an unrelated, younger protégé, a relationship in which the adult provides ongoing guidance, instruction, and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the protégé” (p. 3). Mentoring initiatives are classified into formal or natural mentoring, depending on whether the mentor-mentee relationships are refined and structured through a program (Van Dam et al., 2018). Other characteristics that according to some authors (e.g., Ahrens et. al, 2010; Hurd et. al, 2016; Liao & Sanchez, 2019; Raposa et. al, 2017) define mentoring programs are those based on volunteers over the age of 20 who are at least five years older than the mentees and who have similar ethnics or socioeconomic backgrounds.

Among this wide variety of forms taken by support in after-school time, it must also be considered whether the student is supported individually, through one-on-one tutoring, in a small group, or through small-group tutoring (Beckett et al., 2009; Cappella et. al, 2017; Raposa et al., 2017). In short, this additional support can be more or less structured, ranging from initiatives focused on improving specific skills to natural mentoring. They

can take place inside or outside the school, in religious or non-religious settings, and they can be financed publicly or with private funds. In addition, depending on the initiative, students can be supported by paid teaching staff, paid monitors (with or without teaching studies) or volunteers. Therefore, there is a difference in the profile and background of the so-called educators, instructors, mentors, monitors, big brothers/sisters, etc. They can be family members, neighbours, friends, older schoolmates and even teachers (Ahrens et al., 2010; Lahoz, 2015; Liao & Sanchez, 2019). This may affect the kind of support provided by the instructors, the kind of relationship they have with their students, as well as the type of training and support that they need. In fact, in natural mentoring, when the mentor had a helping profession (e.g., teacher, counsellor, religious leader) a larger effect size was found (Van Dam et al., 2018). No substantially lower effect size was found for college or secondary school student mentors (Herrera et. al, 2011).

Initiative designs also depend on their goals and the students that they aim. In fact, the socioeconomic status (SES) of the students acts as a barrier both for the type of activity offered and for their chance to access them. Initiatives addressed to students from low SES contexts were aimed at school reinforcement, while the ones carried out in more affluent neighbourhoods are more varied (Guest, 2018; Roda, 2017). In addition, there are statistically significant differences in participation rates in out-of-school care services across income groups: this kind of support is more accessible for students from relatively advantaged socioeconomic backgrounds (OECD, 2018). The perceived double standard of supporting vulnerable students but doing so while having low expectations is not coherent because, when measures that effectively increase their performance are implemented, students from a low SES context can achieve exceptional results (Hidalgo et. al, 2002).

Most of the initiatives run by non-profit organisations or public administrations take place in contexts with high rates of poverty or low achievement (Kaplan et. al, 2014). The same happens in Spain with publicly funded experiences at a national level, such as PROA (Manzanares & Ulla, 2012; Ulla & Manzanares, 2014), an autonomous community (regional) level, such as the “Program for the Improvement of Educational Success” of Castilla y León (Lahoz, 2015) or a municipal level, such as the program Èxit of the city

of Barcelona (Peralta, 2010). These initiatives usually focus on formal learning, sports or arts (e.g., Kidron & Lindsay, 2014; Lee et al., 2015; Newman et al., 2010; Shulruf, 2010). Despite their orientation, these initiatives generally aim at improving academic performance, socio-emotional development or increasing the students' attendance (Durlak et. al., 2010; Jez & Wassmer, 2015; Kremer et. al, 2014). In the case of mentoring programs, differences across countries are reported. According to Preston's et. al. (2018) comparative study, in Europe, mentoring programs commonly focus on migrants and refugees to favour social inclusion. In contrast, in the USA, mentoring programs usually aim at improving outcomes and addressing the needs of youths from low SES contexts (Preston et al., 2018). Nonetheless, in Europe, when after-school initiatives focus on educational support, students also tend to come from low SES contexts (e.g., Lahoz, 2015; Steinmann et. al., 2019; Ulla & Manzanares, 2014).

Besides the aforementioned concerns over the inequalities regarding the deployment of after-school initiatives, Manzanares & Ulla (2012) argued that providing successful learning experiences to these students is sufficiently relevant since, according to their teachers, students improved their self-efficacy. Other highlighted benefits are improvements in educational attainment, school engagement, academic and socio-emotional skills, self-concept, the reduction in the rate of school drop-outs, among other things. (e.g., Cappella et al., 2017; Durlak et al., 2010; Forneris et. al., 2015; Haghighat & Knifsend, 2019; Kidron & Lindsay, 2014; Neely & Vaquera, 2017; Shulruf, 2010). Despite the reported improvements, the effect size of the relations between initiatives and the targeted outcomes are usually small. Others did not find any effects on the outcomes of students (Leos-Urbel, 2015; Roth et. al., 2010; Steinmann et al., 2019). Nonetheless, if activities align with the school curricula, the impact on academic achievements improves (Newman et al., 2010; Lauer et al., 2006). Other relevant reasons that influence effectiveness of after-school initiatives are: the predisposition of students to attend programs, their engagement, their relationship with the staff, their knowledge and skills, unsafe environments and the schedules of the students and programs, among many others. (e.g., Mahoney et. al., 2008).

Therefore, to make an impact on the outcome of students, what matters is not only the amount of learning time provided to these students, but the quality of the deployment of after-school initiatives (Leos-Urbel, 2015). Analysing the condition of high-quality programs and how to improve them is still a matter of concern in this field. Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom (2010) reviewed different quality assessment tools concluding that all of them addressed six core concepts:

(1) relationships: connections between and among youth and adults in the program; (2) environment: various aspects of the program climate and setting, including physical and emotional safety; (3) engagement: the extent to which children, youth, and staff are meaningfully involved in program activities; (4) social/behavioural norms: expectations about and responses to positive and negative behaviours in the program; (5) skill building: opportunities for participants to develop specific skills by participating in intentional learning activities; and (6) routine/structure: various aspects of how the overall program is organized including pacing, transitions and routines. (p.353)

The depth in which they are analysed varies depending on the tool. Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom (2010) highlighted four additional concepts that some tools measured: youth leadership or participation, program management, staffing (e.g., ratios, qualifications) and linkages to family and community. In the same year, Smith, et. al. (2010) suggested (a) ensuring a supportive environment, (b) providing opportunities for purposeful engagement, and (c) structured interactions between staff and supported youth as main quality elements of after-school programs. The quality features identified by Pierce et. al. (2010) were: (a) positive staff–child relationships, defined as positive and supportive relationships between staff and children; available activities that assessed both variety and age; and (c) program flexibility, defined as the degree to which students are allowed to choose activities.

Finally, Durlak's et al., (2010) used the SAFE recommendations as quality criteria moderators to analyse after-school programs aimed at promoting personal and social skills among children and youths. These recommendations consist of a) providing a sequenced set of activities to specific goals, (b) fostering active ways of learning, (c) ensuring that program components focus on the goals, and (d) explicitly targeting them.

Although focused on different types of programs, all proposals can complement each other, achieving one that is more comprehensive. However, the role of the interactions between teachers and instructors in these after-school initiatives remain understudied.

1.4. Interpersonal relationship and joint work between stakeholders with educational support roles.

As previously introduced, educational systems have a great potential to improve through strengthening collaborations within schools, between schools and beyond schools (Ainscow, 2016). Considering the experience and expertise of everybody who is involved in the lives of children, including the children themselves, it is fundamental to overcome the current and future challenges hindering inclusive and equitable educational systems. Consequently, interprofessional joint work between those stakeholders is key, despite the lack of research on this matter in school settings (Borg & Drange, 2019). To conceptualise interprofessional practice, Reeves et al., (2010) considered interprofessional *teamwork*, *collaboration*, *coordination*, and *network* as the main structures of joint work involving multiple professions in clinical settings. These forms of interprofessional work were described using five main elements identified after analysing over twenty teamwork descriptions: shared team identity, clear roles/tasks/goals, member interdependence, integration of work, and shared responsibility. Furthermore, Reeves et al. (2018) added a sixth element “team task” because the predictability, urgency, and complexity of the tasks that should be performed cooperatively request different intensities of joint work. Considering these six elements, these authors ranged the forms of interpersonal practice from *teamwork* —where partners at least have a shared identity, responsibility, interdependence, integration, and clarity on their roles and responsibilities to, in general, effectively tackle complex, urgent and unpredictable tasks— to *network* —where partners did not necessarily meet face-to-face because their joint tasks were less complex, urgent and more predictable, and they were less conditioned by the elements that define joint work.

Inclusive education requires openness and sharing proposals with the community based on authentic and spontaneous collaborative cultures that go beyond contrived interactions

enhanced by administrative power (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990). As Hargreaves (2019) himself argued:

Collaborative professionalism was no longer about a set of PLCs [professional learning communities] meetings, but about collaborative inquiry and action, and collective responsibility, as defining the essence of professional life. In collaborative professionalism, formal protocols and informal processes worked together. Instead of contriving and constraining teachers' professional interactions, protocols, and structures were designed to enrich them (p. 617).

This not only applies to teacher interactions, any type of partnership needs collaborative cultures, regardless of the form of joint work that is adopted. Continuing with the referents on collegial relations, Little (1990) discussed the dominance of individualism among teachers and developed a continuum of collaboration based on the interdependence of teachers, scaled from simply storytelling or sharing ideas to the authentic *joint work* consistent with the definition of teamwork, as previously mentioned.

Additionally, Harris & Anthony (2001) distinguished two forms of collegial relations: emotionally supportive collegiality, and collegial interaction, being the latest the most favourable for professional development. Collegial interaction requires closer relationships between teachers guided by shared goals, values, and visions as to the concerns of teaching and education in general. Other highlighted interpersonal factors that affect collaboration between teachers are: mutual trust, respect and support, parity, mutuality, professional and personal compatibility, as well as open attitudes (Ekornes, 2015; Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Pratt, 2014; Scruggs et al., 2007). Schutz & Valley (1992) operationalised the construct of interpersonal relationships into three dimensions: *behaviour*, *feelings* and *self*. Interpersonal *behaviour* is composed by inclusion, control, and openness; *interpersonal feelings* comprises significance, likeability, and competence. The third dimension, *self*, considers such constructs, but self-assesses them (e.g., with self-significance or self-liking). Consequently, making them less relevant for the current doctoral dissertation because they are intra-psychological factors rather than inter-psychological (Palacios et al., 2017).

With respect to the less common constructs from Schutz & Valley's (1992) questionnaire, *inclusion* considers a person's desires to be involved in groups; *control* concerns the determination and the degree of control assumed; *openness* measures the extent to which people feel at ease sharing thoughts and feelings with partners. *Significance* delves into the perception of feeling respected and valued. The *feeling of competence* describes the capacity that someone has to cope with situations, manage problems and be self-sufficient. Lastly, *likeability* measures the extent to which people feel at ease with themselves and others, based on their behaviours or the surrounding atmosphere. This instrument proved to be useful in different types of organisations to improve self-awareness, teamwork, morale, and productivity in such companies.

Despite being developed for other stakeholders, all the identified interpersonal factors may also be essential in partnerships between teaching and non-teaching staff. It is worth mentioning that teachers, TAs and instructors may have their own idiosyncrasies based on values, beliefs, attitudes, customs and behaviours, linked to their possible professional cultures as well as status and gender issues (Hall, 2005), additionally affecting their interactions. Given these differences, special attention should be paid to hierarchic dynamics among them that can hinder egalitarian relationships in which partners equally share all benefits, burdens, and their voice is equally valued (Reis & Sprecher, 2009; Slater & Gazeley, 2018). Nonetheless, the interpersonal factors identified within the scant qualitative studies on non-teaching support staff are in line with the aforementioned (e.g., respect, appreciation, acknowledgement, rapport, hierarchy or shared goals), (Biggs et al., 2016; Devecchi & Rouse, 2010; Giangreco et al., 2001). In fact, Devecchi & Rouse (2010) suggested that the capacity of schools to support the inclusion of adults has consequences on the inclusion of students. That is, collaboration is an important means to support inclusive education.

To translate all these interpersonal nuances into practice, some essentials highlighted by interprofessional care teams to favour teamwork, may also be relevant for the interactions studied in the present doctoral dissertation. These were:

[...] democratic approaches; efforts to breakdown stereotypes and barriers; regular time to develop teamworking away from practice; good communication; a single

shared work location; mutual role understanding; the development of joint protocols, training, and work practices; agreed practice priorities across professional boundaries; regular and effective team meetings; team members valuing and respecting each other; and good performance management (West & Slater, 1996; in Reeves et al., 2010b, p.11)

In fact, collaboration during lesson planning was a significant predictor of student achievement in the United States (Reeves et al., 2017). For this reason, it is no wonder that the literature on co-teaching emphasised the relevance of co-planning, co-construction, co-evaluation, co-respect, co-responsibility (Murawski & Dieker, 2004; Pratt et al., 2016; Scantlebury et al., 2008; Scruggs et al., 2007). As for recommendations on TAs, Capizzi & Fonte, (2012) proposed a plan for collaboration addressed at 1) orienting TAs within schools, clarifying school and classroom expectations and procedures; 2) clarifying professional duties and responsibilities; 3) ensuring effective communication (e.g., using open communication and their first language) and regularly scheduled meetings; and 4) professional development. All these recommendations not only depend on interpersonal factors, but on external ones (e.g., the employment and deployment conditions) that, as highlighted in prior subsections, may hinder or become a catalyst for successful partnership.

In conclusion, a consensus has been reached on the importance of understanding that achieving favourable partnerships is a process that involves time and effort (Jurkowski & Müller, 2018; Pratt, 2014; Rytivaara et al., 2019). To this end, Pratt (2014) shed light on the process that co-teachers can follow to build interpersonal relationships. She proposed a model called Achieving Symbiosis, composed by three main phases: In the first phase (initiation) individuals should adjust to the continuum of feelings experienced before starting a new relationship. In the second phase, (symbiosis spin), teachers *test the waters* learning how to work with one another; then, from this phase, they started to *build their partnerships*, seeking positive interdependence and, finally, considering the need to *reflect* on how to improve. This second phase operates like a cycle mediated by factors such as the compatibility of the two teachers, the internal factors (parity, trust, and rapport), the opportunities for professional development, co-planning time, administrative support and the strategies that they use to become more effective partners.

The third phase of the model (fulfilment), begins when all the pieces of the partnership fit together and work effectively, this is when their partnership is fulfilled both personally and professionally. These pieces are: (a) valuing the relationship, (b) handling challenges smoothly, (c) seamless instruction, (d) the presence of all the dimensions needed from the Symbiosis Spin, (e) the reflection, and (f) compatibility.

Both the second and third phases of the Achieving Symbiosis model are conceived as a process that never ends, as partners should always work on their partnership. Along similar lines, Rytivaara et al., (2019) proposed the following three main steps: 1) the commitment to building a partnership with a colleague; 2) learning to share their practical knowledge through discussing their personalities, professional backgrounds and classroom practices; and 3) a joint reflection. However, more research is needed to know how to fit all these interpersonal and external factors together to ensure effective teamwork between TAs and instructors, as well as effective collaboration between instructors and teachers.

2. Justification of the investigation

Considering that interactions mediate the learning processes of students, the importance of support and methods that foster student participation is evident. Consequently, educational stakeholders should assume roles that favour this kind of interaction and thus support should be reconceptualized. For this reason, lessons where the adult is the centre of the teaching process are no longer needed; adults should rather be dynamizing and enriching the interactions among students, enabling diversified learning experiences. In this sense, and also to respond to the growing diversity in classrooms, educational support has also been diversified, including, among others, non-teaching support staff. Two of the stakeholders that are usually linked to the educational support of the most vulnerable learners are the teaching assistants (TAs) and the instructors of after-school initiatives (Giangreco et al., 2012; Preston et al., 2018), so as their study is of great interest for educational improvement.

There is no doubt that more research on educational support is needed in Spain because rates of *early leavers from education and training* are still very high (16%, Eurostat, 2021). In particular, it is relevant to investigate the deployment of TAs and after-school initiatives because together with teachers they support the students who are affected the most by the barriers of educational system. Specifically, the TAs in Catalonia support students with disabilities or difficulties in the self-regulation of their behaviour, and the instructors of public after-school initiatives support students at risk of school failure from disadvantaged environments. This involves a large presence of students of immigrant origin —groups highlighted as vulnerable by the UNESCO (e.g., UNESCO, 2017). Indeed, some countries that have targeted spending towards disadvantaged groups have seen results in more equitable learning outcomes (Pedró, 2012; UNESCO, 2015).

Once the relevance of focusing on these stakeholders is justified, the international interest in both types of support would be corroborated by the numerous international researches on both forms of support (Raposa et al., 2019; Sharma & Salend, 2016). However, this is on a limited scale (Giangreco, 2021; Raposa et al., 2019; Sharma & Salend, 2016; Webster & De Boer, 2021), in fact, the most recent “Global Education Monitoring Report” (UNESCO, 2020) evidenced the lack of available data on inclusion-oriented use of support personnel. Furthermore, publications related to after-school support in Spain

are scarce, and those concerning TAs are non-existent to date (see Collet-Sabé & Martori, 2018; Lahoz, 2015; Rodríguez et al., 2012; Ulla & Manzanares, 2014). On the other hand, publications from the US and the UK predominate in high-impact journals (Preston et al., 2018; Webster & De Boer, 2021). Therefore, it is necessary to explore how to deploy these supports to have a better picture of the cultures, policies, and practices surrounding them in Catalonia, identifying what to prioritize to achieve a more inclusive education system. For these reasons, the present thesis can contribute to fill this reporting gap. Furthermore, with this first approach and its contrast with international research regarding employment and deployment, this doctoral thesis also aims to provide a series of guidelines for both educational policies and practices.

Regarding the guidelines to optimize the support related to TAs, relevant research can already be found relating to their roles, training, planning time with teachers and supervision (Giangreco et al., 2010; Sharma & Salend, 2016). In fact, most of the publications focus on these topics. (Giangreco, 2021; Webster & De Boer, 2021). As for instructors, most research focuses on mentoring programs, and they mostly address themes involving their benefits and impact considering different moderators mainly focused on the program structure itself, or the profiles of instructors and students (Forneris et al., 2015; Haghighat & Knifsend, 2019; Neely & Vaquera, 2017; Van Dam et al., 2018). Despite also addressing some of these themes, as they are a source of essential information to improve policies and practices in our context, this doctoral dissertation focuses on the relationships between support stakeholders. Given that the theory of social settings (Tseng & Seidman, 2007) as well as other relevant investigations that supported the importance of relationships and the collaboration between stakeholders (Ainscow, 2016; Borg & Drange, 2019; Hargreaves, 2019; Reeves et al., 2018), the interactions between TAs and teachers and instructors and teachers need to be studied to optimise school practices. The existing research does not address how TAs and teachers, as well as instructors and teachers, build a successful partnership. This may be another crucial factor that affects support practices.

Current research about TAs and instructors has only highlighted the need for collaboration or a way to foster teamwork and collaborative settings without delving

deeper into relationships and interactions (Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012; Cremin et al., 2005; Devecchi & Rouse, 2010). However, literature on this topic can be found on co-teaching relationships and other types of relationships in the fields of organization and business supporting its relevance (Ekornes, 2015; Hall, 2005; Pratt, 2014; Schutz & Valley, 1992; Slater & Gazeley, 2018). Despite those precedents, the relationships between TAs and teachers as well as the relationships between instructors and teachers should be specifically studied considering that their nature is different; they are different stakeholders, hence different, invisible or unwritten factors may affect their partnership.

Despite only focused on TAs, two qualitative investigations shed some light on this matter. Giangreco et al. (2001) explored the perceptions of different stakeholders regarding their respect, appreciation, and acknowledgement of TAs. Additionally, Biggs et al. (2016) investigated the influences on the quality of professional relationships between TAs and teachers, identifying five themes of influences. Across these themes, aspects such as rapport or shared vision within the “shared influences” theme or hierarchy, and guiding beliefs in the “underlying influences” theme are relevant for this doctoral dissertation. The importance of attitudes can be deduced from both investigations. Given the relevance of this theme and the scarce research on this matter, this doctoral dissertation can contribute to fill this gap. The aim is that through examining the interactions between teachers and non-teaching staff as well as the context in which they occur, this doctoral dissertation can help to expand our understanding on how schools or education systems could foster effective working relationships between the stakeholders that support vulnerable students.

3. Objectives of the doctoral dissertation

The focus of study of this doctoral thesis are the interactions between the teaching and non-teaching staff considering the context where they are located. More specifically, in school settings, the thesis is focused on the interactions between teachers and Special Education Educators (SEEs), Special Education Assistants (SEAs), monitors of support (known as carers), Preschool Education Specialists (PESs) and Social Integration Specialists (SIS). The out-of-school time interactions between teachers and instructors are contextualised in an expanded learning time initiative implemented in most of the schools and high schools of Barcelona.

The main goal of this doctoral dissertation is: “Examining the interactions between teachers and non-teaching staff intervening in the educational support of the student body belonging to vulnerable groups in the Catalan context.” This general objective is specified with the following specific objectives (SO):

- **SO1.** Exploring the deployment of non-teaching support staff in the Catalan educational system
- **SO2.** Analysing the interactions between teachers and TAs with support roles.
- **SO3.** Identifying the components of an expanded learning time initiative aimed at supporting students who are the most at risk of dropping out of school and experiencing academic failure
- **SO4.** Analysing the interactions established between teachers and instructors of an after-school initiative.
- **SO5.** Providing recommendations based on the interactions between the stakeholders that intervene in the educational support of the student body belonging to vulnerable groups

4. Structure of the doctoral dissertation by published works

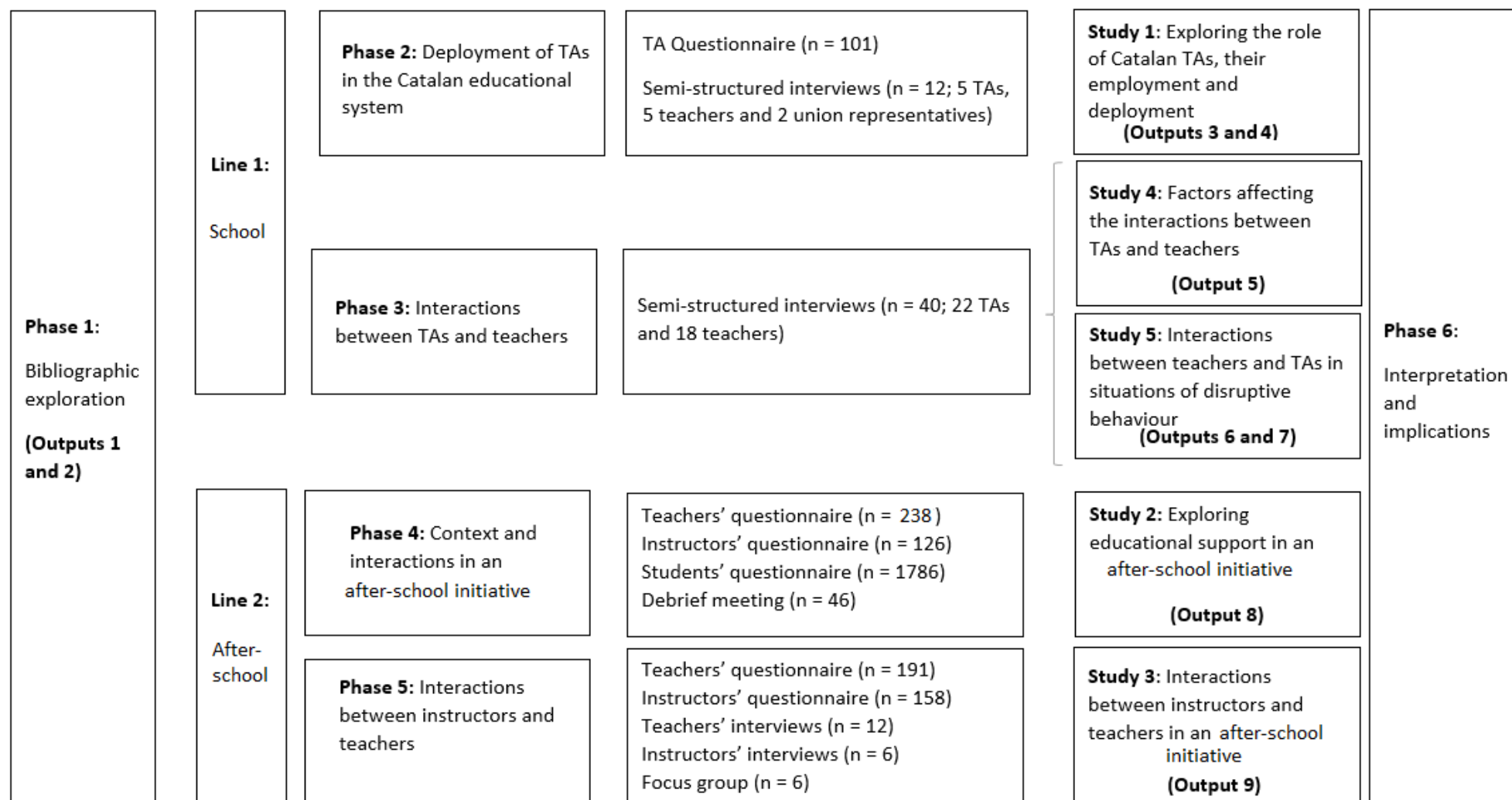


Figure 1. Structure of the doctoral dissertation by published works

This doctoral thesis is written in the format of a compendium of published works. The research was structured in five phases, two main lines of research, five studies and a total of nine outputs. The first and last phases are general, as they comprise the global bibliographical review, the global interpretation of the results and implications for policies and practices. Phases 2 and 3 correspond to “Non-teaching support during school hours” line while phases 4 and 5 correspond to the line “Non-teaching support during afterschool hours”. For this reason, the data collection carried out in schools and high schools is comprised in phases 2 to 5. The information collected in said phases is organised and analysed using five studies listed in chronological order (see figure 1). In the table below the phases, lines and studies are related to the specific objectives of this thesis and the outputs obtained:

Table 1. *Phases, lines, studies and corresponding outputs*

Phase	Line	Study	Goal	Output
1. Bibliographic exploration (2016-2021)	Non-teaching support during school hours and Non-teaching support during afterschool hours.		Examining the interactions between teachers and non-teaching staff intervening in the educational support of the student body belonging to vulnerable groups in the Catalan context.	Jardí, A., & Siles, B. (2019). Estrategias de apoyo como enriquecimiento de las interacciones y de la actividad del aula. In I. Puigdemívol, C. Petreñas, B. Siles & A. Jardí (Eds.) <i>Estrategias de apoyo en la escuela inclusiva: Una visión interactiva y comunitaria</i> . (1st ed., p. 131-168). Graó.
				Sabando, D., & Jardí, A. (2019). La organización del apoyo como tarea compartida. In I. Puigdemívol, C. Petreñas, B. Siles & A. Jardí (Eds.) <i>Estrategias de apoyo en la escuela inclusiva: Una visión interactiva y</i>

				<i>comunitaria</i> . (1st ed., p. 65-98). Graó.
2. Deployment of TAs in the Catalan educational system (2016)	Non-teaching support during school hours	S1. Exploring the role of Catalan TAs, their employment and deployment	SO1. Exploring the deployment of non-teaching support staff in the Catalan educational system	Jardí, A. , Puigdemívol, I., & Petreñas, C. (2021). Teacher assistants’ roles in Catalan classrooms: promoting fair and inclusion-oriented support for all. <i>International Journal of Inclusive Education</i> , 25 (3), 313–328. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1545876
				Jardí, A. , Gil-Fraca, S., Fucho, M., & Burillo, M. (2019). La importancia del rol del personal no docente de apoyo para un sistema educativo inclusivo. <i>Ámbitos de psicopedagogía y orientación</i> , 51 p.103-112. https://doi.org/10.32093/ambits.vi51.1424
3. Interactions between TAs and teachers (2019)		S4. Factors affecting the interactions between TAs and teachers	SO2. Analysing the interactions between teachers and TAs with support roles.	Jardí, A. , Webster, R., Petreñas, C., & Puigdemívol, I., (2022) Building successful partnerships between Teaching Assistants and Teachers: Which interpersonal factors matter? <i>Teaching and Teacher Education</i> , 109. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103523
		S5. Interactions between	SO1. Exploring the deployment of non-teaching support staff in	Jardí, A. , Puigdemívol, I., Petreñas, C., & Sabando, D. (2021) The role of teaching assistants in managing behaviour in inclusive Catalan schools. <i>European Journal</i>

		teachers and TAs in situations of disruptive behaviour	the Catalan educational system SO2. Analysing the interactions between teachers and TAs with support roles.	<i>of Special Needs Education</i> , 36 (2), 265–277. https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2021.1901376
				Jardí, A. , Siles, B., Suñer, A., & Vila, A. (2021) El abordaje de conductas disruptivas desde una perspectiva inclusiva. <i>Ámbitos de psicopedagogía y orientación</i> . [Unpublished manuscript]
4. Context and interactions in an after-school initiative (2017)	Non-teaching support during afterschool hours.	S2. Exploring educational support in an after-school initiative	SO3. Identifying the components of an after-school initiative aimed at supporting students who are the most at risk of dropping out of school and experiencing academic failure SO4. Analysing the interactions established between teachers and instructors of an after-school initiative.	Jardí, A. , Acquah, E., Ianos, M. A., & Puigdemívol, I. (2021). Educational Support in an Expanded Learning Time initiative: Optimizing its components to promote inclusive education. <i>European Educational Research Journal</i> . https://doi.org/10.1177/14749041211002304

5. Interactions between instructors and teachers (2018)		S3. Interactions between instructors and teachers in an after-school initiative	SO4. Analysing the interactions established between teachers and instructors of an after-school initiative.	Jardí, A. , Ianos, M. A., Bartolomé, A. (submitted). Collaboration between school and an afterschool program in Catalonia: A pending issue for inclusive support? [Unpublished manuscript]
6. Global interpretation and implications for policies and practices			SO5. Providing recommendations based on the interactions between the stakeholders that intervene in the educational support of the student body belonging to vulnerable groups	Thesis by published works

4.1. Relationship between phases, lines of investigation, objectives and products

4.1.1. Phase-1: Bibliographic exploration

A literature review was done using the ERIC and WOS databases, looking for the most recent and most referenced and relevant documents. This, to obtain an accurate state-of-the-art regarding the interactions and the educational support within an inclusive perspective. To do so we took as reference co-teaching arrangements and we delved deeper in the support offered by non-teaching stakeholders during school hours and during afterschool hours. The revision of new articles was reiterated until the culmination of this doctoral dissertation. The results of this phase serve to substantiate the other phases, both the respective theoretical frameworks as well as the creation of the instruments. Furthermore, phase 1 is realised through two written book chapters deal with how the maximised educational support through the participation of different support agents should be understood. These chapters are the following and can be consulted in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, respectively, of this thesis:

- **Output 1:** Sabando, D., **Jardí, A.** (2019). La organización del apoyo como tarea compartida. In I. Puigdemívol, C. Petreñas, B. Siles & A. Jardí (Eds.) *Estrategias de apoyo en la escuela inclusiva: Una visión interactiva y comunitaria*. (1st ed., p. 65-98). Graó.
- **Output 2:** **Jardí, A.**, Siles, B. (2019). Estrategias de apoyo como enriquecimiento de las interacciones y de la actividad del aula. In I. Puigdemívol, C. Petreñas, B. Siles & A. Jardí (Eds.) *Estrategias de apoyo en la escuela inclusiva: Una visión interactiva y comunitaria*. (1st ed., p. 131-168). Graó.

Line 1: Non-teaching support during school hours

The current line centres on the stakeholders who offer educational support to students with disabilities and/or difficulties in behavioural self-regulation in mainstream early childhood, primary and secondary education. In the first phase of this line, we do a first exploration of the subject in the Catalan context and in the second we delve deeper into the interactions between non-teaching support staff and teachers.

4.1.2. Phase 2: Deployment of TAs in the Catalan educational system

To reach the objective of “Exploring the deployment of non-teaching support staff in the Catalan educational system” (SO1), in this second phase we created a questionnaire ad

hoc directed to the non-teaching support staff and carried out 12 semi-structured interviews to union representatives of the TAs as well as 5 pairs of teachers and TAs. This first field work is framed within study 1 “Exploring the role of Catalan TAs, their employment and deployment” carried out in 2016. The results of study 1 are summarised in the following papers that can be found in Appendix 3 and Appendix 4 of the current thesis:

- **Output 3:** Jardí, A., Puigdemívol, I., & Petreñas, C. (2021). Teacher assistants’ roles in Catalan classrooms: promoting fair and inclusion-oriented support for all. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 25 (3), 313–328.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1545876>
- **Output 4:** Jardí, A., Gil-Fraca, S., Fucho, M., & Burillo, M. (2019). La importancia del rol del personal no docente de apoyo para un sistema educativo inclusivo. *Ámbitos de psicopedagogía y orientación*, 51, 103-112.
<https://doi.org/10.32093/ambits.vi51.1424>

4.1.3. Phase-3: Interactions between TAs and teachers

In this phase developed in 2019, the last phase of sample collection, we delve deeper into the interactions between TAs and teachers through the use of ad hoc semi-structured interviews. To do this, with the help of an external questionnaire, the 14 Catalan schools with the highest degree of inclusion were selected. Thus addressing, as much as possible, the contextual factor. To identify the degree of inclusion we used the results of the *Questionnaire on the inclusive profile of primary schools in Catalonia*’ (Sabando et al., 2019) and with the collaboration of the *Consell Superior d’Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu de Catalunya* (Catalan Government) schools were contacted. This fieldwork was carried out with the participation of 22 TAs and 18 teachers. The results of this phase are articulated in two studies. In study 4 “Factors affecting the interactions between TAs and teachers”, we delve deep into the interpersonal and external factors that affect partnerships. While, in study 5 “Interactions between teachers and TAs in situations of disruptive behaviour” we investigate the support interactions that both agents carry out when managing disruptive behaviour. The study of this particular casuistry is justified by the relevance of the interaction in the management of these situations that emerges from the discourses of the interviewed stakeholders. Both studies aim to meet the objective of “Analysing the interactions between teachers and TAs with support roles” (S.O.2). Nevertheless, study 5 also contributes to further understanding the roles and deployment

of TAs thus contributing to specific objective 1. The dissemination of study 4 was carried out through output 5 (see Appendix 5), and that of study 5 through output 6 and 7 (available on Appendices 6 and 7 respectively):

- **Output 5. Jardí, A., Webster, R., Petreñas, C., & Puigdemívol, I., (2022)**
Building successful partnerships between Teaching Assistants and Teachers: Which interpersonal factors matter? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 109.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103523>
- **Output 6. Jardí, A., Puigdemívol, I., & Petreñas, C., Sabando, D. (2021)** The role of teaching assistants in managing behaviour in inclusive Catalan schools. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 36(2), 265–277.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2021.1901376>
- **Output 7. Jardí, A., Siles, B., Suñer, A., & Vila, A. (2021)** El abordaje de conductas disruptivas desde una perspectiva inclusiva. *Ámbitos de psicopedagogía y orientación*, 55. [Unpublished manuscript]

Line 2: Non-teaching support during afterschool hours

In this second line we consider those stakeholders who support students at risk of school failure during after-school time. Our research focuses on a single support initiative because it is one of the most used with the Catalan student body. It is the Èxit program of the Barcelona Education Consortium (the education board), carried out in the city of Barcelona. This line is articulated through two phases that correspond to two complementing consecutive studies with the aim of, firstly, learning how the different components of the program interact (the context), to later be able to delve deeper into the interaction between instructors and teachers.

4.1.4. Phase-4: Context and interactions in an after-school initiative

Phase 4 was carried out during 2017, as the second field work, and materialises with *study 2* “Exploring educational support in an after-school initiative” that meets the specific objective “Identifying the components of an after-school initiative aimed at supporting students who are the most at risk of dropping out of school and experiencing academic failure” (S.O.3). In this phase we analyse the educational support given by non-expert professionals during afterschool hours in a program by the Barcelona Education

Consortium (the education board). In this first approach, a matrix of secondary data from the student body (n = 1786) participating in the program is analysed and two ad hoc questionnaires are applied. One addressed to the instructors (n = 126) and, the other, to the teachers (n = 238) participating in the program. We also take into account the conclusions reached in the closing meetings of all the teams (n = 43). Thus, we identify the components of this initiative affecting support. This is shown in the following output which can be found in Appendix 8 of this doctoral dissertation:

- **Output 8: Jardí, A., Acquah, E., Ianos, M. A., & Puigdemívol, I. (2021).** Educational Support in an Expanded Learning Time initiative: Optimizing its components to promote inclusive education. *European Educational Research Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14749041211002304>

4.1.5. Phase-5: Interactions between instructors and teachers

In this last phase that took place in 2018 (third data collection phase) **study 3** “Interactions between instructors and teachers in an after-school initiative” is developed. To further research interaction, one of the components revealed in the previous phase, two ad hoc questionnaires more focused on interaction aimed at the instructors (n = 158) and teachers (n = 191) were applied. On the other hand, six groups from different primary and secondary schools were selected, taking into account the age variety of the students, the instructors’ assessment by their coordinators and the degree of complexity¹ of each school. Interviews were carried out with the instructors (n = 6) and teachers (n = 12) and focus groups (n = 6) with the students. This study aims to meet the objective “Analysing the interactions established between teachers and instructors of an after-school initiative” and its results are found in output 9, available in Appendix 9:

- **Output 9: Jardí, A., Ianos, M. A., Bartolomé, A. (submitted)** Collaboration between school and an afterschool program in Catalonia: A pending issue for inclusive support? [Unpublished manuscript]

4.1.6. Phase-6: Global interpretation and implications for policies and practices

By triangulating the results of the two lines of research, the results were interpreted in order to draw overall conclusions. These specify how teachers and support agents are

¹A status established by the Department of Education according to various indicators related to socioeconomic data. High complexity schools should have a lower student-to-teacher ratio, faster teacher replacement, preferential access to student grants and larger budgets.

influenced during school hours and after-school time by their interactions, and which are the best ones to offer a better educational support to the students. This thesis culminates in the development of a series of recommendations to promote good support practices based on interaction.

5. Methods

Taking into account that the main objective of this investigation is aimed at delving deeper into the interaction between teachers and non-teaching staff (TAs and instructors), it is relevant that the epistemological approach relies as much as possible on the views of their own situation. Therefore, we position ourselves within the socio-constructionist paradigm in which the subjective meanings of stakeholders' situations are influenced by their interaction with others. In this paradigm, as stated by Ladner (2019):

Social rules are not fixed, but subject to change and reinterpretation. The goal of constructivist ontology is to understand the process by which people understand their social reality. [...] In constructivist social science, reality is a layer of social structures like race, gender, sexual orientation, economic class, or religion (p.18).

From this paradigm's point of view, social reality is constructed based on everyday interpretations humans make in their daily life and their knowledge emerges from these interpretations. We sought to understand TA-teacher interactions and instructor-teacher interactions understanding their context and background. Furthermore, the intention of this research was to capture the reality of the stakeholders in an ethical manner. This point is drawn from the transformative paradigm whose fundamental principles are the enhancement of social justice, the furtherance of human rights, and the respect for cultural norms (Mertens, 2010, p.470). This stance is relevant as the stakeholders analysed may be suffering the consequences of the inequity derived from the power structures that have traditionally understood the school in a hierarchical way. At the same time, the students they are supposed to support (students with disabilities, behaviour and learning difficulties, and other students who are most at risk of dropping out of school and experiencing academic failure) may be experiencing discrimination and/or inequalities of any kind.

Despite the theories of the present dissertation having emerged from the stakeholders' voices, we did not start from scratch. We based our investigation on preliminary literature on the matter and, later, we modified or complemented it with the results of our analysis, thus using an inductive interpretive approach (Creswell, 2014). Considering the transformative paradigm in which our research should be positioned, in this back-and-forth dialogue of prior theories, we sought to incorporate the emancipatory theory lens (Mertens, 2009) as prior research may be imbued of a culture that contributes to perpetuate the barriers that especially affect the most vulnerable groups.

As to the general research approach we chose mixed methods, incorporating elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The combination and integration of the two forms of data seeks to provide a more complete understanding of the experiences studied. As pointed out by Johnson et al., (2007, p. 129), the mixed methods approach “recognizes the importance of traditional quantitative and qualitative research but also offers a powerful third paradigm choice that often will provide the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results”.

Regarding the mixed methods model, the design of this thesis is known as multiphase mixed methods (Creswell, 2014). This is an advanced mixed methods design in which three mixed methods projects and a qualitative one that answered a common goal were conducted (see figure 2). Furthermore, as they are organised in two lines, and each line has two projects, they follow an exploratory sequential mixed method design (Creswell, 2014). Thus, the qualitative data of phases 3 and 5 help explain in more detail the initial quantitative results of phases 2 and 4, respectively.

As regards research designs, in rough outlines, in quantitative data sets we opted for nonexperimental forms of research such as descriptive and correlational designs (see phases 2, 4 and 5). Descriptive designs provided numeric trends of the samples studied, allowing the quantification of experiences and their comparison. Whereas correlational designs showed the relationship among variables. Finally, as in qualitative data the same phenomenon from different points of view was described and we sought to capture it as described by the participants themselves (teachers, instructors, teaching assistants, students and union representatives), we conducted a phenomenological research design in phases 2, 3 and 4. In summary, this design made it possible to obtain different but complementary types of data on the same phenomenon (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

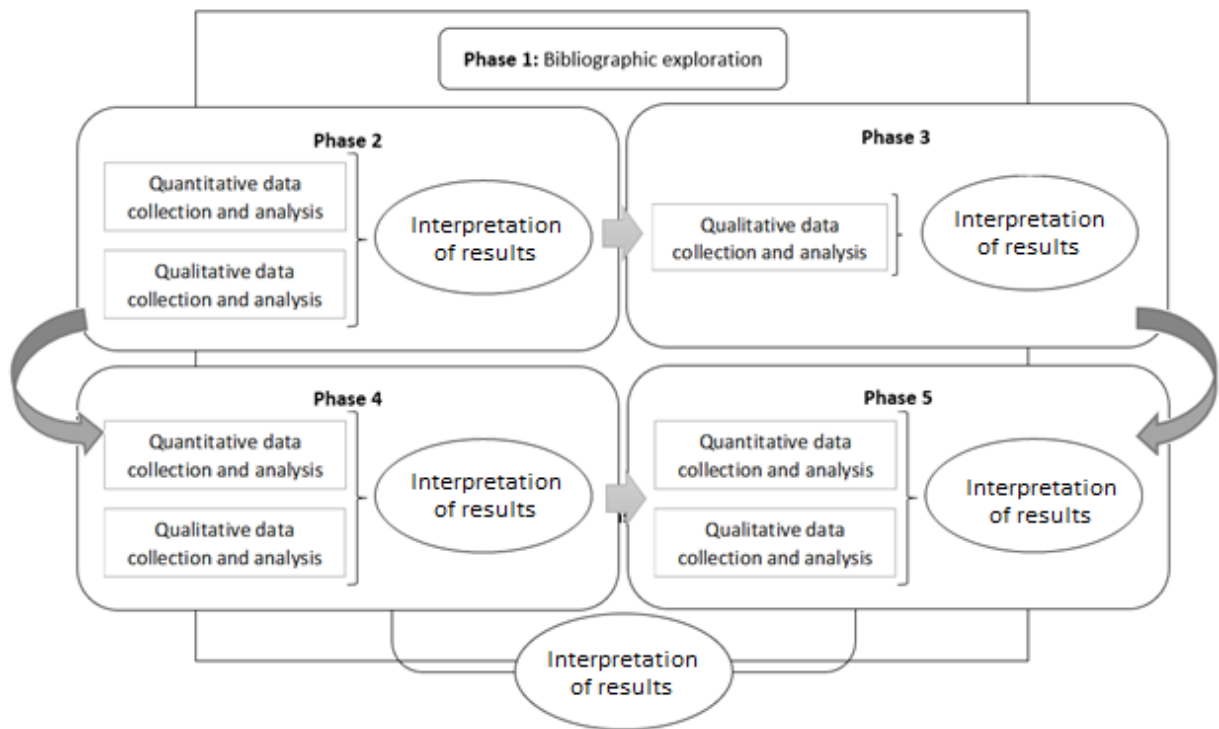


Figure 2. *Research design*

In the five subsections below the methodological particularities of each phase are presented. We organised the subsections that contained fieldwork (phases 2 to 5) following the recommended structure of articles: participants, instruments, procedure, and data analysis. For phase 1 (bibliographic exploration) and phase 6 we only describe the procedures followed as these phases complement or were complemented by the other phases.

5.1. Phase 1: Bibliographic exploration

In this phase neither structured processes to carry out a metanalysis, metasynthesis, nor a systematic review, were followed as this was not the object itself. As we follow an inductive interpretive approach (Creswell, 2014), this phase's objective is to substantiate theoretically the “Non-teaching support during school hours” and the “Non-teaching support during afterschool hours” lines so as to establish a line of dialogue with it from the derived results. This phase is also relevant for the creation of instruments. Articles for review were identified by searching four databases (Web of Science, Scopus, Erich and Psycinfo). These databases were selected because they are the main databases in these fields of research that include education, psychology, pedagogy, and social sciences knowledge. We also included chapters and non-indexed but relevant books on the matter.

For the “Non-teaching support during school hours” line the most used keywords were the following: teaching assistants, teacher assistants, paraprofessionals, paraeducators, teacher aides, collaboration, teamwork, partnership, interactions, educational support, inclusive education, behaviour management and co-teaching. As to the “Non-teaching support during afterschool hours” line, the keywords used to find the most relevant research were the following: after-school programs, extracurricular activities, expanded learning time, mentor, educational support, inclusive education, achievement gap, interactions, collaboration, communication, teamwork.

Line 1: Non-teaching support during school hours

5.2. Phase 2: Deployment of TAs in the Catalan educational system

5.2.1. *Participants*

The average age of the questionnaire respondents ($n = 101$) was 39 years old (ranged from 22 to 63; $SD = 10.8$) and the majority were female (88%). Most of them were hired as carers ($n = 94$), there were only 5 SEEs and a SEA in our sample. They had an average of 6.3 ($SD = 3.9$) years of classroom experience, and the same TA could work in several classrooms and stages supporting different students. For this reason, 44 TAs were counted twice or three times in the following description by stages (e.g., a TA could be hired half-time in primary education and half-time in secondary education). Thus, more than half ($n = 52$) of the respondents were working in preschool (3–6 years old), 72 out of 101 in primary school (6–12 years old) and 20 in secondary school (12–16 years old). In fact, it is unusual to find TAs supporting a single student full-time. They usually work in more than one classroom, level and educational stage during the week. Almost 90% were working in state schools located in rural and urban areas in Catalonia.

As for their initial training when they got the job, only one Carer reported not having finished basic school but, 23 stated having only this basic education level. Contrasting their academic training when they became TAs and the qualifications required in each position, many of them were overqualified: 28% had an education-related degree, 6% had a non-education-related degree and 28% had finished the higher level of vocational education — post-secondary non-tertiary education level, ISCED-4 (UNESCO 2014). Finally, 15% of TAs began with a Middle Grade Training Cycle.

Table 2. *Data collection techniques, participants and codification.*

Technic	Profile of participants	Codes
Questionnaire	TAs (n = 101) (Carers n = 94, SEE n = 6, SEA n = 1)	Q1, Q2, [...], Q101
Semi-structured interviews	TAs (n = 5) Teachers (n = 5) Special Education Educators' and Assistants' union representative (n=1) Carers' union representative (n=1)	CS1, CS2, CS3, CP1, and ES4 TS1, TS2, TS3, TP1 and TS4. EAU CU

Five pairs (n = 10) of TAs and teachers that were working together were interviewed to contrast realities and points of view. The school inclusion criteria were the following: schools from different context, diverse teaching methodology and/or hiring differences (see Table 3). In addition, two union representatives were also interviewed to have a whole vision of the TAs' reality. One of the union representatives was responsible for those TAs who were hired and managed by the administration, and the other, was responsible for those who were hired and managed by a subcontracted company. The respondents provided information about TAs' duties, the role they are performing, general beliefs and mutual expectations.

Table 3. *Demographics*

	Location	Type of school	Respondents
School-1	Wealthy neighbourhood, Barcelona	Traditional-Methodologies- Private Secondary and Primary School	CP1 and TP1
School-2	Low-income neighbourhood, Barcelona	Active-Methodologies- State- Primary School	CS1 and TS1
School-3	Middle-class area, Barcelona	Traditional-Methodologies- State- Primary School	CS2 and TS2
School-4	Surrounding area of Barcelona	High Complexity Primary School	CS3 and TS3

School-5	Wealthy neighbourhood, Barcelona	Traditional-Methodologies- State Secondary and Primary School	ES4 and TS4

5.2.2. *Instruments*

After reviewing the literature for key topics and issues (e.g. Giangreco et al., 2010; Sharma & Salend, 2016), a questionnaire was created (see Appendix 12). The first version of the questionnaire was enriched and validated by three experts and a pilot study was then conducted. Based on analysing the pilot, a final questionnaire was created containing three sections: (a) the TAs demographics and their future prospects, (b) job setting and training and (c) contractual and carried out tasks, general job description and conditions. It had opened and closed questions; however, space was provided in some closed questions to allow respondents to specify their own situation. In the demographic section, respondents were asked to specify which kind of TA they were, the training they had when they were hired, years of experience, and future prospects. In the second section, TAs were asked to report information about their school (such as school funding and educational stage).

The 29 job-related tasks drawn from the OSOMD were included in the questionnaire. The OSOMD is an annual document written by the Department of Education of Catalonia (Catalonia, 2015b) that summarizes how schools have to be organized and managed including, among other issues, the duties of each stakeholder. The 29 tasks were selected according to the TA role shown in the literature and experiences previously reported by some TAs and union representatives. For this reason, we also included some tasks from other stakeholders such as teachers, Preschool Education Specialists (PES) or Social Integration Specialists (SIS). These 29 tasks were categorised into four groups: carrying out, elaboration, cooperation and assessment. Moreover, this section also had open questions to specify how they worked daily (i.e., space where they worked, student's diagnostic, coordination, supervision, work conditions, satisfaction).

As to the qualitative instruments, three interview guides were designed to obtain more specific information from the TAs, teachers and union representatives. TAs were asked about the role they perform; their expectations; their interaction with teachers and students; the consequences of this interaction; feelings; difficulties; needs; and the

highlights of their job. Teachers were asked to answer similar questions about the TAs with whom they worked. Finally, the union representatives were interviewed about their own role and the roles and needs of TAs. Instruments related to this phase can be found in Appendix 12.

5.2.3. Procedure

A convergent parallel mixed methods research design was conducted collecting quantitative and qualitative data at the same time and, afterwards, both data sets were analysed separately. The integration of information was in the interpretation part of this phase.

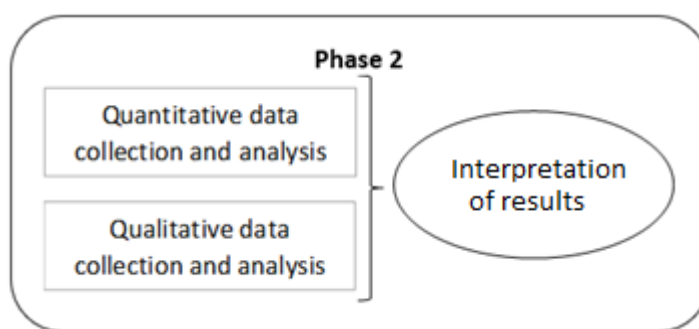


Figure 3. Research design phase 2

As to the quantitative data collection, there were two main ways of distribution: online and hand delivered. 1) The main Union of Carers (Comissions Obreres) distributed via e-mail the survey to its network using the free tool Google Forms. 2) Three psychologists from an EAP (a public educational service that supports and advices different primary and secondary schools from an educational area) hand-delivered the questionnaires in their schools. A few days later, the researcher picked up the autonomously filled-out forms from these psychologists. Of these, 15 were returned. Completion time for the questionnaire was estimated to be between 15 and 20 min.

The inclusion criteria to select the schools for the interviews was to ensure a sample as heterogeneous as possible in regard to the types of TAs (Carers, Special Education Assistants and Special Education Educators), the educational stage and school methodologies. One TA per school was selected and then, the teachers that they spend more time with were invited to participate. Thus, there were 10 semi-structured interviews with TAs and teachers and 2 more semi-structured interviews with union representatives. One union represented the carers (TAs from an external company) and the other the SEEs and the SEAs (Department of Education, TAs). Interviews ranged in duration from 20 to 60 min, they were recorded with permission from the participants and transcribed for

analysis. Rigour and validity in the data collection and findings were ensured following the ethical aspects presented by the European Commission (2013). These ethical aspects include informing the participants of the research goals and their right to know the results, ensuring their confidentiality and the right to withdraw their consent at any stage of the research. These ethical aspects were explained on the headings of each questionnaire and before beginning the interviews. In addition, those participants that were interviewed signed an informed consent (see Appendix 11).

5.2.4. Data analysis

The data from the questionnaires was analysed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Descriptive statistics of those who participated in the questionnaire were analysed. The questionnaire's closed questions were quantified, rank-ordered and related using Microsoft excel software (2013). The research variables considered were the following: the different kinds of TAs, their tasks, their responsibilities, and the proximity between student and TA. Additionally, a thematic analysis of the information obtained from the open questions and the transcribed interviews was conducted using the software NVivo 11 plus. The categories emerged from the data but also from the literature review and the research variables considered in the qualitative part. As to the coding scheme, the researchers met and discussed their disagreements to reach a consensus on each set of coded text, obtaining internal validity. Once a shared understanding of the categories, subcategories and their meaning was ensured, all interviews and open answers were analysed. The categories, subcategories and definitions are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *Categories, subcategories, and definitions of phase 2.*

Category	Subcategory	Definition
Role	Tasks	Includes: tasks carried out, scheduling and role performed by each paraprofessional.
	Sense of responsibility	Describes those responsibilities that TAs consider they must assume.
Interaction	Proximity	Describes the relationship and interdependency between adults, students with SEN and their peers. Also includes the physical allocation of the stakeholders.

Mutual representations		Describes the mutual representations that affect the interaction between the agents, derived from the recognition, appreciation, and respect between adults.
Relational-affective bond		Describes the type of interpersonal relationship based on the generated trust and understanding between adults.
Coordination		Describes or refers to the aspects related with teamwork, formal and informal exchanges, the possibility of agreeing on criteria and follow up.
Supervision		Describes or refers to the aspects related to who accompanies the support staff and the type of help they need.
Relationship with the students		Describes or refers to the relationship that the adults have with the specific student, their connection, if they are the referent and the relationship they have with the rest of the students.
Preparedness	Training and experience	Describes or refers to the aspects related to the initial or sustained training, the matching of qualifications to the task and the professional experience
Conditions	Employment and deployment	Describes all those administrative aspects like employment status, time distribution, salary, rights, etc.

The trustworthiness of the quantitative and qualitative data was established using three merging techniques (Brantlinger et al. 2005; Trainor and Graue 2014): (1) data triangulation, studying evidence from varied data sources; (2) methodological triangulation, using multiple methods to study our problem and (3) stakeholder triangulation, providing an insight into their situation through different angles and perspectives.

5.3. Phase 3: Interactions between TAs and teachers

The data collected in this phase was used for study 4 “Factors affecting the interactions between TAs and teachers” and study 5 “Interactions between teachers and TAs in situations of disruptive behaviour” the results of which were divided into three articles.

As the three articles started from the same fieldwork, the following section describing the participants, instruments, and data collection procedures are the same for all three. However, the data analysis section is more generic since in each article some data analysis particularities were specified.

5.3.1. Participants

The study participants were public school teachers and TAs from 14 schools recruited considering their school's inclusive profile. This profile was obtained through *'The Questionnaire on the inclusive profile of primary schools in Catalonia'* (Sabando et al., 2019) composed of six dimensions: school organization, inclusive school climate, classroom organization, educational support, community involvement and lifelong learning (see procedures subsection for further information on the school inclusion criteria and procedures).

From the 615 urban Catalan schools that participated, we selected the 14 that obtained the highest rates of inclusion considering that each dimension was ranked into three levels of consolidation of inclusive practices (high, medium, or low). Of those, 10 schools had all six dimensions at the highest level, while 4 had the lifelong learning at the second level. Furthermore, within the selected schools the three levels of school complexity were included, thus ensuring the representation of schools from different socioeconomic contexts, as shown in table 5.

Table 5. School description and participant distribution

School	Complexity level	Dimensions at the highest level of inclusion	Participants
1	High	5	TA14, TA1, T1 & T2
2	Medium	6	TA15, TA2, T3 & T4
3	Medium	5	TA3, TA16, TA17, T5 & T6
4	High	6	TA18, TA4 & T7
5	Medium	6	TA5, TA19 & T8
6	High	6	TA6 & T9
7	High	5	TA7, TA8, TA20, T10 & T11
8	Medium	6	TA9 & T12

9	High	6	TA10 & T13
10	Low	6	TA11 & T14
11	Medium	6	TA12 & T15
12	Medium	6	TA21 & T16
13	Low	6	TA13 & T17
14	Medium	5	TA22 & T18

A total of 22 TAs and 18 form teachers from these public urban Catalan early childhood and primary schools participated in the investigation. Among the TAs, 90.9% were female ($M = 42$, $SD = 9.8$, ranging from 22 to 58 years old). The TAs had work experience ranging from 1 to 19 years ($M = 9.81$, $SD = 6.04$). As regards to their professional profile, 12 were hired by subcontracted companies while 10 were directly hired by the Department of Education. The TAs were generally supporting 6 students on average on a one-on-one basis and in different classrooms. As for the teachers, 100% were female aged 28 to 65 years old ($M = 40.3$, $SD = 13.4$). Their working experience ranged from 4 to 26 years ($M = 13.43$, $SD = 7.18$).

5.3.2. Instruments

Forty semi-structured interviews with TAs and teachers were conducted. The interview guide was designed ad hoc based on four main topics that emerged from prior research (e.g., Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012; Giangreco et al., 2010; Pratt, 2014; Schutz & Valley, 1992): 1) roles, 2) communication, 3) interpersonal interaction and 4) professional identity (see Appendix 14). The content of this guide was validated through a focus group with university teachers ($n = 2$) and teachers from inclusive schools ($n = 6$). Each interview lasted an average of 43.5 minutes.

5.3.3. Procedure

To provide an insight into the interactions between TAs and teachers, shedding light on how partnerships are built and the key interpersonal and external factors that affect this interaction, a qualitative

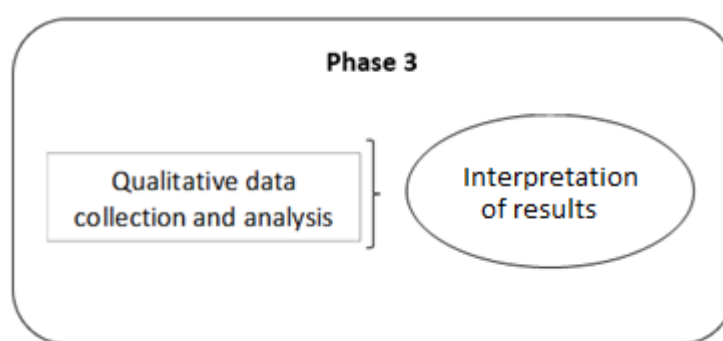


Figure 4. Research design phase 3

phenomenological study was conducted. The project developed in this phase is the only one with purely qualitative procedures, however it must be framed within the global multiphase mixed methods (Creswell, 2014) research designed for this doctoral dissertation.

The *Consell Superior d'Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu de Catalunya* (Catalan Government) authorised the research and facilitated the identification of the most inclusive schools chosen through “*The Questionnaire on the inclusive profile of primary schools in Catalonia*” (Sabando et al., 2019). This questionnaire provided the inclusive profile of 615 urban Catalan schools, which was 54,6% of the population. This inclusive profile was defined according to the inclusion level (low, medium or high) obtained in the following six dimensions:

Table 6. *Dimensions of the “Questionnaire on the inclusive profile of primary schools in Catalonia”*

Dimension	Description
School organization	Organisational characteristics and inclusive functioning of the school (e.g., student distribution and barriers for inclusion)
Inclusive school climate	Measures to foster collaboration, coexistence and respect between stakeholders (e.g., welcome plan for students and professionals, measures to ensure a good coexistence and against bullying, measures to reduce absenteeism)
Classroom organization	Student distribution, classroom arrangements and adult participation within classrooms (e.g., grouping criteria and frequency of two adults in classrooms)
Educational support	Description of how, who, where and when the support is provided (e.g., role of special education teachers and participation of different stakeholders in support decisions)
Community involvement	Kind and level of participation of different stakeholders (e.g., volunteering composition and levels of family participation)

Lifelong learning	Instances of training and professional reflexion (e.g., spaces for reflexion and percentage of teachers involved in trainings)

Note: Adapted of Sabando et al. (2019).

The 14 schools with the highest rates of inclusion were selected to ensure that the selected schools were promoting, to a greater extent, inclusive education. This criterion to include schools helped to better control school factors (inclusive policies and practices) that might affect the interactions between TAs and teachers. The sample also included schools from different regions of Catalonia and from different socioeconomic contexts. Once the *Consell Superior d'Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu de Catalunya* (Catalan Government) identified the schools, we asked the head teachers for research permission, informing them about the project, the research goals and the confidentiality of both the school and participants, the rights to withdraw their consent at any point in the investigation and to know the results of said investigation (European Commission, 2013). The 14 head teachers showed an interest in participating and contacted their TAs, who agreed to participate. TAs were asked to select the teacher with whom they worked best; some TAs of the schools that had more than one TA chose the same teacher. Interviews were scheduled according to the stakeholders' availability and were conducted in their schools. Each participant was informed again about the research and the ethical aspects and signed an informed consent (see Appendix 13). Interviews were individual and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcriptions were sent to each interviewed stakeholder to guarantee that their words correctly represented their perspective. Only comments on accurate vocabulary or expressions were returned. Nobody asked to change content or withdrew their consent to participate in this investigation.

5.3.4. Data analysis

After transcribing all the interviews, we conducted a preliminary content analysis of 10 interviews to gain an overview of the data. This resulted in a first coding scheme with the main themes, categories, and sub-categories. The codification process was inductive to capture the meaning provided by the participants from our particular context. Prior research items such as openness, significance, inclusion, likability (Schutz & Valley, 1992) or rapport, hierarchy and shared challenges (Biggs et al., 2016) had their own meaning which was not fully consistent with the participants' voices. Afterwards, the 40

interviews were analysed with the Nvivo 11 pro software enriching the coding scheme with the emerging sub-categories and, once code and meaning saturation were reached (Hernández et al., 2006) the scheme was presented to the team. Researchers agreed on the meaning of each category and sub-category (see table 7).

Table 7. *Categories and sub-categories of phase 3.*

Theme	Category	Sub-category
Interpersonal factors	Feeling at ease	Affinity
		Open communication
		Sense of belonging to a classroom-group
		Professional compatibility
		Autonomy
		Feeling Welcome
	Trust	Fulfilment of professional expectations
		Open communication
		Working as a team
		Inherent trust
External factors	Respect and Value	Role attributed
		Interpersonal treatment
	Building relationship	
	Hierarchy	
	Teamwork	

	Communication availability	
	Sense of belonging to a school	
	Employment conditions	
Role	On-task roles	
	Behaviour management	Roles in behaviour management
		Coordination in behaviour management
		Behaviour management procedures

Finally, a second researcher analysed each sub-category in the research data set and discussed the remaining differences until consensus was reached. The main analysis strategy was the identification of the reciprocity of concepts among the multiple perspectives (Larkin et al., 2019). However, we also considered less generalized concepts to capture more details and individualities.

Line 2: Non-teaching support during afterschool hours

5.4. Phase 4: Context and interactions in an after-school initiative

5.4.1. Participants

The three stakeholders involved in the after-school initiative analysed (teachers, instructors, and students) were included in the present study. A total of 1786 students from 5th grade of primary education to 4th grade of secondary education (10-16-year-olds) answered the questionnaire; 65.62% of them were in secondary school. They encompass 74.63% of the total 2393 registered students, which means a maximum sampling error of 1.169%, with a confidence level of 95%. Confidence intervals were calculated with Macorr©-online for all groups. Regarding nationalities, 63.8% of the participants self-reported as being Spanish, 21.5% South or Central American and 8% Asian. There is an over-representation of immigrant students in the after-school program with respect to

Barcelona's student population, where 12,14% is a foreign national (Department-of-Education, 2017).

As to the instructors, 126 participated in this study. Many instructors were studying or had completed education-related studies at the university (57.94%); however, they were not experienced instructors as 51.59% had never been responsible for student groups.

The instructors provided information on 176 after-school support groups which represents 63.08% of the groups participating in the project (50 instructors handled two groups). The margin of error of the sample is 4.5 with a confidence level of 95%. Among the participating groups, 66 belonged to primary education and 110 to secondary education. Groups were organized mainly according to academic year (52.84%), except for the inter-level groups of primary education (5th and 6th grade) and 3rd and 4th grade of secondary.

The study also counted with the participation of 238 teachers, of which 81.93% (n=195) were working at secondary schools (consistent with teacher proportion on this stage of the program). This sample supposed 28.95% of the 822 total of teachers of the program, obtaining a maximum sampling error of 5.36%, with a confidence level of 95%.

Finally, the 43 teams participated in the debrief meeting as to which components of the program worked well and which ones should be improved. These teams are formed by one coordinator and as many instructors as support groups the team had. The program was deployed in 43 high schools and the students of the surrounding 105 primary schools were also supported in these high schools, forming the 43 teams. In these teams, instructors were supervised by coordinators and by more general coordinators who oversaw multiple teams grouped by zones, forming a pyramidal organization.

5.4.2. Instruments

Data collection was done through four instruments: three questionnaires addressed at the students, instructors and teachers and the reports of the debrief meeting of each after-school team. For the students, we utilized a questionnaire developed by the Barcelona Education Consortium (the education board) and given out annually to assess this after-school program. The questionnaire consisted of 54 close-ended questions (13 Likert scales with 4 response options) and 22 open-ended questions organized into three blocks: a) demographic data b) habits and expectations and c) support assessment. For this study, we only focused on the questions regarding the support (9 Likert scales, for example,

'How much do you think you have used this educational support?' and 3 open-ended questions such as *'Value the support received in the program and explain why'*). Cronbach's alpha showed an internal consistency of 0.767 for the 12 items.

The questionnaires for the teachers and instructors were developed by the researchers for this study, based on previous investigations about after-school program quality and support components (e.g., Durlak et al., 2010; Pierce, et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2010). Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom's (2010) synthesis of different assessment tools used in the field also guided the design of both questionnaires. From this synthesis, the components considered were routine and program structure, environment, engagement, social or behavioural norms and relationships between adults and students. Content validation was carried out by 3 experts in the field, the 7 head coordinators and the person responsible for the after-school program. All their comments regarding wording, answer choices and length were considered. They were also asked about the instrument's content in terms of its relationship with their everyday reality. The final instructor questionnaire was 35 close-ended questions — 23 Likert scales (0-10), example, *"The program has been a place where the students have been able to work"* and 12 multiple choice questions *"What support would you have needed to improve your educational support practices?"* and 3 open-ended questions. All the scales showed internal consistency (*support deployment*: $\alpha = 0.895$, *teamwork*: $\alpha = 0.815$, *communication*: $\alpha = 0.812$, *institutional procedures*: $\alpha = 0.681$ and *support effects*: $\alpha = 0.768$). All the instruments related to this phase can be found in Appendix 16.

The final questionnaire for the teachers was comprised of 29 closed-ended questions — 25 Likert scales (0-10), example, *"Value how the relationship between your students and the instructors has worked"* and 4 multiple choice questions — and 4 open-ended questions, example, *'Among everything done with the students within this program, what has been the most beneficial aspect for your students?'* The internal consistency of each dimension was calculated with Cronbach's α : *support deployment* ($\alpha=0.869$), *communication* ($\alpha=0.905$), *institutional procedures* ($\alpha=0.643$) and *support effects* ($\alpha=0.894$).

In addition to the three questionnaires, the debrief meeting reports of each after-school team were a source of qualitative data. These documents consisted of a template in table

format where each team gathered the aspects they wanted to maintain, and those that should change or improve.

5.4.3. Procedure

A convergent mixed-methods research design was conducted to investigate how the different stakeholders involved (teachers, instructors, and students) perceived the support provided, what aspects worked well and in what ways they did so. This means

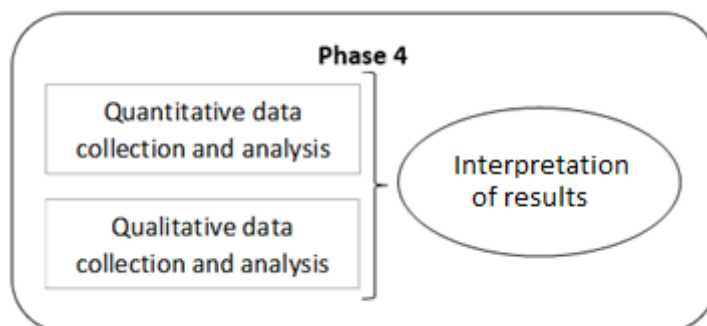


Figure 5. Research design phase 4

that the questionnaires were collected at the same time that the debrief meeting reports, then quantitative and qualitative data were separately analysed and, finally, they were merged for their interpretation (see figure 5).

First, the research design and goals of the second line of this doctoral dissertation were presented to the heads of the Exit program by the Barcelona Education Consortium (the education board). They authorised the research, agreed to participate in the validation process and facilitated the online distribution of the two new questionnaires (for the teachers and instructors). They also agreed to share the matrix of the student questionnaire they annually use. The participation in this study was voluntary and participants were promised anonymity and confidentiality. The research goals as well as the ethical guidelines published by the European Commission (2013) were explained and were agreed to by the participants in the first screen of the survey before completing the questionnaires (see Appendix 15).

The student questionnaire was administered online by the coordinators and was completed at the high schools during one of the final support sessions. As to the questionnaire for the instructors, head coordinators forwarded an invitational e-mail from the researcher to all their instructors. This e-mail included a link to the online survey questionnaire hosted by Google Forms. Instructors could choose to voluntarily participate via agreeing or not with the ethical consent in the first screen of the survey or simply deleting the invitational e-mail. The head coordinators were asked to forward a reminder

e-mail to the instructors approximately three weeks after the initial invitation e-mail was sent. The questionnaire for the teachers was distributed on paper and collected during the debrief meeting by the coordinators. Completion time for all questionnaires was between 15 to 30 minutes. Finally, the reports of the debrief meeting were written by each team (instructors and coordinator) after the corresponding debate. They wrote these conclusions in a one-page table, but extra space was provided when needed. The person responsible for the program collected all the debrief meeting reports and provided a copy of them to the researcher.

5.4.4. Data analysis

The quantitative data was analysed with the software SPSS v. 24, which was used to compute descriptive statistics, Mann-Whitney U Tests and Spearman correlations. The Nvivo 11 Pro program was used for the inductive thematic analysis of the open-ended questions of the questionnaires and the debrief meeting reports. After having analysed 50% of the dataset, the first author proposed a coding scheme with categories and subcategories. The team discussed their disagreements until reaching consensus on each set of coded text, obtaining internal validity. This ensured a shared understanding of the categories, subcategories, and their meaning. The categories that emerged were consistent with the dimensions from the quantitative analysis. These categories and subcategories are presented in the following table:

Table 8. *Categories and sub-categories from the instructor, teacher and student' questionnaires and debrief meeting reports.*

Categories	Subcategories
(1) On-site support management and operation: organization climate and practices	Holistic support and mentoring Reinforcement and follow-up time Study and organization habits Student-instructor interaction Student-student interaction Material and equipment Organization and environment Activities Reinforcement strategies

(2) Structural organization and operation policies	Staff distribution
	Student selection
	Ongoing training
	Documentation
	Schedule and working conditions
	Instructor profile
(3) Team interaction	Team-team
	Team-teachers
	Team-family
(4) Perceived learning	Changes in students
	Instructors' learning

In summary, to achieve rigor and a better understanding of the support components three kinds of triangulation were applied: (1) methodological triangulation, using quantitative and qualitative methods; (2) data triangulation, studying pieces of evidence from four data sources; (3) and stakeholder triangulation, providing insight from their own perspective (Trainor & Graue, 2014).

5.5. Phase 5: Interactions between instructors and teachers

5.5.1. *Participants*

The three stakeholders involved in this after-school initiative were included in the present study (teachers, instructors, and students). However, we specifically focused on teachers and instructors through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, as their interactions are the object of the present research. Nonetheless, the point of view of students regarding teacher-instructor collaboration was gathered conducting six focus groups.

A total of 191 teachers (73.8% female, $M = 43.61$, $SD = 9.04$) responded the questionnaire; 41.6% of them were primary education form teachers (5th and 6th grade) while the others were form teachers of secondary education (1st to 4th grade). Most teachers (62.3%) had prior experience with the studied after-school initiative, but only a few of them (25.9%) kept working with the same instructor from the previous year. A total of 158 instructors answered the questionnaire (66.5% female, $M = 21.66$, $SD = 2.59$)

who provided information on a total of 204 support groups. In this after-school initiative, instructors should be university students under 30 years old. For most instructors (62.7%) this was their first year in the initiative, only 17.7% had three or more years of experience as instructors.

A total of six case studies composed the qualitative part. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 6 instructors (33.3% female, $M = 22.67$, $SD = 2.42$) and 12 teachers (91.7% female, $M = 46$, $SD = 14.64$) (see table 9). A total of 57 students (11-16 years old) participated in 6 focus groups. To include these six cases, maximum heterogeneity among them was sought considering the level of complexity of the school, the neighbourhood, the school level of the students and the performance of the instructor assessed by their coordinator.

Table 9. *Inclusion criteria and distribution of stakeholders.*

School	School level	Performance ²	Interviews	Focus Group		
Case 1	5 th and 6 th grade of primary school ($\approx$ 10-11 and 11-12 years old)	100%	Teacher-1 Teacher-2 Teacher-3 Instructor-1	n	=	8 students
Case 2 ^a	2 nd of secondary school ($\approx$ 13-14 years old)	90.75%	Teacher-4 Teacher-5 Instructor-2	n	=	10 students
Case 3 ^a	1 st grade of secondary school ($\approx$ 12-13 years old)	33%	Teacher-6 Teacher-7 Teacher-8 Instructor-3	n	=	14 students
Case 4 ^a	3 rd grade of secondary school ($\approx$ 14-15 years old)	100%	Teacher-9 Teacher-10 Instructor-4	n	=	8 students

Case 5 ^a	5 th and 6 th grade of primary school ($\approx$ 10-11 and 11-12 years old)	18.75%	Teacher-11 Instructor-5	n = 9 students
Case 6	4 th grade of secondary school ($\approx$ 15-16 years old)	46.17%	Teacher-12 Instructor-6	n = 8 students

Note: ^aSchools considered as high complexity, a status established by the Department of Education according to various indicators related to socioeconomic data; ^bThe after-school coordinators assessed instructors' performance through a rubric with the following indicators and weightings: pedagogical style (20%), group management (50%) and communicative attitude (30%).

5.5.2. Instruments

Five instruments were used to collect data: two questionnaires, two semi-structured interview guides and a semi-structured focus group guide (instruments related to this phase can be found in Appendix 18). The questionnaires for teachers and instructors were an adapted version of those used in the fourth phase of this doctoral dissertation. The changes, based on preceding research —e.g., Jardí et al., 2021; Reeves et al., 2010—, were aimed at gathering further information regarding interactions between teachers and instructors. The person responsible for the after-school initiative along with seven head coordinators validated the new content. A sample of 20 teachers and 20 instructors was used to pilot the questionnaires. All stakeholders were asked about the pertinence of the questions, the length, as well as any issues in the wording and the answer choices. The improvement suggestions were only vocabulary nuances. For this study, categorial and scalar questions were considered involving interactions. Specifically, 4 categorial questions focused on communication, 4 Likert scale questions focused on interactions and 6 Likert scale questions focused on satisfaction and support effects.

For the qualitative part, six cases were studied conducting a total of 16 semi-structured interviews with teachers and instructors, and 6 focus groups with students. They lasted an average of 49.34 minutes and 40.53 minutes respectively. The main topics of the interview guide were the following, 1) support, 2) role, and 3) interpersonal interaction. The content of these guides was also based on the investigations mentioned above and was trialled by the head coordinators of this after-school initiative.

5.5.3. Procedure

This phase consists of a convergent parallel mixed method design (Creswell, 2014) in which qualitative and quantitative data was collected at the same time. However, this phase follows up the results obtained in phase 4 to explore the phenomenon of

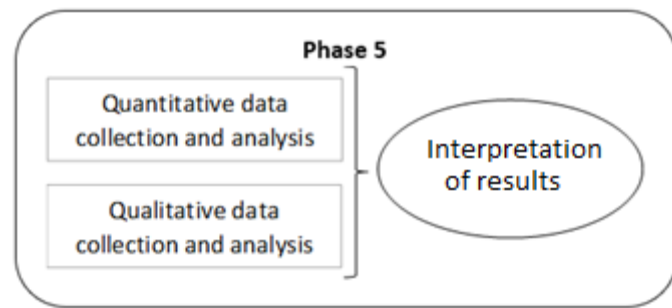


Figure 6. Research design phase 5

“interactions” between stakeholders of support in more depth. Therefore, the whole after-school research can be classified as exploratory sequential mixed method design (Creswell, 2014). For this phenomenological study, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were undertaken addressed at teachers and instructors, and 6 focus groups with students. The qualitative part serves as a case study.

The *Consorci d'Educació de Barcelona* (the education board) authorised the research and distributed the questionnaire online among teachers and instructors through their coordinators. In the first screen of the survey, participants were informed about ethical aspects such as the goals of the research, the voluntary participation, the confidentiality, the possibility of withdrawing their consent and the right to receive feedback once the results were analysed (European Commission, 2013). The completion time for all questionnaires varied between 15 and 30 minutes.

The administration, through the head coordinators of this after-school initiative, facilitated the recruitment of six groups for the multiple-case study considering the inclusion criteria. After asking permission from the school and after-school coordinators, teachers and instructors were invited to participate. Before being interviewed, participants signed the informed consent (see Appendix 17). Interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed verbatim, and transcripts were sent back to the participants to amend the transcripts and verify that their perspective was accurately represented. Participants agreed with the content, only providing clarifications regarding vocabulary and the appropriateness of their expressions.

5.5.4. Data analysis

The software used to compute descriptive statistics and Mann-Whitney U Tests was SPSS v. 24. As for the thematic analysis, first, the interview transcripts from all participants were reviewed to get an insight of the data. Then, significant statements for all cases were identified and compared across-cases, producing a coding scheme. Commonalities of the communicative experience across cases were captured, however divergent but informative points of view were also included. Once researchers agreed on the meaning of each category and sub-category (Brantlinger et al. 2005), the coding process was completed using the software Nvivo 11 pro.

6. Continuum of published works

This section presents the 9 outputs that compose the continuum of research projects conducted for this doctoral dissertation. Before presenting each output there is a brief introduction to each one that specifies its goals and justifies the output within the continuum of this doctoral dissertation. These brief introductions end with the highlights of each output. The complete version of each article is available in appendices 1 to 9.

These outputs include two chapters of a published book; four papers published in three journals indexed in the Journal Citation Reports (JCR) and in the Scimago Journal Rank (SJR); one more paper under revision in such high impact journal; and two dissemination articles published in a CARHUS indexed journal.

6.1. Output 1: The Organization of the support as a joint task

Sabando, D., Jardí, A. (2019). La organización del apoyo como tarea compartida. In I. Puigdemívol, C. Petreñas, B. Siles & A. Jardí (Eds.) *Estrategias de apoyo en la escuela inclusiva: Una visión interactiva y comunitaria*. (1st ed., p. 65-98). Barcelona: Graó.

(see Appendix 1)

This second chapter of the book “*Estrategias de apoyo en la escuela inclusiva: Una visión interactiva y comunitaria*” theoretically positions how support is understood and organised from an inclusive perspective. The position developed is based on a non-systematic literature review on the educational support and reflections in collaboration with the “*Suport Educatiu a l'Educació Inclusiva*” (“Educational Support in Inclusive Education”) Work Group. A group that is made up of teachers from early education and primary schools, as well as university teachers. With this chapter we define in a reasoned manner how support is understood throughout this doctoral thesis. Something that is necessary since the final objective is to examine the interactions between agents that jointly support students. Therefore, this chapter contributes to all the specific objectives since the information gathered was used to theoretically frame all the other outputs. Specifically, this first chapter meets specific objective 5: “Providing recommendations based on the interactions between the stakeholders that intervene in the educational support of the student body belonging to vulnerable groups”.

In the current chapter the need to change the way of understanding, granting and implementing educational support is emphasised. The importance of designing a decentralised and multilevel support system is also addressed. Decentralization implies the collaboration of all the agents that participate in the students' learning, including TAs and non-professional stakeholders. Working jointly, it is easier to tap into the environment's potential and its natural support networks in order to reduce or eliminate the participation and learning barriers that affect all students, but, especially, those students that belong to vulnerable groups. This community participation facilitates the implementation of multilevel support systems integrated in the general classroom dynamics. This system with interlocking supports of varying intensity focuses on prevention, whereby universal measures are the basis for enriching educational experiences for all.

6.2. Output 2: Support strategies enriching interactions and classroom activity.

Jardí, A., Siles, B. (2019). Estrategias de apoyo como enriquecimiento de las interacciones y de la actividad del aula. In I. Puigdemívol, C. Petreñas, B. Siles & A. Jardí (Eds.) *Estrategias de apoyo en la escuela inclusiva: Una visión interactiva y comunitaria*. (1st ed., p. 131-168). Barcelona: Graó.

(see Appendix 2)

This fourth chapter of the book “*Estrategias de apoyo en la escuela inclusiva: Una visión interactiva y comunitaria*” contributes from a theoretical stand point to define different ways in which adults and students can get organised to enrich their activity and boost student interaction. As with the previous chapter, the theoretical development in this chapter is based on a non-systematised literature review of the interactions between adults and the student body contrasted with the reflections of the Work Group “*Support Educatiu a l'Educació Inclusiva*” (Educational Support in Inclusive Education). A Work Group comprised of teachers from preschool and primary school teachers as well as university teachers. The theoretical foundation relating to classroom organisation where more than one support stakeholder is involved are essential to understand the interactions between them. Therefore, this work was necessary to position the research and take an informed look at the interactions between teachers and TAs involved in educational support; this being the main objective of this doctoral dissertation. As well as answering the fifth

specific objective “Providing recommendations based on the interactions between the stakeholders that intervene in the educational support of the student body belonging to vulnerable groups”, this output contributed to the theoretical background needed to answer the rest of the specific objectives.

This chapter highlights the different ways of organizing adults in co-teaching and brings in the concept of practical co-teaching, which aims to build on the evidence on interactions among teachers to benefit the interactions between teachers and any other support agent. Role clarification and negotiation, co-planning, shared assessment and shared reflection allow to get the most out of the work between adults. For this, it is also necessary that both adults create learning environments where adult-adult-student and student-student interactions increase, and the quality of these interactions is improved. In this respect, we highlight student organisation in cooperative structures, by stations, heterogeneous group splitting, interactive groups and project-based learning as enriched learning environments. We also talk about peer mentoring, the student mentor and inter-institutional volunteering as organisational ways that promote peer-to-peer support and mutual learning. Thus, emphasis is placed on overcoming a vision of support led by specialised teachers towards specific students. To sum up, in this chapter the focus is put on ways of classroom organisation based on the interactions between different agents, which ultimately become universal support measures.

6.3.Output 3: Teacher assistants’ roles in Catalan classrooms: promoting fair and inclusion-oriented support for all.

Jardí, A., Puigdemívol, I., & Petreñas, C. (2018). Teacher assistants’ roles in Catalan classrooms: promoting fair and inclusion-oriented support for all. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 25(3), 313–328.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1545876>

(see Appendix 3)

This first article on the deployment of TAs in mainstream Catalan classrooms constitutes a first approach to the regulatory reality of TAs versus their everyday reality described by the agents themselves. This exploratory mixed method investigation consists of a questionnaire to TAs and semi-structured interviews with 5 TAs, 5 teachers and 2 union representatives. In this article we analysed the differences between the job requirements

described by the Government, the roles TAs believe they have been hired to perform and the tasks they are really carrying out in their schools. Thus, this article provides stakeholder first-hand experiences in the Catalan context as well as an analysis of the legal framework on the matter.

Therefore, this article gives answer to the first specific objective: “Analysing TA deployment in the Catalan educational system.” Obtaining this more general information about TAs was a necessary step due to the lack, to date, of research on the topic in the Catalan and Spanish contexts which could be used as a starting point. The information gathered allowed to contextualise the subsequent studies (phase 3) which centre more specifically on the interactions between Teachers and TAs so as to, as a whole, answer the main objective of this thesis. These interactions cannot be analysed in isolation as they are influenced by the context in which they take place. Thus, as well as generating evidence so that the deployment of Catalan TAs is known internationally and substantiating the subsequent improvement proposals, the results of this phase provided the framework that served as the basis to delve deeper into the interactions between Teachers and TAs who jointly support students belonging to vulnerable groups in a more complete and informed way.

This exploratory study made it possible to know what types of TAs there are, which are their roles, their responsibilities and needs, as well as their employment and deployment conditions. Our results showed the inconsistency between the job requirements standardized by the Catalan Government (Spain), the roles the Teacher Assistants believed they had been hired to perform, the tasks they were actually carrying out in their schools and the role they should perform according to the research. We observed that even the TAs themselves did not know their roles and responsibilities, which had negative consequences regarding others and their own expectations within the schools. Thus, roles and responsibilities should be clarified. Furthermore, they were assuming responsibilities for which they were neither prepared nor qualified, without appropriated supervision. Nonetheless, they could take on this role if they worked as a team with teachers. In fact, as they were supporting students within classrooms, their perspective on teaching and learning, from planning to assessment, is really important. They should be conceived as another support stakeholder within a wide but effective network of support.

We also found that there were three types of TAs that were contractually bound to students with disabilities or behaviour regulation problems. However, within an inclusive approach, no stakeholder should be bound to any one particular student nor support them in excessive proximity or out of regular classrooms. We relate this to the deficit-centred perspective that is still alive in school culture, policies and practices. Moreover, according to the standards, only one type of TA should give educational support; the others should merely assist, which is inconsistent with inclusive principles. After our analysis, we recommended rethinking TA deployment to ensure inclusion-oriented policies and practices.

6.4. Output 4: The importance of the role of TAs for an inclusive educational system.

Jardí, A., Gil-Fraca, S., Fucho, M., Burillo, M. (2019). La importancia del rol del personal no docente de apoyo para un sistema educativo inclusivo. *Ámbitos de psicopedagogía y orientación*, 51 p.103-112.
<https://doi.org/10.32093/ambits.vi51.1424>

(see Appendix 4)

This article, published in both Spanish and Catalan in an open-access journal has as its main objective to disseminate knowledge base on the evidence surrounding TAs, as well as showing the three TAs with specific direct support functions present in the Catalan system: the special education educator (SEE), the special education assistants (SEA) and the monitors of support (known as carers). This article is intended to bring the results of Study 1 (Exploring the role of Catalan TAs, its employment and deployment) to the attention of the professionals working in schools and high schools, as they don't usually read, or have access to, English language journals of high scientific impact. Therefore, in the context of this thesis this article serves to disseminate in a plainer manner the results and conclusions of output 3, which corresponds to the first specific objective "Exploring the deployment of non-teaching support staff in the Catalan educational system" (SO1). This way the specific objective 'Providing recommendations based on the interactions between the stakeholders that intervene in the educational support of the student body belonging to vulnerable groups', while also meeting the ethical criterion of informing the participants about the results and conclusions of the study.

This article sets out the different models in which TAs are deployed and details in particular the Catalan case. The importance of including TAs in coordination and meetings that directly affect their practices, guarantying an initial and continuing training in accordance with their role and responsibilities, taking on an educational role instead a support one so as to more effectively contribute to the inclusion of the student body are also underlined in this article. In short, to optimise the use of TAs, a structural transformation in the way of thinking about support is necessary, taking a more global and shared vision of support at both a school and an educational system level.

6.5. Output 5: Building successful partnerships between Teaching Assistants and Teachers: Which interpersonal factors matter?

Jardí, A., Webster, R., Petreñas, C., & Puigdemívol, I., (2022) Building successful partnerships between Teaching Assistants and Teachers: Which interpersonal factors matter? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 109. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103523>

(see Appendix 5)

This paper is the first in Study 4: Factors affecting interactions between TAs and teachers. We start from the idea that the interactions between professionals are in themselves relevant since they can affect classroom practices. That is, even though the rest of the conditions –such as working conditions, the distribution of responsibilities, the TA deployment model, the type of interaction with the students– were ideal, there is something else in the interactions themselves between teachers and TAs that helps to achieve a better or worse partnership. This article is aimed at identifying the factors that characterise effective interpersonal partnerships between teaching assistants and teachers working in inclusive schools in Catalonia (Spain). To this end, we conducted 40 semi-structured in-depth interviews with 22 TAs and 18 teachers that worked together in inclusion-oriented schools.

Thus, in the framework of this thesis, this article answers the second specific objective: “Analysing the interactions between teachers and TAs with support roles”. An objective that was approached with a qualitative methodology after exploring the deployment of TAs in Catalonia. Participants described factors such as affinity, open communication, the sense of belonging, feeling welcomed, professional compatibility, and autonomy as key to make them feel at ease with a partner. The participants also stated that when

partners can communicate openly, work as a team and professional expectations are fulfilled, trust in each other emerges. Finally, the role attributed to the TAs and the interpersonal treatment with their partners are essential to make them feel respected and valued. These results shed some light on how to build proper TA-teacher partnerships; a complex process that requires time, effort, and external support. However, results show that stakeholders can build effective relationships, even though the contextual factors are not the optimal.

Therefore, this article provides recommendations on how schools and administrations can support the development of effective TA-teacher partnerships, highlighting implications for policies and practices. Furthermore, the interpersonal factors that affect TA-teacher partnerships described in this article can complement the prior theoretical models on TA deployment, thus achieving a broader approach.

6.6. Output 6: The role of teaching assistants in managing behaviour in inclusive Catalan schools.

Jardí, A., Puigdemívol, I., & Petreñas, C., Sabando, D. (2021) The role of teaching assistants in managing behaviour in inclusive Catalan schools. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 36(2), 265–277.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2021.1901376>

(see Appendix 6)

This article explores how TA and teacher teams from inclusive-oriented schools manage disruptive behaviour situations. This was one of the biggest concerns among the stakeholders interviewed since, when they were asked about their interactions, 29 out of 40 stakeholders (77.27% TAs and 66.67% teachers) immediately reported behaviour-related situations. Despite being cantered in behaviour-related experiences, this phenomenological research contributes to both specific objective 1 “Exploring the deployment of non-teaching support staff in the Catalan educational system” and 2 “Analysing the interactions between teachers and TAs with support roles” since the stakeholders reported their roles and also how they interact to handle these situations. Once having delved deeper into the key factors that described interactions between TAs and teachers (output 5) this article shed light on some of the implications of these interactions in school practices.

The detailed first-hand experiences and strategies shared by the TAs and teachers reflected the importance of having more than one adult within classrooms to implement inclusive practices. They reported that having more than one adult within classrooms helps in identifying warning signs, preventing disruptive behaviour and assisting all the students in a more inclusive way. Together they can more effectively implement proactive, prevention and anticipation strategies, but also reactive ones, necessary for de-escalating disruptive behaviour. That is, providing more inclusive support is easier with more and better (quantity and quality) collaboration interactions.

We recommended providing teamwork time to ensure reflection, discussion, learning and the implementation of consistent measures. As TAs assume important roles in behaviour management, they should be included in these teamwork spaces, especially in the Attention to Diversity Committees, where support is discussed and agreed upon. Limits and actions must be consensual, coherent, contextualized and consistent between all the stakeholders involved in education, including the students themselves. In addition, we also highlighted that, in Catalonia, there is one type of TA with an especially relevant role in conflict resolution and working as a network -the Social Integration Specialist (SIS). However, excessive responsibility delegation on TAs in this matter should be avoided; their responsibilities must be coherent and shared, never exclusive to them.

6.7. Output 7: Tackling disruptive behaviour from an inclusive perspective.

Jardí, A., Siles, B., Suñer, A., Vila, A. (2021). El abordaje de conductas disruptivas desde una perspectiva inclusiva. *Ámbitos de psicopedagogía y orientación*, 55
[Unpublished manuscript]

(see Appendix 7)

The purpose of this dissemination article is to share experiences of behaviour management implemented in schools with a markedly inclusive character. This article aims to make available to schools the some of the results of study 5 -Interactions between teachers and TAs in situations of disruptive behaviour- presented in output 6, published in a high-impact journal. Furthermore, this article provides new experiences that complement those previously published, emphasising certain aspects that could not be

addressed in sufficient depth in output 7 and that are essential for schools. Therefore, this article answers specific objectives 2 and 5 of this thesis.

From all the recommendations that arose from Study 5, in this article we highlighted the importance of implementing active methodologies to ensure all students are participating and learning before implementing more intensive measures to reduce misbehaviour. We stressed the relevance of an efficient organization of professionals exemplifying how teamwork between stakeholders can prevent behaviour-related situations. Stakeholder interventions should be consistent, so norms should be agreed with the entire educational community (including families and students). This requires collaboration, collegiality, collective reflection and a rigorous monitoring and assessment of the measures implemented. Finally, we emphasise the usefulness of developing a favourable relational-affective bond between the professionals and the students. One based on understanding and a change of viewpoint that helps to connect with the students and allows them to self-regulate their behaviour.

**6.8.Output 8: Educational Support in an Expanded Learning Time initiative:
Optimizing its components to promote inclusive education.**

Jardí, A., Acquah, E., Ianos, M. A., & Puigdemívol, I. (2021). Educational Support in an Expanded Learning Time initiative: Optimizing its components to promote inclusive education. *European Educational Research Journal*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/14749041211002304>

(see Appendix 8)

In this article the results of study 4 are shown: Context and interactions in an after-school initiative. This after-school initiative is managed and funded by the Consorci d'Educació de Barcelona (Educational Board of Barcelona) and is one of the most extended afterschool programs in the city. The main stakeholders of this school-based initiative are students at risk of academic failure, their instructors and teachers; their families are less involved by design. Thus, we analysed the experiences of 1786 students, 238 teachers and 126 instructors to examine the components of this after-school initiative aimed at supporting students at risk of academic failure in order to optimize the components that can improve its use and organization. We wanted to know 1) how they perceived this after-school support initiative, 2) which were the relationships between support

components (in terms of design, support environment and interaction), 3) if there were perception differences regarding the support components, and 4) what was seen as optimal to provide support in after-school time.

As we analysed the components reported by previous research, identifying the ones that should be maximized to achieve a greater support use, with this paper we addressed the third specific objective of this doctoral dissertation: Identifying the components of an after-school initiative aimed at supporting students who are the most at risk of dropping out of school and experiencing academic failure. Knowing how this support initiative worked and was deployed was important to, then, delve into the interactions between instructors and teachers (4th specific objective).

The results of the analysis are relevant as support use was linked to a greater success perception by students. Thus, we highlighted those support key components that should be optimized to get the most out of students. The stakeholders involved should know them, therefore, adjusted training and supervision is needed, especially considering that instructors are non-teaching staff but have to perform a pedagogical role. The results also suggested that to truly promote inclusive support, these kind of support initiatives should no longer be conceived as external, but additional within a larger network of support that goes beyond school. Furthermore, as an additional support measure, this should be understood as a continuum, considering the universal support measures implemented in the schools. after-school initiatives should be collaboratively designed to effectively address the needs in each context. This can contribute to the removal of the educational system's barriers for school improvement, overcoming inequalities and fostering achievement for all.

6.8. Output 9: Collaboration between schools and an expanded learning time initiative in Catalonia: A pending issue for inclusive support?

Jardí, A., Ianos, M. A., Bartolomé, A. (submitted) Collaboration between school and an afterschool program in Catalonia: A pending issue for inclusive support?

[Unpublished manuscript]

(see Appendix 9)

This is the last article included in the present doctoral dissertation by published works. It shows the results of the second study (Study 3) of the line regarding “Non-teaching

support during after-school hours”. The previous study concerning the main components of the support in an after-school initiative backed the relevance of delving into the collaboration between teachers and instructors of after-school initiatives. In fact, Study 2 identified *collaboration across sites* as a component that should be analysed when assessing the quality of this type of support. In fact, the quantity and quality of information exchanged between teachers and instructors can have effects on educational support. Hence, this article aims to explore the interactions between teachers and instructors of an after-school initiative, and the importance of the frequency of their communication, both in educational support and interpersonal connections. To this end, a total of 158 instructors (supporting 204 after-school groups) and 191 teachers participated in two questionnaires. Additionally, six case studies were conducted comprising 6 semi-structured interviews with instructors, 12 semi-structured interviews with teachers, and 6 focus groups with students.

This article addresses a fourth specific objective: “Analysing the interactions established between teachers and instructors of an after-school initiative”. Therefore, after having studied the context in which interactions occurred, this article explores the frequency and type of communication between teachers and instructors. Despite maintaining the same cyclical approach as the first line of investigation (Non-teaching support during school hours), this output does not provide as much detail on interpersonal interaction as does Output 5. Nonetheless, this explores the role of the communication in educational support specifically, including also the students’ perspectives. This last article is presented in its submitted version, due to it still being in peer review in a journal.

This *mixed methods* article emphasises the relevance of communication for educational support becoming essential when some support tasks are *shifted*, as it happens with instructors. However, the empirical data shows that communication between teachers and instructors is scant and usually reactive. Therefore, the multi-tiered system of support (MTSS), despite being promoted by the current policies since 2017, is not properly implemented. Among the other barriers identified, it is worth mentioning the attitudes of the stakeholders towards collaboration, as well as the misuse of technologies to enhance communications. In fact, results show that the frequency of communication affects some aspects of both educational support and as the relevance attributed to interpersonal factors. Nonetheless, lessons can be learned from those who, despite the poor

employment and deployment conditions of the instructors, achieved successful collaborations. Specific implications for theory, policies, and practices are discussed.

7. Results

In this section the main results obtained are mentioned in summary form. They are organised according to this doctoral thesis' specific objectives. These results emerge from the different outputs previously exposed.

7.1.SO1: Exploring the deployment of non-teaching support staff in the Catalan educational system

1. In Catalonia there are *5 kinds of TA* with educational support functions that could be included in what is internationally known as TA. The Special Education Educators (SEE), Special Education Assistants (SEA) and Carers are directly linked to students with severe disabilities, behaviour difficulties or students whose situation is supposed to require intensive support. The Preschool Education Specialists (PES) and Social Integration Specialists (SIS) also assume direct support functions in practice, although they have more general functions (Catalonia, 2020a, 2020b). PESs are assigned to the first year of preschool (3 years old). SISs are not assigned to any class group and intervene directly with students in at-risk situations, their families, and other social agents from their communities (Catalonia, 2020b). Table 10 (next page) summarises the main differences between agents.

Table 10. *Characteristics of the different TAs in Catalonia.*

Kind of TA	SEE	SEA	Carer	PES	SIS
Role	Educational	Assistance	According to Individual Plans	Educational	Socio-educational
Education level	Vocational education ^a	School certificate ^b	School certificate ^b	Vocational education ^a	Vocational education ^a
Specific initial Education	No ^c	No	No ^d	Yes	Yes
Time for ongoing training	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Company	Department of Education	Department of Education	Sub-contracted company	Department of Education	Department of Education
Contract	full-time ^e	full-time	Piece work ^f	full-time	full-time
Category	C1	D1		C1	C1
Coordination time	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

^aVocational education: ISCED-4, post-secondary non-tertiary education level (UNESCO 2014); ^bSchool certificate ISCED-3, Upper secondary education level (UNESCO 2014); ^cThey are required to be at least SIS or similar (Catalonia, 2020c); ^dPrivate companies are offering 30 hours online courses; ^eFull time are 37,5h. per week; ^fThe number of hours depend on all students' needs, maximum 25h/w.

2. As to the *model of deployment*, TAs are generally moving classroom to classroom supporting students with SEN. Consequently, they are working across several classrooms, different stages, with different teachers, supporting different students depending on school needs. In addition, the results of study 1 showed that 81 % of these TAs were supporting students with SEN one-on-one. Only six TAs of this phase 2 expressed they tried to reduce the excessive proximity with students. However, all TAs of the phase 3 (intentional sampling of “inclusive schools”) stressed on the relevance of this, despite not achieving it in practice in some cases.
 - 2.1. Some participants of phases 2 and 3 reported supporting some students withdrawing them from their main classrooms to special classrooms with other students with disabilities or behaviour difficulties, or to the corridor.
3. The results of the first study on TAs showed that most participants (n = 106) *do not know their job description*. They highlighted other professionals’ tasks and responsibilities as their own.
 - 3.1. SEE roles and responsibilities were the ones TAs most commonly thought they had to perform despite the fact that most of them were Carers (94 %).
 - 3.2. Most questionnaire respondents (73 %) thought they had to perform behaviour-related roles, but 57 % indicated that they had to do it in collaboration. Nonetheless, 14 TAs believed that according to their contract they were solely responsible for “their” student’s behaviour
4. The *roles and responsibilities* of TAs, in most of the analysed cases, diverge from those established by regulations.
 - 4.1. Studies 1 and 5 showed that TAs overextend their tasks performing roles belonging to other profiles of TAs, teachers, educational psychologists, or speech therapists.
 - 4.2. According to studies 1 and 5, TAs are assuming important roles in managing behaviours.
 - 4.2.1. In study 1, 87 % of respondents indicated performing behaviour-related roles, being 20 % solely responsible in practice.
 - 4.2.2. In study 5, participants detailed how they managed these behaviour situations starting with universal measures. The presence of more than one adult within classrooms helped to prevent disruptive behaviour and assist all students in a more

inclusive way. Teamwork also ensured coordinated and more proactive strategies, offering a consistent and adjusted support to each student. The teaching method and the design of lesson activities was also mentioned as a strategy for maximising student engagement and minimising disruptive behaviour. Finally, participants detailed some specific school-wide behaviour interventions that schools had systematised to de-escalate behaviour. For instance, sending the student to the school porter to do something that seemed relevant in order to change their mood and, if needed, asking for support to manage the student's reincorporation to the classroom.

- 4.3. As is explained in Output 2 and the studies focussed on TAs (studies 1, 4 and 5), TAs can assume educational roles as long as they work in close coordination with teachers, are appropriately trained and supported.
5. The *initial education* required to work as TA depends on their professional profile. SEE, PES and SIS, who have a higher work category require minimum a vocational training qualification —post-secondary non-tertiary education level, ISCED-4 (UNESCO 2014). PES and SIS have a specific initial training for their professional role spanning two courses (2000 hours, including internship) (Espanya, 2007, 2012). SEE, in contrast, don't have a specific initial training. They are therefore required a SIS or similar training (Catalonia, 2020c). Among the merits that grant the top scores to access jobs there are university degrees such as that of teacher or social educator, depending on the type of TA. SEA and Carers are only required a school certificate, although the merits that count towards their score are similar to those of the other abovementioned TAs (Catalonia, 2020c). Carer hiring and merits depend on the subcontracting company.
- 5.1. As to the participants of both phases (phases 2 and 3 of line 1: TAs), we can observe that, regardless of the type of TA, most are overqualified for the position they occupy. Specifically, 81 of the 101 TAs surveyed in phase 2 and 13 of the 22 surveyed in phase 3.
6. *Work conditions* such as contract hours, availability of work hours for continuous training and coordination do not depend on the type of TA or their job category, but on the company that manages them. As is shown in Table 10, SEE, SEA, PES

and SIS are Department of Education staff and Carers, although paid with public funds, are managed by the companies that win the public tender.

- 6.1. In terms of *working time* all TAs directly depending on the Department of Education are hired full-time for 37.5 hours per week, 25 being the weekly school hours for students. Their conditions of employment depend on whether they are interim or permanent staff, as happens with the teaching staff. Therefore, unless they are making substitutions, they have continuity in their job pool and have greater stability. By contrast, Carers are hired and laid off every year according to the needs of the school. For management reasons, sometimes they are hired when the school year has already started. In addition, the total number of hours in each centre will depend on the number of hours assigned to each student. That is why they are hired on an hourly basis. With a maximum of 25, coinciding with the students' school timetable. These 25 hours can take place in different schools.
- 6.2. Regarding *lifelong learning*, Carers (subcontracted) are the only ones who do not have any hours devoted to it in their work hours (Catalonia, 2020a). The rest of TAs have up to 40 hours of free training that they need to be agreed with management. As to specific time for training, SEE have 2.5 stipulated hours per week for preparation, training and top-up training. The 7.5 hours for meetings and material creation, also include the training happening in the school itself (Catalonia, 2020b). The description of the SEA specifies that they must participate in the training, but there are no specifications regarding the time commitment. PES and SIS also have 2.5 weekly hours for preparation, training and top-up training, which can happen at the school or outside of it. All TAs participating in both phases of sample collection undertake further training, even if on their own account.
- 6.3. Carers don't have paid hours for *coordination* either. However, it is specified that their actions must be in accordance with the agreements of the teaching staff and the families (using as reference the Individualised Plans of the students) and be coordinated with the overall educational interventions of the school (Catalonia, 2020a). As regards the Department of Education TAs, SEE could coordinate within the 7.5 weekly hours they have for "meetings and coordination." In the SEA's job description, there is no specification for their time distribution. PES

have 5 hours for stage, level and faculty meetings, interviews with the families and other non-classroom activities, such as the creation of materials. However, the 5 hours for SIS are exclusive for coordinating with other agents from the school and external. In practice, as can be seen in phases 2 and 3, the inclusion of TAs in meetings depends on their willingness (voluntariness in the case of Carers) and on whether the form teachers and teams choose to invite them.

- 6.3.1. Furthering the coordination data of phase 2, 22 of the participants stated not coordinating, 11 only coordinating with the special education specialists (SEN-COs or educational psychologists), 27 only with the form teachers and another 22 TAs that coordinated both with form teachers and SEN-COs or educational psychologists.
- 6.3.2. As to the TAs and teachers interviewed in phase 3, more than half ($n = 25$) remarked that TAs don't participate in meetings either, although some say they sporadically attend. As a matter of fact, some TAs that could, by contract, attend, lament not being invited to meetings relevant to their work.
- 6.4. The management of the Department of Education TAs depends on the head teachers as they are the final decision-makers when it comes to the time allocations of the work plans and the people involved (Catalonia, 2020b). The document does not specify who should *guide and supervise* them, as opposed to the Carers who since the 2016-17 school year have the form teachers guaranteeing that their tasks are tailored to the needs of the students and to the overall educational intervention of the school. Thus, the subsequent school organization and management documents specify that the form teacher should welcome the Carers and encourage their incorporation into the school, learning lines and expectations. Form teachers need to also make sure that the Carers know their role and responsibilities and guide their practices.
- 6.4.1. Most of the TAs surveyed in phase 2 were supervised by form teachers as well as SEN-COs or educational psychologists ($n = 44$) or just by form teachers ($n = 33$). It is important to keep in mind that 94 were Carers, 5 were SEEs and there was only 1 SEA in this sample. It is also worth mentioning that in the qualitative part of this phase the term "supervision" was questioned because of its negative connotations. Despite this, they made clear the importance of an effective

supervision in the sense of mentoring, having someone acting as guide to whom to turn, as a team task.

- 6.4.2. In the interviews in phase 3 we can see that the task of supporting diversity practices is carried out by the SEN-Co, despite not having any hours allocated for this purpose in the case of Carers. The most routine issues are dealt with the form teacher, in cases of effective partnerships.
7. The main findings of Outputs 3, 4, 5 and 6 indicate that there are *barriers for inclusion* in the current TA deployment in Catalonia that don't depend on themselves or the teacher in charge of the students. These deployment barriers stem from the following factors: the implementation model, the individual assignation of most TAs, the roles attributed to the different types of TAs (those purely assistance related would not be in line with inclusive models), unclear responsibilities and poor employment conditions.

7.2. SO2: Analysing the interactions between teachers and TAs with support roles.

1. As shown in output 5, the interpersonal factors that contributed to achieving effective partnerships were codified into three main factors: feeling at ease, trust and respect and value (see figure 7). These factors influence and inform each other and may act as catalysts or barriers to achieve effective partnerships. Most of them can be worked on, so the development of effective and evidence-based partnerships should be purposefully reached to better contribute to the educational support.
 - 1.1. The key factors to make partners *feel at ease* were personal affinity, open communication, the sense of belonging, feeling welcomed, professional compatibility, and autonomy.
 - 1.2. *Trust* can be achieved when partner expectations are fulfilled, with open communication and teamwork. While few participants stated that as professionals trust should be automatic, when looking into it, trust is the factor more often linked to the need of time. This contrasts, for example, with some unintentional or instant connexions for feeling at ease.

- 1.3. The role attributed to the TAs — the tasks and responsibilities that they assume — and the interpersonal treatment between TAs and teachers are essential to feel *respected and valued*.

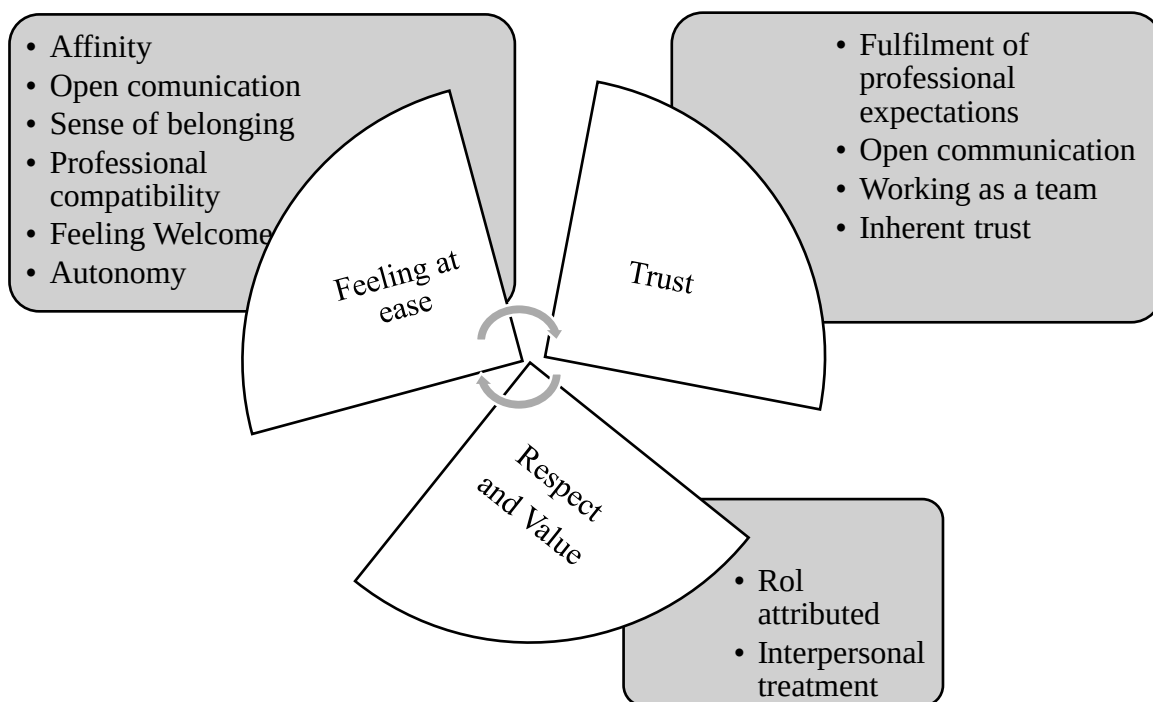


Figure 7: *Interpersonal relationship factors to feeling at ease, trusting, respecting and valuing each other.*

- The results of output 5 also suggested that stakeholders might be more affected by the effects of interpersonal factors depending on their profile. For instance, more TAs than teachers reported about the sense of belonging and feeling welcomed within classrooms on a daily basis when describing what made them feel at ease. TAs were also more sensitive to the interpersonal treatment; perhaps they were in a more vulnerable position in this regard than teachers. In contrasts, more teachers than TAs reported teamwork when talking about trust.
- The results of output 5 showed that achieving *effective TA-teacher partnerships* is a complex process that requires time, effort, positive attitudes, commitment, and external support. First, partners have to manage the feelings that emerge as they get to know each other, starting by first impressions, but they also have to fit together professionally adjusting their working preferences and roles. After this

process, a partnership starts but the interpersonal factors above mentioned should be discussed and worked on to keep the partnership alive.

4. Most of the interpersonal factors detailed in output 5 can be fostered with proactive attitudes towards partnership, ensuring regular time for meetings, communication, reflection, and collaboration
5. Interpersonal factors do not only depend on attitudes between people since they are also influenced by society's structure, culture, and point of view. To this end, in study 4 stakeholders also described factors that were not completely controllable for them as they are affected by external factors (e.g., deployment and employment conditions). These interpersonal factors that went beyond TA-teacher's issues were the following: the perception of hierarchy, the sense of belonging to the school, and the teamwork (see appendix 10). However, schools can mitigate some of these factors with individual and team attitudes as well as with school leaderships that bet on inclusive education, optimising, therefore, the use of their human resources.
 - 5.1. Regarding hierarchy participants reported the importance of establishing egalitarian relationships. Despite the different categories and professionals, the stakeholders, as agents of support, should not be understood in a hierarchical way, but as professionals that contribute complementary to the educational support. Each of them has their tasks and they all assist each other, not just TAs assisting Teachers.
 - 5.2. Participants also reported a need for belonging to a school which was different from the perception of belonging to a classroom since this was linked to the relationships with the whole teaching staff, not only the partnership with the teachers that TAs worked with.
 - 5.3. The perception of teamwork is a relevant factor for the interviewed stakeholders. Some highlighted factors were: the sense of partnership, complementing and adding to each other, acting coherently and coordinating to achieve a common goal, etc.
6. Findings of study 4 also highlighted the relevance of being included in meetings. The opportunities for formal communication, even if they are influenced by the employment conditions of the type of TA, don't exclusively depend on this

external factor since depending on the school's dynamics TAs had more or less opportunities for it.

7. The results of study 5 focused on behaviour management situations also showed the effectiveness of successful partnerships within classrooms.
- 7.1. When teachers plan lessons according to the presence of TAs, different activities involving all students can be conducted since behaviour can be better managed in partnership.
- 7.2. Two adults within classrooms also allowed to intervene in the early stages of disruptive behaviours, having positive effects on the professionals' wellbeing.
- 7.3. Teamwork time promotes collegiate reflection and discussion of school practices.
- 7.4. In addition, consistent interventions can be ensured when teachers and TAs work alongside each other in the classroom; unity and consistency can be achieved and also projected to the students. Thus, teamwork is essential to effective behaviour management.
- 7.5. All the strategies highlighted as useful for behaviour management by the participants required tight coordination. Participants stressed the need of having intervention procedures systematized. This also requires the participation of both stakeholders in meetings.

7.3. SO3: Identifying the components of an after-school initiative aimed at supporting students who are most at risk for dropping out of school and experiencing academic failure.

1. This after-school initiative offers free academic support to students at risk of academic failure for free, being a kind of "additional measure of support" with great potential for reducing inequalities. This support in after-school time was positively valued by the students.
2. The most important components are included in the following dimensions: after-school support design and orientation, supportive environment (including interpersonal relationship between students and with instructors), stakeholder communication and teamwork.

3. The way this after-school initiative was deployed is very relevant as this was the dimension with the highest correlation with support effects. The main results as to the design and orientation reported in output 8 are the following:
 - 3.1. The perception of improving grades and enjoyment when attending were highly linked (highest positive correlations) with greater support use. Thus, making students aware of little improvements and fostering high expectations as well as self-responsibilities towards learning (with internal and controllable attributions) are important strategies to implement according to instructors and teachers.
 - 3.2. Support use can be enhanced through the appropriate distribution of learning time as well as engaging and relevant designs and activities.
 - 3.3. To better contribute to school goals, activities should be planned with them in mind. All the stakeholders involved (teachers, instructors, students and families) should clarify the goals and expectations and participate in decision-making.
4. As to the after-school support's deployment within classrooms, instructors should create a safe environment where the students can concentrate and work, so as to properly provide the support needed.
 - 4.1. To this end, group management was revealed as one of the most important factors that otherwise raised concerns among the participants. There is a need for training on this matter as well as on behaviour management and classroom routines.
 - 4.2. To foster supportive environments participants suggested group management aspects such as setting limits, grouping and classroom arrangements to promote collaborative learning or encouraging students to adopt the role of the instructor with the younger students. There were also organisational references such as decreasing ratios, increasing the number of instructors or retaining and maintaining stable teams of instructors and teachers.
 - 4.3. As regards interpersonal relationships, the bond between the instructors and students is also essential to achieve a supportive environment in which students can work and feel comfortable both in general and with their peers. In fact, instructors were positively highlighted as support stakeholders because they were neither family members nor teachers and could be seen as referents by students.
5. Regarding the interaction between instructors and teachers, the focus was placed on the communication among them. In fact, the scarce communication and its

reactive nature (solely for conflict resolution) was one of the major concerns recorded by the instructor teams in the debrief meeting reports. The participants emphasized the importance of sharing objectives, expectations, concerns and other relevant information for the educational support, even considering the program as internal instead of an external resource (lead and carried out by a different institution).

6. Another relevant component was the teamwork between the instructors. The instances of counselling and support between the instructors and each coordinator was valued as important for their practices.

7.4. SO4: Analysing the interactions established between teachers and instructors of an after-school initiative.

1. The interactions between the teachers and instructors cannot be considered from the perspective of a close partnership, but as teamwork because the educational activity does not happen in the same momento and classroom. The after-school support happens after school hours. Because of this, the interaction between teachers and instructors is delayed from the momento the educational support happens.
2. Both in person and online communication between the instructors and teachers was scarce: 46.6% of the interviewed teachers and 63.2% of the instructors mentioned having interacted in person only during the three required meetings or less. As to online communication, 66.2 % of the teachers and 58% of the instructors didn't use online channels to communicate or they only used them to receive emails with general information about the program.
3. Teachers were satisfied with the information they offered and received. Only 13.8% of them stated not getting enough information from the instructors and 12.8% not having offered enough information to them. However, 44.4% of the instructors would assess with a failing mark the usefulness, to offer the support, of the communication maintained.
4. The results of the case studies contribute to see that the dissatisfaction with the lack of communication was due, among others, to the fact of not being able to adjust the support to the needs or performance of the students. Fluid

communication is also useful to better manage student behaviour and show the importance what is work within the support to students.

5. The communication between teachers and instructors is important for the educational support.
- 5.1. The stakeholders who communicated more frequently offered a better support to their students in terms of learning and organization habits. They also valued more highly the program's results and benefits for their students as well as being more satisfied with their contribution to the support. As to the stakeholders, the instructors were more satisfied with their own contribution to the students' support than the teachers.
- 5.2. The benefits of a good communication were also highlighted by the students themselves in the focus group.
6. When dealing with the interpersonal relationships, the results of Output 9 showed the following:
 - 6.1. The teachers seem to give greater importance than the instructors did to the relationship between them, the *trust* in each other, having shared goals and understanding the after-school support as a school one.
 - 6.2. However, the case studies don't show teachers as being more proactive in terms of their interpersonal relationships with the instructors. It's the instructors who took the lead, although some teachers also felt the need of reciprocity and trust, which ended up affecting communication.
 - 6.3. In this sense, the relationship between stakeholders and their trust in each other was perceived as more important by those who communicated frequently compared to the participants who did so infrequently. Nevertheless, the communication they maintained did not affect how important they perceived the fact of sharing objectives and understanding the program as a school measure.
 - 6.4. The qualitative results contribute to understanding the fact of sharing objectives and understanding the program as a school measure goes beyond the kind of communication carried out. All the participants highlighted the importance of sharing objectives, taking it for granted in some cases. As to how to consider the support, the need to work together was reinforced, even when considered an external support it wasn't viewed as being unrelated to school measures.

8. Discussion

Evidence has been found in this doctoral thesis about non-teaching staff that jointly with teachers intervene in the educational support of students with disabilities and/or behaviour difficulties, as well as other students at risk of academic failure. Specifically, the results obtained allow us to understand the employment and deployment of TAs in Catalonia as well as the deployment of one of the after-school initiatives that supports a higher number of students at risk of academic failure in Catalonia for free. This first immersion to the context allowed to further understand the interactions between teaching and non-teaching staff (TA and instructors) providing support to vulnerable students.

Furthermore, this research is one of the scarce international investigations focused on interactions involving non-teaching support stakeholders and the first published one at national level — see Biggs et al. (2016) and Giangreco et al. (2001). The process of building partnership and the interpersonal factors involved is studied between other stakeholders, such as teachers, but their relationships with non-teaching staff have relevant particularities to know and consider. In addition, the articles showed the deployment of TAs and the after-school initiative studied in Catalonia which, together with their inclusive approach, is a novelty since it contributes to cover the lack of published literature on this matter in Spain. Most publications come from the USA, the UK, Australia and Canada (Giangreco, 2021; Giangreco et al., 2010; Raposa et al., 2019; Sharma & Salend, 2016; Van Dam et al., 2018). Thus, the main thesis of the present doctoral dissertation contributes to fill gaps in the literature. In this section, a brief discussion is carried out of the most relevant results emerging from the outputs of this doctoral dissertation.

Education goes further than the four walls of the school classroom. In output 1 we positioned ourselves in an inclusive support model where every stakeholder is considered to contribute in some way to the education of students. Therefore, educational support is also understood from a community perspective where it does not exclusively belong to the special education teacher's hands, but where all the stakeholders can contribute (Ainscow, 2001; Parrilla, 2002; Petreñas et al., 2020; Puigdemívol et al., 2017). When we talk about all the stakeholders we include teachers,

students themselves, families, neighbourhood members, volunteers, special education teachers and other specific teachers, school psychologists, speech therapists, head teachers, teaching assistants, instructors of any out-of-school activity, administration members, etc. In output 1 we highlight that all of them, when understood as an effective support network, can make the relevant contributions, from their respective roles, to the students' learning process. All of this regardless of whether they are professional or not, of their level of education, ethnicity, or any other socio-demographic label.

In this doctoral thesis we focus on those non-teaching support stakeholders who by contract have a role in educational support. We exclude, therefore, other stakeholders like volunteers or families as well as career specialists (e.g., educational psychologist, speech therapist). We focus on less established, less socially known, or with more uncertain role figures, that support vulnerable students both during school and afterschool time.

In Catalonia non-teaching staff with support roles have very different profiles depending on whether the support is carried out during school hours or during after-school time. As we can see in Outputs 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, the staff with the roles and responsibilities of educational support in schools are in general professionalized stakeholders, whilst the support in these after-school initiatives is non-professional (output 8). In this sense, it is necessary to clarify that the term “profession” is defined as a type of paid job that needs special skills, training, or a certain level of education (e.g., Oxford, Cambridge, Collins, RAE and DIEC2 dictionaries). In light of this definition, we take into account the existence of specific training for the job, the clear delineation of roles and responsibilities, the type of contract and the demographic data of the people in said positions.

As to the different types of TAs, there is no doubt that Preschool Education Specialists (PES) and Social Integration Specialists (SIS) have their own profession since, as well as having roles and responsibilities clearly differentiated from other TAs, they have a two-year initial training that trains them for their job and it is a prerequisite for said job. Instead, the roles and responsibilities of Special Education Educators (SEE), Special

Education Assistants (SEA) and Carers are not so easily differentiated in practice, and they do not require initial training – although some form of vocational training is required of them. All TAs occupy full-term positions except for Carers, although they can be hired for the full school day (25h/w). As to the profile of the people who take these jobs, we can see that their age is varied and average job experience is wide, up to more than 20 years of experience. Something similar to the teachers.

In contrast, the instructors of this after-school initiative, as well as most afterschool and mentoring programs in Europe, are college students (Preston et al., 2018); specifically, in this after-school initiative, instructors should be less than 30 year-old college students (output 8). Even the typical mentor in the US is a non-professionalized stakeholder that has their own occupation and volunteers as referent for the youth (e.g., Herrera et al., 2011; Liao & Sanchez, 2019; Preston et al., 2018; Raposa et al., 2017; Van Dam et al., 2018). Thus, supporting vulnerable students in this kind of after-school initiatives, even when the roles and responsibilities are defined, is a job that takes up only a few hours a week, that even though they might be paid, cannot be considered as a profession.

Therefore, the working hours are not the only difference between the studied non-teaching staff (TAs and instructors). The figures themselves as well as their perspectives are also different. Because of this, this discussion delves, in both cases, into the external and interpersonal factors that affect the interactions between agents, but in a different way that clarifies the specifics of each one of them.

8.1. External factors that affect the interactions between support staff

In this subsection the main factors highlighted in this doctoral dissertation framing the interactions between teaching and non-teaching staff were discussed in a broader context. These so-called external factors come from education policies —they are established institutionally— making modifications at an individual level difficult.

8.1.1. External factors affecting the interactions between TAs and teachers

The main findings of Outputs 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 indicate that the interactions between TAs and teachers are affected by the whole deployment of TAs including the implementation

model (TAs' assignation, kinds of TAs, roles and responsibilities, supervision) and the employment and working conditions (employment categories, working hours, requirements of initial TA education, opportunities for coordination and lifelong learning as well as TA management and supervision).

Our investigation found that the current TA deployment does not favour inclusive education (outputs 3, 4 and 6). From the models described by Butt (2016b), the itinerant and the one-on-one models are the ones that better represent the practices of the TAs in Catalonia. In addition, most TAs (SEE, SEA and Carers) are individually assigned to students. Both the one-on-one model and the individual assignation are described as harmful since an excessive proximity between the TA and the student can make their independence and interaction with their classmates difficult, as well as having other ill effects related to labelling and ethical concerns (Feldman et al., 2015; Giangreco, 2013; Giangreco & Broer, 2005; Griffin & Blatchford, 2021; Mortier et al., 2011; Radford et al., 2015; Russel et al., 2015). Fostering learner independence is essential for the students to be competent and self-sufficient (Radford et al., 2014; Vygotski, 2006). Thus, this effect, known as “velcro effect” (Giangreco et al., 2005) makes the student's learning and participation difficult, and, therefore, their inclusion.

The allocation of TAs to individual students is problematic, also, because of the added harm of delegating the support of students with disabilities or behaviour difficulties to the theoretically less qualified stakeholders (Giangreco, 2021; Giangreco et al., 2010). As a matter of fact, Radford et al. (2011) comparing the interactions with the students, saw that the ones with TAs were of a lesser quality than those with the teachers. It is worth noting as well that the teachers involve themselves more with these students' support when the TA is allocated to the classroom instead of an individual student (Giangreco et al., 2001).

Our recommendation of de-assigning students and choosing models that tend towards team-teaching could also contribute in reducing the heavily reported “Island in the Mainstream” phenomenon (Biklen, 1988 as cited in Giangreco, 2021, p.284) – whereby a student is in the same classroom as the other students but doing different activities with the TA. This means that students are present within classrooms but not participating with

their peers. Further information is needed to assess whether they are learning or not (the third inclusive principle). Consequently, at least, one of the defining inclusive education principles would not be fulfilled (UNESCO, 2009). They would not be fulfilled either in the cases listed in phases 2 as well as 3 where, even for just a few hours, the students are supported in the corridor or in special classrooms. In short, in this doctoral thesis we note that instead of an inclusive model as the laws suggest, (e.g., Catalonia, 2017), this individual allocation better fits into a medical model of support in which a “specialist” is supposed to treat the student’s problem rather than supporting them in a more contextualised way (Hughes, 2000; Kelly, 2010; Whitburn et al., 2017).

The medical model is also shown in outputs 3, 4 and 6 when the most difficult support tasks are carried out by the actually considered attention to diversity professionals (TAs and special education teacher) instead of being a shared task where the form teacher is the one with the main responsibility. That is, despite the intentional sampling of inclusive schools in phase 3 (output 6), our results pointed out that the deployment of TAs should improve to ensure inclusive education. In output 6, when sharing behaviour management experiences, there are clear examples of this issue. Although there is also evidence of effective behaviour management between TAs, teachers and other stakeholders.

Regarding the itinerant model (Butt, 2016b), it also describes the deployment of TAs in Catalonia (outputs 3, 4 and 6). As well as being problematic in regard to inclusion, it hinders effective partnerships. As to inclusion, the fact that they are going from classroom to classroom supporting different students with different teachers makes TAs incapable of coordinating with all the teachers, as well as not knowing in which point of the lesson they are or what the student has already done. This is highlighted particularly in Output 6 when having to intervene in a coherent way in behavioural matters. The literature recommends models in which the TA is permanently assigned to one class and one teacher being able to implement roles to avoid the overreliance on TAs, such as the Teacher Assistant As Facilitator or TAs promoting peer support arrangements among other school wide alternatives (Brock & Carter, 2016; Butt, 2016b; Giangreco et al., 2011; Giangreco et al., 2005).

Regarding building effective partnerships in the itinerant model, as highlighted in output 5, it might be possible, but one of the most important things is investing in formal and informal time for the partnership, making the most of all interpersonal factors. The itinerant model makes this difficult because TAs might not have enough time to attend meetings, plan, reflect, discuss and make contributions to the teachers in regards to assessment —e.g., Scruggs et al. (2007), but for co-teaching partnerships. The time where TAs and teachers can adapt mutually inside the classroom that helps them fit together can also not be enough depending on the amount of hours TAs spend with each teacher.

Additionally to the interaction barriers for the adults arising from the one-on-one and itinerant model, we pointed out another barrier that can end up affecting student inclusion. This is the existence of TAs whose roles and responsibilities are only looking after students' basic needs (personal care tasks): the SEAs and some Carers (outputs 3 and 4). In an inclusive approach the students not only need physical attention. In fact, we were able to see that, in practice, the stakeholder who support them intervened as well in an educational manner no matter the kind of TA they were (outputs 3, 4, 6 and 7). This situation cannot be avoided, and it is also necessary if we want to encourage the participation and learning of all the students with more proactive practices. With this thesis we provide the concept of “educational roles” instead of instructional roles (Carter et al., 2009; Giangreco et al., 2010; Sharma & Salend, 2016; Webster et al., 2011) to qualify the fact that TAs should not take on the instructional task, that being the teachers' main responsibility instead, and the TAs should intervene as a team (outputs 3, 4, 6 and 7) as the Irish government is trying to achieve with “inclusion support assistants” instead of “special needs assistants” (Zhao et al., 2021) but insisting on teamwork rather than denying them their role in teaching activities.

Regarding intervening as a team, in output 2 we introduced the concept of “practical co-teaching” with the intention of making it clear that much of the evidence gathered about teacher-teacher interventions can be used and adjusted for TA-teacher interventions, keeping in mind their differences. Nevertheless, we do not intend to catalogue it under co-teaching because TAs are not teachers, and they should not take on such responsibilities if they are not working closely together with teachers. Thus, all types of

TAs, except carers, would have the possibility of participating in the lesson planning and the support gradient, in the implementation, the reflexion and adjustment of measures, and in assessment. That is to say, in Catalonia, in practice, most types of TAs and teachers can function as co-teachers from the three-legged stool suggested by Scantlebury et al. (2008) — co-respect, co-responsibility and co-generative dialogue — the only thing missing would be the co-responsibility leg because without specific knowledge and ongoing support on how to scaffold learning for independence (Bosanquet & Radford, 2018; Radford et al., 2015, 2014), it is better that the more intensive interventions are taken on by whoever is better prepared. In this sense, in output 2 we emphasise in more universal measures of support that the TAs can contribute to boost, always avoiding an overreliance on them, expanding the measures proposed in prior research (i.e., student organisation in cooperative structures, by stations, heterogeneous group splitting, interactive groups and project based learning and other structures to foster peer-to-peer support such as peer mentoring, the student mentor and inter-institutional volunteering).

Therefore, in order to offer more inclusive support the need to improve the employment and working conditions, as well as the inclusion of TAs in coordination, training and better supervision, are justified and largely evidenced (e.g., Breyer et al., 2020; Butt, 2016a, 2017; Giangreco et al., 2010; Sharma & Salend, 2016). Accordingly, the employment and working conditions of carers could not be justified for any other reason than an economic one. These conditions together with the roles and responsibilities defined for SEAs and some Carers would reveal double standards since the support policies claim to favour an inclusive education (output 3). Double standards are also shown when schools don't make the most of TAs by not including them in meetings, trainings, and other instances of teamwork despite having hours devoted to them while defining themselves as inclusive.

In addition to reconsidering the roles of SEAs and Carers, their initial and ongoing training needs to be improved. To this end, since TAs actually have a place in schools, and PEEs and SISs have a specific initial TA education (vocational education) addressing their roles and responsibilities, it would be appropriate to design a specific vocational training for SEEs as well. This qualification requirement is a reality in a few countries

such as Slovakia or the US (Breyer et al., 2020; Butt & Lowe, 2012). Given that and contrasting with most countries' regulations, we suggest a high level vocational education focused on each professional profile as a requirement for future TAs. This initial education should be accompanied by opportunities for professional development adjusted to TAs' needs (output 3 and 6). Butt & Lowe (2012) indicated that a specifically targeted skills-based training benefited the whole classroom. This means that there is no need for huge investments as Da Fonte & Capizzi (2015) showed with a cost-effective training based on three core skills. Indeed, the meta-analysis conducted by Brock & Carter (2017) suggested that the quality is more important than the number of hours of training. Thus, having time for free training is a strength of the working conditions of the TAs hired by the Catalan Department of Education (SEE, SEA, PES and SIS), although these free training courses should be optimised as the literature suggests and addressed at both TAs and teachers.

Considering, the *Wider Pedagogical Role* (WPR) model (Webster et al., 2011), "preparedness", in addition to training, also includes the daily preparation of TAs and teachers to make the most of having a TA, and also having the opportunity to discuss lessons beforehand. Again, excepting Carers, the other kinds of TAs in Catalonia can attend meetings, though this might not be their reality in practice as shown in phases 2 and 3 of this doctoral dissertation; so, schools should purposefully schedule and highlight within the school community the relevance of the full participation of TAs in school routines. This coordination involves a kind of supervision understood as a natural team matter, not a hierarchical one, where some command and others obey. However, employment and deployment conditions may not be favourable for this to happen (Breyer et al., 2020; Slater & Gazeley, 2018).

In fact, in an inclusion-oriented school supervision should not be understood as authoritative but cooperative, as made explicit by the participants of the two phases of data gathering on this matter. The support staff may have a better knowledge of a student or strategies that might be as or more valuable than those of a teacher, because of how well they might get to know the student. Equally, the specialist might have knowledge and resources that can better the day-to-day doings inside the classroom. That is why

multi-disciplinary work is so important in order to give students a comprehensive care. The greatest difficulty is that there is no assurance of these natural and ongoing opportunities to train, provide performance feedback and mentor TAs being always led by more expert and skilled professionals such as special education teachers as, in addition to guiding the staff, they have other relevant functions (Gómez-Zepeda et al., 2017). But skilled professionals are needed since orientations should be aligned with what works. To this end, prior research has highlighted both the relevance of schoolwide tools to ensure a more effective deployment of school supports (see Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012; Giangreco & Broer, 2003; Giangreco et al., 2001b) and the need of training to favour effective supervision (Breton, 2010; French, 2001; Lewis & McKenzie, 2010). Therefore, diverging slightly from the preliminary literature, we do not believe that the person in charge of TA supervision should be a SEN-Co, school psychologist or special education educator. Considering that TAs spend, or should spend, the most time with form teachers, supervision should be a task taken on as a team.

The primary mechanism for supporting students with disabilities in general education classes should no longer be the utilisation of TAs. As Giangreco (2021) suggested, addressing all the deployment, employment and working factors discussed in this subsection should not be seen as the solution to inclusion; other combinations of alternatives to a TA's dependency should be considered. The three-tiered model of support established by the Department of Education (Catalonia, 2017) might be helpful in designing and implementing a wide range of support measures addressed to all students.

8.1.2. External factors affecting the interactions between instructors and teachers

Output 8 suggest that after-school support initiatives have a considerable potential in fostering greater equity when offering free academic support to those students who are at risk of school failure, as well as being a part-time job where university students can build up useful competencies for their future careers. With the present research on the main components that contribute to optimise the use of this support, we provided a more holistic proposal to approach the deployment of after-school initiatives by unifying prior proposals on the matter (Durlak et al., 2010; Pierce et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2010;

Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010). Our new proposal adds a new component, considering that the quality of collaborations between schools and after-school initiatives matter. Therefore, the most important components that inform on the quality of after-school initiatives are: after-school support design and orientation, supportive environment (including the interpersonal relationships between students and with instructors), and stakeholder communication and teamwork. Their effective deployment, thus, depends mainly on how these components are implemented; their structure, the quality of the training and support addressed to stakeholders, the time for collaboration, and its quality, considering the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) approach (Output 9).

Regarding the suggested proposal to approach after-school support (Output 8), the first dimension, *support design and orientation*, covers how the initiative is implemented in terms of objectives and how they are approached, the activities, learning dynamics and routines. As a result, this dimension encompasses two of the three quality indicators proposed by Pierce et al. (2010): the variety and appropriateness of *available activities* and the *program flexibility* to let participants decide. The SAFE criteria (Durlak et al., 2010) was also considered in this dimension due to the fact that it recommends providing a *sequenced* set of activities to foster specific goals, fostering *active* forms of learning, ensuring that program components *focus* on the goals, and *explicitly* targeting these goals. As to Smith's et al. (2010) components, this dimension includes the purposeful engagement of students. To this end, Output 8 emphasises the relevance of making students aware of their progresses as well as involving them and their families in decisions related to the design and orientation of the initiative. Four out of five main recommendations gathered in the guide of “what works clearinghouse” to improve academic achievement in out-of-school time (Beckett et al., 2009) can be included in this dimension.

The *supportive environment* dimension (Output 8) refers to the climate and good atmosphere within the support group, to make students feel safe, facilitating good coexistence, and the bonding with one another and with the instructor. Other key constructs usually measured by different program quality assessment tools that we include in this

dimension are, thus, social/behavioural norms, relationships, and environment (Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010). Consequently, this dimension includes the two remaining dimensions proposed by Smith et al. (2010): ensuring a *supportive environment* and fostering *structured interactions* between staff and supported youth. This dimension also includes the supportive and positive behaviour from the instructors towards the youth enrolled in the initiative, as remarked within Pierce's et al. (2010) definition of the dimension *positive child-staff relations*.

Prior research proposals do not include the third dimension, but they can be considered in different ways in tools that assess the relations to the community (see Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010). Although it may depend on whether the initiatives are community or school-based, within a MTSS framework all supports need to be interconnected and integrated no matter the context in which they take place (Hart et al., 2021); therefore our third dimension is fundamental. This is also supported by a strong theoretical framework on interactions between contexts and learning (Bronfenbrenner, 1987; Tseng & Seidman, 2007). In Output 8 we named this dimension: *stakeholder communication and teamwork*, however, after delving into the interactions of support stakeholders (Output 9), we suggest naming it *collaboration between school and after-school settings*, considering the kind of shared work needed between instructors and teachers based on the typologies of Reeves' et al. (2018) of interprofessional practice. In fact, this connection and collaboration is basic to carry out most of the recommendations included in the dimensions above. To facilitate such interactions, in Beckett's et al. (2009) guide, they recommend designating one responsible person in each setting to encourage communication and favourable relationships between school and after-school staff.

In addition to these three dimensions, a fourth dimension related to *operation policies* should be added despite being in another level of concreteness. This encompasses guidelines on staff distribution, staff and student selection, initial and ongoing training, and supervision (Output 8). In this line, the educational level of the staff and their ratios are relevant; in fact, these, in addition to their training, are associated with school adjustment (Vandell et al., 2005). Furthermore, as some support tasks are shifted to instructors, and they are not professional stakeholders, they need to be trained to

properly assume these roles (McQuillin et al., 2019; Webster et al., 2011). Despite task-shifting, output 8 highlights that the instructors should not pretend to be teachers, their role has value for being different from teachers and family members. Consistent with the role performed in other initiatives, they should be friendlier and more affectionate, trying to become good models for students and acting as such (Davis & Fullerton, 2016; Woodland, 2016).

To guide instructors in this role, they should receive initial training addressing the fundamentals of educational support during after-school time, but also training and coaching on an ongoing basis. Therefore, Frazier's et al. (2019) three-tiered training proposal may be useful for improving both the training and supervision of after-school initiatives (see the section “implications”). Despite prioritizing hiring teachers, psychology or social work students for instructor and coordinator positions as it can be more beneficial for students (Van Dam et al., 2018), coordinators may not be prepared enough (in terms of knowledge and skills) to train or design training capsules for this training proposal. Therefore, another sustainable way to ensure the effective implementation of after-school initiatives such as *service-learning* should be explored (Tannenbaum & Brown-welty, 2006; Vess et. al., 2018). Nonetheless, after-school coordinators need to be trained to support instructors, as most do, rather than simply playing a clerical role (Output 8). They should support the adherence of instructors to first and second-dimension recommendations, fostering their relations and regular collaborations with schools, as well as coordinating the assessment of their groups' performance and the use of the data gathered from all parties to improve their practices (Beckett et al., 2009). In conclusion, it is not only what instructors do with students that matters, but how the whole initiative and support system is understood and deployed.

8.2. Interpersonal factors affecting the interactions between teaching and non-teaching staff.

From outputs 5, 8 and 9 we can see that TA-teacher and instructor-teacher interactions are of a different nature and they should be approached differently. As explained in the first part of this discussion section, despite the employment and deployment conditions, the job of TAs should be professionalised while the instructors' job, despite the

improvements needed, benefits those college or university students that want to become teachers or work, at least, in other education-related jobs (Vess et al., 2018). To roughly define the kind of joint work needed in the professional relationships studied, we take Reeves' et al. (2018) proposal grounded for interprofessional relationships. They defined how essential the main elements of joint work — shared team identity, clear roles/tasks/goals, interdependence of members, integration of work, shared responsibility and team tasks — were for the types of interprofessional partnerships, classifying them from highest to lowest relevance of such elements as: interprofessional teamwork, collaboration, coordination and network.

Considering this classification and the findings from outputs 5, 8 and 9, to provide an effective support TAs and teachers would be included in teamwork while instructors and teachers, in collaboration. The differences according to the definition are that in the joint work of instructors and teachers, their shared identity and integration is seen as less relevant than in TA-teacher partnerships. The tasks and situations that instructors and teachers should manage together are more predictable, less urgent and complex than the ones faced by TAs and teachers within the same classroom with students with disabilities and/or behaviour difficulties.

Our results show that the proximity of teachers and both kinds of stakeholders of support is different and, as previously theorized, as it should be. Given the scarce interaction between instructors and teachers observed in the first exploratory study, the subsequent interaction analyses remained at communication level while we could delve deeper in TA-teacher interactions. Therefore, on the one hand, the interpersonal factors that emerged from TAs and teachers' experiences were the following: trust, respect, value or acknowledgement, perception of affinity, professional compatibility, maintaining open communication, the sense of belonging to a classroom and the sense of belonging to the whole school, feeling welcomed, the sense of autonomy as well as the perception of hierarchy and teamwork (output 5 and appendix 10). Communication and trusting each other were also considered for instructor-teacher collaborations. However, professional compatibility was reduced to sharing goals, and, as instructors supported students out of

school hours, whether they understood this as an additional school measure or not, was an important factor to explore.

All the above-mentioned factors in their favourable version should fit together in order to achieve proper partnerships according to the intensity of joint work required for each form of educational support. Despite what is essential to achieve an effective partnership in each case, this is a dyadic process in which each stakeholder must put together the pieces of their unique puzzle. This is a relevant contribution for research in both the fields of TAs and after-school given the scarcity of studies that address them.

For feeling at ease, our participants highlighted the importance of *affinity*, making a personal connection with the partner, which was described as being at least, if not more, important than a professional connection. This mutual understanding was reported to be evident from on first impressions but must be worked on (output 5). Prior literature broadly included this aspect in compatibility, emphasising its relevance for the success of co-teachers partnerships (Scruggs et al., 2007). In fact, Scruggs et al. (2007) identified that incompatibilities were one of the major challenges among co-teachers in Australia, Canada, and the United States. Furthermore, Cockroft & Atkinson (2015) highlighted that characteristics involving personal qualities, attitude and a genuine interest in the job are even more important than training. The relevance of attitudes also emerged in the after-school study (output 9). The novelty of the term *affinity* shown in output 5 is that we specifically differentiate it from professional compatibility. This unintentional personal agreement or sympathy can be influenced by partners' personalities and backgrounds (Hall, 2005; Pratt, 2014).

In contrast, *professional compatibility* is focused on sharing the same perspective on which are the milestones of education, how to better include students, their relationship with them and when they have high expectations on students and share the same management style. Therefore, partners should agree on methods, roles, their relationship with students, lesson planning and their main goals. The level of agreement on these aspects for initiatives in after-school should not be as high as when stakeholders share the same space and time. However, as shown in outputs 9 and 10, methods should be active

and favour the achievement of the shared objectives which should also be agreed with the students. Due to the hybridity concerning instructors, their roles and relationship with students are issues that they should address with each teacher they work with to make their expectations compatible. These results are in line with Pratt (2014) who understood compatibility between teachers as sharing similar perspectives, views, and being similar in their learning philosophy. To fit in professionally, first, stakeholders should acknowledge that everyone may have a prior experience, expertise and working style preferences, so they should work on them to form common goals (Bridges et al., 2011; Capizzi & Fonte, 2012).

In addition to feeling at ease, professional compatibility is also needed to trust each other but is described by participants as an expectation based on what they perceived from the others' practices. To stress on this nuance, when compatibility was linked to trust as an expectation, we categorised it as *fulfilment of professional expectations*. In output 5, the lack of confidence in the other is due to a divergence in perspectives on education, management styles, methods, or ways of assisting students with disabilities. Stakeholders should rely on each other with the perception that their partner will properly manage classroom situations in a professionally compatible manner. Thus, consistent with Hammersley-Fletcher & Qualter (2010), mutual trust depends on the stakeholders' practices.

The interviewed TAs and teachers also highlighted the usefulness of an *open* and true *communication* between them. This factor was linked both to feeling at ease with their partner as well as trusting them. On the one hand, to feel at ease, stakeholders should know and acknowledge that discrepancies within the workspace or relationships emerge. Differences should be handled as part of the job and by taking action to proactively overcome them, rather than understanding them as a personal offense. Not facing problems has long term implications. In addition, there are challenges inherent to the communication across professions due to profession-specific world-views and common understanding (Borg & Drange, 2019; Hall, 2005).

Interprofessional barriers are relevant in TA-teacher partnerships since they have different backgrounds starting with the required training level and their training opportunities. On the other hand, an assertive and *open communication* among partners is also crucial in trusting one's partner. This favours negotiation of practices and feedback provision since partners feel empowered and secure to contribute naturally, being themselves. For a partnership to flow easily, stakeholders need to be informed, discuss their practices, as well as not feeling judged or criticised when sharing (output 5). In addition, to ensure a more trusting relationships output 9 highlights the relevance of perceiving that communicative exchanges have an impact on practices. In fact, we show that communication is relevant for educational support (output 9). Because of the current employment and working conditions of TAs and, for some, their non-existent time for coordination, keeping TAs and instructors informed about the most relevant issues should be a part of teachers' tasks. Stakeholders need to be pragmatically informed about useful aspects to improve their practices (Ekornes, 2015).

To feel at ease, the *sense of belonging* to each class-group, was reported as being important (output 5). TAs need to feel included in classroom dynamics and routines. In the same school, TAs felt more included with some teachers than others. This might be influenced by the model of deployment of the TAs in Catalonia as they are working across several classes with different teachers and multiple students (outputs 3 and 4). However, participants differentiated feeling included in each classroom versus feeling included at a school level. According to their experiences, the sense of belonging to a class-group had more to do with the partnership quality while to the whole school it was related to external factors such as employment conditions, administrative support, co-planing time and leadership styles. The perception of loneliness was present among several TAs but was particularly highlighted when partnerships did not work well or when TAs managed more challenging situations (e.g., output 6).

In contrast, teachers seem to be more involved with instructors when they experience conflict situations, tending to a reactive kind of communication (outputs 8 and 9). However, data about the sense of belonging was not gathered in the instructors' case as they are stakeholders of the same organisation. Despite it not being necessary to consider

instructors as part of the school staff, in output 9 we stressed the relevance of considering after-school support as part of a continuum of school support practices. This is consistent with recommendations on integrating educational support within a MTSS (Hart et al., 2021; Sailor, 2015).

Therefore, the roles of all support stakeholders should be integrated like a gear system, they should not work in isolation. Although instructors are not school personnel as TAs are, they are part of the community and must be and feel part of this support system. Breyer et al., (2020), with their transnational research, pointed out that TAs' involvement in school activities depends on the members of the school-community, despite suggesting that the countries in which TAs are more likely to feel part of the school community were those in which they are employed by schools directly or they are part of the advisory board. With our data we can say that it is first the school attitude and, then, the opportunities to be and become part of what matters (e.g., joint time for coordination, training, leisure), not who the employer is, contrasting with Breyer's et al., (2020) interpretation (output 5). The same happened with instructors since, they all have the same employment and deployment conditions, their collaboration experiences were diverse due to how they interacted (output 9).

Nonetheless, this sense of belonging together with the perception of being *welcomed* seem to be more relevant for TAs than teachers perhaps because they are the ones experiencing such poor working conditions. As to *feeling welcomed*, participants shared that the reception process when TAs arrived at the school can leave a mark on their feelings and personal impression as regards the school and how their job is perceived (output 5). As Capizzi & Da Fonte (2012) suggested, this can make TAs feel informed, welcomed, and valued as a part of the school staff. Our participants stated that this not only consist of a first welcome and orientation but on a constant welcoming attitude and including TAs within regular classroom dynamics. In TA-teacher relationships, this should be specifically tackled since, due to particularities such as working conditions and responsibilities, it might not be possible to implement an effective *Team Teaching* (Cook & Friend, 1995) contrasting with co-teacher partnerships. How teachers receive instructors in schools was also relevant for their partnership (output 9). Likewise, one of

the recommendations to improve instructor-teacher collaborations is to support students within their schools so that instructor-teachers contact increases. However secondary school students are currently supported in their schools so only placing the initiative in schools would not solve the problem, teachers should facilitate these informal exchanges and make instructors feel welcomed.

Collaboration between stakeholders is essential in providing effective support (Devecchi & Rouse, 2010). Once stakeholders were working together, they could know and complement each other (outputs 5 and 9). This complementarity and reciprocity increased mutual trust. This is key for *teamwork* (in the case of TAs) and *collaboration* (in the case of instructors) as a favourable sphere of mutual support can be generated: the more mutual trust, the more effectiveness in joint work was perceived. Quicke (2003) argued that if the relationship is collaborative, then, this feeling of trust would have to be mutual, but the kind of trust between unequal relationships must be particularly considered. This affects both teamwork with TAs and collaborations with instructors. In this sense, partnerships should be based on mutuality, the perception that one can complement the other, rather than on hierarchy (Slater & Gazeley, 2018). This parity helps to achieve fluidity in teamwork which is helpful in practice (Pratt, 2014), especially considering the partner's strengths as some TAs and instructors are highly qualified (e.g., some TAs are educational psychologist or teachers and instructors are college students). This can be also related to the need of *autonomy* expressed by stakeholders when describing what makes them feel at ease because, within a team, teachers must leave TAs room to make decisions and participate. Teachers should include and empower TAs, fostering their autonomy if they want to achieve a relationship of collaboration instead of a 'master-servant' relationship (Quicke, 2003).

The perception of *hierarchy* is a factor of relevance in teacher-TA relationships since they belong to different employment categories and some TAs have poorer working conditions. As compiled by Hall (2005), traditionally, professions were understood as hierarchical power structures which should be challenged by the interprofessional team process. In schools this structure might be considering head teachers at the top and TAs at the bottom of a pyramid. The social status also plays an important role as in Catalonia

the difference between TAs, and the existence of different kinds of TAs itself, is somewhat unknown even within schools, not to mention their scant social visibility (output 3). This might be also applied to instructor-teacher relationships. Quicke (2003) suggested that their relationships are unequal per se and wondered if they are much alike manager and managed relationships or tutor and trainee.

The bulk of the research aligns with the need to equalise relationships between teachers and TAs (see Breyer et al., 2020; Cremin et al., 2005; Devecchi & Rouse, 2010; Hall, 2005; Quicke, 2003; Slater & Gazeley, 2018). Spreading the concept of “network of support” utilised to include other stakeholders as relevant agents of support (Puigdemívol et al., 2017) might be useful in shifting these non-teaching figures to partners instead of assistants. Study 4 of this doctoral dissertation remarked the imperative relevance of establishing egalitarian relationships showing how the perception of non-egalitarian relationships negatively affected partnerships and, consequently, educational practices. However, the fact that different stakeholders perceived their relationship as egalitarian despite the barriers that came from the above-mentioned external factors is encouraging since schools do not need to wait until the Department of Education ensures proper conditions to improve these relationships. What matters is the kind of dialogue established between stakeholders; an egalitarian dialogue based on the quality of the arguments rather than in power positions (Aubert et al., 2013).

Hierarchy, thus, has to do with the acknowledgement affecting the perception of respect and feeling valued. Teachers’ and TAs’ discourses revolved around this regard as well as the role that TAs were allowed to perform. The more they were consulted, considered, and included in relevant tasks, the more they felt respected and valued by teachers. It is not surprising that literature exists showing that TAs feel underappreciated, although, again, this varies enormously from school to school (Breyer et al., 2020; Brown & Stanton-Chapman, 2017; Giangreco et al., 2001; Symes & Humphrey, 2011). Feeling respected and valued is not only essential for TA-teacher or instructor-teacher partnership formation; when teachers demonstrate respect and care for each other, trust in each other’s decisions increases, contributing to interdependent co-teaching relationships (Pratt, 2014). Interdependence should not be confused with assuming teacher duties without

adequate preparation, training, direction, or supervision since this was linked to feelings of disrespect and isolation (Giangreco et al., 2010). Task-shifting should always be supported as well as framed within a MTSS approach (Hart et al., 2021; McQuillin et al., 2019).

The attitudes of all school members as well as the way that supports are operationalized are the first steps to fostering effective partnerships. A partnership between TAs and teachers is not the mere presence of two adults within classrooms as was suggested for teacher dyads (Jurkowski & Müller, 2018; Pratt, 2014; Rytivaara et al., 2019). Likewise, collaborations between instructors and teachers should be more than three meetings — presentation, follow-up and a debrief meeting — and one unidirectional report at the end of each term. Partnerships are reported to grow with time, facing first impressions and checking and considering each other's working preferences and behaviours (outputs 5 and 9). Therefore, both pairs of stakeholders, to improve their joint work (teamwork or collaboration), should explicitly work on their roles, on their interdependence, on their methods and routines, likes and dislikes, on their relationship with students, on their communication (including the nonverbal one), and specifically address how to improve their partnership itself.

9. Implications for policies and practices

Administrations should support the implementation of their policies. In consequence, this doctoral dissertation emphasises the need of implementing the *multi-tiered systems of support* (MTSS) approach, integrating any kind of support measure. The base of this approach is the response to intervention philosophy, hence, one of the most relevant improvements would be (1) promoting for stakeholders to base their practices on research evidence, collecting information on their practices, analysing them and making improvements. Likewise, (2) administrations should collect, monitor, analyse and share data of school practices, especially if they are targeted at the so-called vulnerable students and funded by public administrations. To make this process more sustainable, (3) partnerships should be made between frontline staff, administrations, and researchers considering the overall benefit of the parties involved.

It should be noted that the MTSS is fundamental when *task-shifting* occurs, that is, when some stakeholders assume specific roles on educational support. This is the case of teaching assistants (TAs) who, together with teachers, support students during school hours as well as instructors who support them in an after-school initiative. Recommendations emerging from this doctoral dissertation addressing both support measures have two main focuses. Firstly, both their employment and deployment conditions, and secondly, delving into the implications concerning relationships between teaching and non-teaching staff (TAs and instructors). In a broad sense, the current education legal framework in Catalonia is on the right track, as it launches policies that support the implementation of MTSS. However, it is necessary to articulate how to put them into practice.

9.1 Employment and deployment of TAs

Regarding the deployment of TAs, there is no need for three different kinds of TAs—special education educators (SEEs), special education assistants (SEAs) and carers—with direct support tasks. All three should play similar roles to favour inclusive education, but only the job description for SEEs fits inclusive education principles. Consequently, the administration should (4) devise a plan to convert the current SEAs and carers into SEEs taking advantage of their experience and only hire SEEs from here on. (5) Reducing the number of types of TAs from 5 to 3 might be helpful to clarify their role and define

what TAs represent for the school community and the whole of society. However, specific actions in this respect, such as including them as school staff in school's websites, organigrams, interviews with families, parties, and other regular activities would make them more visible and would help to overcome this highlighted barrier. The Preschool Education Specialists (PESs) and Social Integration Specialists (SISs) have their work boundaries better defined and, in addition, they are better oriented towards inclusion because, unlike the previous ones, they are not assigned to specific students. Therefore, we strongly recommend (6) assigning TAs to some classrooms to also encourage the involvement of teachers in intensive supports. Lastly, on the subject of (7) contractual conditions, those that must be maintained are SEEs, PESs and SISs, as they are employed full-time by the Department of Education, they belong to a C1 employment category, they have free access to the Department of Education's ongoing training and their job description includes time for this ongoing training and coordination. However, as it will be specified later, coordination time should be optimised at a school level.

As for the initial TA education, both PES and SIS have specific vocational education—ISCED-4, post-secondary non-tertiary education level (UNESCO, 2014); spanning two courses (2000 hours, including internship)— that prepares them for their roles and job duties. SEEs, being different professionals, also (8) need an initial training that addresses their working needs. This should be authorised by the Spanish Government and launched and managed by the Department of Education in public high schools. Basic examples of core contents for their initial education are how to scaffold learning to foster learners' independence together with teachers; how to ensure effective proximity with students; how to facilitate interactions among students; inclusive education principles; communicative and teamwork skills; training on co-planning co-reflection and co-assessment with teachers; training on the most recommended models of deployment of TAs; and training on the most common tasks that might be shifted or shared such as behaviour management (Bosanquet & Radford, 2018; Brock et al., 2016; Brock & Carter, 2017; Da Fonte & Capizzi, 2015; Douglas et al., 2018; Radford et al., 2015; Radford et al., 2014; Rispoli et al., 2011; Walker & Smith, 2015; Walker & Snell, 2016; Webster et al., 2013).

The Department of education should also (9) offer ongoing training that is adjusted to the needs of TAs and teachers. This is fundamental when some specialised tasks —such as promoting the use of augmentative and alternative communication or function-based classroom interventions (Bingham et al., 2007; Walker & Snell, 2016)— are implemented together or are shifted to TAs. However, this premise does not involve delegating tasks for which TAs do not have sufficient preparation and skills. (10) Teachers, who are responsible for all students and the more qualified professionals, must take on the most challenging tasks, with the support of the entire team. As suggested by Webster et al. (2013) this training should be conducted together with teachers or, at least, both should have a similar training, so as to apply theory to practice.

Teachers could also train TAs (Brock & Carter, 2016), but given the structure of the Catalan educational system, (11) those who can best carry out this type of training or internal coaching are the Support and Attention to Diversity Teachers (Gómez-Zepeda et al., 2017) and the specialised professionals of the external public services (e.g., the psychopedagogues of the psychopedagogical counselling teams). For this reason, all these stakeholders should be (12) trained in their initial education and also on an ongoing basis for this purpose. It is essential that teachers have teamwork skills and know how to work and support effectively with the support of TAs; they should, at least, master the contents aforementioned as they are basic for TAs' initial education. Furthermore, (13) TAs, as part of the school, should also be included in school trainings that are generally addressed to teachers. Relating to their supervision, the head teacher's team would, as a result, be in charge of the management of all the school staff (including each type of TAs) and their inclusion in every area, while both the specialised professionals and the form teachers would guide and orient them.

Regarding the deployment of TAs, (14) the *itinerant* and *one-on-one* models (the most common ones in Catalonia) need to be avoided to the extent possible and in the case of the *withdrawing* model, it should be rooted out. We suggest implementing a sort of team-teaching model adjusted to the strengths and limitations of both teachers and TAs. This recommendation has its base not only on inclusion arguments in relation to students (UNESCO, 2017) but also based on what favours better interactions between TAs and

teachers for educational support. As for effective interactions, the mismatch of roles and partnership formation, (15) administrations and schools should bet on stable teaching and non-teaching staff partnered with the most compatible colleagues (based on interpersonal factors) for a prolonged period of time. Furthermore, the head teacher's team (16) must ensure that the schedules of both TAs and teachers are compatible so that they can co-plan, co-reflect and co-evaluate. Although the administration guarantees coordination time for SEEs, SEAs, PESs and SISs, this should be properly used on a school level; these meetings must be (17) operationalised and optimised to make the most of the time of the stakeholders involved (e.g., Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012; Siles et al., 2015 proposals). All TAs need to (18) be included in meetings that concern them, considering their arguments for decision-making based on an egalitarian dialogue (Aubert et al., 2013).

With respect to the advice on building effective partnerships, as priorly highlighted, the school's head teacher's team should pair TAs and teachers according to their affinity, professional compatibility, personality, communicative style, and other preferences maintaining those pairs that feel at ease and trust each other or are in process to achieve so. This is essential for their day-to-day work considering that, for instance, they will have developed their own non-verbal language, and they will have matched their roles. To favour partnership formation, as mentioned previously, quality time for formal and informal exchanges should be guaranteed. This includes professional growth spaces, meetings to reach consensus on everything (based on research) as well as leisure activities and celebrations. In addition, schools should (19) establish a reception plan to properly receive TAs. In this first induction, schools should clarify their learning philosophy, principles, school policies and practices, making sure there are no relevant aspects (even if obvious) with no explanation. This plan should be designed taking into consideration every stakeholder and should specify who they should resort to according to each need. This induction should be understood as a process that also includes the introduction of TAs to the entire school team, emphasising the importance of (20) welcoming attitudes regularly.

On account of this, building successful partnerships is not only a structural matter, it also concerns the attitudes of teachers and TAs themselves. As long as working conditions do

not improve, teachers should (21) keep TAs informed on the most relevant issues as part of their tasks. In terms of teacher attitudes, teachers have to pay special attention to (22) including TAs in the school's life, (23) foster TAs' autonomy, empowering them to ensure teamwork instead of promoting "master-servant" relationships (Quicke, 2003) and (24) making them feel as equals, respected and valued. This should, in addition, be addressed on a system, school and individual-level.

9.2. Design and deployment of after-school initiatives addressed at youth at risk of academic failure.

Organisations that run after-school initiatives (e.g., non-profit organisations or local authorities) should (4) ensure that they meet the minimum quality criteria. The quality of the implementation must take preference over the number of students reached, since poor educational support practices will not contribute to equity either (Leos-Urbel, 2015).

We organised the components emerging from this doctoral dissertation and prior literature in the following dimensions: the design and orientation of after-school support initiatives, supportive environment (including interpersonal relationships between students and with instructors) and stakeholder communication and teamwork. This should be supported by effective supervision, training, and the implementation of the MTSS approach.

As for the after-school initiative's design and orientation, all stakeholders should know that this initiative aims at improving academic attainment. Hence, (5) specific goals, routines, and activities should be addressed for this purpose. Not only should (6) the stakeholders involved be aware of the overall dynamics and goals, but they should also be involved in such design to adjust expectations. This is also relevant to better respond to contextual needs. For this reason, to improve the current deployment, (7) we recommend involving families and students in this decision-making process and the subsequent adjustments. (8) In turn, enticing routines and goal-oriented, interest-based activities will also contribute to one of the pillars of the effective after-school support operation: keeping students engaged. Support use can also be enhanced through (9) making students aware of their improvements, even if there are few. This is relevant considering the students it is targeted to, and thus, instructors should help with both (10) accelerating their learning process (including learning skills) and also (11) offering a

more holistic and personalised support based on high expectations. To implement these more engaging and inclusive methods, instructors should be effectively trained and supported (see recommendations from 18 to 22).

In reference to ensuring a supportive and safe environment, (12) clear classroom management (including behaviour management and conflict resolution, one of the most reported needs), (13) adherence to jointly established rules and (14) bonding with students is essential. Knowing the importance of this knowledge and skills, after-school initiative leaders cannot leave it to chance and even less so, considering the different backgrounds of every instructor. As it happens with teaching assistants, the effectiveness of instructors' support practices should not only depend on their skills and predisposition. In consequence, proper training and supervision are key factors (see recommendations from 18 to 22). Other suggestions in this regard are (15) supervising instructor-student ratios (including co-teaching arrangements), (16) how students are grouped and (17) classroom arrangements that favour peer support, among other recommendations that could be transferred from literature on the subject of classroom management.

In terms of trainings, instructor training hours must be (18) paid for as a regular job assignment. In addition, (19) the hours of training carried out within after-school public initiatives by both teachers and instructors must be considered as training in the public job boards. On the subject of its articulation, Frazier et al., (2019) proposal might be a sustainable option for this kind of after-school initiatives. This training proposal is organised into three tiers, which facilitates the support and training offered to be individualised. The first one consists of (20) self-training capsules addressing the most relevant contents for supporting students during after-school time. These evidence-based contents can be reviewed and expanded annually. Capsules need to include theory as well as video exemplars from frontline staff. This virtual platform can serve both as initial training and for ongoing training of instructors. (21) The contents related to the implementation and collaboration of MTSS should be aimed at both teachers and instructors. The second tier should involve (22) interest-based, in-person workshops to introduce and practice some skills, routines, or activities with instructor teams. The third tier consists of (23) a specific and individualised support for the stakeholders that struggle

in any aspect of their practice. This should include skill modelling, training, or any other form of support tailored to their needs (e.g., leadership issues within classrooms or a bullying case).

The preparation of contents for tier 1 capsules as well as the whole second and third tier might be difficult to put into practice due to the fact that neither the instructors' coordinators nor the coordinators' coordinators are education professionals. If professional support cannot be financed with the budgets for after-school activities, solutions such as (24) reducing support groups or prioritizing the most vulnerable areas may apply. (25) Service-learning projects (Vess et al., 2018) involving psychology, social education, or teacher students would be an option as long as university teachers review and support their students' contributions as part of a practical project for their subject. If effectively implemented, it would benefit both parties.

Furthermore, (26) this needs to be supplemented with time for teams to reflect on their practices and share doubts, problems or concerns, considering as well the (22) in-situ observations conducted by their coordinators. Therefore, the role that coordinators must assume is of guidance and support rather than control; it must be clarified and supported. Coordinators should also foster the connection between schools and after-school initiatives. (23) In fact, leaders with clear roles concerning network coordination are essential (Borg & Drange, 2019; Díaz-Gibson et al., 2017). However, (24) each after-school initiative partnership needs an assigned coordinator on both sides to supervise collaborations involving the main stakeholders. This is especially relevant in secondary schools given that there are many form teachers involved.

Delving into collaborations and the connection between school and after-school time, on their first meeting, instructors and teachers should, in addition to (25) clarifying their roles and expectations; agreeing main goals and routines; reporting each student strengths, weaknesses, preferences, and any further relevant information, (26) shape how their interactions will take place. Collaboration and means of communication should be adjusted to the preferences of the stakeholders, as there is not a single valid way. However, there are communicative minimums that organisations should require. In

reference to formal communication, (27) instructors and teachers should meet, at least each term, to talk about the progress of the students, adjust goals and adapt practices with a preventive and proactive approach, not only to report needs or results.

Formal communication needs to be supplemented by less formal in-person and online communication to effectively address regular issues. Stakeholders should be aware that if agreements are not fulfilled, their collaborative relationship may deteriorate, in turn, affecting the educational support. (28) We strongly recommend in-person contact and exchanges as they are helpful in favouring interpersonal factors that lead to more effective collaborations, although we recognize that, in some secondary schools, it may be difficult to implement in terms of organisation. To this end, we encourage teachers (29) to organise their coordination time also considering that they should collaborate with after-school staff. Currently, (30) the participation of teachers can be encouraged by acknowledging the time spent on coordination as training hours in their job bank, although the system should improve by rewarding only teachers who are really involved. Collaboration time should also be (31) included among the instructors' paid tasks. As for online means of communication, tools such as (32) e-mail for urgent messages and online shared documents to keep partners informed of essential agreed points might be useful if used regularly in a sustainable way.

Finally, to foster effective collaborative partnerships, both school and after-school managers should (33) maintain, to the extent possible, stability among their staff, as well as among teacher-instructor pairs. Trust and partnership might also favour greater support between them, as well as other favourable dynamics that will strengthen the improvement and integration of after-school support (e.g., including the instructors in some Attention to Diversity Commissions or relevant trainings that would benefit the students they both support).

10. Strengths, limitations, and future research

10.1. Strengths

One of the main strengths of this thesis lies in its focus on precarious groups that also support highly vulnerable students. As for teaching assistants (TAs), they usually support students with disabilities or difficulties in the self-regulation of their behaviour. On the other hand, instructors of after-school initiatives, support students at risk of school failure, mostly of immigrant origin or from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. In addition to their job insecurity and precariousness, both stakeholders are a minority in the educational system, so giving them a voice is relevant to transform society (Mertens, 2009). The enhancement of their voices and roles as stakeholders of support may help to counteract the hierarchic structures of the educational system. Hence, the relevance of studying the support provided by stakeholders who could be considered the most vulnerable among those hired to support students, and who, in turn, support vulnerable students (UNESCO, 2015).

Focusing on how these groups are supported has implications for inclusive education and, consequently, for the quality of the system. This is because the improvement of the results of students with a lower performance is what has been shown to have the best effects on the overall performance of the system (Pedró, 2012; UNESCO, 2015). With the results and their implications, we are contributing to better orient the roles of these stakeholders and their whole deployment, fostering more inclusive and equitable systems. This doctoral dissertation may shed some light on how inclusive supports should be shaped, which is one of our strongest contributions.

The analysis of the interactions between these support stakeholders and teachers enabled making a relevant contribution, since there is little research on this topic. This doctoral dissertation, through the different studies conducted, provides a comprehensive vision of the interactions between teachers and the non-teaching staff. This doctoral dissertation helps to expand the knowledge around the way in which schools or education systems could foster effective working relationships between stakeholders that support vulnerable students, and how building bridges between school and after-school settings. Therefore, with the topics addressed, we may open up new lines of inquiry (Giangreco, 2021; Webster & De Boer, 2021). As these authors recommended, TAs are not studied in a decontextualized way, but are understood considering a set of factors that affect them, be

it directly or indirectly. In fact, understanding the collaborations between stakeholders thoroughly can only be achieved by considering the organisational context of school settings (Kelchtermans, 2006). Therefore, this thesis also provides information on policies and practices regarding both supports, which results in further contributions as there are no Spanish academic publications concerning TAs, and those that address the deployment of after-school initiatives are scarce. This also facilitates comparative studies for both shapes of the educational support at an international level.

Regarding the implications, it is worth highlighting their wide scope, which affects not only educational policies and practices with numerous orientations, but also contributing to the theory by suggesting the expansion of the models that we currently use to approach the quality of the supports. In addition, the impact on the context can be noticeable because both forms of support are highly requested, with an upward trend evidenced by their proliferation, in our context and also internationally (Collet-Sabé & Martori, 2018; Giangreco, 2021; Sharma & Salend, 2016). Furthermore, with the fifth specific objective and the dissemination plan, we specifically address the need of contributing to a real change in the area that concerns improvements on school practices. To this end, we have disseminated the results with the administration and major TA unions and, more generally, using social networks; part of the research has also been published in Catalan and Spanish in open access journals that are usually read by teachers (unlike the journals indexed to JCR or Scopus); we also participated in an open panel discussion about TAs. In addition, the research has been disseminated through numerous international congresses (i.e., CILME 2017, CICE 2017, CIMIE 2018, ECER 2018, ICESD 2018, AIDIPE 2019; ECER 2019, CIPE 2021 and WERA focal meeting 2021); we designed and conducted a course addressed to TAs for the Department of Education; and lastly, we added this content as part of a subject in the initial teacher education courses of the University of Barcelona as well as the University of Lleida.

Concerning the methods, the *mixed methods* approach helped to better capture the reality with the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative designs. This exploratory research was basically phenomenological to understand the experiences of some stakeholders from their perspective. TAs, instructors, teachers, and students from the after-school initiative

self-reported their experiences regarding the support and the interactions between adults. This way, their perspective could be triangulated, having a more completed view of the phenomenon that was being studied. This doctoral dissertation sought to provide depth through the means of describing a range of experiences rather than finding a single truth, including both, the most common perceptions and also less reported but highly descriptive information. The research design, including the two phases of fieldwork for each type of support, enabled the obtention of a first overview of the situation, which was completed with a second round of fieldwork that delved into the most relevant issues that were previously identified. Finally, it is worth to mention the large sample handled considering the four phases of fieldwork, especially the 70 semi-structured interviews with teachers, instructors, and TAs and the 6 focus groups with students.

10.2. Limitations

First, despite following the guidelines for ethical research facilitated by the European Commission (2013) and having the approval and support of the Department of Education and the Barcelona Education Consortium, in the case of the TA studies and the after-school initiative respectively, no official Institutional Review Board processed an approval. Continuing with the research design, Sharma & Salend (2016) noticed that research on TAs is usually characterised by employing qualitative approaches with relative small sample sizes, which are usually self-reported by TAs. In our case, teachers were also included, but, considering their recommendations on the research design, we are not contributing to the TAs field in this regard. However, we would do so in the case of after-school initiatives, since most studies use quantitative research designs. Nevertheless, our designs align to the purpose of our research.

Despite the large sample handled, we intended to avoid extracting generalizations from the results; as specified in each article. Therefore, findings and interpretations should be approached cautiously, the contextual data provided should help the reader to better interpret our results and conclusions. The sampling strategy for the questionnaires was snowball sampling for the TAs' questionnaire (due to the difficulty in having access to them) (Hernández et al., 2006), and the questionnaires addressed to students, teachers, and instructors were sent to the whole group belonging to the after-school initiative. As for the body of TAs in Catalonia, this could not be

calculated nor estimated because of the lack of official data and because most respondents were carers. Another limitation affecting the line of research concerning after-school time is that the participation of teachers was lower and could be biased since they might be more involved than the teachers who did not participate in both studies.

Regarding the design of instruments, none of the available instruments covered our objectives entirely, and we needed a questionnaire adapted to our context. Therefore, we created new questionnaires based on previous studies and pre-tested their properties and validity. Nonetheless, further applications of the questionnaire are needed to add to its usefulness and transferability to other after-school initiatives. Finally, in future research we will add a second level of *member checking* as a measure of credibility for interpreting results (Brantlinger et al., 2005) to ensure that we interpreted the meaning of the checked transcripts accurately according to the participants' perspectives. Each article states the additional specific limitations of each study.

10.3. Future research

In relation to the line of research on TAs, it would be interesting to analyse the relationship between the factors that emerged and their impact on school practices quantitatively. The impact of the deployment of TAs on these vulnerable students should be tested, although the characteristics of the standardised tests conducted massively in Catalonia may not be appropriate for most of the supported students. In fact, the comparisons between the learning processes of those students are somewhat challenging and need to be addressed cautiously. It would be interesting to include more autonomous communities (e.g., Aragon, Valencia or Andalusia, which make use of teaching assistants) controlling all the employment and deployment conditions, comparing them with other Spanish regions that are less dependent on TAs. The number of students supported in general or special education schools should be considered, as well as the main models of deployment that are implemented. To conduct large-scale, multi-method studies, we would like to partner with the international research community, responding to their call to join a network of TA researchers (Webster & De Boer, 2021). Finally, the topic of their professionalisation would also be relevant to explore.

Future research on the line of “support during after-school hours” should dig deeper into the interpersonal factors that favour collaborative partnerships, selecting working partners that feel as though they work as a team. This will expand the current research that selected groups according to their performance. It is necessary to implement a training structure, as well as improving the instruments of assessment and the communication tools commonly used to that end. In addition to support them in this regard, the effectiveness of these changes and trainings should be tested. Finally, the benefits of hiring teachers-to-be as instructors should be examined in light of the reported larger effect when mentors had helping professions (Van Dam et al., 2018). Likewise, the effects on their competences as teachers should also be investigated.

The novelty and relevance of these topics enables me to continue to approach them on a deeper level throughout my academic career. Our future work on this field of research may help to improve inclusive education. Framing my future work in a team rather than in a doctoral dissertation may shift the scope and its transference into school practices.

11. Conclusions

To increase the quality of education systems by ensuring inclusive education, it is essential to consider the cultures, policies, and practices related to educational support. Inclusive supports must have an eminently preventive character, be dynamic, and have different degrees of intensity. They must also be oriented towards accelerating the learning processes of all students with high expectations based on the *response to the intervention* philosophy, and must take advantage of the potentials of involving different community stakeholders. When different stakeholders from the student's environment participate in educational support, more interactions can be generated, maximizing the possibilities and opportunities for support. However, for joint practices to be more effective and to really help to reduce barriers to participation and learning, it is necessary to engage in a genuine process of coordination, adjustment of responsibilities, roles, expectations, and ways of working as a team. In fact, the only thing that leads to a comprehensive approach to students is a perspective of multi-sourced network of educational support, considering all the areas of development. In this sense, the *multi-tiered system of support* (MTSS) becomes relevant since it allows us to understand the supports as a whole and not individually. This approach might help to mitigate the concerns over the intrusion of some stakeholders into other fields, as it is rooted on collaboration.

In this doctoral dissertation, we focused on teaching assistants (TAs) and after-school initiative instructors because they are playing important roles in the field of educational support. These paraprofessionals are assuming some tasks that were typically carried out by teachers, school psychologists, social educators and even speech therapists. This so-called *task-shifting* occurred to meet social demands for more support with the current budget constraints. However, as TAs and instructors are one of the less-qualified stakeholders within the educational system, this “remedy” should only be considered if task-shifting is embedded within a MTSS. Catalonia launched this approach to educational support in 2017 with the Decree of Inclusive Education (Catalonia, 2017). However, this thesis shows the need of articulating how to put this approach into practices as, currently, supports involving teaching assistants and instructors are not integrated adequately within a MTSS, due to employment and deployment conditions.

One of the major theoretical contributions of this doctoral thesis is the proposal to expand the models used to describe all the factors that affect the impact of the supports that have been studied. We grounded the relevance of considering the interactions between those who provide educational support as a necessary component for an effective educational support. As for TAs, we suggest expanding the *Wider Pedagogical Role* (WPR) model (Webster et al., 2011) adding the interpersonal factors and the perspective of partnership formation within the preparedness, deployment, and practice levels of analysis. Regarding after-school initiatives, we suggest considering *collaboration across sites* as a defining component of after-school initiatives together with support design and orientation, supportive environment, the engagement of the students and the structured interactions within the after-school support (Durlak, 2010; Pierce et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2010).

Delving into the interpersonal factors, TAs and teachers need to build teamwork partnerships while instructors and teachers, need to build collaborative ones. To achieve this, the interpersonal factors that emerged from their experiences are: trust, respect, value or acknowledgement, perception of affinity, professional compatibility, open communication, the sense of belonging to a class-group and the sense of belonging to the whole school (integration of the after-school support in the instructor-teacher case), feeling welcomed, the sense of autonomy as well as the perception of hierarchy and teamwork or collaboration. The interactions between TAs and teachers provided more nuances on interpersonal factors since they interact more frequently, and their relationships must be closer. These interpersonal factors can prevent or act as catalysts to constitute partnerships.

The interactions of TAs and instructors with teachers and the resulting support given to students are only the tip of the iceberg, since different barriers have been detected related to its employment and deployment conditions. The most remarkable barriers in the case of TAs were: 1) the primary implementation model (itinerant and one-on-one); 2) the individual assignation of most TAs; 3) the roles attributed to the different types of TAs (with two types of TAs existing for economic interests rather than pedagogical reasons); 4) the ignorance of responsibilities and job boundaries which are neither known by society

nor by TAs themselves; 5) the misadjusted initial education for SEAs, SEEs and carers; 6) the lack of ongoing training addressed to the needs of both TAs and teachers; 7) the scarce participation of TAs in meetings that concerned their practices even though all types of TAs (except carers) have paid time for coordination; 8) the poor employment conditions of the carers (i.e., outsourced manager, piecework contracts, low wages, fired annually, and the lack of consideration for coordination and training); 9) the lack of a clear supervisor to guide and support them; and 10) the lack of professionalization of the TAs that have a position in the current educational system.

As for the implementation of after-school initiatives, the main barriers occurred in the design of the initiative itself that, although it could be based on research-informed quality criteria, 1) these are not intentionally transferred to the stakeholders who, lastly, implement the initiative. Likewise, 2) there is not any kind of systematic procedure based on the student's results nor the experiences of all stakeholders to improve the support. Therefore, its implementation might be more based on the experience or instincts of these non-professional stakeholders. 3) An overreliance on these non-professionalised stakeholders is another remarkable barrier. 4) A single one-afternoon induction training is not enough to prepare new instructors for their roles and the complexity of the situations they will face. 5) The ongoing training and coaching lead by coordinators may neither meet the instructors' needs nor the quality standards for effective trainings, as coordinators are not required to be qualified professionals. 6) It is also necessary to improve the role of coordinators and their preparation to assume such role. In fact, the whole approach to training and supervision needs to be improved. Moreover, 7) in general, the communication between instructors and teachers is scarce, affecting the quality of their collaboration and educational support. In fact, 8) the technologies are not effectively used to this end. Due to this, several schools 9) do not integrate this initiative adequately according to the MTSS approach. In truth, 10) the scant administrative support to the MTSS implementation specially affects after-school supports, since they are carried out outside of school space and time.

At a relational level, most obstacles came from barriers that have been already mentioned, such as the inclusion of TAs and instructors in relevant meetings, time constraints, or the

lack of adjusted training (in this case, to build up communicative and teamwork skills). Nonetheless, to ensure effective teamwork partnerships between TAs and teachers and collaboration partnerships between instructors and teachers, 11) the attitudinal barriers towards partnerships and inclusion are decisive. These barriers —e.g., not considering the voice of TAs due to hierarchy or status-driven perspectives, the lack of empathy, or not taking responsibility for some students—, directly affect all the interpersonal factors revealed through this doctoral dissertation. In addition to the reported external and interpersonal challenges, it should be noted that favourable school and individual attitudes are key to achieve successful partnerships between stakeholders of support.

In conclusion, effective interactions between non-teaching staff and teachers are essential for inclusive education. Therefore, policymakers, school leaders, frontline stakeholders and the whole of society should give them the importance they deserve. Due to the previously stated barriers that may hinder the inclusive implementation of supports, their effective deployment should not be left to chance or the goodwill of the involved stakeholders. If “every learner matters and matters equally”, every stakeholder of support matters and matters equally. They need to be supported, and they should not be forced by the system to make pedagogical decisions for which they are not prepared. For them, for students and for inclusive education, they should always work in partnership with teachers within a MTTS with embedded response to intervention (RTI). No support is inclusive in itself, it will always depend on how it is understood and implemented.

12. References

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Appendices

Appendix 1: The organisation of the support as a joint task

La organización del apoyo como tarea compartida

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En este capítulo explicaremos el cambio que se promueve en las escuelas inclusivas para concebir el apoyo educativo desde la perspectiva comunitaria, que potencia la participación y colaboración de todas las personas del centro y de la comunidad para hacer frente a las barreras que se interponen en el aprendizaje y la participación de todos los estudiantes. Ello implica superar la visión del apoyo como una tarea exclusiva de profesionales especialistas, para comprenderla como una responsabilidad compartida por todas las personas, profesionales o no, que están presentes en el entorno de los estudiantes y que en menor o mayor medida influyen en sus procesos de aprendizaje.

La movilización de los diferentes recursos del centro y de la comunidad busca asegurar al máximo la participación de todos los alumnos en las actividades de aula. Así mismo, se espera que los docentes mantengan altas expectativas para todo el alumnado y asuman un importante papel como agente facilitador de interacciones y dinámicas de aprendizaje, que generen un ambiente cooperativo de enseñanza basado en valores compartidos de respeto y valoración entre el alumnado. Esto potencia el sentido comunitario en el aula, donde la socialización y las interacciones entre todos los agentes cobran un papel protagónico para conseguir que todos los alumnos participen en la construcción de su propio conocimiento.

Otro aspecto fundamental que destacaremos de esta visión inclusiva del apoyo son sus beneficios, que, por un lado, se refieren a su carácter intensivo que permite ofrecer un apoyo más personalizado a la vez que contribuye a dar mayor sentido al aprendizaje y a acelerarlo y, por el otro, su carácter extensivo que aporta beneficios que van más allá de la escuela e incluso más allá del aprendizaje.

La finalidad del apoyo es su retirada, es decir, conseguir la autonomía del alumnado en aquel o aquellos aspectos por los que en algún momento ha requerido de ayuda. Esto se logra al sistematizar apoyos multinivel, con distintos grados de intensidad, concebidos como parte natural y propia de los diseños de aprendizaje, integrados y disponibles en los entornos de aprendizaje desde el inicio de la actividad educativa. Un sistema de apoyos preventivo protagonizado por medidas universales que van en beneficio de todos los alumnos, enriqueciendo las experiencias educativas con más vías y opciones para llegar al aprendizaje. Es decir, se proporcionan entornos de aprendizaje ricos y seguros aspirando a reducir al máximo los apoyos y medidas intensivas evitando riesgos de diferenciación. Sin embargo, se asume que estas no podrán ser erradicadas del todo, pues la plena universalidad choca con el dinamismo de las propias necesidades de apoyo educativo; no todo se puede prever, existirán situaciones que requerirán un apoyo educativo intensivo y experto, pero, por supuesto, cumpliendo con los criterios inclusivos que hemos enfatizado.

Finalmente, haremos hincapié en la reorganización de los recursos a través del máximo aprovechamiento de las redes naturales de apoyo presentes en la comunidad educativa destacando, entre otros, el relevante papel que tienen los propios alumnos y la familia al otorgar el apoyo educativo de una manera más inclusiva.

Tras haber conceptualizado el apoyo educativo en el marco de la educación inclusiva, ahondando en la evolución histórica de su función y en lo que significa para la escuela, en este capítulo hemos querido resaltar la visión del apoyo educativo como una tarea compartida por todos los agentes educativos presentes en el entorno escolar, desplazando con ello la perspectiva tradicional que durante muchos años ha imperado en las escuelas, en la que el apoyo era reducido a un alumnado concreto, de forma segregada, y considerado como una función exclusiva de profesionales especialistas.

Para entender mejor el apoyo concebido bajo un paradigma colaborativo es necesario

comprender los procesos implicados en la transformación de los centros y la sociedad hacia una educación más inclusiva. También requiere profundizar en algunos aspectos constitutivos del apoyo, como lo es la perspectiva desde la que se comprende esta nueva visión, el carácter intensivo y extensivo de sus beneficios y la propuesta de reorganización de los recursos a través del máximo aprovechamiento de las redes naturales de apoyo presentes en la comunidad.

El apoyo educativo para todos

La perspectiva inclusiva entiende la educación como un derecho básico de todo ser humano, fundamental para desarrollar una sociedad más justa e igualitaria (Unesco, 2009). En consecuencia, es el sistema educativo ordinario el que debe dar respuesta a la pluralidad de necesidades que presentan los estudiantes a lo largo de su escolaridad (Giné y otros, 2009), cuidándose de que ninguno de ellos quede excluido de la participación en su escuela y en su comunidad. Este planteamiento quedó establecido como principio rector del Marco de Acción sobre Necesidades Educativas Especiales¹ de la Declaración de Salamanca (Unesco, 1994) de la siguiente manera:

Las escuelas deben acoger a todos los niños, independientemente de sus condiciones físicas, intelectuales, sociales, emocionales, lingüísticas u otras. Deben acoger a niños discapacitados y niños bien dotados, a niños que viven en la calle y que trabajan, niños de poblaciones remotas o nómadas, niños de minorías lingüísticas, étnicas o culturales y niños de otros grupos o zonas desfavorecidos o marginados. [...] Las escuelas tienen que encontrar la manera de educar con éxito a todos los niños, incluidos aquellos con discapacidades graves. Cada vez existe un mayor consenso en que los niños y jóvenes con necesidades educativas especiales sean incluidos en los planes educativos elaborados para la mayoría de los niños y niñas. [...] El mérito de estas escuelas no es solo que sean capaces de dar una educación de calidad a todos los niños; con su creación se da un paso muy importante para intentar cambiar las actitudes de discriminación, crear comunidades que acojan a todos y sociedades integradoras. (pp. 59-69)

La declaración deja claro que el apoyo educativo no se limita al alumnado con dificultades de aprendizaje o discapacidad, sino que se orienta a dar respuesta a la totalidad del alumnado, enfatizando particularmente a los estudiantes con riesgo de marginalización, exclusión o bajo rendimiento. Con esta expresión se hace referencia a aquellos grupos que estadísticamente conforman una población de mayor riesgo o vulnerabilidad, por lo que requieren que se adopten las medidas necesarias para minimizar los riesgos de exclusión que les amenazan y se asegure su presencia, participación y éxito académico dentro del sistema educativo (Echeita y Ainscow, 2010).

Quienes trabajamos en educación debemos apostar por lograr una escuela cada vez más inclusiva, y para ello debemos tener en cuenta los lineamientos que definen y enmarcan las acciones educativas que emprendemos. El apoyo educativo es uno de los elementos clave a transformar, entendiéndolo desde una perspectiva colaborativa e inclusiva. Lamentablemente, esta transición hacia un apoyo educativo más inclusivo no ha sido fácil, pese a los beneficios evidenciados por diversas investigaciones (INCLUD-ED, 2009; Puigdemívol y otros, 2017). Insistir en el cambio de perspectiva es indispensable para distinguir entre la manera en que las escuelas han brindado tradicionalmente el apoyo educativo y la propuesta que se hace desde la educación inclusiva. Esta se dirige a erradicar una serie de prácticas muy arraigadas en los sistemas educativos que están más relacionadas con concepciones de apoyo basadas en el enfoque deficitario. Pero es que, además de ser excluyentes, estas prácticas no han demostrado ser eficaces (Echeita, 2006), perjudicando, en mayor o menor medida, precisamente a aquellos alumnos a los que se pretendía ayudar.

Este cambio obedece a la transición descrita en el primer capítulo desde la perspectiva individual y deficitaria, pasando por una perspectiva contextual e interactiva, hasta llegar a la actual perspectiva comunitaria, que considera la colaboración de todos los miembros de la comunidad educativa como imprescindible para la resolución de problemas, la eliminación de barreras para la inclusión y el logro de metas comunes. Ello supone una reforma general de la escuela. Bajo esta perspectiva comunitaria se potencia la participación y colaboración de todos los miembros del centro para responder a los desafíos que supone educar en la diversidad (Ainscow, 2001; Parrilla, 2002; Stainback y Stainback, 2004; Unesco, 1994), reconociendo en la escuela y en sus profesionales la autonomía y capacidad para actuar de manera innovadora y adecuada frente a ellos.

Instaurar el apoyo educativo desde esta perspectiva es una apuesta basada en teorías, entre las que destacamos la teoría sociocultural de Vygotski (2008) con la zona de desarrollo próximo (ZDP); Wood, Bruner y Ross (1976) con la metáfora del andamiaje; los procesos de participación guiada de Rogoff (1993), la teoría de la indagación dialógica de Wells (2001) o la perspectiva dialógica del aprendizaje (Aubert y otros, 2009). Estos autores constituyen una valiosa referencia para incorporar la participación de la familia y de otros agentes sociales, superando de esta manera el tradicional enfoque adaptativo por uno más

transformador.

Desde esta óptica, el apoyo educativo deja de entenderse como una función exclusiva de un profesional especialista para comprenderse como una responsabilidad compartida por los diversos agentes del centro educativo y de la comunidad, quienes conforman una valiosa red de apoyo educativo. Su rol es fundamental para la transformación del contexto escolar y la eliminación de las barreras para el aprendizaje y la participación. El apoyo distribuido facilita poder ofrecer respuestas educativas de mayor calidad gracias a aunar y articular las acciones que lleva a cabo cada agente. Las respuestas de mayor calidad pasan por proporcionar las ayudas que cualquier alumno requiere para desarrollarse al máximo de sus posibilidades, considerando sus características individuales; una tarea que, cuando recae en una sola persona, puede resultar frustrante y agotadora.

Sistematización de los apoyos: sistemas de apoyo de múltiples niveles

No cabe duda de que todo aprendiz requiere ayudas durante su proceso de aprendizaje y que todo sistema educativo que promueva la inclusión debe facilitarlas. Es más, de un centro orientado a la inclusión se espera que ponga en juego todas aquellas medidas, estrategias, herramientas o recursos materiales y humanos que eliminen las potenciales barreras que pueden limitar la participación o el progreso de sus estudiantes antes de que tengan efectos en su alumnado. Sin embargo, por la naturaleza dinámica de las necesidades de apoyo, de los procesos de aprendizaje y de la sociedad misma, sería prácticamente imposible poder identificar y prevenir todo aquello que, en algún momento de la trayectoria educativa de cualquier alumno, le puede generar o suponer un obstáculo. No obstante, como profesionales de la educación tenemos el deber de minimizar estas situaciones. Por ello, además de importantes acciones proactivas, un sistema educativo de calidad debe desplegar y sistematizar un conjunto de apoyos educativos de distinto grado de intensidad que puedan ser ajustados a las diferentes situaciones y retirados o reconceptualizados a medida que el alumnado gana autonomía. De hecho, de un apoyo educativo bien diseñado se espera que pueda ser retirado ya que, si se eterniza, deberíamos valorar si está efectivamente centrado en abordar aquello que genera la problemática o bien está actuando como una suerte de parche. Con un buen apoyo educativo el alumnado debe progresar, ya que se trata de inter-venir globalmente en la situación que limita su avance.

Para sistematizar estos apoyos recurrimos al modelo de «respuesta a la intervención» o *response to intervention* (RtI), ya que por un lado contempla que todo el alumnado necesitará apoyo, pero a distinto nivel de intensidad, y por el otro que este apoyo debe ser de calidad, partiendo de lo que funciona tanto en las investigaciones como en las evidencias de progreso de nuestros alumnos, siendo continuamente evaluado y reajustado para que todos y todas lleguen a su desarrollo potencial. En realidad nos estamos refiriendo a un modelo que proviene tradicionalmente de la educación especial y ha sido ampliamente descrito en la literatura internacional como un proceso preventivo para la atención del alumnado (Fuchs y otros, 2003). El National Research Center on Learning Disabilities (NRCLD) lo definía como un proceso de evaluación e intervención para seguir sistemáticamente el progreso del estudiante y tomar decisiones sobre la necesidad de modificar la docencia o aumentar la intensidad de los apoyos, usando las evidencias recogidas del seguimiento del alumnado (Johnson y otros, 2006).

A pesar de que el constructo de respuesta a la intervención esté más extendido o se esté usando indistintamente, titulamos este apartado con el concepto de «sistemas de apoyo de múltiples niveles» (*multi-tiered system of support*, MTSS) derivado de la respuesta a la intervención porque sus prácticas se sitúan en un marco educativo regular, desde el que se quiere aprovechar la experticia de la educación especial. El término «niveles» no significa inmovilismo o apoyos estáticos, sino que las medidas y apoyos diseñados tienen distintos grados de intensidad sistematizados. Los niveles de intervención que se proponían ya en la respuesta a la intervención eran los siguientes: el primario, que sería el programa de educación general; el secundario, que consiste en la intervención de grupos pequeños de duración limitada, centrado en unos objetivos y basado en evidencias; y el terciario, que implica acciones individualizadas e intensivas. Se trata, pues, de un sistema de apoyo con distintos grados de intensidad basado en la evaluación continua de la eficacia de las intervenciones educativas dirigidas al alumnado. Las decisiones sobre el propio apoyo se toman en función de su eficacia, por lo que continuamente se mejora la eficiencia del sistema de apoyo.

Un ejemplo de sistematización de los apoyos que parte de este modelo es el establecido por el sistema educativo catalán (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2015). Este plantea un proceso sistémico con una serie de medidas y apoyos que los centros tienen que planificar cuidadosamente para responder a las necesidades de cada alumno. Estas medidas y apoyos contemplan diferentes grados de intensidad con el fin de fomentar la autonomía del alumno, posibilitando el acceso al currículo y su progreso competencial. En este documento se

diferencia entre los conceptos de *medidas* y *apoyos*. Entienden por *medidas* aquellas acciones realizadas por los centros con el fin de reducir las barreras del entorno y prevenir las dificultades de aprendizaje de todo el alumnado, ajustando el contexto de aprendizaje. Los *apoyos* serían aquellos recursos personales, materiales y tecnológicos, así como las ayudas contextuales y comunitarias que los centros ponen en marcha para lograr la eficacia y funcionalidad de las medidas antes mencionadas.

La planificación de la intensidad de las medidas y apoyos se realiza en función de tres principios básicos: 1) proporcionar una atención educativa universal de alta calidad a todos los alumnos, 2) identificar e intervenir tempranamente en aquel alumnado cuyo aprendizaje está en riesgo, a través del establecimiento de un sistema de evaluación universal que permita determinar las ayudas adecuadas para garantizar su proceso de aprendizaje y 3) evaluar la eficacia de la intervención de acuerdo al progreso del alumnado evidenciando, de esta manera, las modificaciones necesarias para mejorar esta propuesta educativa (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2015, p. 18). Coherente con los tres niveles de intervención del modelo de respuesta a la intervención, el gobierno catalán propone tres niveles de intensidad de las medidas y apoyos para la intervención: universales, adicionales e intensivos (2015, p. 19).

1. *Medidas y apoyos universales*, intervenciones dirigidas a la totalidad del alumnado. Se basan en la organización de los recursos del centro para flexibilizar los entornos de aprendizaje y minimizar las barreras que impiden una adecuada respuesta a la diversidad del alumnado. Han de ser aplicadas por todos los profesionales del centro de manera colaborativa. Algunos ejemplos de este nivel fundamental son: contar con una estructura flexible de centro, desarrollar un plan de atención a la diversidad a nivel de centro, aplicar metodologías activas, entornos de aprendizaje participativos, etc. A nuestro entender, estas líneas organizativas y pedagógicas se pueden concretar aplicando prácticas basadas en el diseño universal de aprendizaje, las estrategias de aprendizaje cooperativo, los grupos interactivos, la tutoría entre iguales, la co-docencia, la evaluación formativa, etc.
2. *Medidas y apoyos adicionales*, dirigidos al alumnado que requiere ayuda de carácter más específico pero temporal; se complementan con las medidas universales existentes. La intervención mediante estas medidas y apoyos está determinada por el centro y, en el caso de Cataluña, coordinada por la Comisión de Atención a la Diversidad (CAD). Al tratarse de una intervención temporal, se deben señalar los plazos previstos para la retirada de los apoyos y los indicadores bajo los cuales se decidirá que ya no es necesaria dicha intervención. Algunos ejemplos de medidas y apoyos adicionales que prevé el departamento son: el apoyo escolar personalizado (SEP); el programa intensivo de mejora (PIM), los programas de diversificación curricular (PDC), el aula de acogida, el apoyo lingüístico y social, el proyecto de promoción del pueblo gitano en Cataluña, la atención domiciliaria, las aulas hospitalarias, los hospitales de día para adolescentes (HDA), las unidades docentes de centros educativos del Departamento de Justicia y las unidades docentes en centros de la Dirección General de Atención a la Infancia y la Adolescencia (DGAIA).
3. *Medidas y apoyos intensivos*, con un carácter más permanente, aunque no estático, y destinados a determinados alumnos que poseen un dictamen o un informe de reconocimiento de necesidades educativas especiales para los que se propone una intervención más intensiva. Se recurre a ellas cuando diferentes medidas y apoyos universales y adicionales no han sido suficientes para dar respuesta a las necesidades de apoyo. Como ejemplos de medidas y apoyos intensivos el departamento ofrece los siguientes: los apoyos intensivos para la escolarización inclusiva (SIEI) que vienen a sustituir las antiguas USEE (unidades de apoyo a la educación especial); los apoyos intensivos a la audición y lenguaje; las unidades de escolarización compartida (UEC); las aulas integrales de apoyo para necesidades asociadas a trastornos mentales o conductuales graves (AIS/UME/UTE); los centros de educación especial proveedores de servicios y recursos (CEEPSIR); o los centros de educación especial (CEE).

Cabe matizar que el carácter inclusivo de dichas medidas y apoyos dependerá del marco o perspectiva desde la cual se implementen, de lo que consideramos como cultura inclusiva, que restringe las prácticas de apoyo que siguen teniendo dejes clínicos de atención segregada. Un ejemplo muy clarificador lo encontramos en las escuelas o institutos que interpretan los anteriores ejemplos de apoyos intensivos como aulas separadas donde los alumnos van a recibir la ayuda que supuestamente necesitan; en estos casos estaríamos ante un modelo integrador, pero no inclusivo. Concretamente esto lo podemos ver cuando se utiliza la dotación extraordinaria de profesionales incorporados gracias a los apoyos SIEI para atender a alumnos durante el horario lectivo alejados de sus iguales, junto con otros alumnos que se considera que tienen necesidades específicas de apoyo educativo, privándolos de aprender aquello que sí se trabaja con el resto del alumnado. En estos casos, en vez de usar los recursos para intensificar o complementar lo que ya se hace, estos apoyos imposibilitan la actuación del resto de apoyos desplegados ya sean universales,

adicionales o intensivos. Entender el apoyo como algo a proporcionar en espacios separados del aula y del grupo supone desaprovechar los recursos existentes, puesto que en este modelo el sistema de apoyos no funciona como un engranaje que contribuya a acelerar el aprendizaje de estos alumnos, sino como un conjunto de acciones reactivas, aisladas, desestructuradas, basadas en el déficit y las bajas expectativas.

Aunque una medida esté en un documento marco que quiere promover la inclusión, lo que impera para ser considerada así es la forma de llevarla a cabo que, aun partiendo de una misma normativa, puede ser diferente en cada centro educativo. Por lo tanto, disponer de un aula de «apoyos intensivos para la escolarización inclusiva» o de muchos planes individualizados no implica automáticamente que el centro en cuestión esté proporcionando apoyos educativos inclusivos. Más bien podría ser un indicador de lo contrario. En un sistema de apoyo educativo inclusivo de múltiples niveles la mayoría de los apoyos deberían ser universales. Estos y su calidad son los que se deberían tender a disminuir la necesidad de apoyos más intensivos. Además, añadir medidas y apoyos adicionales o intensivos sin mejorar la base los hará menos eficaces y más permanentes, ya que al retirar el apoyo de mayor intensidad el contexto seguirá teniendo la barrera que previamente dificultaba el aprendizaje. En este sentido, las maestras del grupo de trabajo de Apoyo Educativo en la Escuela Inclusiva (a partir de ahora GT-AEEI)² lamentan que una forma común de proceder de maestros e incluso a nivel de escuela ante las necesidades específicas de apoyo educativo es de forma inmediata y, en ocasiones, exclusiva, solicitar planes de apoyo individualizados (PI) o incluso personal no docente de apoyo, en lugar de replantearse el diseño de las actividades o metodología para que no sean una barrera para ningún alumno. Por tanto, nos encontramos ante una falta de reflexión sobre las propias prácticas para lograr mayor universalidad, aspecto que prácticamente imposibilita sistematizar los apoyos.

Carácter intensivo y extensivo del apoyo educativo

Tal como lo explicamos al comienzo del capítulo, cuando el apoyo educativo es otorgado desde un paradigma colaborativo y proporcionado por diferentes agentes, sus efectos se intensifican. A su vez, los agentes de la comunidad que participan en el apoyo se enriquecen con el mismo, tal como reconocen a menudo. Ello nos permite hablar de los *beneficios intensivos* del apoyo y también de sus *beneficios extensivos*. Estos últimos se dan cuando las familias, como consecuencia de su colaboración con la escuela, dan más valor al aprendizaje y aumentan sus expectativas en relación con el progreso de sus hijos. Es muy frecuente, además, que aumente el valor que dan al conocerlo, al trabajo que llevan a cabo las maestras y maestros. Estos beneficios han sido constatados por la investigación realizada en escuelas que funcionan bajo modelos inclusivos de enseñanza (Puigdemívol y otros, 2017). Cuando se brinda apoyo educativo involucrando a los diversos agentes se aprovechan los recursos humanos naturales existentes, reorganizándolos para intensificar la ayuda a aquellos alumnos que más lo necesitan. Este sería el carácter intensivo del apoyo que aumenta la motivación y la participación de los alumnos. Mientras que el carácter extensivo educativo hace referencia a los beneficios obtenidos de la interacción escuela-comunidad, lo que supone mejoras tanto para la propia comunidad, como para las familias de los alumnos, tal como se explica a continuación.

Beneficios intensivos del apoyo educativo

La investigación desarrollada en relación con el apoyo educativo (Puigdemívol y otros, 2017) constató que el aprendizaje de todo el alumnado, incluyendo aquel con mayores dificultades, se intensificó al trabajar en modalidad de grupos interactivos, que permitían reducir significativamente los tiempos muertos y la participación de todos los estudiantes, incluyendo los que tenían importantes dificultades de aprendizaje. El propio profesorado también señaló que el diseño de actividades cortas, junto con la participación de personas de la comunidad motivaba mucho al alumnado; así lo indicaron dos maestras entrevistadas cuando se les preguntó por el principal impacto de la presencia del voluntariado en su escuela:

Maestra de apoyo 1: ¡La motivación! El principal impacto es la motivación que tienen los niños por la escuela.

Maestra de apoyo 2: Y los niños con dificultades... En este caso ellos ven que la realidad de la escuela no es ajena a lo que ocurre en su casa. Esto es muy importante para determinados niños. Nos hemos encontrado con una niña que no hablaba en la escuela y en cuanto su mamá empezó a venir como voluntaria, la niña ha visto la escuela como un lugar en el que puede confiar y ha comenzado a hablar.» (Entrevista a profesorado de apoyo [Puigdemívol y otros, 2017, p. 11])

La investigación también evidenció el reconocimiento por parte de los estudiantes sobre los efectos que la participación del voluntariado tiene en su propio aprendizaje. Lo ejemplificamos con las dos siguientes respuestas cuando se les preguntó «por qué consideran positiva la entrada de voluntarios en el aula»:

Ismael: Primero porque ayudan a la profesora, después porque a los niños nos parece muy bien y aprendemos. Si está la profesora sola aprendemos un 10% menos, y si son dos profesores sería un

10% más, y así, cada vez más, y más rápido, más rápido, más rápido, etc.

Sandra: Mientras más profesores o voluntarios hay en la clase mejor, pues así los diferentes grupos hacen diferentes actividades, y cada grupo puede hacer varias. (Grupo de discusión entre estudiantes [Puigdemívol, 2017, p. 12])

Por lo demás, la investigación actual también ha demostrado el incremento de la tasa de actividad³ de los alumnos cuando estos trabajan en grupos interactivos, concluyendo que el aporte de más adultos dentro del aula incrementó la atención de los estudiantes con necesidades educativas especiales, la ayuda entre iguales y también el apoyo individualizado otorgado a estos estudiantes.

Beneficios extensivos del apoyo educativo

La interacción escuela-comunidad supone mejoras tanto para la propia comunidad como para el entorno familiar del alumnado. La participación de la comunidad hace que la inclusión alcance el ámbito comunitario, mejorando las relaciones del entorno social y la coherencia entre escuela-comunidad, ya que permite percibir la escuela como algo más familiar y cada vez menos ajeno a la vida cotidiana de las familias:

El hecho de que tú colabores [con la escuela] hace que, para el crío, estudiar o leer o hacer cosas en casa relacionadas con el cole no sea un castigo, porque el papá, la mamá o la abuela lo hacen. Entonces: ¿eso ayuda al aprendizaje del niño? Por supuesto, lo entiende como que es algo habitual [...] (Madre de la escuela V., grupo de discusión [Puigdemívol, 2017, p. 13])

Asimismo, los resultados hacen referencia también al retorno obtenido de la experiencia como voluntarios en términos de un beneficio mutuo (Wells, 2001) y enriquecimiento personal. Además de poder ayudar a otros niños, reconocieron que actuar como voluntarios o voluntarias les ayudó a conocer más sobre el aprendizaje de sus propios hijos, lo que les sirvió para apoyar a sus hijos en el hogar, como se refleja en el siguiente testimonio:

La opción de poder entrar al aula pues, para muchos que no nos dedicamos a la docencia, es una oportunidad. Porque tus recuerdos de cuando estudiabas no tienen nada que ver con cómo se organiza ahora el aula. Como madre para mí esto es muy interesante por los dos lados: por el beneficio que yo puedo dar a los niños y al revés, por el beneficio que ellos me dan a mí: son las dos cosas. Me proporciona tanto beneficios personales como la posibilidad de ver cómo se trabaja en el aula y entender mejor cómo trabaja mi hija cuando trae deberes [...] (Madre de la escuela V., grupo de discusión [Puigdemívol, 2017, p. 14])

Como vemos, el incremento de la participación beneficia de alguna manera a todos los que colaboran, un beneficio que va más allá del hecho de conocer el centro o transferir formas de acompañar al alumnado en lo académico. Los adultos pueden hacer crecer otras competencias, por ejemplo, la lingüística:

PADRE 2: [...] Yo entraba primero a hacer grupos interactivos en castellano, después cuando aprendí un poco de catalán empecé a hacer grupos interactivos en catalán y este año los estoy haciendo en francés, como soy francés...

MODERADORA: ¿Tienes lengua francesa?...

PADRE 2: Sí, de estudiar en Marruecos. [...] además estoy practicando, sé que estoy ayudando voluntariamente, que no cobro nada, pero también yo estoy practicando un idioma que mañana me servirá para algo, para mis hijos, por ejemplo. (Familiares de la escuela A, grupo de discusión)

El hecho de que otros agentes provenientes de la comunidad participen en el apoyo amplía los efectos extensivos más allá del ámbito escolar, llevando los beneficios al entorno extraescolar y familiar.

La escuela inclusiva como una comunidad de apoyo

Un sistema educativo inclusivo, una comunidad que apoya

La escuela inclusiva no se puede entender sin tener en cuenta el contexto y la comunidad, es por ello que la generación de la red de apoyo comunitario resulta esencial para el aprovechamiento de los recursos existentes, ya que permite compartir experiencias, conocimientos y toma de decisiones respecto a políticas intersectoriales que efectivamente contribuyan a la reducción de las desigualdades entre los alumnos (OREALC-Unesco, 2007). Por lo tanto, todos los miembros de la escuela y de la comunidad, incluyendo las instituciones externas y los centros de formación, constituirán recursos valiosos para apoyar los procesos de inclusión de manera exitosa, si se muestran dispuestos a aceptar y acoger a la diversidad y desempeñan su función de agentes de apoyo al alumnado tanto en la escuela como en la comunidad.

Desde la escuela inclusiva, el aprendizaje es visto como un fenómeno social que nunca se

ha limitado a lo que sucede entre las cuatro paredes de la escuela. Por tanto, el contexto es de gran relevancia para el aprendizaje y para las trayectorias educativas. De igual manera, cada trayectoria en particular es de gran trascendencia para la sociedad por el efecto que tiene en dicha sociedad, al estar en continua interacción. Por ello, para garantizar la calidad de la enseñanza es fundamental que la educación sea socialmente concebida como un bien público y como un derecho fundamental de las personas (OREALC-Unesco, 2007), ya que tiene efectos en lo individual y en el conjunto de la sociedad.

Desde esta óptica, queda claro que la educación de calidad no solo afecta a las escuelas, sino también a las comunidades y la forma de vida que quieren adoptar las personas (Stainback y Stainback, 2004). En este sentido, la escuela inclusiva debe romper los límites visibles e invisibles, tanto tangibles como intangibles, que tradicionalmente han aislado el sistema (reglado) de educación formal, separando lo que sería la escuela y la comunidad. Estos límites hacen que nos aproximemos a los procesos de aprendizaje de los que participa el alumnado con una mirada sesgada, considerando en mayor medida el sistema aula o escuela a través de la única voz de sus profesionales.

Contrariamente a estos límites, el apoyo educativo desde la escuela inclusiva entiende a las personas y el aprendizaje en su totalidad, de una forma global y mucho más amplia, como una dinámica propia y regular de las comunidades en las que dichas personas están inmersas y que, además, tiene lugar en todas las etapas a lo largo de la vida. El apoyo inclusivo no entiende de barreras espaciotemporales, ya que cualquier persona puede necesitarlo en cualquier momento de su vida.

Siguiendo esta línea y tomando el concepto de *ecología de equidad* (Ainscow y otros, 2012), que explica que la equidad no solo depende de las prácticas escolares y del sistema educativo sino de una gran variedad de procesos en continua interacción dentro y fuera de la escuela (historias escolares, cultura, realidad económica, barrio, relaciones, etc.), queda claro que más allá de las escuelas también existen barreras que perpetúan las desventajas y que afectan la participación y el aprendizaje global del alumnado. De igual forma, más allá de las escuelas existe un sinfín de recursos a aprovechar para favorecer la inclusión real del alumnado, considerando todas las etapas de su vida. Es decir, fuera de los límites físicos de los centros podemos encontrar apoyos educativos que pueden actuar tanto dentro como fuera de ellos y de su horario lectivo. Los centros educativos, pues, cuentan con potenciales apoyos que les pueden ayudar. El entorno, con su capital social, puede colaborar para ofrecer conjuntamente una respuesta más compleja y global. Al hacer esto, la escuela comparte su función social y potencial educativo con las demás instituciones de la comunidad (Unesco, 2009) y con ello disminuye los obstáculos hacia la inclusión. Como apunta Ainscow (2016), fortalecer este capital social es una tarea importante para lograr equidad (Ainscow, 2016), ya que las redes de personas que forman parte de un contexto (aunque pertenezcan a distintas organizaciones, entidades, distintos colectivos, grupo social, formación, etc.) tienen un papel clave para conseguir desarrollar un sistema cada vez más inclusivo.

Estas personas participan en la tarea educativa como agentes educativos, ya sea a título individual o colectivo con roles diferenciados, en situaciones, experiencias y contextos de aprendizaje diversos: en contextos formales, con una primera intención educativa dentro de la educación reglada (p. ej., escuelas e institutos); no formales, con intencionalidad educativa pero fuera de la educación reglada (p. ej., actividades extraescolares); e informales, sin intencionalidad ni planificación (p. ej., aprendizaje espontáneo y continuado en familia). Los contextos donde sucede el aprendizaje no son estancos, un mismo agente puede participar en distintos contextos desarrollando roles diversos. Todo el mundo puede aportar, independientemente de sus conocimientos, formación y la situación en que tiene lugar. Sin embargo, las oportunidades de influencia dependen del grado de apertura a la comunidad y el tipo de participación que permite cada centro educativo.

Agentes para el apoyo educativo

Un elemento clave para el funcionamiento del complejo trabajo en la red comunitaria de apoyo es el liderazgo del equipo directivo. Lo consideramos el «motor» para que la transformación del centro hacia esta nueva forma de organización funcione. El liderazgo para la inclusión escolar tiene dos hitos fundamentales. Por un lado, debe ser democrático y participativo; debe promover culturas escolares de colaboración (Ainscow, 2001) basadas en relaciones positivas y productivas, que valoren y respeten las diferencias. En estas, el poder y la responsabilidad son compartidos con otros, quienes se identifican como agentes activos del cambio y se comprometen con la mejora de la institución. Por el otro lado, los líderes educativos deben propiciar las transformaciones que sean necesarias para la eliminación de barreras que limitan o impiden la participación y el aprendizaje del alumnado en sus escuelas y en la comunidad. Así quedaba reflejado en la *Declaración de Salamanca*:

Los directores de los centros escolares deberán encargarse en particular de fomentar actitudes positivas en la comunidad escolar y de propiciar una cooperación eficaz entre profesores y personal de apoyo. Las modalidades adecuadas de apoyo y la función exacta de los distintos participantes en

Concretando con las redes de apoyo que se movilizan dentro de la misma escuela, el profesorado de apoyo y atención a la diversidad tiene un papel importante en su gestión y también en facilitar las interacciones entre los distintos agentes, en hacer que la red de apoyo funcione (Gómez-Zepeda y otros, 2017). Se trata de profesionales estratégicos para asumir este rol, ya que por su formación y trayectoria se han especializado en el apoyo educativo y, por lo tanto, tienen una experticia que pueden compartir con todos los agentes que intervienen y ofrecen apoyo educativo como se desarrolla en el capítulo 3.

Otro agente considerado clave para el funcionamiento de esta red es el profesorado, considerado uno de los actores principales para promover valores inclusivos e implementar las políticas y prácticas que sustentan la educación inclusiva. Es muy importante tener en cuenta que son los profesores quienes, en última instancia, pondrán en marcha y llevarán a la práctica los planteamientos de la educación inclusiva y de cualquier reforma educativa. Además, la influencia de su papel en el logro y el rendimiento de los estudiantes es ampliamente reconocido, por lo que «contar con docentes competentes en escuelas desventajadas es vital para su éxito» (OECD, 2012, p. 128). Asegurar una adecuada atención a la diversidad y una educación de calidad requerirá que los profesores desplieguen una serie de complejas competencias en aspectos tanto académicos como actitudinales.

Académicamente, el profesorado debe diseñar e implementar estrategias curriculares que potencien el aprendizaje y la participación de todo el alumnado en un clima de respeto y valoración por la diversidad, estimulando el apoyo mutuo a quienes más lo necesiten (Unesco, 2009). En este contexto, la figura del maestro tutor (así se denomina en España al encargado de un nivel) es fundamental para el apoyo, pues es quien dirige las actividades, conduce la sesión y es el principal responsable de los estudiantes de su clase, incluyendo al alumnado con mayores dificultades. Esto marca la diferencia con algunos modelos segregadores de apoyo en los que el maestro de educación especial era el único responsable del alumnado con dificultades.

Dadas las responsabilidades, para ofrecer apoyos de calidad será fundamental el desarrollo de competencias de trabajo en equipo que permitan resolver problemas de manera colaborativa, junto al resto de docentes, miembros de la escuela y de la comunidad. Los grupos colaborativos dentro la escuela (intrainstitucionales) y los interinstitucionales, así como los modelos de docencia compartida (desarrollados en el capítulo 4) son de gran relevancia para lograr estos hitos. Estas estrategias de colaboración entre los diferentes miembros del centro serán claves para enfrentarse de manera más relajada y segura a las tareas cotidianas, los requerimientos y la toma de decisiones que demanda la atención a la diversidad.

En este entramado de apoyos escolares, los propios alumnos son el primer agente de apoyo para sus compañeros (Ainscow, 2001; Echeita, 2006; Giné y otros, 2009; Parrilla, 2002). La ayuda entre iguales, además de ser muy posible e inmediata en el contexto del aula, reporta beneficios tanto en el alumno que ayuda como en el que es ayudado. El apoyo pasa a considerarse como un proceso natural propio de la actividad de aula. Las interacciones de colaboración que emergen dependen del tipo de organización del alumnado y los roles que desempeñan, como se concreta en el capítulo 4. Estas redes naturales de apoyo, además de facilitar la participación del alumnado, su activación y la aceleración de los aprendizajes, promueven el desarrollo de habilidades sociales, como son el trabajo en equipo, la cooperación y la valoración de los demás, por nombrar solo algunas.

Para implementar estas prácticas de apoyo entre alumnos se puede aprovechar la presencia de adultos, atribuyéndoles un rol diferenciado para que ayuden a dinamizar y crear situaciones de interacción entre alumnos, como ya están haciendo los voluntarios dinamizando los grupos interactivos, las tutorías entre iguales, los apadrinamientos; o bien podría desempeñar el personal de apoyo no docente (*paraprofessionals / teacher assistants*) el rol de facilitadores de la ayuda entre iguales (Carter y otros, 2016), que se desarrolla más profundamente en el capítulo citado.

La participación de la comunidad puede darse de formas diversas en cuanto a frecuencia, implicación e intención. Las colaboraciones pueden ser esporádicas e intermitentes o bien estar más sistematizadas, como es el caso de la participación de voluntariado durante el horario lectivo o los proyectos de aprendizaje servicio (ApS). Las actividades más estructuradas en las que los miembros de la comunidad pueden participar son, por ejemplo: liderar o colaborar en el desarrollo de talleres, participar en espacios de lectura personalizados o bien tertulias dialógicas para alumnado u otros miembros de la comunidad, etc. Estas iniciativas también se pueden desarrollar fuera del horario lectivo, en lo que se denomina extensión del tiempo de aprendizaje, que es otra iniciativa de apoyo generalmente adicional, dirigida a grupos concretos de alumnos, en la que fácilmente pueden involucrarse diferentes miembros de la comunidad. Estas iniciativas pueden tomar forma de talleres de estudio asistido o mentorías, programas tradicionales de refuerzo, bibliotecas tutorizadas, clubs de deberes, de empoderamiento, etc.

Es necesario precisar que el hecho de que exista una red de apoyo en la que participan diversos agentes no anula las funciones de los maestros de apoyo ni tampoco las de los especialistas. Lo que se genera es un cambio en las funciones y responsabilidades que cada uno asume en relación con la red, de manera que las responsabilidades ante las dificultades de aprendizaje ya no recaen solamente en los profesionales especialistas, sino que son una responsabilidad compartida y distribuida entre los diversos agentes. Dentro de esta red de agentes no olvidamos el importante papel de las familias como principales agentes de apoyo, sino que lo desarrollamos de forma más extendida en el siguiente apartado.

En definitiva, abogamos por un verdadero sistema de apoyo educativo en red que resulta de la interacción entre múltiples agentes y que es beneficioso para todo el alumnado, pero que puede tener un gran impacto en el progreso de los alumnos con más dificultades. Este parece ser eficaz y ofrece oportunidades para la inclusión (Puigdemívol y otros, 2017). El mayor potencial de lo que hemos explicado es que estos agentes ya existen, las propuestas son viables ya que, en general, no son recursos extraordinarios por lo que el esfuerzo se dirige a organizarlos para lograr mayor eficiencia e incidir en la concepción del apoyo como intrínseco a cualquier proceso de aprendizaje. En este contexto, el apoyo y la participación de distintos actores pasan a ser una práctica general y cotidiana en escuelas inclusivas.

La implicación de las familias

Si bien no se puede hablar de centros inclusivos sin contar con la comunidad, cabe mencionar específicamente el papel que juegan las familias para la construcción de un verdadero proyecto de escuela inclusiva en el que el término «escuela» los interpele como parte de esta. Es fácil entender que, si el alumnado es el protagonista de los centros educativos, quienes actúan como padres, madres u otros familiares, al ser los agentes probablemente más permanentes en sus trayectorias académicas, también adquieran un papel protagonista dentro del sistema educativo. No se debe obviar que el primer ambiente de socialización de niños y niñas es el familiar. Aunque el rol e interacciones del resto de agentes de la comunidad con el alumnado sean relevantes y trascendentales para cada contexto educativo, el rol de las familias es inherente a los centros educativos del mismo modo que lo son los alumnos.

Las familias son parte fundamental de la escuela, son indisociables de los alumnos; por tanto, no podemos, tenerlos en cuenta de forma aislada u ocasional. Desde la perspectiva ecológica de Bronfenbrenner (1987), el aprendizaje depende de las interacciones que suceden entre distintos sistemas y subsistemas solapados en los que el alumnado está inmerso. Contra más vínculos inter e intracontextos, existe mayor posibilidad de que se den interacciones enriquecedoras y relaciones de apoyo. Con esta mayor implicación entre agentes, en especial la familia, mayor será el potencial para un desarrollo y crecimiento saludable del alumnado.

A pesar de las reticencias o temores de algunos docentes a la mayor implicación familiar, el amplio corpus de investigaciones sobre el tema no pone en duda su relevancia. Sin embargo, sí se observa que hay formas dispares de interpretar el concepto de implicación familiar que afectan tanto la realidad de los centros como la forma de abordar las investigaciones y, por ende, sus resultados. Por lo tanto, un importante punto de partida sería la reflexión sobre lo que cada agente entiende por participación e implicación familiar, para así poder eliminar posibles barreras y ampliar las miradas.

Es importante destacar que por plena participación de la familia no entendemos el simple seguimiento o supervisión de los deberes, notas y asistencia a reuniones, sino una definición más completa que tiene en cuenta el tipo de actividades que realiza la familia juntamente con el centro (durante el horario lectivo, extraescolar, acciones formativas, autodirigidas, de toma de decisiones, de evaluación y mejora, etc.), para lo cual se hace necesario conocer las creencias, expectativas y actitudes de los padres hacia la escuela, hacia los maestros y viceversa, como también analizar las metodologías y buscar la manera de que estas puedan incluir a los familiares. De hecho, la metasíntesis de Wilder (2014) concluye que la definición de implicación familiar que se relaciona más intensamente con los resultados académicos es aquella en que se consideran las expectativas de los progenitores. Para promover la implicación, desde los centros deberíamos tener en cuenta las expectativas, ya que reporta mayores logros y, entre ellos, los éxitos académicos. Además de las expectativas positivas, Pomerantz, Moorman y Litwack (2007) destacaban que la participación de los padres puede ser particularmente beneficiosa cuando el apoyo a sus hijos está centrado en el proceso y en generar autonomía (permitiendo que ellos exploren, se autodirijan y solucionen sus problemas), en vez de poner el énfasis en las habilidades innatas y presionarlos para que alcancen determinados resultados.

Siendo un tópico tan relevante, en la literatura científica encontramos distintas propuestas dirigidas a identificar y clasificar el tipo de participación familiar. Destacamos un primer acercamiento de Epstein (2010) porque no solo da una idea de los diferentes

grados de responsabilidad que asume la familia, sino que también permite visualizar cómo y dónde tiene lugar la participación. Las seis categorías de participación que planteó son las siguientes: 1) crianza (*parenting*), ayudar a las familias a crear ambientes para apoyarlos como estudiantes; 2) comunicación (*communicating*), diseñar formas de comunicación eficaces y bidireccionales sobre los programas escolares y su progreso; 3) voluntariado (*volunteering*), lograr y organizar la ayuda de los padres; 4) aprendizaje en casa (*learning at home*), aportar información e ideas a las familias sobre cómo ayudar en los deberes, otras actividades curriculares y en la planificación; 5) toma de decisiones (*decision making*), incluir a padres en las decisiones escolares haciéndolos representantes y líderes; 6) colaboración con la comunidad (*collaborating with the community*), identificar e integrar recursos y servicios de la comunidad para fortalecer los programas escolares.

Esto hace patente que la relación familia-centro puede tomar distintas formas y diferentes grados de implicación. La relación entre agentes también puede variar, siendo más o menos simétrica según la escucha y el respeto de opiniones y la posibilidad de elección y asunción de responsabilidades. A nivel práctico, la participación familiar puede ser presencial o a distancia, durante el horario lectivo o extraescolar.

Por otro lado, es importante destacar la necesidad de formación de las familias para conseguir una mayor implicación de su parte (García y Ríos, 2014). Para ello se pueden crear espacios de empoderamiento dirigidos a familiares en los que participen otros miembros de la comunidad como, por ejemplo, realizar formaciones según los intereses o necesidades, talleres o tertulias literarias dialógicas organizadas dentro o fuera del recinto escolar, independientemente del agente que las organice. Estas iniciativas se añadirían a la participación en reuniones individuales, de grupo-clase, curso o ciclo, en el consejo escolar y en comisiones mixtas en las que los familiares realmente puedan tomar decisiones relevantes y evaluar conjuntamente el funcionamiento y las líneas de la escuela.

Familias: participantes obligados e insustituibles

Recogiendo lo anterior, las familias, como elementos insustituibles de una red de apoyo que debe ayudar, no deberían ser concebidas como sujetos subordinados al papel que cada centro les otorga. En este sentido, es imprescindible alejarnos de las relaciones tradicionales de poder en las que solo algunos de los profesionales con cargo podían mandar, ya que, por el contrario, en una escuela de todos, todos pueden decidir democráticamente. Esto también incluye la participación de la familia y del alumnado en la toma de decisiones sobre sus propios apoyos (Mortier y otros, 2011). En síntesis, debemos transformar la relación familia-escuela hacia dinámicas más cooperativas en que no se consideren las familias como recursos, sino como piezas clave en la toma de decisiones. De hecho, se ha demostrado que el potencial educativo aumenta cuando la escuela y la familia son capaces de trabajar juntas para lograr objetivos comunes y compartidos (Sheridan y otros, 2015). Así lo muestra el siguiente relato de una maestra:

María era una madre del colegio. Cuando se empezó a implementar la colaboración de las familias en la escuela de manera más decisoria (crear entre todos el proyecto escolar, soñar la escuela ideal, organizar comisiones mixtas de trabajo, etc.), María asistía a las reuniones de manera discreta. El curso siguiente la AFA (asociación de familias del alumnado) cambió la junta y María se presentó a la elección. Salió votada y fue la nueva presidenta. Desde ese día empezó a trabajar codo con codo con la dirección del colegio: se redactaron nuevos estatutos de la AFA, se cambió la empresa que gestionaba el comedor, se buscaron nuevos voluntarios que pudieran asistir al centro, se organizó actividades complementarias para el alumnado y las familias, etc. Durante siete años se fue perfilando el liderazgo de María, quien pasó de pedir ayuda para redactar un documento a motivarse a ella misma y a otras madres a hacer cursillos como el de monitora o el de directora de tiempo libre, siempre buscando aquellos que se ofrecían de forma gratuita. Vimos cómo algunas familias acudían a ella cuando tenían algún problema y cómo ella intentaba ayudarlas. También vimos cómo empresas de tiempo libre acudían a ella para buscar monitores y cómo iba ayudando a madres del colegio a colocarse. Vimos cómo el ayuntamiento acudía a ella para organizar actividades en el barrio. María ha sido una persona indispensable en el proyecto educativo del colegio. (Mariona, maestra)

Además de los claros beneficios intensivos (Puigdemívol y otros, 2017) dentro del contexto clase, la participación de esta madre fue clave en la toma de decisiones y funcionamiento de la escuela, un claro ejemplo de trabajo en equipo familia-escuela. También contribuyó a estrechar vínculos entre la comunidad, aumentó la cantidad de interacciones entre contextos a la par que los perceptibles beneficios extensivos para la comunidad y para ella misma. Esta participación la empoderó como agente educativo, se vio capaz de hacer cambios en la escuela de sus hijos, pero también fuera de ella, contribuyendo así a transformar el entorno. Como recoge McWilliam (2016), este empoderamiento de las familias ayuda a que aumente su autoeficacia haciéndolas cada vez más autónomas y autosuficientes. De esta manera se sienten reconocidas y son capaces de participar más efectivamente siendo, a su vez, una suerte de modelos para que cualquier otra familia o miembro de la comunidad sienta que puede implicarse totalmente de la forma que guste o convenga. Se trata de, unas veces de forma voluntaria y otras involuntaria, explícita o implícitamente, «equipar a los padres para que equipen a sus hijos y puedan lograr sus sueños» (Hill, Witherspoon y Bartz, 2018, p. 14).

Para ello, dentro de las escuelas se debe generar un contexto que propicie y facilite la participación, ya que las familias pueden no sentirse cómodas o seguras involucrándose en la educación de sus hijos de una manera más activa y de la que no tienen experiencias previas. Es entendible que tengan dudas sobre lo que hacen sus hijos, como señala una maestra en el siguiente testimonio:

La escuela notó que había un grupo de familias reticentes a que sus hijos fueran de colonias. Como solíamos sortear dos plazas para que voluntarios nos acompañasen durante la estancia, ese año se hizo participar a una de esas madres. De esta forma hijos y sobrinos se unieron a sus iguales disfrutando de la experiencia, experiencia que repiten anualmente. Desde entonces esto es un estímulo para ellos. (Gemma, maestra. Acta 4 GT-AEEI, 2017)⁴

Es preciso aclarar que las redes de apoyo no se generan de forma espontánea, su buen funcionamiento tampoco es casual. Las escuelas deben incorporar mecanismos para desarrollar fuertes conexiones con cada casa y con la comunidad a través de un enfoque organizativo (Sheldon, 2007) que incluya el trabajo en equipo, la planificación y la evaluación. Se deben trabajar y estructurar las formas y espacios de interacción si se quiere propiciar una participación, pero sin olvidar que es una cuestión recíproca. Es decir, las escuelas también deben aprovechar cualquier iniciativa parental que pueda hacer sentir a madres y padres que la escuela es más suya, ir forjando relaciones de confianza. Una directora contaba que no dudó ni un segundo cuando un padre que no era habitual en la escuela le pidió usar un aula de la escuela en horario no lectivo para hacer una reunión, ya que ese primer acercamiento podía suponer el inicio de su implicación en actividades de la escuela. Lo mismo sucede cuando asociaciones u otras entidades entran de alguna forma en el espacio escolar, creando relaciones de simbiosis con las que se generan beneficios individuales y también colectivos.

Se pretende una colaboración verdadera, desinteresada, sin condiciones. Muchas veces se deben deconstruir concepciones para volver a construir relaciones sanas donde las familias sean consideradas para todo, no solo buscar o pedir su actuación cuando aparecen problemas o dificultades actitudinales, comportamentales o de aprendizaje sin prevenir o aprovechar las potencialidades, por lo que debemos evitar las acciones reactivas trabajando mayormente para prevenir.

Recogiendo también la anterior experiencia de las colonias, es importante que las familias conozcan lo que se hace en la escuela y que también puedan proponer actividades, soluciones a problemas, etc. Esta transformación necesaria para que todos se sientan parte de la escuela conlleva un cambio de cultura escolar hacia relaciones igualitarias donde realmente se escuche y consensue:

Muchas veces cuando funciona no es cuando se imponen pautas sino cuando se comparten. Tenemos que transmitir con un buen lenguaje, que los familiares se sientan parte de algo, tenemos que comprender, no solo oír. Ellos sí saben, debemos acompañar su sentimiento de soledad, que se sientan escuchados. Escuchar y hacer preguntas para que entiendan lo que hacemos. Los maestros debemos empezar por entender que los padres tienen una opinión del sistema educativo donde han matriculado a sus hijos y que esta afecta. (Mónica, maestra. Acta 4 GT-AEEI, 2017)

Podríamos seguir añadiendo ejemplos de pequeñas acciones o gestos en los que subyace la forma de entender la escuela y que favorecen la implicación de la familia. Sin embargo, lo importante es que cada contexto analice sus opciones y genere sus propias oportunidades de incrementar interacciones enriquecedoras, ya que no existe una respuesta o solución única.

Superando obstáculos para la participación familiar

A pesar de tantas evidencias respecto a los beneficios de la participación familiar, existen barreras que afectan el logro de una mayor implicación. Las razones de ello son múltiples, y no es extraño que la interacción entre agentes se vea condicionada por las ideas preconcebidas, miedos o inseguridades, las experiencias previas con distintos agentes, especialmente las negativas, que han podido marcar su trayectoria escolar o la de sus hijos, como se desvela en la siguiente discusión entre maestras del grupo de trabajo de Apoyo Educativo en la Escuela Inclusiva:

La mirada y la acogida de la familia es importante, afirma una maestra. Comenta que una vez llamó a una madre y vino acompañada de tres más, no hace falta imaginar las

experiencias previas que había tenido. Lo malo fue que, una vez enderezada la situación del alumno, la madre decidió no llevarlo más al servicio porque creyó que ya estaba «curado». Otra maestra se lamenta de que en el instituto los niños más conflictivos no duran nada, los expulsan como si para ellos la educación no fuera obligatoria. (Mónica, maestra. Acta 4 GT-AEEI, 2017)

Por ello, la mencionada deconstrucción de la relación de participación para lograr interacciones de colaboración verdaderamente democráticas, además de enseñar nuevas formas de participación, pasa por identificar y luchar contra aquellas ideas que pueden dificultar o impedir dicha implicación. Este mejorado modelo de participación contribuye a evitar la paradoja de que quienes pueden beneficiarse más del apoyo en red sean los que menos participan (Sheridan y otros, 2015). Este cambio implica un trabajo constante que requiere acompañamiento y mucho diálogo para que todas las partes que colaboran tengan la información que necesitan y, así, actúen más efectivamente. Debemos asegurar este aspecto pues, por ejemplo, algunas familias creen irrespetuoso consultar y preguntar a los profesionales. Dar informaciones o procedimientos por obvios o sabidos no empodera a los implicados y genera además barreras, como se observa en el fragmento anterior. Además de la creencia de estar faltando al respeto por preguntar, la participación familiar puede verse limitada por inseguridad, por creer que no pueden aportar, sobre todo desde lo educativo. Esta puede ser una situación recurrente sobre todo en escuelas de contextos socioeconómicos desfavorecidos, en las que se requerirá un trabajo constante de invitación y motivación para generar dinámicas de participación.

Otro obstáculo que puede residir en el imaginario colectivo es creer que, a medida que el alumnado crece, no necesitará tanta implicación familiar en el contexto escolar. La participación familiar no solo es importante durante la etapa de infantil y primaria, el alumnado de secundaria continúa perteneciendo al mismo sistema educativo, ya que son igualmente alumnos con sus potencialidades y necesidades de apoyo educativo. La adolescencia es una etapa crítica en la que los menores requieren tanto o más acompañamiento que en las anteriores etapas, aunque de forma diferente. De hecho, la participación de los padres está más relacionada con el rendimiento en secundaria que en la etapa de primaria, teniendo implicaciones en el éxito escolar a largo plazo (Kim y Hill, 2015). Sin embargo, cabe destacar que existen menos investigaciones que estudien la etapa de secundaria.

La investigación también ha permitido desbancar falsas creencias que afectan la relación escuela-familia, como la abundancia de familias inmigrantes despreocupadas de la educación de sus hijos e hijas en la sociedad de acogida (Lorenzo, Godás y Santos, 2017). Lorenzo, Godás y Santos (2017) continúan afirmando que otra cosa sería «entender las circunstancias de sus proyectos migratorios, las contingencias a resolver y las prioridades que pueden condicionar el cuidado, control y expectativas educativas de su descendencia (Gaunt, 2005; Rätty y Kasanen, 2010)». Rodríguez Ruiz, Martínez González y Rodrigo (2016) subrayan que la no participación familiar no radica en su desinterés. Este es un prejuicio fácilmente perceptible cuando, en vez de buscar otras formas de llegar e involucrar a todos, intentamos justificar y conformarnos con la no participación de determinados familiares. En el mismo estudio concluyen que las mayores dificultades para la participación son los persistentes patrones de crianza protagonizados en gran medida por las madres y las dificultades de conciliación de la vida laboral con la familiar y con la colaboración dentro del recinto escolar.

Cualquier familia actual se puede encontrar con la dificultad de participar durante el horario lectivo pero, como se indica al principio de este apartado, cada contexto debe consensuar las formas de implicación que funcionen mejor considerando cada familia de forma personalizada, sin generalizar como colectivo. En este sentido, también es necesario sortear las posibles barreras administrativas y burocráticas. Las escuelas y sus patios deben ser recursos disponibles de la comunidad. Demasiada rigidez puede dificultar la participación de las familias:

En la primera reunión de la etapa de educación infantil las maestras hicieron un llamamiento a todos los padres para que se involucraran en las distintas comisiones de la escuela. Los padres de Sofia, como muchos otros, se apuntaron uno a cada comisión. El padre se unió a la comisión de espacios animado con el proyecto de remodelar el patio. Su participación rápidamente quedó frustrada al tener tan limitada su participación pues la legalidad en tema de seguros no les permitía realizar prácticamente mejoras con sus propias manos aun estando cualificados. Su participación quedó en mera consulta. Peor suerte corrió la madre, ya que su comisión no se reunió. El siguiente año ambos pretenden continuar en las comisiones, pero con menores esperanzas y construyendo una idea sesgada de lo que es la participación en la escuela, a pesar de la existencia de muchas comisiones. (Aina, investigadora)

Aparte de la participación consultiva, en este caso observamos cómo la interpretación de la legalidad obstaculiza la participación familiar y puede marcar la posible implicación futura. Si bien es cierto que los padres no pueden encargarse de crear o instalar ciertas estructuras, en el diseño y remodelaje de los exteriores y patio de un centro sí hay mucho en lo que pueden imaginar, decidir y liderar juntamente con los maestros que pueden complementarlo desde el punto de vista pedagógico. Estas barreras de gestión o más institucionales están presentes incluso en las leyes. Un ejemplo de mensaje contradictorio es el destacado por Calvo, Verdugo y Amor (2016) en la actual ley educativa en España, la Ley Orgánica 8/2013, de 9 de diciembre, para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa, ya que por un lado sitúa a los padres como primeros responsables de la educación de sus hijos y, por el otro, limita a consultiva la participación de estos en la toma de decisiones en los consejos escolares.

A pesar de las barreras y limitaciones, no nos debemos situar en una posición derrotista e inmovilista, sino avanzar en aquellas políticas y prácticas de evidenciados beneficios.

Las escuelas, ejes de las comunidades de apoyo

No cabe duda de que las escuelas deben adoptar un rol diferenciado al del resto de contextos de aprendizaje, pero diferente al tradicional, es decir, no se trata solo de dar clases, sino de asegurarse de que todos los alumnos aprendan. Se requiere que los centros vayan más allá «favoreciendo que la comunidad local, el barrio, los distintos agentes, el voluntariado y las asociaciones adopten un papel protagonista» (Azorín, 2017) para cooperar en la misión educativa que tradicionalmente se ha otorgado a la escuela, sin desdeñar el papel de la escuela sino todo lo contrario (FernándezEnguita, 2017). Los centros solos no pueden asumir todas las funciones que la sociedad les encomienda y además liderar grandes redes interinstitucionales sin sentirse sobrecargados. Su función en la red no es ejercer el liderazgo (Civís y Longás, 2015). La sociedad no debe delegar tan arduas responsabilidades a las escuelas, que ya tienen unas tareas atribuidas muy importantes. No obstante, los centros educativos pueden ser uno de los muchos motores ya que, si están inmersos en una estructura colaborativa, cualquier nodo de la red puede movilizar las acciones conjuntas.

Ello implica que los centros educativos y la comunidad, se deben transformar, ya que el concepto de educación inclusiva requiere ser comprendido como un fenómeno sistémico que implica un cambio profundo en una serie de elementos interdependientes a la vez, más allá de «cambiar un modo de hacer, cambiar las personas o los espacios». Esto lleva a concebir la escuela como una comunidad de apoyo (Parrilla, 2002; Stainback y Stainback, 2004) en la que todos los miembros del centro educativo y de la comunidad pasan a conformar una valiosa red social de apoyo que se involucra activamente para mejorar el proceso educativo, compartiendo la responsabilidad por el logro de aprendizajes de calidad de todos los estudiantes, en los diferentes contextos y a lo largo de la vida. Este abordaje comunitario es el que asegura éxitos.

La administración también tiene responsabilidades sobre la comunidad y además tiene competencias en materia legal pudiendo, entre otras cosas, facilitar la fluidez de las relaciones. Por ello, especialmente las administraciones locales deberían corresponsabilizarse de la coordinación de recursos y de acordar planes y programas de entorno con objetivos socioeducativos. Según la literatura científica, son estas administraciones las que deberían asumir la gestión y organización de las redes coordinando los proyectos y estrategias (Azorín, 2017; Civís y Longás, 2015; Longás y otros, 2008). Nos referimos a administraciones locales porque son las más próximas a cada contexto, pueden conocer más las necesidades y las potencialidades. Con esta mayor autonomía no se busca una aproximación a la realidad, sino partir de ella, con los protagonistas, para entender y actuar más efectivamente gracias a la experiencia y la experticia existente en la comunidad. Consecuentemente, la flexibilidad a nivel local es importante para lograr equidad y excelencia (Ainscow, 2016).

Redes interinstitucionales

Las redes tienen en común la idea de interconexión, de interacción entre organizaciones o grupos de personas. Conceptualmente, las relaciones escuela-comunidad se enmarcarían dentro de una gran red, aunque para que esta sea funcional requiere de sus miembros unos propósitos, intereses o preocupaciones similares. Existen diferentes tipos de red según su alcance o según su finalidad: por ejemplo, las *networked learning communities* (comunidades de aprendizaje en red) (Katz y Earl, 2010), las *professional learning communities* (PLC) (Owen, 2015) y las redes *school to school* (escuelaescuela) (Azorín y Muijs, 2017), que suelen estar formadas por grupos de escuelas que trabajan conjuntamente para aprender y mejorar sus prácticas. Esta colaboración entre escuelas

permite que de forma conjunta resuelvan sus problemas, enriquezcan sus prácticas, crezcan y se hagan más fuertes.

El apoyo entre escuelas con objetivos innovadores es una corriente al alza en España, y ejemplos de ello son el proyecto Horitzó 2020 de las escuelas jesuitas o inicialmente Escola Nova 21, red a la cual también pertenecen dichas escuelas. También restringidas al ámbito formal encontramos las vinculaciones escuela-universidad (Mérida, González y Olivares, 2012), un tipo de red en la que incluiríamos el grupo de trabajo de Apoyo Educativo en la Escuela Inclusiva.

Las redes citadas previamente están formadas por determinadas instituciones u organismos de características muy similares, generalmente por centros educativos; en cambio, las redes a las que nos referíamos para desarrollar un auténtico sistema inclusivo son de una mayor envergadura, ya que las redes socioeducativas de ámbito interinstitucional e intersectorial incluyen a toda la comunidad, estas se conocen como *educational collaborative networks* (ECN) (Longás y otros, 2008; Díaz-Gibson, Cívís y Guàrdia, 2014).

Entre las redes socioeducativas interinstitucionales deberíamos destacar la Asociación Internacional de Ciudades Educadoras (AICE), una agrupación de gobiernos locales que cuenta con 484 ciudades de África, América, Asia y Europa. Dentro de este marco España, en 1996, constituyó la Red Estatal de Ciudades Educadoras (RECE) que actualmente forman 184 ciudades. Existen proyectos concretos que buscan el compromiso ciudadano con la educación, como los proyectos educativos de ciudad (PEC) o de entorno liderados por los gobiernos locales con el objetivo de aportar coherencia y continuidad a las acciones educativas, vinculando el entorno para articular el trabajo en red.

Un ejemplo de *educational collaborative networks* en el contexto catalán es Interxarxes, una red interinstitucional que fue analizada por Díaz-Gibson, Cívís y Guàrdia (2014). En esta red participan servicios del ámbito educativo, social, salud y socioeducativo del barrio con el objetivo de ofrecer una atención más coordinada. Mayoritariamente está formada por instituciones y no se incluyen asociaciones de familiares o vecinos a no ser que individualmente estén vinculados a una organización colaboradora como, por ejemplo, una escuela. Por lo tanto, la comunidad en sí misma puede seguir sin participar de forma directa en esta red de apoyo.

El paso siguiente de la estructura interinstitucional sería conseguir transversalidad para realmente arraigar y contribuir, es decir, que las acciones que se desarrollen penetren en la comunidad, en la forma de hacer de las personas evitando, así, que las redes se limiten a ser colaboraciones normativas exclusivamente de profesionales y, por tanto, una retahíla de bienintencionadas propuestas que queden en papel mojado. La intención es real, en el curso 2017-2018 contabilizamos en Cataluña 128 planes educativos de entorno (PEE) en los que participaban 109 municipios. Sin embargo, no hay que confundir la cantidad de PEE ni los servicios sumados a la red con la calidad del servicio final. Es necesaria una colaboración real y un buen liderazgo para aprovechar mejor los recursos existentes. Como apuntan Cívís y Longás (2015, p. 231) en su análisis de cuatro experiencias consideradas buenas prácticas de PEE: «la dinamización y organización de la colaboración interinstitucional mediante el trabajo en red ha servido para incrementar la eficiencia y eficacia de los recursos locales». Además del liderazgo, la confianza es una condición clave para el éxito cuando se trabaja en red.

El intercambio de experiencias enriquece los puntos de vista, da pie a la reflexión y ayuda a mejorar la comprensión con perspectivas más amplias (Sammons y Bakkm, 2011). Este compartir para aprender también puede suceder entre organizaciones de distintos contextos gracias a las tecnologías, que pueden facilitar contactar de forma no presencial, gestionar y estrechar lazos. Unas redes interinstitucionales fuertes son importantes tanto para promover cambios y mejoras educativas como para incorporarlas más profundamente. El contagio de la motivación cuando se trabaja en red es notorio. El movimiento entre escuelas genera curiosidad en el contexto e incluso promueve que otras escuelas se unan o que, por lo menos, germine el debate para la mejora. Un ejemplo es la gran cantidad de centros educativos que se han unido a la iniciativa Escola Nova 21, buscando transformar la educación partiendo del trabajo cooperativo en red vinculado al contexto local; en mayo de 2018 contaban con medio millar de centros educativos.

Evidentemente, las redes también promueven el sentimiento de pertenencia a la comunidad (Hernández y otros, 2013), un aspecto muy importante para que toda persona se sienta incluida en un contexto y, así, quiera y pueda participar, interactuar y, con ello, aprender. Sin embargo, la participación de cualquier persona, colectivo, entidad u organización debe considerarse en el amplio sentido de la palabra: se deben poder tomar decisiones conjuntamente de forma democrática, tal y como también se ha expuesto en el apartado de familias. Un tipo de relaciones que se pueden dar con mayor facilidad entre profesionales de instituciones de rango similar, por ejemplo, entre docentes de escuela, instituto o trabajadores sociales, pudiendo encontrar barreras cuando la relación es con profesionales del ámbito no formal u otros colectivos como familiares o vecinos y que, por

ello, debemos cuidar y propiciar imperativamente.

Las redes en el apoyo educativo

Con las investigaciones y las prácticas ejemplificadas en este capítulo podemos ver que las prácticas educativas se están adelantando a unas políticas que pueden no estar facilitando la eficiencia de las redes de apoyo. De hecho, un estudio de Azorín y Muijs (2017) muestra que en el Estado español no hay políticas comunes que apoyen las redes. Sin embargo, ya hemos visto que las redes son esenciales para garantizar principios como el de inclusión o educación integral que, por ley, un sistema educativo debe garantizar. Sin una visión del apoyo en red resulta prácticamente imposible poder atender de forma integral a las personas, considerando todos sus ámbitos de desarrollo. Por ello, además de poner el foco en la administración educativa y las entidades e instituciones con fines principalmente educativos que constituyen redes como las citadas previamente, también se requiere el trabajo en red con la administración sanitaria, la jurídica y de empleo, entre otras muchas.

Por tradición, cultura o facilidad organizativa tendemos a separar y sectorizar una realidad que es única en sectores o ámbitos, cosa que puede tener como resultado una atención fraccionada e incoherente que nos aleje de atender las personas en su globalidad. Este trabajo conjunto sí se da en situaciones extremas, por necesidad, aunque, dada la urgencia, puede que prime la colaboración de tipo reactivo (apagar fuegos). Este tipo de acciones pierden eficacia y van en detrimento de la idea de sistema inclusivo capaz de eliminar barreras de forma anticipada. Los resultados de las acciones o inacciones, finalmente, acaban recayendo en la eficiencia y eficacia de personas y grupos concretos que, en ocasiones, se sobrecargan, como se observa en la siguiente discusión entre maestras del citado grupo de trabajo de Apoyo Educativo en la Escuela Inclusiva:

Nadia se lamenta por la falta de comunicación ante la situación de un alumno de su escuela, ya que ni tan siquiera sabía que su situación estaba siendo seguida por servicios sociales. Mireia comenta que lo primero es el derecho a la privacidad, pero Nadia se queja de la imposibilidad de anticiparse al problema desde la parte educativa. Mireia afirma que los servicios sociales y la escuela son dos mundos aparte. Diana se incorpora comentando que en su país de origen los servicios sociales estaban colapsados, se debería trabajar conjuntamente y entender cómo se trabaja. Mireia se queja de su focalización en los papeles, y Nadia le responde que depende más de la persona pero que los servicios sociales también lo tienen complicado, por ejemplo, cuando cambiaron su trabajadora social referente y tuvieron que volver a empezar con los casos. Maite también cree que se han burocratizado tendiendo hacia la asistencia y distanciándose, en algunos casos, de las líneas de atención pedagógica de su centro. Mireia comenta que en las dos áreas educativas donde ha trabajado recientemente existen modelos de intervención muy diferenciados, uno con una perspectiva más educativa que otro. Montse concluye que la rigidez del sistema dificulta la prevención y que gracias a que se saltó los protocolos se pudo atender más rápidamente una situación límite. Remarca que las maestras son las que mejor saben lo que sucede en la propia escuela. (Conversación entre maestras. Acta 2 GT-AEEI, 2016)

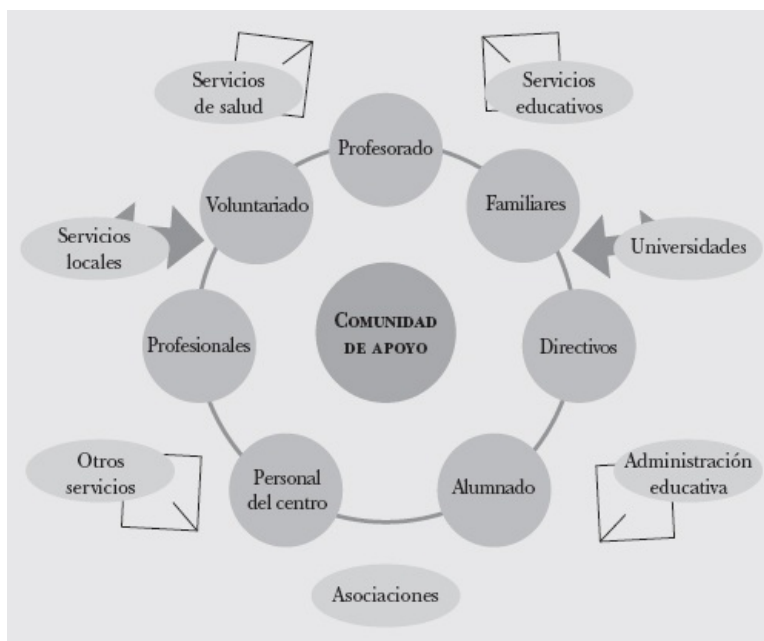
Sin dudar del mucho trabajo que tienen todos los agentes, las maestras explicitan que los mecanismos de trabajo en red entre instituciones son demasiado rígidos y que, en algunos casos, el trabajo conjunto no es fluido. En estos casos, la burocracia y las interacciones dentro de la red supondrían una barrera adicional a las ya existentes. Vemos que frente a una misma normativa las prácticas difieren partiendo de su concepción y afectando la atención del alumnado. En este sentido y en primera instancia, los grupos colaborativos entre los profesores del mismo centro (los citados intrainstitucionales) son una estrategia de gran utilidad (Echeita, 2006; Giné y otros, 2009; Parrilla, 2002) para la puesta en común de ideas y la toma de decisiones conjunta. Lo cierto es que los alumnos pueden pasar por muchos profesionales a lo largo de la semana: docentes, monitores de comedor, de centros abiertos, de extraescolares, auxiliares de apoyo, etc. Todos ellos junto a los propios compañeros y familiares intervienen en los procesos de aprendizaje, lo que resulta en un apoyo que depende de la calidad de las interacciones entre organizaciones, adultos y alumnos. Sin embargo, la participación de estos agentes no docentes en reuniones pedagógicas es opcional o directamente no contemplada en los documentos oficiales; depende del funcionamiento de la escuela, como comentaba la siguiente maestra:

Mireia explica que tiene muchos alumnos con beca comedor y debe coordinarse mucho con el comedor escolar. A veces hacen subir a los monitores a reuniones y los cubren. La escuela también paga un monitor extra. Cree necesario ligar el comedor con la escuela, los monitores tienen que estar dentro del engranaje de la escuela, ya que tienen que

enterarse de cómo se hace, especialmente con determinados alumnos. Las monitoras ven cómo actúan los docentes y se forman con el modelo, pero tenemos que pensar cómo hacerlo. (Mireia, maestra. Acta 2 GT-AEEI, 2016)

El trabajo en red no solo sirve para tener más información del alumnado, nutrir las perspectivas, tomar distancia, reflexionar, aprender y actuar a la par, sino que también permite optimizar los recursos con acciones complementarias y no paralelas. Armar redes densas entre organizaciones de un mismo contexto contribuye a mejorar los servicios que en estas se ofrecen, ya que las redes tienen un enorme potencial para promover la capacidad del sistema educativo para responder a la diversidad (Ainscow, 2016). En el cuadro 1 (véase en la página siguiente) se intenta plasmar gráficamente esta idea de red de apoyo que hemos estado explicando. La figura busca representar que las interacciones son multidireccionales, es decir, se dan entre los agentes del propio centro (alumnado, profesorado, familia, voluntariado, personal no docente, etc.), desde la escuela hacia los servicios externos (quienes a su vez trabajan interconectados entre sí) y viceversa.

Cuadro 1. Representación de la red de apoyo



Este trabajo en red con la comunidad requiere de ciertos factores que son considerados como indispensables para su funcionamiento eficaz: un clima de centro cooperativo democrático, formación continua de los agentes educativos y espacios de participación de las familias y otros miembros de la comunidad en el proyecto educativo y en la toma de decisiones del proceso educativo de sus hijos.

Conclusiones

Para garantizar la calidad de la enseñanza asegurando la participación y aprendizaje de todos y todas es fundamental analizar los tipos de apoyo educativo que se están ofreciendo tanto dentro como fuera de los centros educativos. Algunas de las preguntas relevantes son: ¿a quién o quiénes se dirige el apoyo? ¿quién está involucrado en su desarrollo? ¿quién lo coordina? ¿qué intensidad tiene el apoyo? ¿qué duración tiene? ¿cómo promueve la autonomía del alumnado? ¿qué objetivo o meta lo guía? ¿con qué otros apoyos se articula y cómo? ¿cómo se evalúa (indicadores de progreso)?

Apostando por sistemas de apoyo diseñados desde una perspectiva inclusiva, organizados, dinámicos, con la participación de múltiples agentes y mayoritariamente de carácter preventivo, es posible ofrecer respuestas más globales, específicas y que, a su vez, no estigmaticen a ningún estudiante, teniendo en cuenta todos los contextos en los que el alumnado se desarrolla.

Cuando se brinda apoyo educativo involucrando a los diferentes agentes presentes en el entorno se generan más interacciones, maximizando las posibilidades y oportunidades de apoyo. Desde esta perspectiva, el contexto no solo se entiende como un entorno con barreras que limitan el progreso del alumnado, sino que se ensalzan las oportunidades educativas que emanan de él.

Sin embargo, estas prácticas compartidas exigen un verdadero trabajo de

corresponsabilización, clarificación de roles y coordinación para trabajar en una misma dirección.

Aunar esfuerzos para crear y dinamizar redes interinstitucionales de forma sostenible es primordial para promover la inclusión de todo el alumnado a lo largo de la vida.

Solo una visión del apoyo en red permite atender de forma integral a las personas considerando todos sus ámbitos de desarrollo.

Ideas clave

- Es necesario un cambio de perspectiva en la forma de entender, otorgar y poner en práctica los apoyos educativos para que no se conviertan en otra barrera para la participación y el progreso del alumnado.
- Ningún apoyo es inclusivo en sí mismo, siempre dependerá de la forma como este se entienda y se lleve a la práctica.
- El apoyo educativo no es una acción aislada, sino que debe funcionar como un engranaje en el que cada acción se entiende dentro de un amplio sistema de apoyos.
- Los apoyos tienen distintos grados de intensidad y constantemente deben ser evaluados y ajustados a las diferentes situaciones. Se deben ir retirando a medida que el alumnado gana autonomía.
- El objetivo del apoyo educativo es facilitar la participación del estudiante, acelerar su aprendizaje y promover que alcance el máximo de autonomía.
- El apoyo es una responsabilidad comunitaria en la que el propio alumnado (compañeros), los familiares, distintos profesionales de la educación, vecinos y la administración local deben contribuir diferenciadamente, siendo empoderados como agentes educativos.
- La implicación de diferentes miembros de la comunidad aporta beneficios tanto para quien lo recibe como para quien lo proporciona y para el propio entorno.
- Agentes educativos, organismos e instituciones deben trabajar de forma coordinada y complementaria en la construcción de redes interinstitucionales que optimicen las prácticas de apoyo.

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1. Este marco fue aprobado en la Conferencia Mundial sobre Necesidades Educativas Especiales, organizada en Salamanca en 1994 por el Gobierno de España y la Unesco.

2. En diferentes apartados del libro se hará referencia a este grupo de trabajo de *Apoyo Educativo en la Escuela Inclusiva (GT-AEEI)*, un equipo mixto formado por una parte por profesores de las universidades de Barcelona y Lleida y estudiantes de doctorado y, por otra, por maestras y equipos directivos de escuelas inclusivas de distintas zonas de Cataluña. Su finalidad es compartir, investigar y mejorar las prácticas de apoyo de acuerdo con los principios de la educación inclusiva, exponiendo también sus resultados a través de revistas científicas y de divulgación. La aportación de los miembros del grupo a esta obra ha sido fundamental para conjugar el rigor teórico con la experiencia práctica en los centros educativos.

3. Duración total de la actividad (DT), tiempo que el alumno está inmerso en una actividad de aprendizaje Total (TAA). La tasa (o índice) de actividad responde a la fórmula $\text{Tiempo Actividad Aprendizaje (TAA) / DT} \times 100$. En el TAA no se contabilizan los tiempos de espera del estudiante para una corrección o el material necesario, ni cuando está claramente distraído. Se contabilizan los tiempos de escucha atenta o de debate con los compañeros para solucionar un problema, etc.

4. Las citas de actas del grupo de trabajo de Apoyo Educativo en la Escuela Inclusiva (GT-AEEI) se indican con el acrónimo, el número de la sesión y el año. Los nombres son seudónimos por el compromiso de confidencialidad en las sesiones del grupo.

Appendix 2: Support strategies enriching interactions and classroom activities

Estrategias de apoyo como enriquecimiento de las interacciones y de la actividad del aula

Andrea Jardí, Belinda Siles

Los recursos humanos son los que más abundan en cualquier sistema educativo. Escuelas e institutos están formadas por alumnos, personal docente y personal no docente incluyendo conserjes, familiares y vecinos. Sin embargo, cuando se cuestiona el apoyo educativo, el escudo de la falta de recursos es uno de los más recurrentes, ya que se entiende que se necesita más apoyo adicional. Esta mirada se sustenta en la idea que tenemos arraigada en mayor o menor medida de que los apoyos deben ser ofrecidos siempre por especialistas. Esto puede usarse como argumento para eximirnos de responsabilidades a la par que puede aumentar el sentimiento de frustración por tener que lidiar con situaciones de eterna espera de un rescate externo.

Contrariamente, es mucho lo que podemos hacer dentro de las aulas con los recursos actuales. Estas prácticas están en las manos de cada una de personas que están diariamente trabajando en los centros educativos, siempre entendiendo que las acciones a nivel de equipo son las más eficaces. En este capítulo se destacarán algunas formas de organizar los adultos y también el alumnado dentro de las aulas basadas en enriquecer las actividades y favorecer la interacción entre alumnos. La co-docencia y la co-docencia práctica permiten sacar el máximo partido al trabajo entre adultos. Las ideas clave para mejorar la práctica conjunta son la clarificación de roles y estrategias, la co-planificación, la evaluación compartida con resolución y reflexión conjunta y, sobre todo, la organización de los alumnos para generar más interacciones adulto-adulto-alumnado y alumno-alumno.

La optimización de los recursos y la mejora de los apoyos se basan en el incremento de las interacciones, así como en la mejora de su calidad. Los entornos de aprendizaje organizados en estructuras cooperativas, por estaciones, desdoblamientos, grupos interactivos y trabajo por proyectos muestran cómo el alumnado mismo puede ser un apoyo para su propio aprendizaje y el de los demás, sin ser este un objetivo explícito de la práctica. Es decir, la propia organización del aula ya supone una medida de apoyo universal que beneficia a todo el alumnado incluyendo el alumnado más vulnerable. También se destacan formas de organizar el alumnado específicas para fomentar la ayuda entre iguales y el aprendizaje mutuo como la tutoría entre iguales, el alumno tutor y el voluntariado interinstitucional. Las organizaciones descritas en este capítulo permiten guiar al alumnado en la construcción conjunta de conocimiento y adquisición de habilidades. Además de los contenidos que se trabajan, se modela la forma de afrontar los aprendizajes y se facilita la autogestión del comportamiento y del aprendizaje, lo que puede generalizarse a cualquier contexto presente y futuro. En definitiva, se aprende a aprender.

Introducción

Las interacciones constituyen uno de los elementos clave para el desarrollo y aprendizaje de las personas, pues facilitan el intercambio de pensamientos y la negociación de significados mediante el lenguaje. Cada uno de los agentes implicados en este intercambio puede reestructurar sus esquemas de conocimiento y construir significados compartidos; es decir, todos los que interactúan, independientemente de su rol, pueden aprender. En este sentido, «los adultos y los alumnos más competentes proporcionan lazos entre la tarea y el contexto que les ayudan a interpretar situaciones que no entienden» (Petreñas, 2014, p. 74). Autores de gran trascendencia han estudiado procesos que derivan de la interacción, como la conocida metáfora del andamiaje (Wood, Bruner y Ross, 1976), con la que se explica la retirada de

ayudas cuando se va alcanzando autonomía al internalizar lo aprendido. En este proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje mediado por el lenguaje también destaca la teoría de Vygotski (2008) sobre la zona de desarrollo próximo, donde los guías o mediadores se sitúan en el desarrollo potencial facilitando los apoyos necesarios para que cada alumno llegue a sus máximos.

En consecuencia, gracias a la interacción con otras personas y sus conocimientos, el desarrollo potencial del alumnado ya no es el posible individualmente, sino que aumenta junto con las oportunidades de aprendizaje derivadas de la calidad y variedad de las interacciones de que disponga. La propia diversidad dentro del aula enriquece las interacciones entre alumnos y con los adultos. Por ello es fundamental que los diseños y la forma de organizar el aula y sus agentes aprovechen el potencial de la interacción implicando a todo el alumnado en su propio aprendizaje y en el de los demás. En este capítulo se destacan algunas formas de organizar la interacción que contribuyen a maximizar el intercambio adulto-adultoalumnado y alumno-alumno-adulto con diferentes estrategias que enriquecen dicha interacción. Estas se convierten en un apoyo general que beneficia a todo el alumnado, siendo también un apoyo para el alumnado más vulnerable.

Desarrollo de la co-docencia

Co-docencia

La co-docencia (*co-teaching*) se caracteriza por el trabajo conjunto de varios docentes con grupos de estudiantes, compartiendo planificación, organización, entregas y evaluación de la enseñanza a la vez que el espacio físico. Roth y otros (2002) destacaban que tenían que ser dos o más docentes enseñando y aprendiendo juntos y compartiendo la responsabilidad del aprendizaje de todos los estudiantes; es decir, co-docencia implica la participación activa y simultánea de dos o más docentes en el proceso de enseñanza y en el proceso de aprendizaje de cada alumno sobre el que los profesionales comparten la misma responsabilidad, independientemente del rol que desempeñe cada uno y de su figura profesional. No obstante, cada organización puede llevar a la práctica un tipo distinto de co-docencia ajustada a su forma de entender la educación maximizando en mayor o menor medida este recurso. La literatura identifica diferentes modelos de co-docencia, aunque en la práctica exista una mayor variedad. Esta diversidad podría darse gracias a la mezcla entre el origen deductivo e inductivo del concepto, ya que es un constructo nacido de unas prácticas y también teorías que se retroalimentan y que están en continua evolución; los modelos no son estáticos. Además, también varían por la necesidad de los centros y profesionales de ajustar la teoría a la complejidad de cada contexto.

La palabra co-docencia en sí misma no aporta suficiente información para determinar o intuir si las culturas, políticas y prácticas de un centro en concreto promueven la inclusión. Tampoco nos informa de la calidad de los procesos que se generan o surgen, ya que literalmente solo concreta que la docencia es conjunta o compartida. Del mismo modo, el término docencia tampoco aporta suficiente información, ya que incluiría infinitas formas de promover que el alumnado aprenda y se desarrolle. Por lo tanto, se requieren especificaciones para construir unas representaciones ajustadas de las prácticas de co-docencia a las que nos referimos en este capítulo. La esencia que compartimos de esta forma de dar respuesta a las necesidades de apoyo es el trabajo conjunto, el compartir ideas, la planificación, la reflexión y la evaluación consensuada a la vez que se comparten espacios. Los agentes que participan se nutren mutuamente, no se limita a la simple presencia de dos docentes dentro del aula, es un proceso interactivo que permite a docentes con distinta experiencia dar servicios de calidad a los estudiantes con una gran variedad de necesidades de tipo social y académico, incluyendo la discapacidad, en las aulas ordinarias (Idol, Nevin y Paolucci-Whitcomb, 2000).

Por lo tanto, la co-docencia puede favorecer la presencia, participación y aprendizaje de todo el alumnado dentro de las aulas ordinarias siempre y cuando se cumplan algunos criterios básicos ampliamente evidenciados que favorecen la inclusión de todos los alumnos como, por ejemplo, agrupar de forma heterogénea tanto los grupos-clase como los posibles subgrupos derivados de los modelos de co-docencia. La organización en grupos heterogéneos es una condición indispensable para cualquier práctica educativa inclusiva (Garrett y Hong, 2015), aunque no todas las evidencias sobre co-docencia descritas en la literatura la cumplan. Como se ha dicho, el término es muy amplio y puede aplicarse partiendo de distintos paradigmas de la educación. Consecuentemente, no resulta extraño identificar prácticas de co-docencia en centros que agrupan al alumnado por niveles de aprendizaje o en centros de educación especial. Ambos casos quedarían descartados de nuestra definición inclusiva de co-docencia, ya que no tienen cabida dentro del «marco de escuela inclusiva».

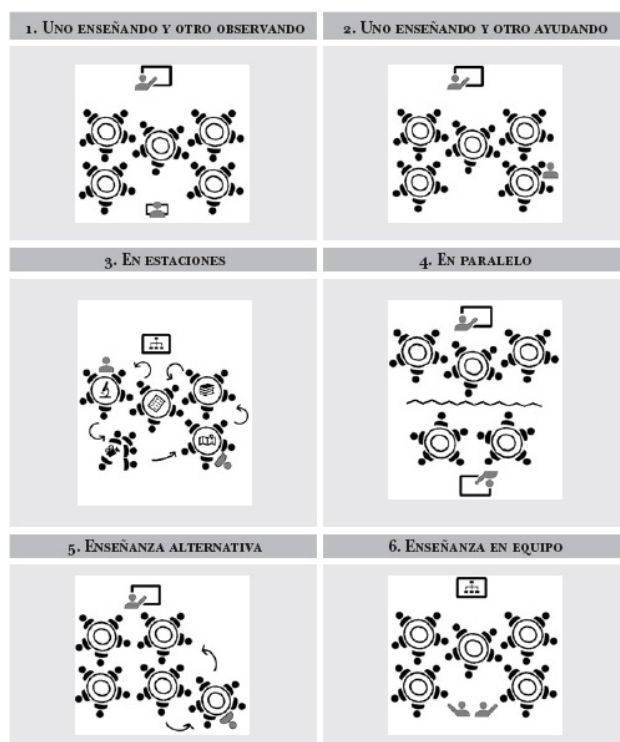
Diferentes autores (Cook y Friend, 1995; Walther-Thomas y otros, 2000; Thousand, Villa y

Nevin, 2006; Friend, Hurley-Chamberlain y Sham-berger, 2010) han tratado de identificar, denominar o bien se han nutrido de la terminología publicada para referirse a diferentes formas de hacer co-docencia. Friend, Hurley-Chamberlain y Schamberger (2010) distinguen los siguientes modelos (véase el cuadro 1).

1. Uno enseñando y otro observando.
2. Uno enseñando y otro ayudando al que añadimos la variante de enseñanza interactiva (Walter-Thomas y otros, 2000).
3. En estaciones.
4. En paralelo.
5. Enseñanza alternativa.
6. Enseñanza en equipo

«Uno enseñando y otro observando» se da cuando se mantiene el gran grupo y un docente sirve de modelo al otro, siempre y cuando el otro se quede observando. Un ejemplo de esto se podría dar en el inicio del periodo de prácticas, cuando el practicante básicamente observa o bien cuando se decide que uno de los docentes tiene que recoger información del grupo sin interactuar demasiado.

Cuadro 1. Modelos de co-docencia. Fuente: Adaptado de Friend, Hurley-Chamberlain y Schamberger (2010)



En el modelo de «uno enseñando y otro ayudando» (*one teaching and one assisting o supportive teaching*) también se mantiene el gran grupo. Uno de los docentes lidera las clases y el otro va rotando, ofreciendo ayuda a los alumnos que la necesitan. Este es uno de los más aplicados y evidenciados (Isherwood, Barger-Anderson y Erickson, 2013; Scruggs, Mastropieri y McDuffie, 2007; Zigmond y Matta, 2004). Esto también sucede en nuestras aulas, ya que ayudar al alumnado más vulnerable ha sido una de las funciones más comunes del profesorado de educación especial dentro de las aulas ordinarias. Las ayudas que suele ofrecer el segundo docente en este modelo serían uno a uno. Así mismo, se destaca que la práctica es más eficaz cuando los roles de líder y docente de apoyo se van intercambiando, es decir, cuando los dos docentes se alternan en las explicaciones en gran grupo. Esto ha sido denominado «enseñanza interactiva» (Walther-Thomas y otros, 2000). En ambos modelos se podría organizar el alumnado de distintas formas, pero siempre manteniendo las explicaciones en gran grupo.

Por otro lado, en el modelo por estaciones se dividen los contenidos en diferentes espacios de clase y cada docente asume la responsabilidad de facilitar el contenido planificado previamente para cada estación mientras los alumnos van rotando por ellas. Por lo tanto, la ratio disminuye durante la explicación y cuando se ofrecen las ayudas. En este caso es necesario diseñar estaciones de trabajo autónomo (en equipo o individual) o bien contar con la participación de más docentes, adultos u otros alumnos que las dinamicen. Un ejemplo a considerar podría ser uno de los proyectos que desarrolla una de las escuelas que participa en el grupo de trabajo de Apoyo Educativo en la Escuela Inclusiva (GT-AEEI):¹ en este, cada docente del ciclo lleva un taller por el que van pasando todos los alumnos.

En relación con el modelo en paralelo, los co-docentes planifican conjuntamente, pero trabajan con diferentes grupos de alumnos en diversas áreas del aula. Una de las escuelas del mencionado grupo de trabajo cuenta con amplia experiencia en este modelo. La diferencia es que no comparten el espacio físico, sino que separan el alumnado de forma heterogénea en distintas aulas. Según la experiencia de las maestras, para garantizar el éxito del modelo en paralelo debe haber un trabajo conjunto, simultáneo y compenetración entre los docentes hasta llegar al punto de poder cambiar de grupo sin afectar a la planificación ni al desarrollo normalizado de la sesión.

Para la práctica de la enseñanza alternativa un docente se encarga del gran grupo y otro docente de un grupo reducido. Este grupo reducido dentro del gran grupo tendría que ser heterogéneo y también rotativo, es decir, los alumnos que lo forman deben ir cambiando, ya que no es una ayuda específica para un alumno en concreto sino generalizada para el beneficio de todos los alumnos. La ratio más pequeña del grupo reducido permite explicar y ofrecer ayudas de forma más intensiva, mientras el otro docente sigue con el gran grupo. Las agrupaciones flexibles de nivel podrían corresponder a los parámetros de lo que se considera co-docencia, asemejándose al modelo en paralelo, ya que se dividen los alumnos y los contenidos se podrían planificar y evaluar conjuntamente. Sin embargo, por su demostrada baja calidad al separar el alumnado por nivel no tienen cabida en este capítulo (Macqueen, 2013).

Finalmente, el modelo mejor considerado por su grado de mutualidad, igualdad y por la corresponsabilidad de funciones es la enseñanza en equipo. En él, los docentes planifican, enseñan y evalúan conjuntamente compartiendo la responsabilidad de todos los estudiantes de la clase. Esto no significa que, por ejemplo, los co-docentes deban estar siempre juntos para diseñar cualquier actividad o corregirla; más bien los obliga a planificar conjuntamente y consensuar unos criterios básicos para cada uno de los pasos del proceso de enseñanza. Así se podrían repartir las tareas manteniendo la coherencia y maximizando el tiempo disponible. Es decir, trabajando colaborativamente se puede optimizar el tiempo y esfuerzo de cada docente a la vez que aumenta la corresponsabilidad, coherencia y globalidad entre unidades, actividades, contenidos y maneras de hacer de los docentes, siempre respetando su libertad de cátedra.

Cabe destacar que cualquiera de los modelos explicitados de co-docencia puede diseñarse para unas horas concretas o para unas áreas determinadas. Por lo tanto, se pueden poner en práctica diferentes modelos en un mismo grupo-clase según los objetivos que se persigan. Además, dentro de cada uno de los modelos se puede agrupar el alumnado de diferentes formas. Por ejemplo, aplicando la co-docencia en paralelo, dentro de cada uno de los dos grupos según la actividad, se podría trabajar en parejas, individualmente o en equipos cooperativos. La variedad de formas de entender y aplicar la co-docencia no es negativa, ya que es necesario personalizar las formas de intervenir las singularidades de cada contexto para ser más eficaces y poder reducir las barreras para la participación y aprendizaje. Es más, Pancsofar y Petroff (2016) llegan a la conclusión de que la aplicación de diferentes modelos de co-docencia refleja el conocimiento que de ellos tienen los docentes. De hecho, según los objetivos perseguidos, e incluso el contenido a trabajar, habrá modelos y diseños más ajustados, como ya se está estudiando (Beyers-Brown, Howerter y Morgan, 2013; Ploessi y otros, 2010). El mayor grado de colaboración del modelo aplicado se corresponde con una menor asociación a actitudes negativas de los docentes frente la co-docencia (Pancsofar y Petroff, 2016).

Quién es quién en la co-docencia

Otro aspecto a tener en cuenta es ¿quién se considera que hace co-docencia? ¿Qué agentes pueden compartir la docencia? En las investigaciones se distinguen diferentes agrupaciones como la co-docencia entre un docente con experiencia y un docente novel. En este tipo se incluyen los estudiantes de prácticas o los docentes que todavía no han prestado servicio (Roth y otros, 2002), aunque también se podrían añadir los docentes en plantilla que hace pocos años que se dedican a la docencia o los que acaban de llegar al centro y necesitan adaptarse a la nueva realidad. En este mismo grupo tendrían cabida las diferentes investigaciones de co-docencia en áreas curriculares determinadas, por ejemplo: en el área de ciencias, Murphy y Beggs (2005); en educación primaria, Murphy y otros (2004); y en secundaria, Scantlebury, Gallo-Fox, y Wassell (2008).

Agrupar docentes con más y menos experiencia práctica favorece el aprendizaje bidireccional mediante la interacción que se puede dar entre personas con un bagaje de experiencia tan distinto. Conjuntamente tienen muchas más oportunidades de ofrecer una respuesta eficaz y ajustada a las necesidades del alumnado. El aprendizaje más explícito podría ser la gestión del aula (siempre y cuando se compartan espacios), la organización temporal y distribución de sesiones (si se hace una planificación conjunta), el enriquecimiento que aporta la mirada de una persona recién formada y habilidades en nuevos formatos como el dominio de las TIC, etc. El siguiente relato de una maestra veterana sobre el trabajo conjunto con una maestra novel apoya esta tesis a la par que lo

clarifica:

Hace unos años participé en la organización de aula en grupos interactivos en una clase de segundo de primaria. Ese año habíamos estrenado las primeras pizarras digitales en las aulas, y a mí, profesora inmigrante digital,² ya con unos cuantos años, me resultaba muy difícil trabajar con ellas, la informática me impresionaba y me sentía poco capacitada para utilizarla en mis clases y con el alumnado.

Trabajábamos dos profesoras y dos voluntarios en la misma clase, cada uno dinamizando uno de los grupos. A mí me tocó dinamizar un grupo de lectura comprensiva, y a mi lado tenía otra profesora, mucho más joven, que dinamizaba un grupo de escritura. En vez de hacerlo con lápiz y papel, como yo misma hubiera hecho, trabajaba con la pizarra digital, lo cual despertaba automáticamente el interés en el alumnado. Mientras dinamizaba mi grupo, de reojo miraba el trabajo de mi compañera, admiraba el dominio que tenía y los resultados: cómo la utilizaba y cómo atendían los alumnos. Al final de cada clase me acercaba y le preguntaba cómo lo había hecho, cómo lo utilizaba y ella, con paciencia, me iba enseñando. ¡Ya os podéis imaginar la torpeza de una persona no digital!

Al final de curso yo también utilizaba la pizarra para mis clases, había perdido el miedo. Un día le di las gracias porque había aprendido mucho con ella. La sorpresa fue que ella me dijo que también había aprendido conmigo, cosa que me sorprendió; me explicó que trabajando a mi lado le había enseñado estrategias y métodos para gestionar el alumnado con éxito. Las dos valoramos que trabajar dos profesionales dentro del aula no solo ayudaba al alumnado, sino que también al profesorado. (Mariona, maestra)

Queda claro que los conocimientos y la experiencia de los docentes tienen un gran valor en esta compleja red de interacciones. Sin embargo, los «saberes» no lo son todo. También puede haber contagio de otros aspectos tan beneficiosos para hacer participar al alumnado como la motivación de los propios docentes. Es fácil que un docente novel esté extramotivado con lo que podría contagiar a su co-docente y conjuntamente emprender proyectos o profundizar en los existentes. Las típicas cuestiones y dudas que surgen cuando alguien se inicia en el desarrollo de la profesión podrían ser gestionadas conjuntamente aportando la seguridad y confianza que todo docente necesita para desenvolverse en el grupo-clase con eficacia. Esto sin obviar que no solo al profesorado novel se le plantean nuevos retos a abordar. Lo interesante es que el inter-cambio también puede dar pie a cuestionar la propia praxis, la necesaria reflexión que precede a la mejora. Sin embargo, no debemos olvidar que no siempre los docentes noveles son los que están más motivados, ni los que aplican estrategias menos eficaces de gestión del aula ni los que están más actualizados en cuanto a educación.

Por otro lado, diferentes estudios destacan la co-docencia entre profesorado generalista y de atención a la diversidad, de educación especial o de pedagogía terapéutica (Cook y Friend, 1995; Scruggs, Mastropieri y McDuffie, 2007; Friend, Hurley-Chamberlain y Shamberger, 2010; Isherwood, Barger-Anderson y Erickson, 2013). Esta combinación permite aprovechar los conocimientos específicos sobre atención a la diversidad para que todos los alumnos aprendan y desarrollen al máximo su potencial. Los docentes trabajan conjuntamente para satisfacer las necesidades de todos los estudiantes, proporcionando los ajustes y modificaciones adecuadas dentro de las aulas ordinarias (Friend, Hurley-Chamberlain y Shamberger, 2010). Esta sería una de las parejas con mayor impacto en el sistema educativo actual (español) por su viabilidad y oportunidades de aportar mejoras, ya que la figura todavía considerada de maestro de educación especial, con funciones de maestro de atención y apoyo a la diversidad (MAAD), normativamente debe proporcionar las ayudas dentro del aula ordinaria.

Del mismo modo, también se puede hacer coincidir otros maestros: bien sean maestros generalistas, como se está haciendo en algunos centros para reforzar, mayoritariamente, áreas instrumentales como la lengua o las matemáticas; o bien maestros generalistas y otros de especialistas (de inglés, música o educación física).

En este grupo de profesionales que legalmente pueden realizar funciones docentes, también se podrían incluir los psicopedagogos en plantilla, en el caso de secundaria, o los de centros privados o privados-concertados y otros especialistas de servicios educativos específicos que entran en las aulas como recurso específico para un alumno en concreto. Este personal específico sería personal del cuerpo docente, como es el caso de los maestros con la especialidad de audición y lenguaje o titulación en logopedia, pero también los psicopedagogos y otro personal de apoyo como psicólogos, trabajadores y educadores sociales y técnicos especialistas del CREDV³ o centros de recursos educativos (CRE) de la ONCE.⁴ Aunque entren en las aulas con menor frecuencia y regularidad, también pueden hacer co-docencia.

Teniendo en cuenta los modelos de co-docencia citados al inicio de este capítulo, el tipo

de co-docencia más aplicado internacionalmente y también el más común en nuestro sistema sería «uno enseñando y otro ayudando» entre dos docentes (concretamente las parejas docente-MAAD o docente generalista de refuerzo), ya que un profesional suele tener la responsabilidad de todos los alumnos y del contenido mientras que el de apoyo, en el mejor de los casos, va ofreciendo ayudas a todos los alumnos. No obstante, quien asume el rol de apoyo, a pesar de la normativa inclu-siva, podría estar sacando un grupo homogéneo con dificultades fuera del aula, quedarse con este grupo en el aula, pero trabajando separadamente o bien permanecer sentado al lado de un alumno en concreto (dentro o fuera del aula) ofreciéndole determinadas ayudas. Estas opciones diferenciadoras son menos eficaces y, por supuesto, no se corresponden con los criterios inclusivos. Para que el apoyo que proporcionen sea realmente inclusivo, es necesario que estas figuras añadidas asuman responsabilidades sobre el contenido y los procesos de aprendizaje de todos los alumnos, tal como se ha visto en los otros modelos de co-docencia. Del mismo modo, la atención a la diversidad es función de todos los docentes, no únicamente del docente extra que entra al aula. Los modelos analizados aquí permiten optimizar la presencia de dos docentes en el aula, y facilitan una participación más proactiva en beneficio del alumno con dificultades, pero también de todo el grupo.

Alternativas para la participación

Si la pareja para la co-docencia la forman docentes con agentes como el personal no docente de atención educativa,⁵ no suele considerarse una auténtica co-docencia. Se aduce que las funciones legalmente encomendadas a este personal no les permiten adoptar el mismo grado de responsabilidad en todas las tareas docentes, ni tampoco se les pueden suponer las competencias requeridas a un docente. Aunque haya personas muy válidas entre estos otros profesionales, como se subrayaba en una de las sesiones del grupo de trabajo (GT-AEEI), no se puede contar para todo con estos profesionales por diversos motivos. Por un lado, el sistema educativo no les requiere unos conocimientos pedagógicos mínimos para que ejerzan, aunque, en la práctica, el personal de apoyo pueda estar formado y preparado. Por otro lado, sería laboralmente injusto exigirles funciones y responsabilidades que, por contrato y sueldo, no se contemplan. En términos de co-docencia, el grado de igualdad, partiendo de la distinción de funciones entre figuras docentes y no docentes, no es suficiente como para considerar su intervención como co-docencia. En este caso, quien lleva el peso fundamental de los diseños, planificación, evaluación y mejora de las prácticas son los docentes, aunque el personal no docente pueda colaborar en su ejecución.

De igual forma, tampoco se consideraría co-docencia la participación de voluntarios (familiares, exalumnos, docentes jubilados, exalumnos de prácticas, docentes sin servicios prestados, vecinos u otros miembros de la comunidad), ya que intervienen en los procesos de enseñanza y de aprendizaje desde otra perspectiva y con distintos objetivos y funciones. Aunque tengan titulación docente e incluso hayan ejercido en el mismo centro, siendo voluntarios participan como agentes educativos asumiendo un rol diferenciado. No obstante, muchos de los aspectos relacionales que ayudan a que la co-docencia resulte exitosa también son fundamentales para que un docente y un profesional auxiliar o voluntario ofrezcan un mejor servicio trabajando conjuntamente, ya que pueden orientar su colaboración. Al fin y al cabo, se trata de dos profesionales trabajando conjuntamente dentro del aula.

La consideración del alumnado de prácticas como uno de los agentes que comparten la docencia es un tema controvertido. Queda claro que todo estudiante en prácticas debería poder desempeñar y practicar las diferentes funciones docentes, desde la programación a la evaluación, incluyendo la propia para poder mejorar. El rol que deben desempeñar dentro de las aulas es de docentes. Sin embargo, los estudiantes pueden verse limitados cuanto a oportunidades para practicar todas las funciones docentes tanto por los convenios de prácticas entre el centro y la universidad como por la voluntad de sus tutores en el centro de prácticas. Si no pueden realizar algunas de las tareas docentes, algunos de los modelos de co-docencia no podrían aplicarse. Además, nuestro sistema considera estos agentes alumnado en prácticas, lo cual se aleja del sustantivo «docencia» del concepto estudiado. Los estudiantes en prácticas son asignados a un docente que los guía, supervisa y participa en su evaluación, lo que no permite calificar su relación como una situación de auténtica igualdad.

En todos los casos es difícil asegurar la igualdad de responsabilidades y de toma de decisiones, ya que legalmente quién tiene la carga docente y el peso de la evaluación es el docente en plantilla. Pero hay parejas co-docentes de este tipo con relaciones muy igualitarias que se corresponsabilizaran de cada una de las partes del proceso de enseñanza. Aun así, en caso de discordia quien tendría la última palabra es el docente, ya que legalmente es el responsable único, lo que no sucede cuando ambos adultos son docentes.

Es evidente que la interacción facilita el aprendizaje, por lo que todos estos agentes

suponen un importante apoyo a la docencia ya que, inmersos en la dinámica, están interviniendo directamente en los procesos de aprendizaje y de enseñanza. Pueden promover la participación de todos los alumnos o estimular otros apoyos, como la ayuda entre iguales. Sin embargo, en función del rol de cada agente educativo podrán asumir más o menos responsabilidades. Por ejemplo, según la normativa catalana, los docentes de educación especial y los técnicos de educación infantil (personal no docente) por contrato pueden co-planificar y contribuir a las evaluaciones aportando información, pero no es el caso de los auxiliares ni celadores, aunque, como profesionales, debieran. Consecuentemente, en los primeros ejemplos podríamos hablar de una co-docencia práctica. Los voluntarios serían quienes pueden asumir oficialmente menos responsabilidades. En casuísticas similares podríamos hablar de una co-docencia más colaborativa, aunque su predisposición hacia las diferentes funciones y tareas educativas también debería ser considerada por los docentes.

Un ejemplo de roles en co-docencia colaborativa tiene lugar en los grupos interactivos (Álvarez y Puigdemívol, 2014) que practican la mayoría de escuelas del grupo de trabajo mencionado (GT-AEEI). Las docentes preparan previamente las actividades que dinamizarán los voluntarios en un sistema rotativo de cuatro estaciones, dinamizadas por un adulto. Se trata de grupos reducidos que rotan cada 20 minutos. Por lo tanto, aunque todos los participantes puedan ofrecer una ayuda significativa, el rol del docente no es equitativo al de los voluntarios. Sin embargo, estos se sitúan en una de las estaciones desempeñando roles similares a los del docente. En ese momento, lo que impera es la interacción entre personas con distintas experiencias (entre alumnos y también con el adulto) con sus estrategias y perspectivas antes que su figura. Los voluntarios realizan una co-docencia colaborativa que puede enriquecerse con el *feedback*, ya sea informando sobre los alumnos y actividades o haciendo propuestas de mejora.

Orientaciones para el éxito de la co-docencia

La co-docencia supone un sistema complejo de colaboración que afecta a todos los niveles de la organización de la escuela. Es decir, su práctica no se puede dar solamente en una clase y entre dos docentes ya que, como se ha descrito, constituye todo un modelo de apoyo a partir de la maximización de las interacciones. Por lo tanto, aunque la idea pueda partir de los propios docentes, sin una organización y gestión a nivel de centro, la co-docencia no sería posible. Una co-docencia efectiva «debería implicar los dos docentes en la co-planificación, co-instruyendo y co-evaluando estudiantes con diferentes necesidades» (Hunter, Dieker y Whitney, 2016). Los horarios de estos profesores deberían ser afines para facilitar su co-docencia y las coordinaciones que requiere. Se deben ajustar según los objetivos de la co-docencia. Es decir, si el equipo decide hacer co-docencia en el área de matemáticas dos horas por semana, se deben disponer y distribuir los recursos humanos para que esto sea posible.

Todos los agentes del centro deberían crear y compartir unas pautas pedagógicas y de gestión del aula mínimas para garantizar la coherencia de las acciones que llevan a cabo. También es importante la continuidad de los docentes y del proyecto ya que permite que los codocentes aprendan y que sus prácticas sean más eficaces convirtiéndolas en prácticas reflexivas. Para optimizarlas es fundamental tener claros el ideario y las normas del centro, haber clarificado el modelo de co-docencia que se quiere desarrollar y los roles que cada docente desempeñará. Los documentos pueden ser una herramienta muy útil de apoyo a las prácticas, si son verdaderamente propios del equipo, compartidos, útiles y accesibles. No nos referimos a aquellos documentos que simplemente se elaboran para presentar a la Administración y que luego «guardan el polvo» en una estantería. La documentación debe ser poca, concisa, con las ideas clave claras, compartidas, elaboradas y consensuadas antes de empezar cualquier proyecto. Estos documentos facilitan que los profesionales dediquen sus esfuerzos diarios a las tareas que no se pueden anticipar o acordar. Finalmente, seguir un orden del día durante las coordinaciones permite que en ellas se focalicen los temas más trascendentales, ayuda a ir al grano.

Generando entornos de aprendizaje: interacción y apoyos

La importancia del grupo: agrupación del alumnado y aprendizaje

Esta interacción, necesaria para aprender y para enseñar, no solo se promueve con formas de organización y gestión donde el adulto lleva la voz cantante. Los métodos de enseñanza en que los alumnos participan activamente, en los que su aprendizaje depende de su trabajo e implicación son más profundos y formativos que los métodos meramente informativos. Los

verdaderos protagonistas del aprendizaje deben ser los alumnos y por ello, además de asegurar unas buenas prácticas en co-docencia, deberíamos focalizar la atención en lo que sucede entre ellos. Con una simple fotografía de la disposición física del aula podríamos hacer una primera evaluación de lo que está sucediendo. Tener en cuenta la organización del contexto social y, en particular, las interacciones comunicativas en estos contextos, es esencial. Por ello, sea cual sea la organización, el espacio y el mobiliario debe ajustarse a las prácticas que se quieran llevar a cabo para que no supongan una barrera para la participación del alumnado. Como apunta una de las maestras, «si se distribuye el mobiliario en una disposición tradicional [pupitres y sillas en dirección a la pizarra] no se está favoreciendo ni la co-docencia ni el aprendizaje entre iguales ni la escuela inclusiva, ya que no se facilita la participación e interacción» (Sesión del grupo de trabajo de AEEI, 2016).

La ayuda entre iguales es tan o más valiosa que la de los docentes, tanto a nivel académico como emocional y actitudinal. Por un lado, el lenguaje usado para ayudar puede ser más próximo, los alumnos tienen más recientes las posibles frustraciones ante el contenido y pueden actuar diferenciadamente (Cohen y Stover, 1981; en Stainback y Stainback, 2001), de manera que el que ayuda puede reestructurar el contenido para interiorizarlo mejor o descubrir y descartar concepciones erróneas. Un mejor clima no quiere decir pensamiento único, los alumnos deben negociar los significados y discutirlos para aprender. Por otro lado, «los estudiantes están más motivados cuando aprenden de sus compañeros y cuando tienen la oportunidad de ayudarlos a aprender» (Puigdemívol y Krastina, 2010, p. 101), pueden reforzar positivamente su autoconcepto académico, autoestima y su sentimiento de pertenencia puede aumentar.

Algunas de las formas que favorecen la ayuda entre iguales son los equipos cooperativos heterogéneos, los apadrinamientos, el alumno tutor, los rincones o estaciones, los grupos interactivos, las tertulias literarias, etc. El documento de organización y gestión de los centros educativos de 2016-2017 recoge como estrategias y actuaciones educativas para atender a todos los alumnos en el aula las siguientes:

el trabajo cooperativo, el trabajo por proyectos, la resolución participativa de los problemas relacionales y de conflictos, la enseñanza multiniveles, la docencia compartida, la tutoría entre iguales, los soportes tecnológicos, el trabajo por rincones y/o los talleres dentro del aula, los talleres o actividades interniveles y el trabajo en pequeños grupos dentro del aula. (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2016, p. 138)

Del mismo modo que ocurría con los modelos de co-docencia, las agrupaciones de alumnos no tienen por qué ser estancas, ya que en la práctica algunas de sus estrategias se pueden usar para nutrir otras agrupaciones. Por ejemplo, aunque el trabajo por rincones ayude por sí mismo a aumentar la participación, se puede enriquecer con las pautas de trabajo propias de la organización cooperativa generando interdependencia positiva entre alumnos para lograr mayor interacción. El radical común de estas disposiciones es el incremento de las oportunidades que tiene el alumnado para participar y afrontar activamente los contenidos con la ayuda de cada uno de los agentes involucrados; especialmente la ayuda entre iguales. Los propios compañeros son el recurso humano más común dentro de las aulas, por lo que son los principales agentes de inclusión.

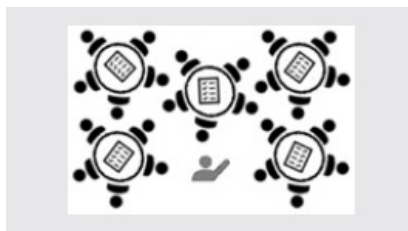
Organizaciones cooperativas del aula

Las prácticas de trabajo cooperativo son conocidas en nuestro contexto. A partir de Pujolàs (2009, p. 231), el aprendizaje cooperativo se podría definir como:

el uso didáctico de equipos reducidos de alumnos, [...] utilizando una estructura de actividad tal que asegure al máximo la participación igualitaria (para que todos los alumnos tengan las mismas oportunidades de participar) y se potencie al máximo la interacción simultánea entre ellos.

A esta definición añadimos la conveniencia de componer grupos heterogéneos por los motivos ya argumentados. Hace años que se han demostrado los efectos positivos del aprendizaje cooperativo frente al competitivo o individualista en cuanto al rendimiento académico, socialización, motivación y autonomía (Pázos y Hernando, 2016). En esta estructura de aprendizaje el grado de igualdad y mutualidad entre alumnos es alto. Los alumnos no solo son responsables de su propio aprendizaje, sino del aprendizaje de los demás miembros de su grupo.

Esta estructura no es espontánea, los docentes tienen un papel importante tanto en la composición y estructuración de los grupos heterogéneos, como en el diseño de las actividades, en asegurar su comprensión y en facilitar y modelar las interacciones entre alumnos para profundizar en los objetivos. Siguiendo esta misma línea, Gillies (2016) recoge cinco componentes clave para el éxito del aprendizaje cooperativo: 1) asegurar la interdependencia positiva entre los miembros del grupo, 2) facilitar la interacción promotora de aprendizaje, 3) fomentar las responsabilidades individuales, 4) enseñar explícitamente las habilidades sociales apropiadas para interactuar y aprender conjuntamente, y 5) animar a los grupos a reflexionar sobre el proceso de organización de la tarea y de la interacción con los compañeros.



Para facilitar el intercambio y co-construcción de significados mediante el lenguaje los grupos no deben ser muy numerosos (cuadro 2). Se recomiendan equipos de cuatro o cinco personas para que todos tengan oportunidades de participar. Esta agrupación incluye diferentes técnicas en las que los alumnos trabajan conjuntamente para lograr determinados objetivos comunes de los que son responsables todos los miembros del equipo. Sin su aportación, el grupo no puede lograr los objetivos, lo que promueve la interdependencia positiva y las responsabilidades individuales ante el grupo. Del mismo modo se facilita la ayuda entre iguales para que todos aprendan. Por ello, dentro de los equipos cada alumno desempeña un rol que conlleva el cumplimiento de unas funciones negociadas y clarificadas. Los roles de portavoz, secretario y coordinador son los más comunes, aunque se pueden crear y adaptar roles según las necesidades de la tarea. También pueden crearse roles para actividades concretas, si son sencillos de cumplir. Se recomienda que los cargos dentro del equipo sean rotativos para que todos los alumnos practiquen las competencias que requieren, pero con el tiempo suficiente para poder desempeñar efectivamente cada rol. Esta estructura exige que el alumnado, además del contenido de aprendizaje, aprenda a ofrecer ayudas y adquiera habilidades para funcionar cooperativamente. Algunas de estas habilidades para la interacción son «la escucha activa, compartir ideas y recursos, comentar constructivamente las ideas de los demás, aceptar la responsabilidad de la actitud propia y tomar decisiones de forma democrática» (Gillies, 2016, p. 42).

Para mejorar las habilidades y el funcionamiento como equipo, además de la práctica es necesaria la retroalimentación externa y las autoevaluaciones como parte de la tarea. Las herramientas de autorregulación son un apoyo muy útil. A ello sumamos que la autogestión del grupo requiere, además del compromiso de cada alumno, dotar a las actividades de auto-instrucciones sencillas y concretas para que los alumnos puedan proceder autónomamente. Con estas simples estrategias se facilita la participación activa del alumnado, la autonomía de los grupos y la posibilidad de que el docente proporcione apoyos específicos al alumnado más vulnerable (Saumell, 2011). Ello sirve además de modelaje para que cuando el docente se retire los iguales protagonicen ese apoyo. En definitiva, organizar grupos de alumnos colaborando y ayudándose entre ellos favorece la inclusión de todo el alumnado.

Trabajo por proyectos: actividad, diálogo y reflexión

El aprendizaje basado en proyectos (ABP) es una práctica en auge, pero con una larga tradición. Kilpatrick fue pionero de esta metodología ofreciendo una experiencia completa que implicaba al alumnado en la acción, utilizando una motivación intrínseca. Dewey destacó la importancia de experimentar para aprender en primera persona. Se trata de un aprendizaje activo con enfoque transversal de las actividades, abarcando al mismo tiempo diferentes áreas de conocimiento de una forma más próxima a la realidad. El aprendizaje basado en proyectos también refleja el aprendizaje basado en el descubrimiento de Bruner (1961). Son muchas las definiciones del mismo documentadas desde el siglo xx. Hasni y otros (2016, p. 411), con su revisión bibliográfica, recogen cinco características comunes en las definiciones de aprendizaje basado en proyectos:

El aprendizaje basado en proyectos 1) debe involucrar a los estudiantes en la investigación de una pregunta o problema que guíe las actividades y organice conceptos y principios; 2) resulta en el desarrollo por parte de los estudiantes de objetos o productos que abordan la pregunta o problema; 3) permite a los estudiantes implicarse en investigaciones; 4) implica que estudiantes, docentes y miembros de la sociedad colaboren en el problema como una comunidad de investigación; 5) promueve que los estudiantes usen herramientas cognitivas.

Es decir, el proceso de aprendizaje parte de la curiosidad de los alumnos que generan preguntas que deberán resolver mediante la colaboración, negociación y el diseño de su propia investigación hasta llegar a un producto final. García-Valcárcel y Basilotta (2016) apuntan que difiere del aprendizaje basado en problemas en que el objetivo no es solo buscar soluciones a los problemas; entienden que los aprendizajes realizados a lo largo del proyecto que se aborda son igual de importantes.

El aprendizaje basado en proyectos suele seguir tres grandes fases: planificación, creación y procesamiento. En la primera, los alumnos escogen un tema, se buscan los recursos para poder llevar a cabo la investigación y se hace una planificación de los pasos y

tareas en que se dividirá el proyecto organizándolo en el tiempo. Cuando se lleva a cabo un trabajo por proyectos es importante disponer del tiempo necesario para la planificación. ¿Qué queremos?, ¿cómo lo queremos hacer?, ¿cómo lo decidiremos?, ¿con qué propósito lo haremos?, ¿quién hará cada cosa?, ¿cuándo, cómo y dónde? El alumnado tiene que tomar decisiones, opinar, elegir, etc. El tema general que trabajarán todos los grupos o la investigación concreta del grupo se elige democráticamente:

Empezar la clase con un ¿qué queremos aprender hoy? implica un cambio que motivó de manera especial a mis alumnos. En un primer momento los alumnos no sabían que decir ¿Qué pregunta hoy la «señor»? ¿Qué dice? Puntalicé: Ha de ser algo que normalmente no hacemos en clase. Tuve que poner un ejemplo: A mí me gustaría aprender cómo se hace una tarta de manzana. A partir de aquí, su imaginación empezó a volar preguntando: «¿Cómo está la luna de cerca?», «¿Qué tiene un ordenador por dentro?», «¿Cómo se hacen las películas?» Y así hasta 25 preguntas diferentes que abarcaban todos sus deseos. La primera clase había salido de maravilla, había conseguido mi objetivo: generar interés y que aprendieran a escucharse y a respetar los turnos de palabra. Fue interesante observar que los alumnos con más dificultades participaron con la misma motivación que los demás. (Relato de una maestra de una escuela inclusiva)

En la segunda fase, se desarrolla la idea, los alumnos buscan, crean, elaboran, discuten y comparten opiniones para llegar a su producto final. La tercera fase es de seguimiento y reflexión. En esta fase, los estudiantes presentan sus productos a una audiencia según se acuerde (en pequeños grupos, ante toda la clase, en formato «feria pedagógica»). En este momento pueden recibir su evaluación y realizar su autoevaluación. Pero en realidad lo más importante es el proceso de aprendizaje y no el producto o resultado final.

Un año realicé en una clase de P3 (alumnos de 3 años) un proyecto de trabajo emocionante. Escogimos la luna como tema y decidimos observarla, cada día un alumno tenía que mirarla y dibujarla con una cera blanca en una cartulina negra que preparamos. Cuando empiezas un proyecto, nunca sabes cómo irá ni qué saldrá, ya que se va construyendo a partir de las interacciones que surgen, aunque se parta de objetivos planificados. Un día apareció Antonio con su luna dibujada y en medio había un punto más blanco. Explicó que era el cráter más grande que había en la luna y que se llamaba Mar de la Tranquilidad, se lo había explicado su padre. Otro día un papá propuso hacer una práctica de cómo el sol daba luz a la luna con una linterna y dos bolas de porexpán.

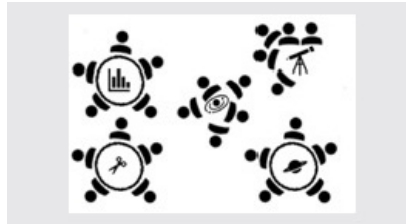
Otro día una mamá trajo una caja con harina y canicas que convertimos en meteoritos que impactaban en el suelo lunar creando cráteres. La literatura infantil sobre la luna fue otro de los éxitos ya que cada semana traían un cuento que leíamos. Fue gracioso cuando el padre de una de las alumnas, Alba, comentó que pensaba que su hija era superdotada ya que iba recitando «Un meteorito chocó contra la luna y creó un cráter que se llama Mar de la Tranquilidad». Nos preguntó si esto entraba en el currículo de P3. Para mí, lo más emocionante de todo fue la reunión de presentación del proyecto a los familiares, vino tanta gente que tuvimos que ir a un espacio más grande. Se habían creado tales expectativas que vinieron abuelos, tíos y hermanos. Fue un proyecto especial, es importante implicar a la comunidad. (Relato de una maestra de una escuela inclusiva)

El trabajo por proyectos conlleva en el alumnado autogestión, un aumento progresivo de la autonomía e interacción con los iguales y otros agentes para conseguir un mejor proyecto. Se dota de poder al alumnado haciéndolo más protagonista de su proceso de aprendizaje más interesado y con una motivación intrínseca para el aprendizaje. Es una metodología valorada muy positivamente por los alumnos (García-Valcárcel y Basilotta, 2016), tal y como se evidencia en el relato. Un enfoque de aprendizaje en que el alumnado investiga para construir conocimiento y establecer relaciones entre saberes. Permite la inmersión de los alumnos en los contenidos que pueden ser trabajados con más profundidad. Los proyectos deben ser el centro del currículo, no algo periférico (Walther-Thomas y otros, 2000). Si el proyecto es auténtico y parte de la realidad, la división de contenidos por áreas del currículo no tiene sentido. Consecuentemente, con aprendizaje basado en proyectos se promueve el aprendizaje de los contenidos de una forma más significativa e interdisciplinar. Se necesitan y se practican competencias de trabajo en equipo, participación en comunidad, pensamiento crítico e investigación, entre otras habilidades cognitivas de orden superior (Hasni y otros, 2016) muy necesarias en una sociedad tan cambiante. Es decir, se promueve la adquisición de las habilidades y competencias vinculadas directamente a los objetivos de la propuesta pero, a la vez, se adquieren competencias y conocimientos no específicos o transversales como los citados. Ayaz y Söylemez (2015) observaron un incremento de los

resultados académicos en su área de estudio, las ciencias (cuadro 3).

Los docentes tienen un papel muy importante en el diseño de actividades relevantes, auténticas y motivadoras; guiando a los alumnos, haciendo propuestas acordes al estado de cada proyecto y orientando para que los alumnos sean conscientes del proceso y de los resultados. De hecho, una de las mayores dificultades suele ser el cambio de rol, el esfuerzo que supone aplicar una metodología diferente a la mera exposición de contenidos y dejar de lado las rutinas adquiridas (Dopico y Pevida, 2017). La predisposición del profesorado es un factor potenciador, al igual que el liderazgo y apoyo del equipo directivo para que el centro asuma el proyecto como propio y lo impulse (García-Valcárcel y Basilotta, 2016). En conclusión, esta metodología potencia el lenguaje, contribuye a construir pensamiento en el alumnado, ayudándole a comprender e interpretar la realidad. Favorece las actitudes solidarias de cooperación grupal y es una metodología que permite avanzar a todos y cada uno de los componentes del grupo.

Cuadro 3. Trabajo por proyectos. Fuente: Elaboración propia



Organización por estaciones: resaltando la autonomía

Otra práctica basada en la interacción es la metodología por estaciones o rincones. Su práctica tiene como base a autores como Dewey, Freinet y Montessori, entre otros, que apostaban por el aprendizaje activo, la motivación para aprender, los espacios y los materiales de autoaprendizaje. Es una forma diferente de organizar el aula, una de las más flexibles, que se puede acoplar al espacio y a los recursos disponibles de cada centro. Se trata de espacios situados dentro del aula donde el alumnado lleva a cabo, en pequeños grupos o individualmente, tareas generalmente manipulativas y de investigación. Los rincones no tienen por qué tener un tiempo de duración determinado. Cada niño podría actuar a su ritmo, en función de sus preferencias e intereses sin tiempos rígidos. El diseño de las actividades es fundamental para su éxito ya que deben trabajar los contenidos, ser manipulativas, con distintos niveles de dificultad y claras. Deben poder realizarse sin la ayuda del adulto, sin explicaciones adicionales más que las autoinstrucciones.

El espacio físico también es muy importante, pues debe llamar la atención del alumnado. Algunos consejos para que funcione exitosamente son los siguientes:

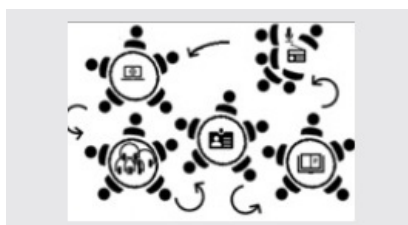
- Deben ser espacios bien delimitados, fijos y señalizados.
- Deben ser fáciles de identificar, normalmente se representan con un logotipo consensuado por el grupo-clase.
- Cada rincón debe tener materiales con distintos niveles de complejidad.
- Todos deben tener una norma consensuada, que debe ser clara y corta.

Para maximizar los aprendizajes, evitar aglomeraciones y asegurar la fluidez se pueden diseñar y acordar unas estaciones obligatorias, unas estaciones optativas y hojas de ruta para coordinar los grupos sabiendo el orden que cada grupo quiere seguir. Esta hoja puede cumplir la función de auto-gestión si incluye las instrucciones necesarias para las actividades de cada estación, apartados para la autoevaluación y comentarios relevantes sobre los contenidos, procedimientos, dificultades y puntos fuertes. El grado de libertad de los alumnos en las estaciones y la permanencia en éstas puede variar según los objetivos. Es decir, se pueden diseñar estaciones con solo una actividad multinivel o con diferentes propuestas de actividades que el alumno o grupo que participa pueda escoger. Pueden estar muy pautadas o bien partir de la experimentación libre. Se pueden montar para esa sesión o bien mantenerlas expuestas y disponibles durante un periodo de tiempo (cuadro 4). Algunos ejemplos de rincones son los siguientes:

- Rincón de expresión plástica: diferentes materiales que permitan pintar, realizar *collages*, montar una escultura, conocer un pintor, escultor, etc.
- Rincón del lenguaje: leer y escribir. En este rincón se pueden tener materiales de lectura en varios formatos y materiales de escritura como lápices, bolígrafos, plumas, papeles de diferentes formas y colores, tabletas y ordenadores.
- Rincón de las matemáticas: materiales como ábacos, dominós, puzzles, bloques lógicos, construcciones, *multilink*, garbanzos. Se puede crear una caja con diferentes preguntas de investigación. Por ejemplo, «¿cómo podemos saber cuántos caramelos hay en este bote sin llegar a abrirlo?».
- Rincón de juegos: juegos de mesa tradicionales, juegos organizados por los mismos alumnos, por otros mayores, por las familias, etc.
- Rincón de la experimentación: materiales diversos que propicien la investigación acompañados de preguntas que ayuden a investigar. Por ejemplo, «si soplamos una pompa de jabón por un orificio cuadrado, ¿saldrá la pompa cuadrada?»
- Rincón de la lengua extranjera: familia de palabras diferentes, reproductores con auriculares, episodios de dibujos animados, etc. en la lengua que se quiere aprender.

A los anteriores ejemplos debe añadirse la propuesta pedagógica según las competencias y objetivos a trabajar; aunque algunos rincones puedan ser de menor intensidad, todos requieren planificación. Los docentes deben adecuar las propuestas, estructuras y tipo de organización al alumnado y a las evidencias científicas. Por ejemplo, diseños de tres estaciones en codocencia en que dos estaciones son lideradas por co-docentes y la tercera es autónoma han resultado ser ineficientes (Gurgur y Uzuner, 2011). Este diseño perdería la esencia de la metodología, ya que es fundamental que los alumnos puedan realizar las tareas de las estaciones de forma autónoma y que el número de alumnos en cada una de ellas sea reducido para que puedan trabajar conjuntamente. La mayoría de las escuelas que utilizan esta metodología acostumbran a llevarla a cabo en horas determinadas compaginándola con otras metodologías. Sin embargo, existen escuelas especializadas en el trabajo por rincones que imparten toda la escolaridad de esta manera. Como en las otras organizaciones resaltadas en este capítulo, el papel del tutor o profesor deja de ser el de profesor-instructor y pasa a ser el guía que enseña a que aprendan por ellos mismos. Pasan a ser animadores para provocar la reflexión y despertar la curiosidad de los alumnos. Además, la organización permite que los docentes ofrezcan apoyos directos e individualizados si se requiere.

Cuadro 4. Organización por estaciones. Fuente: Elaboración propia

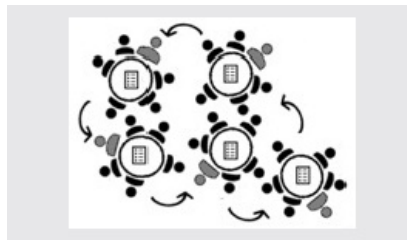


El trabajo en estaciones o rincones ayuda al alumnado en la construcción de sus propios conocimientos, permite un aprendizaje significativo a través de la experimentación y la manipulación. Los estudiantes pueden estar más preparados para afrontar situaciones de la vida real si las actividades son transferibles a su cotidianeidad. La predisposición para el aprendizaje puede ser más favorable, ya que los alumnos pueden escoger qué hacer guiándose por sus gustos, intereses y por su curiosidad. Otro de los efectos positivos es la satisfacción por el trabajo realizado, ya que es más fácil que los estudiantes sientan las actividades como propias. Aun rotando individualmente por las estaciones, la interacción es constante, ya que nunca están solos. Los compañeros que ya han pasado por las estaciones se convierten en una figura de apoyo experta a la que pueden consultar o con quien pueden debatir. Sin embargo, es recomendable que las rotaciones se realicen con los equipos cooperativos para añadir sus ventajas a los beneficios ya citados. La diversidad de espacios y materiales, además de poder potenciar la creatividad y la imaginación, permite la llegada al conocimiento por distintas vías y facilita la participación y aprendizaje de todos.

Grupos interactivos

La organización del aula en grupos interactivos (Álvarez y Puigdemívol, 2014) favorece el trabajo de más de un adulto en clase. En esta organización se reparte el alumnado en 4 o 5 grupos con un máximo de 6 alumnos por grupo. Los grupos deben de ser lo más heterogéneos posible, tanto en aprendizajes, sexo como en etnia. Cada grupo realiza una actividad diferente (preparada previamente por los docentes) con la ayuda de un voluntario o voluntaria que se responsabiliza de la tarea motivando los alumnos para que participen, dialoguen y acuerden las mejores soluciones. Consecuentemente, la diferencia fundamental en relación con los grupos cooperativos es la dinamización de cada grupo por parte de un adulto. Hablamos de dinamizar y no enseñar o «hacer una pequeña clase», porque en grupos interactivos lo más importante es la interacción entre el alumnado. Se ofrece la actividad y son los propios alumnos quienes deben organizarse para resolver el «enigma» que tienen delante: qué harán, cómo lo harán, etc. Lo importante es que lleguen a resolver el problema planteado dialogando. Cada grupo de alumnos puede resolverlo siguiendo caminos diferentes (cuadro 5).

Cuadro 5. Grupos interactivos. Fuente: Elaboración propia



Al final de la sesión el alumnado debe haber realizado todas las actividades pasando por todos los voluntarios y docentes dinamizadores. Con esta organización se aceleran también los aprendizajes, ya que, con el mismo tiempo, es más fácil realizar más actividades significativas que en una clase con organización tradicional. Estas tareas son de corta duración, el tiempo total recomendable para poder aplicar esta organización es de una hora y media o dos horas. Se calcula el tiempo para que las actividades tengan siempre el mismo número de minutos. Por ejemplo, en una sesión de hora y media con 5 grupos, cada actividad debe durar 15 minutos reservando los 15 minutos restantes para los cambios, el comienzo de la clase y la clausura. La experiencia siguiente relata un ejemplo de cómo los grupos interactivos ayudan a acelerar los aprendizajes:

En la escuela donde trabajaba, el alumnado tenía un cuaderno de matemáticas que realizaba durante todo el curso. A veces costaba terminarlo. Cuando empezamos a organizar el aula en grupos interactivos nos dimos cuenta de que acabamos el cuaderno y realizábamos muchas más actividades. Por tanto, con el tiempo, el cuaderno se convirtió en tres cuadernos, uno por trimestre, y en dos cuadernillos más. Además, las actividades eran más lúdicas. La aceleración del aprendizaje estaba asegurada. También cabe decir que mejoraron considerablemente los resultados académicos. (Mariona, maestra)

En los grupos interactivos normalmente son los maestros tutores quienes seleccionan los contenidos a trabajar. En general, todas las escuelas que llevan a cabo esta organización de clase tienen estipulados los contenidos que se trabajan, y por tanto es más fácil programar. Para fomentar la igualdad entre los profesionales cuando interviene más de un docente, se reparten las programaciones y se trabaja cooperativamente optimizando el tiempo. Así lo

explicaba una maestra:

En la clase de lenguaje se realiza cada semana una sesión de GI, organizando cuatro grupos de trabajo. En uno se realizan actividades de ortografía, otro realiza actividades de comprensión lectora, otro de gramática y el último de expresión escrita. El docente de apoyo y atención a la diversidad es quien prepara uno de los grupos, siempre el mismo, de esta manera se garantiza la coherencia del trabajo y se reparten las tareas para que no recaiga siempre en el profesorado tutor.

Cuando un adulto dinamiza la interacción entre iguales favorece el aprendizaje de todos y cada uno de los alumnos. De este modo se promueve el aprendizaje del alumnado con discapacidad, ya que hace posible ajustarse a las necesidades que surgen. La organización de la clase permite trabajar con todos los alumnos, aunque haya significativas diferencias en su nivel de aprendizaje. El alumnado considerado con necesidades educativas especiales realiza las mismas tareas que el resto de la clase asegurando la no segregación.

En clase teníamos a un alumno diagnosticado con el grado más profundo del espectro autista (DSM-5), no se relacionaba nunca con los demás compañeros y muy pocas veces con los adultos. Se empezó a estudiar su caso en una comisión de trabajo en la que participaban los profesionales que atendíamos al niño (tutor, jefe de estudios, maestra de apoyo y atención a la diversidad, auxiliar), se leyeron artículos, se visionaron audiovisuales y películas que se comentaban entre todos. Esto nos hizo cambiar la mirada con respecto al problema que podía presentar Jhon. Empezamos a pensar que los grupos interactivos, en los que participaba más de un docente, no se aprovechaban demasiado en el caso de Jhon. Nuestra observación diaria nos decía que cuando realizábamos los grupos interactivos y en según qué actividades, Jhon solicitaba al adulto salir de clase e ir a un rincón protector que tenía. También observamos que cuando se realizaba trabajo experimental, en algún momento, desde su rincón observaba lo que hacíamos los demás. Era un punto de contacto, un momento de conexión con nosotros.

La comisión de trabajo decidió realizar en grupo interactivo una actividad que fuera experimental. A partir de ese momento Jhon pidió pocas veces salir de clase, rodeaba al grupo que realizaba el experimento y alguna vez conseguíamos que participara repitiendo los gestos que hacían los compañeros. Nos sentimos orgullosos, ya que rompía con su mundo y entraba en el nuestro. (Relato de una maestra de escuela inclusiva)

Esta organización también resulta óptima para el alumnado con necesidades de carácter social, ya que el simple hecho de poder realizar las tareas les ayuda a no tener conductas disruptivas en clase; podríamos decir que un niño que aprende es un niño que no participará de acciones destructivas, no estará «molestando». En conclusión, y con las palabras de Vieira y Puigdemívol (2013, p. 47): «La organización en grupos interactivos genera unas dinámicas de enseñanza en las que el alumnado se siente más atendido y en las que el profesorado percibe con claridad su progreso [...] podemos deducir con seguridad que los diferentes agentes (alumnado, profesorado y voluntariado, incluyendo las familias) perciben claramente el efecto positivo del voluntariado en el progreso académico del alumnado». Por ello, los grupos interactivos con o sin co-docencia se dibujan como una estrategia de apoyo que enriquece la actividad y las interacciones en el aula, facilitando una atención más personalizada al alumnado que la necesita.

Desdoblamientos

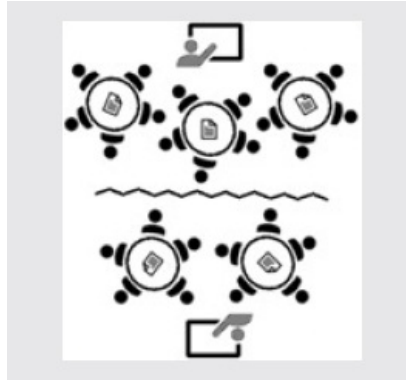
Los desdoblamientos consisten en dividir un mismo grupo entre dos docentes. Esta organización no correspondería a lo que queremos entender por co-docencia, a no ser que ambos docentes co-planifiquen los contenidos, los objetivos, llevando a cabo una evaluación conjunta. Es decir, no se consideran co-docencia los frecuentes desdoblamientos de grupo realizados en las áreas de inglés o música, ya que su objetivo es disminuir la ratio sin co-planificación de contenidos, objetivos, evaluación ni reflexión conjunta. En estos casos, la docencia suele ser independiente, solo se divide el grupo-clase y se comparte espacio temporal. Tradicionalmente se ha realizado con la asignatura de inglés y otras materias como lengua, matemáticas o música, para aplicar metodologías más activas y participativas. Suele ser la modalidad de agrupamiento mejor acogida por el profesorado, ya que implica un menor nivel de coordinación. La condición es que haya tantos maestros como grupos, pudiendo estar en diferentes aulas o compartir el mismo espacio físico, pero sin interacción entre grupos, ya que son independientes. La atención a la diversidad vendría determinada por el tipo de metodología y su adecuación a la participación del alumnado (desdoblamientos con trabajo cooperativo, desdoblamiento con dilemas, desdoblamiento y tertulia dialógica, desdoblamiento y clase magistral, etc.). Aunque la posibilidad de

interacción con el adulto sigue siendo la de un adulto-grupo, como la ratio disminuye la posibilidad de personalización aumenta.

También se contemplan los desdoblamientos mezclando grupos y ciclos, pero siempre de forma heterogénea. Por lo tanto, los desdoblamientos se pueden organizar de la siguiente forma:

- Por grupo-clase.
- Por niveles educativos (cursos).
- Interniveles (ciclos, interciclos, interetapas).

Cuadro 6. Desdoblamientos. Fuente: Elaboración propia



Cuando se realizan los desdoblamientos en co-docencia, con el modelo en paralelo, la coordinación entre los profesores implicados es un requisito (cuadro 6). Si ambos están dando la misma materia, se debe ir a la par con las actividades y contenidos, como bien recomiendan desde la experiencia de una escuela inclusiva (véase el primer apartado, «Co-docencia»). Es mejor seguir la misma programación, dando lo mejor de cada docente. Si los desdoblamientos se mantienen con los mismos profesionales durante más de un curso, el funcionamiento puede mejorar significativamente, ya que la coordinación y la práctica de ambos requieren unas habilidades que se van perfeccionando con la experiencia. Johnson y Johnson (2002) sugieren cinco elementos clave para una buena planificación colaborativa:

- La interacción cara a cara.
- La interdependencia positiva.
- Las habilidades interpersonales.
- El seguimiento.
- La responsabilidad individual.

Es muy importante clarificar los objetivos de la colaboración. Esta no se da espontáneamente o de manera natural en las escuelas, es importante trabajar los hábitos de colaboración partiendo de buenas prácticas.

Fomentando la solidaridad y el aprendizaje mutuo

La tutoría entre iguales

Otra estrategia de apoyo basada en la interacción consiste en establecer relaciones uno a uno entre alumnos, práctica con una larga tradición en los sistemas anglosajones. Los alumnos pueden emparejarse con alumnos de la misma clase, curso o con alumnos de otros cursos. Según los objetivos perseguidos, la organización del aula y las afinidades entre los alumnos, se pueden usar diferentes criterios para emparejar. Compañeros de la misma o de diferentes edades pueden asumir responsabilidades de tutorizar a otro compañero de manera natural, reforzando tanto los aspectos académicos como sociales. Duran (2006) define las parejas de alumnos como una relación asimétrica debido al rol que desempeña cada miembro y su competencia curricular a través de un marco de relación planificada por el profesorado. Un alumno hace de tutor y aprende enseñando a su compañero y el otro, el tutorizado, puede aprender más gracias a la ayuda personalizada que recibe. Por ello, la relación es asimétrica ya que en el aspecto concreto que trabajan conjuntamente, un alumno es más experto que el otro.

Se han identificado diferentes tipos de tutoría entre iguales. Stenhoff, Lignugaris-Kraft (2007) analizaron las siguientes: a) la agrupación heterogénea en que tutores y tutorizados son del mismo curso pero con diferente nivel de conocimiento o habilidad sobre el tema objeto de estudio; b) agrupación homogénea en la que ambos tienen habilidades similares; c) agrupaciones internivel (*cross-age*), en las que el tutorizado es menor que el tutor; d)

agrupación de rol reverso en la que el alumnado con discapacidad es tutor de otro alumno con o sin discapacidad. Además, toman en consideración las estrategias de aprendizaje asistidas por docentes, como e) *peer-assisted learning strategies*, tutorías de media hora dos o tres veces por semana en las que el alumno más experto anima al menos experto a completar el siguiente paso; f) *reciprocal peer tutoring*, dos o más estudiantes se incentivan, enseñan, controlan, evalúan y animan alternando los roles de tutor y tutorizado (Grubbs, 2009), finalmente, g) la tutoría entre iguales de toda la clase (*class-wide peer tutoring*) implica a toda la clase; su estructura y estrategias dependen del programa que se aplique (Fong, 2016). La mayoría de estas agrupaciones se centran en trabajar la lectura, aunque también las hay en matemáticas, sociales y naturales. La duración suele ser de 20 a 35 minutos en los que se incluye la actividad y las retroalimentaciones. En muchos casos incluyen la alternancia de roles.

Las agrupaciones más fáciles de realizar y que se podrían dar con más frecuencia son las que implican un solo grupo-clase, por el simple hecho de que los alumnos suelen pasar más tiempo juntos. Un ejemplo es el programa «Llegim en parella» (Flores y Duran, 2016), en el que el tutor se prepara unas fichas en casa para poder ayudar a su tutorizado. Este programa también cuenta con la importante implicación de la familia. Sin embargo, las agrupaciones internivel en apadrinamientos lectores son la práctica de tutoría entre iguales estructurada más extendida en los centros catalanes. Los alumnos mayores apadrinan a los pequeños ayudándolos a leer. La frecuencia depende del centro, en general una vez por semana se crea un espacio donde se comparte la lectura. Al final de curso se acostumbra a realizar una fiesta de apadrinamiento donde los pequeños obsequian a sus padrinos con un detalle de recuerdo.

Todos los miércoles por la mañana y los viernes por la tarde, durante un cuarto de hora, los alumnos de quinto curso bajan a la clase de P5 a realizar apadrinamiento lector. Cada uno tiene un ahijado, se saludan, van a la biblioteca del aula, escogen el libro que quieren mirar y se sientan, cuando pasas por los pasillos, ves niños sentados en el vestíbulo, niños sentados en la clase, en el suelo, en la alfombra, todos leen, el que ya descifra las letras, lo hace el pequeño y el mayor escucha, el que todavía no descifra, escucha atentamente al mayor que le lee el libro. Es bonito ver cómo colaboran y se establecen unos vínculos entre ellos que luego se trasladan en los ratos de ocio: patio, semana interdisciplinar, etc. (Relato de un apadrinamiento)

La tutoría entre iguales internivel también se valora para promover las interacciones entre alumnos de distintos grupos y cursos, enriqueciendo la actividad conjunta de la escuela y el sentido de comunidad.

Cuando se introdujeron las asambleas generales en la escuela, nos dimos cuenta que los más pequeños, P4, P5 y 1.º de primaria, no eran capaces de hacer de enlaces con los demás compañeros de la clase, les costaba mucho recoger y sintetizar lo expresado o concretado en la asamblea general y su participación era escasa y no demasiado coherente. A pesar de hacer un acta de cada una de las reuniones, se tuvo la percepción de que no acababan de ser productivas para ellos. En la asamblea general se expusieron las dificultades que los alumnos tenían y se llegó al consenso de establecer unos alumnos tutores para ayudar a los más pequeños en las asambleas. A partir de ese momento, los delegados de 5.º y 6.º se convirtieron en los tutores de los alumnos de P4, P5 y 1.º. Cuando se empezó a realizar esta práctica tuvimos que enseñar a los mayores que no debían resolver las tareas, sino enseñar a los más pequeños, para que en un momento dado fueran capaces de hacerlo autónomamente. Después de un año con esta práctica se hizo una evaluación y por unanimidad se acordó seguir, ya que había sido beneficiosa para todos. Los más pequeños participaban con más soltura y coherencia y los mayores reforzaban sus habilidades para poder concretar y resumir lo que querían aportar. (Relato de tutoría entre iguales en asambleas de escuela)

Sin embargo, después de analizar los estudios efectuados sobre las cuatro primeras agrupaciones con criterios rigurosos, Stenhoff, Lignugaris-Kraft (2007) solo pudieron identificar la agrupación heterogénea como práctica con evidencias de eficacia. Del mismo modo, la tutoría entre iguales de toda la clase, tras una revisión con criterios exhaustivos de los estudios disponibles (Cook, Cook y Cook, 2017) no se ha podido constatar como práctica que mejore los resultados académicos del alumnado con dificultades o discapacidad (autismo, discapacidad intelectual, trastorno de la comunicación, dificultades específicas del aprendizaje, etc.). Esto no significa que sean prácticas no recomendables, sino que todavía no disponemos de estudios rigurosos para considerarlas como prácticas basadas en la evidencia, aunque puedan ser más o menos eficaces en sus contextos, como se percibe en algunas de las experiencias analizadas. Además, como el resto de agrupaciones, la tutoría

entre iguales depende de factores externos a la forma de agrupar que influyen directamente en la calidad de las prácticas educativas.

Una de las dificultades más evidentes de la tutoría entre iguales, a diferencia de otras agrupaciones, es que la ayuda no suele ser bidireccional. El diálogo no tiene por qué ser igualitario, con lo que suele haber menos discusión sobre los contenidos pudiendo dar como válidas concepciones erróneas, pues el tutor no tiene por qué tener la razón. No obstante, la literatura identifica diferentes aspectos que ayudan a mejorar la tutoría entre iguales. Duran y Monereo (2005) tenían la hipótesis de que alternar los roles de tutor y tutorado puede reducir desventajas como la mera transferencia de información, el autoritarismo o la dependencia, aportando mayor simetría y negociación del contenido. Se puede ser tutor y tutorado en una misma área o tutor en el área que más se domine. Un ejemplo de relación sería una tutoría matemáticas-inglés donde se inviertan los roles tutor-tutorizado. Esta relación permitiría minimizar la posible vergüenza de preguntar sobre un ejercicio o concepto que no se entiende, ya que la pareja también pasa por la misma situación.

Que una misma pareja de tutoría de contenidos pueda ayudarse mutuamente es beneficioso para la interacción ya que no se percibirá que uno está por encima del otro, hay más reciprocidad. Lamentablemente, esto no siempre se puede garantizar con los alumnos de una misma aula, especialmente en el caso del alumno que presenta dificultades de aprendizaje en diferentes áreas, dificultades generalizadas. Como apuntaban Stainback y Stainback (2001):

Todo estudiante debe sentirse un «miembro valioso» e importante con responsabilidades y funciones que desempeñar para apoyar a los otros. Todo ello ayuda a fomentar la autoestima, el orgullo por los logros, el respeto mutuo y el sentido de pertenencia al grupo y de valía personal entre los miembros de la comunidad. Es imposible que suceda esto si algunos alumnos están recibiendo apoyo y nunca lo proporcionan. (p. 23)

Por ello, es importante que todos los estudiantes pasen por el rol de tutor y de tutorizado, aunque ello tampoco garantice la negociación de significados. Además de la confianza en ellos mismos y de sentirse útiles y valorados, la adopción del rol de tutor les da la oportunidad de ser redescubiertos por sus compañeros de clase. Un claro ejemplo lo encontramos en la siguiente experiencia:

Regularmente los alumnos de 6.º debían apoyar alguna actividad según sus intereses. Había una alumna a la que le costaba relacionarse con las niñas de su edad. Las otras alumnas también eran reticentes a relacionarse con ella, probablemente por los prejuicios relacionados con su discapacidad, por su impulsividad y movimientos repetitivos. Gracias a las actividades de tutoría en infantil, la alumna ganó habilidades y seguridad para relacionarse. Además, creó vínculos con sus tutorizados y con las alumnas de su edad que hacían la misma actividad. Todas se mostraron diferentes y ella cambió venciendo su dificultad para relacionarse y dejándose conocer. Las tutorías fueron un punto de apoyo para extender sus relaciones. (Relato de actividades internivel.)

Una práctica basada en las evidencias que sí contribuiría a minimizar dicha dificultad sería formar a los alumnos en los roles que deben asumir y dotarlos de estrategias antes de empezar con la tutoría entre iguales. El alumnado aprende a dar ayudas, solicitarlas y recibirlas, habilidades fundamentales para su aprendizaje; tienen que saber cómo dar las ayudas para que ambos puedan evitar el aprendizaje memorístico. Tutores y tutorizados requieren acompañamiento docente, estrategias y herramientas para poder expresar dificultades. Por ello, otra práctica basada en las evidencias es la supervisión de la tutoría por parte de adultos durante las sesiones para responder preguntas, supervisar los comportamientos y dar las retroalimentaciones necesarias (Stenhoff y otros, 2007; Grubbs, 2009). Una organización flexible del centro y del aula también facilita este tipo de agrupación. Con todo, se debe evitar sobrecargar de responsabilidades a un alumno (o que este lo sienta así), promover la máxima igualdad y garantizar que todo el alumnado pueda ayudar y ser ayudado.

Los beneficios están documentados tanto para tutores como tutorizados; el tutorizado se beneficia de una ayuda individualizada y el tutor alcanza un nivel de dominio del contenido más profundo (Duran, 2006). Utilizando estas agrupaciones también puede aumentar la ayuda individualizada a alumnos concretos por parte del docente y el incremento del tiempo en que están trabajando (Stenhoff, Lignugaris-Kraft, 2007). McDuffie, Mastropieri y Scruggs (2009) recogieron estudios que documentaban los efectos positivos de la tutoría entre iguales en todas las áreas de contenidos. «Progresos académicos significativos, desarrollo de habilidades positivas de interacción con otro estudiante y el refuerzo de la autoestima» (Pierce y otros, 1989; en Stainback y Stainback, 2001, p. 140), en la motivación (Wetzel, 1996), además de un incremento de la comunicación (Höysniemi, Hämäläinen y Turkki, 2003).

El alumno tutor y las organizaciones de apoyo entre iguales

El alumno tutor puede ser una estrategia muy útil especialmente para alumnos que dentro de su grupo habitual suelen recibir ayuda, para el alumnado más vulnerable, generalmente con discapacidad. Las evidencias muestran que «los estudiantes con discapacidad reciben más interacciones iniciadas por los docentes, interacciones individuales e interacciones orientadas al comportamiento que los otros estudiantes» (McDuffie, Mastropieri y Scruggs, 2009, p. 507). Esto no quiere decir que, dentro de los grupos interactivos, equipos cooperativos o rincones, estos alumnos no puedan aportar, puesto que los grupos son reducidos y se parte del diálogo igualitario. Pero establecer una relación de ayuda estable y duradera entre dos personas, más íntima, puede facilitar su participación por la confianza mutua, la responsabilidad y la adquisición de habilidades para conectar con el otro, lo que propicia el aprendizaje. El alumnado con alguna discapacidad puede ser tutorizado por compañeros de su misma clase, disminuyendo la cantidad de interacciones con adultos. Además, esta agrupación conlleva estrechar más el vínculo con otro estudiante facilitando también su apoyo en aspectos emocionales y relacionales. No es de extrañar ver cómo comparten actividades en el patio y cómo aumenta la interacción entre iguales, la cohesión del grupo y las oportunidades de crear amistad. Sin embargo, la alternancia de roles no suele ser posible y por ello se debería combinar con agrupaciones internivel.

En muchas escuelas se utiliza el compañero tutor cuando se incorpora a la escuela alumnado con otra lengua materna. El objetivo es facilitar la comunicación, practicar el idioma en un contexto informal, repetir las palabras o reexplicar lo que no ha entendido y, además, ser un guía en el centro. Del mismo modo resulta útil para que el alumno recién llegado empiece a relacionarse con los demás y se introduzca en su grupo de iguales. Otro objetivo de la tutorización entre iguales sería el apoyo en la organización, ayudando al tutorizado en su planificación de la actividad, a recordar y anticipar límites de entrega, a revisar la agenda, a mantener el archivador ordenado, a clasificar las tareas, el orden de cajón y de los apuntes, etc. La tutoría con fines concretos es especialmente útil para aquellos alumnos con disfunciones ejecutivas o dislexia. En este caso, tutor y tutorizado serán más conscientes de cómo organizarse y planificarse.

Otra estructura de apoyo en tutoría similar son las organizaciones de apoyo entre iguales (*peer support arrangements*) (Carter y otros, 2016). Pueden agruparse por parejas, pero también en pequeños grupos de, por ejemplo, tres miembros, para no sobrecargar al tutor. Conjuntamente trabajan las actividades diseñadas para todos los alumnos. Los alumnos modelan las habilidades sociales y comunicativas apropiadas para la edad, aumentan las oportunidades de participar en los debates de clase y disminuyen las barreras actitudinales y las causadas por la proximidad de los adultos (Chung, Carter y Sisco, 2012). La ayuda pedagógica del personal de apoyo (maestros y auxiliares) sigue siendo necesaria para asegurar su buen funcionamiento. Es decir, no se trata de suprimir la co-docencia, sino de complementarla con apoyos diversificados.

Voluntariado interinstitucional

La sociedad actual potencia positivamente las relaciones de los estudiantes con el mundo laboral y las coordinaciones entre las escuelas de primaria y las escuelas de secundaria. Estas coordinaciones, si existen, frecuentemente están relacionadas con actividades más bien lúdicas. Nosotros queremos destacar las colaboraciones interinstitucionales entre alumnado de secundaria y el centro de primaria en actividades de aprendizaje, a pesar de la incompatibilidad horaria.

Cuando el alumnado deja la escuela de primaria, suele mantener unos lazos afectivos que perduran en el tiempo. La prueba es que muchos de los exalumnos se aproximan al centro ofreciéndose como voluntarios. Aprovechar estos recursos humanos en actividades de aprendizaje ofrece unas oportunidades de apoyo recíproco de gran valor. Por un lado, la ayuda al alumnado de primaria es altamente eficaz, pero al mismo tiempo es beneficiosa también para el alumnado de secundaria, al consolidar los conocimientos adquiridos con anterioridad. Además, dichos alumnos se sienten útiles y exitosos en su comunidad.

Actualmente en Cataluña los institutos pueden participar en distintos proyectos de aprendizaje-servicio (APS). En uno de ellos, grupos de alumnos de 4.º de secundaria obligatoria realizan un servicio de voluntariado a centros de primaria. El trabajo que realizan los alumnos voluntarios se pacta con el centro educativo según los intereses de los propios voluntarios y los del centro. A continuación, se muestra la experiencia de una voluntaria de este proyecto:

Estoy haciendo 4.º de secundaria obligatoria, me propusieron participar en el proyecto APS, enseguida pensé en hacerlo en mi centro de primaria, nos juntamos cuatro personas y preparamos el trabajo que queríamos realizar y fuimos a hablar con la directora. Le propusimos hacer grupos interactivos en un curso. Volver a trabajar de esta manera y ya como dinamizadora del grupo ha sido emocionante. Me gustó hacerlo, me

sentí bien y además he notado que a los niños y niñas les ha gustado nuestra ayuda en clase. Creo que he hecho algo importante. (Relato de una voluntaria de APS)

Las colaboraciones con los institutos son positivas, se dan casos de colaboración en yincanas matemáticas, yincanas literarias, obras de teatro, talleres de plástica, etc. Las posibilidades son muchas. Todas estas intervenciones son valoradas positivamente tanto por los pequeños como por los mayores. Solo hace falta impulsarlas como se muestra a continuación:

Hace unos años tuvimos una educadora social de prácticas en el centro. Su trabajo fue organizar la coordinación con el instituto de secundaria adscrito al centro. Se prepararon reuniones entre los equipos y se acordó hacer una yincana literaria para la festividad de Sant Jordi (festividad que en Cataluña se relaciona con la literatura). Hace siete cursos que se realiza esta colaboración. Una de las tareas que lleva a cabo el alumnado de ciclo medio de educación infantil es un cuento con valor moral, este cuento es el que exponen el día de la yincana a través de diferentes formatos: con títeres, sombras chinas, teatro, película, etc. Se reparten los alumnos en diferentes grupos y van de cuento en cuento. Cuando se acaba la representación, se realiza una valoración. La valoración siempre ha sido positiva tanto para los niños y niñas como para el alumnado del ciclo. Cuando más disfrutamos es cuando entre los asistentes hay exalumnos. (Relato de una maestra)

Conclusiones

La organización del aula y la metodología que se utiliza es clave para potenciar las interacciones entre diferentes agentes de la comunidad.

Teniendo en cuenta que la interacción es uno de los mayores potenciales del aprendizaje, la organización de la escuela y de la propia dinámica del aula debe potenciarla.

Existen ideas, metodologías y formas de organización útiles para que las y los docentes, aunque no dispongan de recursos complementarios, puedan crear espacios de aprendizaje para todo el alumnado, sin que las capacidades de cada uno de ellos sean un impedimento. Para ello, resultan indispensables buenas políticas que optimicen los recursos humanos que nos proporciona la comunidad para avanzar con cada uno de nuestros alumnos.

Ideas clave

- El aprendizaje no es el resultado de la relación entre profesorado y alumnado, sino el de todas las interacciones que se producen en cualquier situación educativa. Una tarea fundamental del docente es garantizar la riqueza y seguridad de este entorno para todos los estudiantes.
- Determinadas formas de organización, como la organización por rincones, el trabajo por proyectos o los grupos interactivos son recursos muy útiles para atender la diversidad dentro del aula.
- El trabajo conjunto de dos docentes dentro del aula facilita la integración del apoyo a la actividad del aula y del centro.
- El apoyo dentro del aula no debe entenderse necesariamente como la presencia del o la maestra de apoyo al lado de un alumno en concreto, sino organizarse como una forma de co-docencia.
- El apoyo dentro del aula es un apoyo al trabajo de la maestra o maestro tutor que beneficia a todo el alumnado.

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1. Grupo al que se ha hecho referencia en capítulos anteriores y del que forman parte la mayoría de coautores de este libro.
 2. Se entiende por inmigrantes digitales aquellas personas nacidas y educadas antes del auge de las nuevas tecnologías (Prensky, 2001).
 3. Centro de Recursos Educativos para la Discapacidad Visual (de Cataluña).
 4. Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles.
 5. Profesionales de apoyo designados cuando se identifican determinadas necesidades específicas de apoyo educativo en un alumno o alumna. Estas figuras no especializadas existen en diversas comunidades autónomas españolas, con diferentes nombres y funciones según la normativa de cada sistema educativo (educadores de educación especial, auxiliares de educación especial, celadores...). Estos profesionales, llamados *paraprofessionals*, *paraeducators* o *teacher assistants*, son muy comunes en países anglosajones; su contratación se incrementó con la mayor presencia de alumnado con necesidades educativas especiales en centros ordinarios.

Appendix 3: Teacher assistants' roles in Catalan classrooms: promoting fair and inclusion-oriented support for all



Teacher assistants' roles in Catalan classrooms: promoting fair and inclusion-oriented support for all

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ABSTRACT

A critical aspect of inclusive policies and practices is the role that Teacher Assistants (TAs) are supposed to assume within mainstream classrooms. Despite the evidence, TAs are still linked to the most vulnerable children, especially those with severe afflictions. This exploratory mixed method of investigation analyses the differences between the job requirements standardised by the Catalan Government (Spain), the roles the TAs believed they had been hired to perform and the tasks they were really carrying out in their schools. It includes teacher and union representative experiences to obtain a more holistic view of current practices. This article provides TAs' experiences in the Catalan context as well as an analysis of the legal framework on the matter; to better understand these agents, putting emphasis on inclusive practices. According to standards, only one type of TA should give educational support, the others should merely assist. The findings highlight the importance of real and coherent inclusion-oriented TA roles. This places the TA as a key member of a support network maximising all learning opportunities.

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Inclusion has been defined as the process of addressing and responding to the diversity of the needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, as well as reducing exclusion within and from education (UNESCO 2005). Educational systems must respond to diverse learners, enabling participation, equal opportunities, respect for difference and social justice. There have been international initiatives and guidelines based on research such as Strategy Europe 2020 (European Commission 2010) or the Agenda 2030, Education 2030 (United Nations 2015), aiming to reduce social exclusion or ensure inclusive and equitable quality education. Furthermore, the General Comment about article 24, the Right to inclusive education, enacted by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, puts emphasis on 'prohibiting the exclusion of persons with disabilities from the general education system' (United Nations 2016, 7). According to these initiatives, students should be placed in regular settings. Therefore, the number of students with disabilities enrolled in mainstream schools should increase.

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In this context, diversity within classrooms must be seen as a benefit rather than as a problem, because differences turn into opportunities to learn, as Vygotski's theory about learning through interaction supports (Vygotski 2006). This also implies that systems should remove their barriers to foster student participation and achievements, specifically those that concern students belonging to the most vulnerable groups (Booth and Ainscow 2002). To remove these barriers and accelerate the learning of disadvantaged students, educational support is fundamental (Gómez-Zepeda et al. 2017). However, to ensure student's inclusion, supports must not only be appropriate (Thomas 2015), but also integrated to a student's personal support network (Hillman et al. 2013) and coordinated (Ault, Collins, and Carter 2013; Russell 2008).

The presence of students with severe disabilities in general classroom placements is commonly linked to TA support (Giangreco, Doyle, and Suter 2012). TAs, also known as Paraprofessionals or Paraeducators are part of a schools non-teaching staff. In many cases, they have been considered an essential or principal support to place these students in mainstream classes. Due to this, there is an upward trend to hire TAs documented in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia (Butt 2016), where most studies have been conducted (Sharma and Salend 2016). However, concerns over accepting this practice as the way, or only way, to support students with disabilities in mainstream schools have been expressed (Giangreco, Suter, and Doyle 2010; Rutherford 2011).

Several international research studies have provided insights into the specific tasks that TAs commonly assume within schools (Butt 2016; Giangreco 2013; Lewis and McKenzie 2010; Patterson 2006; Sharma and Salend 2016). Instructional responsibilities developed by TAs were quoted by Carter et al. (2009) as one-on-one direct support, personal care, literacy instruction, social skills instruction, community-based instruction, and clerical or non-instructional support (e.g. copying and filing). Nevertheless, there is some disagreement about appropriate roles and how each kind of support can effectively contribute to knocking down learning barriers.

Butt (2016) highlighted five different models of support: the withdrawal, the itinerant, the unit, the one-on-one and the class support model. These models differ in proximity, time and class assignment, rapport opportunities and TA's responsibilities. Traditionally, TAs were in close proximity to directly support a student legally considered with special educational needs (SEN), they were physically located near them. Butt (2016) concludes with an alternative TA model, Teacher Assistant as Facilitator. In this model such as in the class support model, the TA is assigned to support a class, but teachers have the primary responsibility for supporting students with disability and learning difficulties to foster a more inclusive environment. Expanding this model, the negative effects of excessive proximity reported by Russel, Allday, and Duhon (2015), Giangreco (2013) and Mortier et al. (2011) can also be diminished.

Understanding TAs as facilitators, new roles for them should emerge. In this model, TAs invite 'one or more peers to provide support to a student with a severe disability, orienting peers to their new roles, and identifying specific ways they might provide needed supports' (Brock and Carter 2016, 355). Doing this, schools would take advantage of their available support networks (Puigdemívol et al. 2017). Nevertheless, to improve the quality of the support offered to all children, organisations must clarify roles and responsibilities (Brown and Stanton-Chapman 2017; Fisher and Pleasants 2012) as well as effective training and support for TA and teachers (Brock and Carter 2016).

Catalan educational system and TAs

Catalonia is an autonomous region located in the north-east of Spain, bordering France. Policies and practices passed from separation to integration in the late nineteen-seventies, to inclusion since the late nineteen-nineties. Catalonia's current Educational Law (2009) defines students with special educational needs as those who have intellectual disability, visual impairment, deafness, mobility impairment, pervasive development disorders, severe personality disorders and others. This law and the decree-law on education in an inclusive framework (Department-of-Education 2017) seek to favour the inclusion of all children in regular schools. However, in the 2015–2016 school year, more than 7000 students still enrolled in Special Education Schools (Department-of-Education 2016). Therefore, despite these inclusion-oriented policies, some practices are still far from inclusion.

In Catalonia, there are three kinds of TAs who work with students with severe behavioural problems or severe disabilities: The Special Education Educator (SEE), the Special Education Assistant (SEA) and the Carer (all three parts of the non-teaching staff). As is standardized on the *Official School Organization and Management Document* (OSOMD)¹ the role of SEE is to support students with special educational needs, to implement programs prepared by more qualified agents, to collaborate in the development and implementation of personal care (personal autonomy, hygiene, mobility, etc.), to participate in the school's educational project, to know the program's goals and content in order to adapt their work as best as possible, and to cooperate with teachers and provide them with students' information to make accommodations and improve the learning process (Department-of-Education 2015).

SEAs and Carers must fulfil the same role and responsibilities: they have to support those students with their mobility, personal autonomy (health, food, etc.) and other specific treatments (Department-of-Education 2015). The kind of support they have to offer is an assisting one rather than an educational support.

Despite having the same duties, the Carers, who can work in private or state schools, have worse working conditions than SEEs and SEAs because Carers are hired per hours and managed by subcontracted companies. SEEs and SEAs are hired by the public administration, having better conditions such as being full-time employees, 40 h of paid training, greater stability and better salaries. However, SEEs have even better salaries than SEAs because they belong to different employment categories; different levels of qualifications are required to get the job² and they are supposed to perform different roles.

TAs are one of the most demanded and used specific resources in Catalonia to support students with severe disabilities or students whose situation is supposed to require intensive supports. Therefore, the study of TAs is essential in this context to understand their contribution to inclusion. Despite international evidence about TAs, there is no research being conducted in Spain about how TAs are helping students to have more presence, participation and learning in mainstream Catalan classrooms. In an effort to address these problems and promote inclusion-oriented policies and practices, this article will analyse the differences between the job requirements described by the Government, the roles TAs believe they have been hired to perform and the tasks they are really carrying out in their schools. The data used are part of a larger study the purpose of which is to analyse how Catalan TAs support the most vulnerable students in mainstream schools.

Methodology

Our design followed the principles of exploratory, mixed method research (Mertens 2010). This study was conducted to identify the role of TAs in mainstream Catalan schools. One hundred and one TAs provided their experiences through a questionnaire getting a first insight into their situation and role. We focused on their experiences rather than on obtaining a representative sample. The population of TAs could not be calculated nor estimated because of the aforementioned hiring conditions and the lack of official data, indicating, for instance, that they are less important than other agents whose statistics are taken into account and published. This limitation can be addressed through the semi-structured interviews to another 12 participants, including TAs, teachers and union representatives (see Table 1). Finally, we also analysed the appropriate applicable legal framework. We discussed the data obtained and the research studies revised at the end of this article.

Participants

The questionnaire respondents ($n = 101$) had an average of 6.3 (SD = 3.9) years of classroom experience, with the majority being female (88%). Their average age was 39 (ranged from 22 to 63; SD = 10.8). Of these TAs, 94 were Carers, 5 were SEEs and there was only 1 SEA in our sample, which can be a limitation. As for their initial training, only one Carer reported not having finished basic school but, 23 stated having only this basic education level when they got their job. A large number of TAs were over-qualified when they began: 28% had an education-related degree, a 6% had a non-education-related degree and 28% had finished a Superior-level Training Cycle.³ Finally, 15% TAs began with a Middle Grade Training Cycle.⁴

It is unusual to find TAs supporting a single student full-time. They can work in more than one stage. Thus, 44 TAs were counted twice or three times at the following description by stages. More than half ($n = 52$) of the respondents were working in preschool (3–6 years old), 72 out of 101 in primary school (6–12 years old) and 20 in secondary school (12–16 years old). They usually work in more than one classroom, level and educational stage during the week. Almost 90% were working in state schools located in rural and urban areas in Catalonia.

Two union representatives were also interviewed to have a whole vision of the TAs' reality. One of the union representatives was responsible for those TAs who were hired and managed by the administration, and, the other, was responsible for those who were hired and managed by a subcontracted company. The respondents provided information about TAs' duties, the role they are performing, general beliefs and mutual expectations. Subsequently, five pairs ($n = 10$) of TAs and teachers that were working together were

Table 1. Data collection techniques, participants and codification.

Technic	Profile of participants	Codes
Questionnaire	TAs ($n = 101$) (carers $n = 94$, SEE $n = 6$, SEA $n = 1$)	Q1, Q2, [...], Q101
Semi-structured interviews	TAs ($n = 5$)	CS1, CS2, CS3, CP1, and ES4
	Teachers ($n = 5$)	TS1, TS2, TS3, TP1 and TS4.
	SEEs' and Assistants' union representative ($n = 1$)	EAU
	Carers' union representative ($n = 1$)	CU

interviewed to contrast realities and points of view. School inclusion criteria were different school context, teaching methodology and/or hiring differences (see Table 2).⁵

Instruments

After reviewing the literature for key topics and issues, a questionnaire was created (Appendix 1). This was enriched and validated by three experts and a pilot study was then conducted. Based on analysing the pilot, a final questionnaire was created containing three sections: (a) TAs demographics and their future perspective, (b) job setting and training and (c) contractual and carried out tasks, general job description and conditions. It had opened and closed questions, however, space was provided in some closed questions to allow respondents to specify their own situation. In the demographic section, respondents were asked to specify which kind of TA they were, the training they had when they were hired, years of experience, and future prospects. In the second section, TAs were asked to report information about the school (such as school funding and educational stage).

The 29 job-related tasks drawn from the OSOMD were included in the questionnaire. These tasks were selected according to the TA role shown in the literature and experiences previously reported by some TAs and union representatives. For this reason, we also included some tasks of other stakeholders such as teachers, Preschool Education Specialist (PES)⁶ or Social Integration Specialist (SIS).⁷ These 29 tasks were categorised into four groups: carrying out, elaboration, cooperation and assessment. Moreover, this section also had open questions to specify how they worked daily (i.e. space where they worked, student’s diagnostic, coordination, supervision, work conditions, satisfaction).

An interview guide contained questions to obtain more specific information from TAs about the role that TAs and teachers were carried out; their expectations; the interaction with teachers and students; the consequences of this interaction; feelings; difficulties; needs; and the highlights of their job (Appendix 2). Teachers were asked to answer similar questions about the TAs with whom they worked (Appendix 3). Finally, the union representatives were interviewed about their own role and the roles and needs of TAs (Appendix 4).

Procedure

All data were collected between March and June 2016. The questionnaire was distributed via e-mail by a Union of Carers to their networks to promote snowball sampling.

Table 2. Demographics.

	Location	Type of school	Respondents
School-1	Wealthy neighbourhood, Barcelona	Traditional-methodologies-private secondary and primary school	CP1 and TP1
School-2	Low-income neighbourhood, Barcelona	Active-methodologies-state-primary school	CS1 and TS1
School-3	Middle-class area, Barcelona	Traditional-methodologies-state-primary school	CS2 and TS2
School-4	Surrounding area of Barcelona	High complexity primary school	CS3 and TS3
School-5	Wealthy neighbourhood, Barcelona	Traditional-methodologies-state secondary and primary school	ES4 and TS4

Questionnaires were completed through the free and online tool Google Forms. Snowball sampling was also promoted hand delivering a questionnaire to three public psychologists that work with different schools. Researchers picked up the autonomously filled-out form from these psychologists a few days later. Of these, 15 were returned. Completion time for the questionnaire was estimated to be between 15 and 20 min. Semi-structured interviews to TA, teachers and union representatives ranged in duration from 20 to 60 min. The inclusion criteria were the different types of TA, educational stage and/or school methodologies. Interviews were audiotaped with permission from the participants and transcribed for analysis. Rigour and validity in the data collection and findings were ensured. The ethical aspects presented by the European Commission (2013) were considered. Thus, the questionnaire respondents and the interviewees were codified to guarantee that all answers would remain confidential. These anonymity conditions were explained on the headings of each questionnaire and before beginning the interviews.

Data analysis

The data from questionnaires were analysed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Descriptive statistics of those who participated in the questionnaire were analysed. The questionnaire's closed questions were quantified, rank-ordered and related. Excel spreadsheets were used to manage and scan the data file. The research variables considered were: the different kinds of TAs, the tasks, the responsibilities, and the proximity between student and TA. Additionally, the information obtained from the opened questions and transcribed interviews was codified in previously identified codes considering the research variables and the research purpose using NVivo plus. The researchers met and discussed their disagreements to reach a consensus on each set of coded text, obtaining internal validity. This way, a shared understanding of the categories, subcategories and their meaning, was ensured. Interviews and open answers were analysed according to the resulting categories and subcategories. The subcategories concerning this article's purpose are presented in Table 3.

The trustworthiness of our data was established using three triangulation techniques (Brantlinger et al. 2005; Trainor and Graue 2014): (1) Data triangulation, studying evidence from varied data resources; (2) methodological triangulation, using multiple methods to study our problem and (3) stakeholder triangulation, providing an insight into their situation through different angles and perspectives. Such techniques could counteract the sample size limitation.

Findings

The results from this study have been organised into two parts according to our research purpose. The contrast between job requirements and TAs' beliefs is shown first. Then, the

Table 3. Role subcategories.

Subcategory	Definition
Tasks	Includes tasks carried out, scheduling and role performed by each paraprofessional.
Sense of responsibility	Describes those responsibilities that TAs consider they must assume.
Proximity	Describes the relationship and interdependency between adults, students with SEN and their peers. Also includes the physical allocation of the stakeholders.

roles and responsibilities carried out by TAs. The coherence between what is required, what they think they should do and the role that is currently playing seems to be very important to understand their job.

Official perspective: are the real job requirements of TAs known?

One of the most important findings drawn from all 106 TAs is the lack of knowledge of their job description. In addition to their official tasks previously specified, they believed they were hired to perform an enormous range of tasks that officially do not belong to their profession, leaving aside the personal care tasks for which all TA were hired. The results show that 75% of questionnaire respondents reported being hired to be with students during academic activities.

The percentage of TAs who thought they had to perform behaviour-related roles was high. Seventy three percentage of respondents claimed they had been hired to deal with the students' behavioural problems. More than half of respondents (57%) indicated that they had to collaborate with conflict resolution. Moreover, fourteen TAs believed they were solely responsible for their student's behaviour.

It is worth noting, that many respondents considered other professional's roles and responsibilities as their own. For instance, 'participating in the process of observing children' (49%), which is a PES or SIS responsibility. It is also a PES duty 'to promote positive student relationships with their context', even though it was chosen by 69% of the TAs surveyed. Nevertheless, SEE's roles and responsibilities were the ones TAs most commonly thought they had to perform: 'supporting the student to foster their participation' (73%); 'collaborating on planning and developing personal autonomy habit activities' (46.53%, $n = 47$); or 'providing information for assessment' (54%) regardless that most questionnaire respondents were Careers (94%). Furthermore, 22 TAs thought they had been hired to develop teacher tasks like students' assessment.

Role performed: what are Catalan TAs doing in mainstream schools?

The task selection changed when they were asked what they actually did during their workday. TAs were giving academic and behaviour supports, despite their contract and their formation. A high percentage of TAs indicated that they were performing behavioural-related roles (87%). It is remarkable that almost one-fifth of the TAs questioned was solely responsible for the behaviour of the students. Other usual tasks (82%) were 'supporting the students' participation' and 'fostering students' positive relationships with their context'.

Neither the SEE nor the SEA nor the Carer should assume the following tasks, that they admitted to being carrying out: 'advising and informing the families' (18%), 'creating didactic materials and supports for the sessions' (42%) and 'assessing the aims of the special educational needs students' (28%). Likewise, the open questionnaire comments show how these TAs overextend their tasks. For instance, Q9 reported she created a classroom to isolate the students from any outdoor stimulus (such as noise or movement), she adapted their activities, looked for resources and – with the psychologist's advice – she accelerated the child's ability to speak, she introduced pictograms, etc. In fact, this role

belongs to an educational psychologist, a psychopedagogue or a special education teacher. The same was remarked by Q15, aware of training discrepancies:

In general, I'm happy with the work I do but I would like to be trained. We, Carers, are forgotten but at the same time they make us develop roles that could be compared with those which should be performed by an educational psychologist, a therapist or a psychologist. To my knowledge, there is no type of formal education that fits with what we do, instead of the job we are hired to do. My contract says that I am a monitor, which has nothing to do with what I am doing. Not to mention my salary or the precarious conditions I am working in. (Carer Q15)

Moreover, CP1 – like other questionnaire respondents – said that her superiors took advantage of her higher training, she has a degree in speech therapy.

Table 4 shows the most remarkable difference between the number of TAs who thought they were hired to do a determinate task and how many were actually carrying it out. In the last column, we show who should be performing each task according to their official job description.

Data reflect that these TAs are generally moving classroom to classroom helping students with SEN. Consequently, they are working across several classrooms, with different teachers, to help different students depending on school needs. Most questionnaire respondents ($n = 67$) pointed out that they were looking after all the students but, specifically, after those they were meant to support by contract. However, 81% of TAs stated supporting students with SEN in their classrooms were offering this help next to them. For example, Q101 wrote that she was always by their side helping and calming them down. This close proximity to a student is actually expressed by 47% of these TAs. This excessive dependency and proximity may not be a TA's decision as ES4 regretted when he stated that even in an excursion he had to be with a girl with Down's syndrome, instead of taking advantage of this situation to foster her relationships with peers. ES4 also said that relationship problems among students with and without disabilities increased in secondary school.

Only six TA's (Q77, Q39, Q20, Q38, Q41 and Q70) seemed to support students by reducing excessive proximity. For instance, Q41 said: 'I'm moving within the classroom, only being by the student's side when it is needed. The student is acquiring his academic outcomes but has relationship problems with peers and teachers, so it is my intervention

Table 4. Discrepancy between tasks believed to have to carry out, carried out and corresponding profession of each task.

Tasks	Believed (%)	Carried out (%)	Discrepancy (n)	Profession
Looking after all students, but specially after those I am hired for	46	66	21	Nobody
Creating didactic materials and support for the sessions	21	42	21	Nobody
Participating in the process of observing children	49	67	19	PES
Implementing programs prepared by specialists or teachers	43	60	18	SEE
Implementing programs collaboratively prepared	33	47	14	SEE
Preparing specific tasks	32	46	14	SEE
Participating in the preparation of specific tasks	57	55	-2	SEE
Looking only after the student I am hired for	42	27	-15	Nobody
Providing information for the student's assessment	54	4	-51	SEE

goal'. Likewise, Q70 answered that she is removed at some distance from the student, supporting him when he doesn't understand the instructions or what he is expected to do. She also reduces the student's anxiety by explaining again anything the student has not understood.

In Catalonia, all students should be supported within classrooms (Department-of-Education 2017). However, there were still 11 respondents withdrawing students from their classrooms, where support was needed. According to all interviewed stakeholders, the responsibilities of TAs and who supervise them are unclear. Everything is decided by the TAs themselves and/or by the teaching staff, depending on the school staff dynamics as can be inferred from the previous TA quotes. Sometimes, they may perform a role far from legal regulations or inclusive practices because they are not officially included in school ongoing training aimed at those educational stakeholders working within classrooms.

Discussion

The present study shows that in Catalonia officially there are three kinds of TAs SEEs, SEAs and Carers. However, our participants reported that there was no actual difference between the tasks they were performing. According to the unions, the most extended support is the cheapest, the Carer. It became evident that the term Carer is used incorrectly and indiscriminately in these centres to refer to all three types of TA. This contributes to increasing this general lack of awareness and understanding of the role. The results show that even these TAs themselves don't know their own duties. It is remarkable that there is no Carer who could correctly select their job duties from a list. This could be explained because they might have been incorrectly informed about their duties or they might have forgotten them which is a dismissible option since Carers are hired and laid off every year.

This lack of knowledge of TA roles, duties and expectations has been widely documented (Ratcliff et al. 2011). Even teachers interviewed weren't aware of the reality of TAs. The present study also indicates that there is no correspondence between the tasks TAs reported they had been hired to carry out and the tasks they were really carrying out. Even not knowing exactly their responsibilities, these TAs knew they were doing more than was required by the contract.

It is interesting to note that legally, in Catalonia, there are two TAs whose role is only looking after students' basic needs (personal care tasks). Carers and SEAs are not proactive supports. They only guarantee the student's presence, so they could be a learning barrier if they only assume their job responsibilities. Feldman et al. (2015) highlighted the importance of distinguishing between placement and participation of SEN students. Only physically assisting these students, the system is putting their future at risk: without a quality education, they would be forced into more restrictive educational institutions, relationships and environments.

However, in practice, a high percentage of Carers seem to compensate this by taking on some tasks belonging to SEEs. They also carry out the tasks of speech therapists, educational psychologists, or special education teachers. Thus, there is an over-utilisation of TAs (O'Rourke and West 2015). In addition to this over-utilisation, an over-delegation of responsibilities in highly complicated processes was shown, such as assessments or

adaptations. Some TAs are making important curricular decisions, consistent with Sharma and Salend's (2016) review of recent international research. Nonetheless, nowhere does it say, (their contracts or official documents) that they are required to have the necessary competencies to perform an educational role. Due to this lack of qualifications and knowledge to perform these complex tasks, TAs cannot be expected to fulfil students' needs (Giangreco 2013). The quality of school practices is therefore not guaranteed.

Consistent with prior studies, one of the most common extra responsibilities is in performing a behaviour-related role (Fisher and Pleasants 2012; Harris and Aprile 2015; Webster and Blatchford 2015). However, one of the differences with similar investigations (Patterson 2006) is that these TAs do not feel responsible for the management of the behaviour of the other students that might need external regulation. This can generate other problems because this student-TA relationship could be closer than when TA think they should look after other students as well.

In addition to behaviour roles, most respondents reported supporting student participation or fostering positive relationships with the context. These actions can better promote the students' inclusion. However, the tasks TAs should carry out are neither in accessible documents nor written clearly. We must avoid abstraction and ambiguity in the job description to effectively promote inclusive practices. Educational agents and school arrangements should facilitate social relationships among students. This role has been well documented by Carter et al. (2011); Carter et al. (2007).

Contrary to research advice to foster inclusion, the models that better represent the practices of Catalan TAs are the itinerant model and the one-on-one model (Butt 2016). Fewer were in the withdrawal one which is even more excluding and detrimental for students. TAs seem to be going through classrooms having less time to co-work with teachers, to learn and to become a support for all children. There are less opportunities for planning, consultation (Cobb 2007), sharing goals and expectations, and less opportunities for trusting each other. Moreover, students with SEN are usually in the same classroom as their peers but sat next to a TA or placed in close proximity to one. This can have negative effects on the student's academic and social interactions with peers leading to exclusion (Giangreco 2013; Russel, Allday, and Duhon 2015).

TAs interviewed presumed that the older a student with SEN was, the less interaction with their peers. Proximity with peers is needed to foster peer interaction and shared learning (Feldman et al. 2015). TA support should be gradually removed (Russel, Allday, and Duhon 2015) and relocated to promote a large and diverse educational support network, involving different stakeholders. The students themselves should be an active agent, in many situations, they know which support they need, and which can be experienced as a barrier (Mortier et al. 2011).

Disabilities and learning difficulties are dynamic rather than static. Thus, flexibility is fundamental to cope with the dynamic nature of the schools' needs for support. Fortunately, TAs are used to doing what is needed in the classroom, no matter what their contract responsibilities are. They wouldn't have any problems setting limits, working together to prepare materials, or making observations for assessment; but as TAs, they are not trained to perform the variety of responsibilities described. Their common sense is exploited, which is unfair for students, TAs themselves, teachers and the whole educational system. If they were properly trained to perform these tasks, this could result in a higher quality of education.

Countries, school districts and researchers need to examine alternatives to this overreliance on traditional stakeholder roles. Without school level actions (Giangreco 2013), based on research, educational authorities may be allowing inadequate supports. Therefore, flexibility is needed to address particular situations at the local level, to better determine priorities (Ainscow et al. 2016). Likewise, local educator administrators should foster strong relationships between schools by creating a supportive social context (Bettini et al. 2016). It does not require more investment in schools; Da Fonte and Capizzi (2015) reported the effectiveness of user-friendly, low-cost training modules to increase the strategies of TAs. As Petreñas, Puigdemívol, and Campdepadrós (2013) concluded, schools implementing inclusive organisation methods obtain better results with the same resources. Nevertheless, roles and responsibilities should be officially clarified for both the educational agents and the community. Knowing their roles, each agent of the education context should adjust their expectations to the TAs' duties which would address the lack of awareness of responsibilities reported.

There is no doubt that the approach and quality of each kind of support are critical to foster the right learning environment. While alternative roles are needed another approach to maximise existing resources is also needed (Butt 2016; Webster and Blatchford 2013). 'Although there are many pieces of the service delivery puzzle for schools to consider and tackle, having an overarching framework can help guide the process' (Giangreco, Doyle, and Suter 2012, 371). Other roles should emerge, for example, TAs as facilitators of peer support arrangements (Brock and Carter 2016; Carter et al. 2016), cooperative learning groups (Carter et al. 2011; Jimenez et al. 2012) or interactive groups (Álvarez and Puigdemívol 2014).

TAs are another support working to contribute to the overall education of students. The more points of view, the richer and more thorough the education. Educational institutions should take advantage of this resource. Consequently, a large support network should be promoted, where each node should be interrelated. To coordinate, manage and promote this support network, another agent is needed. Gómez-Zepeda et al. (2017) described the Support and Attention to Diversity Teacher, whose role with TAs should be thoroughly analysed. Each stakeholder must understand their role to support students in accessing the social and learning opportunities that exist within inclusive classrooms.

Conclusions

This research provides evidence given by TAs, and other stakeholders they work with, from different contexts, contributing to better understand these agents, putting emphasis on inclusive practices. TAs with inclusion-oriented roles are important stakeholders to promote the presence, participation and achievements of all children. Within classrooms, not only can they provide support, but they can also foster peer support arrangements. Consequently, three kinds of TAs are not needed. Especially, if two of them are supposed to only assist children's basic needs which make no sense within inclusive education. Government double standards are shown in hiring Carers and SEAs while defining themselves and their policies as inclusive. Governments seem to be primarily guided by economic interests.

As the literature has highlighted, and this research has proved, roles and responsibilities must be clarified. Nevertheless, concerns regarding TA intrusion into other stakeholder

fields should diminish in contexts where they are collaborating to achieve the same goals. Knowing and understanding these educational roles and responsibilities could be useful to better support students, maximising all learning resources and opportunities. For instance, TAs should not have the responsibility to plan or assess, but they should perform an active role by collaborating in both processes. Within a network of support, different stakeholders together can contribute to support all students as a team.

In conclusion, within an inclusive approach, TAs should not be bound to any student, they should be considered a school or classroom support. The deficit perspective focused on the individual persists. The same deficit-centred approach is shown when students are set apart from others, considering them as students with Special Education Needs. Improved practices are important to change school culture, policies and practices.

Notes

1. OSOMD is an annual document written by the Department of Education of Catalonia (2015). This document summarises how schools have to be organised and managed. For instance, it specifies agents' duties, training, the possible supports, protocols to act and the outlines for each education level.
2. SEEs require an ISCED-4 education level, post-secondary non-tertiary education (UNESCO 2014). SEAs and Carers require an ISCED-3 education level, upper secondary education.
3. ISCED-4, post-secondary non-tertiary education level (UNESCO 2014), vocational education.
4. ISCED-3, Upper secondary education level (UNESCO 2014).
5. Schools recognised for being in the most socioeconomic disadvantaged context. High complexity schools should have a lower student-to-teacher ratio, faster teacher replacement, preferential access to student grants and larger budgets.
6. Paraprofessional with a specific post-secondary non-tertiary education level (ISCED 4), who collaborate with preschool teachers to promote children's autonomy and fulfil their basic needs.
7. Paraprofessional with a specific post-secondary non-tertiary education level (ISCED 4), who work with at-risk students, their families and other agents to promote students' autonomy and social skills.

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Appendix 4: The importance of the role of TAs for an inclusive educational system

La importancia del rol del personal no docente de apoyo para un sistema educativo inclusivo

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Resumen

La importancia del rol del personal no docente de apoyo para un sistema educativo inclusivo

Las políticas educativas pretenden ser cada vez más inclusivas, tal y como se desprende del uso de esta terminología en leyes e iniciativas nacionales e internacionales. Una de las figuras de apoyo que tradicionalmente ha sido ligada a la presencia en aulas ordinarias de alumnado con discapacidad o dificultades de autorregulación de la conducta es el personal no docente de apoyo. Aún haber sido estudiados internacionalmente y a pesar de la presencia de estos profesionales en las aulas y el importante papel que tienen para lograr un sistema cada vez más inclusivo, casi no hay datos de ellos en el contexto español. Este artículo tiene como objetivo difundir conocimiento en cuanto a las evidencias en torno al personal no docente de apoyo así y como mostrar las tres figuras presentes en el sistema educativo catalán: los y las educadores/as de educación especial (EEE), los y las auxiliares de educación especial (AEE) y los y las monitores/as de apoyo (conocidas como celadores/as). Por lo tanto, se explica el caso catalán en particular y se recogen y conjugan los diferentes modelos recomendados, sin obviar las preocupaciones en torno a la formación, exigencias y condiciones contextuales. En suma, se subraya la importancia de concebir el apoyo de una forma más distribuida y la adopción de un rol educativo que vaya más allá de la mera asistencia.

Personal no docente de apoyo; paraprofesionales; apoyo educativo; educación inclusiva; políticas y prácticas.

Abstract

The importance of Teacher Assistants for an inclusive education system

Educational policies aim to be increasingly inclusive, as can be seen from the use of this terminology in national and international laws and initiatives. One of the support figures that has traditionally been linked to the presence of students with disabilities or difficulties in behaviour-self-regulation in ordinary classrooms is the non-teaching support staff. Even being studied internationally and despite the presence of these professionals in the classrooms and the important role that they have in achieving an increasingly inclusive system, there is hardly any data of them in the Spanish context. This article aims to raise awareness regarding the evidence about Teacher Assistants and show the three figures present in the Catalan education system: the special education educators (EEE), the special education assistants (EEA)

and support instructors (known as carers). Thus, the Catalan case is explained, and the different recommended models are collected and integrated, without ignoring the concerns about training, requirements and contextual conditions. In sum, the importance of conceiving support in a more distributed manner and the adoption of an educational role that goes beyond mere assistance is highlighted.

Keywords: Teacher assistants, paraprofessionals; educational support; inclusive education; policies and practices

Lograr la presencia, participación y aprendizaje (Booth y Ainscow, 2002) de todos los alumnos dentro de las aulas ordinarias es uno de los hitos de cualquier sistema educativo. Queda demostrado que los beneficios de la diversidad revierten en todos los alumnos y en la comunidad. El decreto 150/2017 de la atención educativa al alumnado en el marco de un sistema educativo inclusivo constata la voluntad de transformar el sistema para que sea cada vez más inclusivo. Por ello, la orientación inclusiva de las políticas y prácticas escolares no es ya una opción sino una responsabilidad de la sociedad, pero, en especial, de aquellos colectivos que trabajan por y para la educación. La profesionalidad de estos colectivos de personal docente, personal no docente y legisladores en un sistema verdaderamente inclusivo debería ir ligada a su capacidad para reducir las barreras para la participación y el aprendizaje de todo el alumnado, sin excepción, ya que solo así se asegura una educación de calidad. Por ello, el rol del personal educativo (docente y no docente), así como su reorganización y maximización, conjuntamente con un mejor aprovechamiento de otros recursos ya disponibles en el entorno escolar son elementos clave para transformar la forma de concebir y desplegar el apoyo educativo inclusivo.

Como apuntaba Pedró (2012) el fracaso no es del alumno sino de la provisión escolar, un fracaso estructural que puede perpetuarse, pese a las nuevas directrices en materia inclusiva, si estas regulaciones no se acompañan de una reconceptualización de raíz de los sistemas tradicionales de apoyo educativo. Es decir, debemos transformar las formas de entender y ofrecer el apoyo concibiéndolo como dinámico tanto por los sujetos a quienes se dirige, ya que todo el alumnado lo requiere de alguna manera; como por los niveles de intensidad de la ayuda. El apoyo debe ser diseñado en colaboración, de acuerdo con las evidencias científicas, el contexto y la trayectoria del alumno. Además, deberá ser continuamente evaluado y ajustado para asegurar el desarrollo potencial de todo el alumnado. Esta sistematización de carácter preventivo de los apoyos proviene del modelo *Response to Intervention* (RTI) (Fuchs, Mock, Morgan & Young, 2003) y fue adoptada por el Departament d'Ensenyament para el despliegue del Decreto 150/2017. El gobierno catalán propone tres niveles de intensidad en las medidas y apoyos para la intervención que fluctúan entre las universales, para todo el alumnado, las adicionales y las intensivas, que son las más restrictivas. Estas medidas y apoyos, coherentes con la literatura disponible, se entienden de manera integrada y como un continuo. Así, los apoyos intensivos van precedidos y acompañados de los pertinentes

apoyos universales y adicionales. Sin embargo, para saber si el personal no docente está actuando como un apoyo intensivo, adicional o universal conviene valorar cómo se despliega en la práctica. Es decir, a pesar de las limitaciones a nivel de contratación, estos profesionales no tendrían que considerarse de entrada como apoyos intensivos ya que el grado de intensidad del apoyo dependerá de las prácticas que desarrollen en cada momento. Unas prácticas que vienen condicionadas por el contexto, por la comprensión del apoyo educativo en cada centro y la forma de coordinar los recursos. Añadir que, como con cualquier otro apoyo o medida, habrá que analizar su puesta en práctica para poder valorar su carácter inclusivo. Dicho de otro modo, aunque en el ámbito teórico se pueda (o no) clasificar como una medida que contribuye a la inclusión, hay que analizar cómo se lleva a cabo para poderlo corroborar.

En el sistema educativo catalán, el personal no docente se considera, a priori, como un apoyo intensivo dado que su provisión depende de que en el centro haya escolarizado alumnado con necesidades específicas de apoyo educativo generalmente asociadas a la autonomía y a la regulación de la conducta y que, a este alumnado, se le hayan concedido horas de apoyo no docente. Esta figura profesional, muchas veces utilizada como "el mecanismo principal para apoyar a los estudiantes con discapacidades en entornos de educación generales" (Giangreco, Broer, & Suter 2011, p.25) es común en diferentes países. Sin embargo, el grueso de las investigaciones y, por ende, de las evidencias científicas proviene de Estados Unidos, Reino Unido y Australia. Este interés internacional puede ser consecuencia de las directrices internacionales para la educación inclusiva (UNESCO, 2005) que empujan a los diferentes países a reubicar a aquellos estudiantes que tradicionalmente estaban escolarizados en centros de educación especial, es decir, excluidos de los entornos regulares. La progresiva presencia de estudiantes con discapacidad dentro de las aulas ordinarias aumentó la necesidad de contratar personal no docente de apoyo (Blatchford et al. 2009; Butt, 2016), situándolo como una de las figuras clave para promover la inclusión de todo el alumnado.

En Cataluña existen cuatro figuras de atención educativa contratadas como personal laboral del Departament d'Ensenyament: los técnicos de educación infantil, los integradores sociales, los Educadores de Educación Especial (EEE) y los Auxiliares de Educación Especial (AEE). Estas dos últimas figuras junto con los celadores o monitores de apoyo (personal subcontratado) son las que tienen atribuidas funciones de atención directa al alumnado anteriormente citado. Es decir, en Catalunya existen tres figuras profesionales no docentes a las que se asignan determinados alumnos que se considera que necesitan apoyos intensivos de carácter más permanente.

Las funciones, jornada, condiciones laborales y formación continuada de las figuras consideradas de atención educativa (EEE y AEE) se despliegan anualmente en el Libro de Administración y Gestión de Centros (Departament d'Ensenyament, 2018) y dentro de los centros son gestionadas por la dirección. Son trabajadores ubicados en plazas concretas a jornada completa en la que se incluyen horas de atención directa, de reuniones, de coordinación, de preparación y formación. En cambio, la tarea de los

monitores de apoyo se externaliza a empresas del tercer sector. Los celadores y celadoras, por lo tanto, dependen de la empresa que los subcontrata por horas lectivas según demanda y sin tener garantizado un horario compacto. Para llegar a disponer de una jornada de 25 horas (como monitores de apoyo), en el mejor de los casos, tienen que trabajar en diferentes centros que pueden ser de educación infantil, primaria o secundaria. Cuando acaba el curso, son despedidos hasta que comienza un nuevo curso académico. Las directoras de los centros tienen asignada la función de coordinar su actividad, mientras que su práctica es orientada y supervisada por los tutores de los grupos. Hasta el curso 2017-18 no se publicó la normativa de actuación del centro en relación con las celadoras citadas como “monitoras de apoyo”. En anteriores Libros de Administración y Gestión meramente se citaban, a pesar de su presencia en los centros educativos.

	Educadoras de Educación Especial (EEE)	Auxiliares de Educación Especial (AEE)	Monitoras de apoyo (celadoras)
Cualificación requerida	Ciclo Formativo de Grado Superior	Graduado escolar	Graduado escolar
Contratación	Departament d'Ensenyament	Departament d'Ensenyament	Empresa subcontratada
Funciones	Funciones educativas	Funciones asistenciales	Funciones según Plan Individualizado

Cuadro1: Figuras no docentes de apoyo directo al alumnado

En cuanto a las funciones oficiales, los EEE apoyan al alumnado con necesidades educativas especiales para que participen en las actividades del aula, aplican programas de trabajo preparados por los tutores o especialistas y participan en la elaboración y aplicación de tareas específicas relacionadas con las habilidades sociales, la estimulación sensorial, las habilidades de vida, de transición a la vida adulta y preparación para el mundo laboral (Departament d'Ensenyament, 2018). El documento explicita que deben ser conocedores de objetivos, contenidos y proyecto educativo para colaborar eficazmente con el resto de profesionales, además de proporcionar información útil para mejorar las prácticas educativas. Las funciones contractuales que comparten con los AEE son las siguientes: favorecer la autonomía personal, la adquisición de hábitos de higiene, la movilidad y los desplazamientos del alumno. Los AEE además son los encargados de determinados tratamientos específicos de estos alumnos dentro del centro educativo (Departament d'Ensenyament, 2018).

Las funciones de las celadoras son más difusas puesto que el mencionado Libro explicita que deben “favorecer la participación y el aprendizaje de todos los alumnos, así como su independencia personal y autorregulación” (Departament d’Ensenyament, 2018, p.33), guiándose por los acuerdos establecidos por el equipo docente en el plan individualizado. Sin embargo, ¿cómo serán conscientes de los acuerdos si no tienen asignadas horas de coordinación? ¿Cómo podrán contribuir a estos planes individualizados? ¿Cómo podrán integrarse en la escuela? ¿Qué voz tienen en la evaluación de los objetivos y la propia intervención educativa? En relación con la práctica educativa, aunque el documento no clarifique sus funciones, aporta una serie de recomendaciones generales en cuanto a cómo otros profesionales los deben acoger, incorporar en el aula, aspectos relacionados con la proximidad en el apoyo, aspectos relacionales e incluso aconseja establecer una rutina de actuación en caso de conflictos. Dichas recomendaciones son coherentes con las orientaciones reportadas en la literatura científica para toda figura de apoyo ya sea personal docente o no, pero no son funciones. Hay que tener en cuenta que para mejorar la calidad del apoyo ofrecido a todos los estudiantes y forjar mejores relaciones de colaboración y trabajo en equipo es fundamental clarificar los roles y responsabilidades de los diferentes agentes educativos que intervienen.

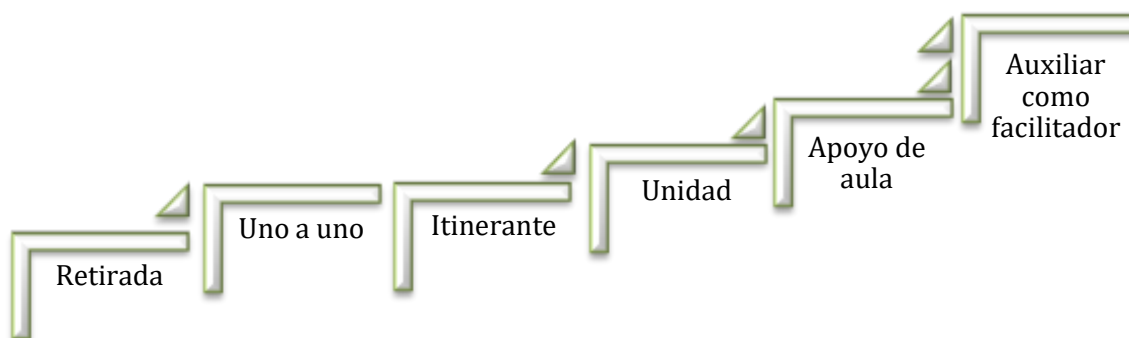
Por lo tanto, analizando los documentos oficiales vemos que solo los EEE tienen especificadas funciones educativas (Jardí, Puigdel·lívol y Petreñas, 2018). Las de los AEE son meramente asistenciales, mientras que las de las celadoras no constan. Sin embargo, a pesar de las diferencias de funciones teóricas, el personal no docente de apoyo que ha participado en la citada investigación constata que, en la práctica, el rol de estas tres figuras no está tan diferenciado ya que actúan según las necesidades del centro (Jardí, et al., 2018). Unas prácticas que pasan de una atención asistencial a adoptar un rol más educativo. Solo este es el que puede contribuir en mayor medida a promover la inclusión de todo el alumnado ya que este no solo necesita que sus necesidades básicas queden cubiertas, sino que es importante facilitar su participación y aprendizaje. Es decir, ni en la práctica ni en la teoría queda justificada la existencia de figuras con roles restringidos a la asistencia. Internacionalmente tampoco existe tal diferenciación entre figuras, aunque dependiendo del país se denominen de forma distinta: *Teacher Assistants*, *Teacher Aides*, *Paraprofessionals* o *Paraeducators*, *Learning support assistant*, *classroom assistant* o *higher level teaching assistants*, mayoritariamente. La misma inconsistencia en la denominación y funciones se pone de manifiesto entre las diferentes Comunidades Autónomas que cuentan con Educadores de Educación Especial, Auxiliares, Técnicos, etc.

En cuanto a la implementación, la investigación muestra que el personal no docente de apoyo está desarrollando tareas educativas. Para entender las prácticas de apoyo de forma más holística y dada la necesidad de que más adultos asuman funciones educativas, Webster et al., (2011) propusieron el modelo pedagógico amplio (*the wider pedagogical role*, WPR) que pretende articular los diferentes factores contextuales (condiciones de contratación, preparación, despliegue del apoyo y prácticas) que afectan

al personal no docente de apoyo y sobre los cuales ellos y ellas tienen poco o ningún control. Brock, Biggs, Cattey y Raley, (2016) destacan el importante papel que pueden jugar estos profesionales si promueven la ayuda entre iguales. Esta acción permite la multiplicación de las posibilidades de apoyo, es decir, si el adulto modela como es mejor ayudar o facilita formas efectivas de comunicación entre los alumnos; esta forma de interactuar y aprender entre iguales se puede mantener durante las horas que no hay personal de apoyo (docente o no) en el aula.

Butt (2016) identifica seis modelos de implementación del apoyo con personal no docente. En la ilustración 1 reordenamos estos modelos buscando plasmar las diferencias en cuanto a cualidad y posibilidades de contribución a la inclusión, siendo el modelo 1 (*de retirada*) el menos favorable y el modelo 6 (*auxiliar como facilitador*) el que más probabilidades tiene de ser efectivo por lo que a la inclusión se refiere. El primer modelo es el más desaconsejable porque la figura no docente de apoyo (1) *retira* al alumno del aula, distanciándolo de sus compañeros y de los aprendizajes a los que tienen acceso el resto de los alumnos, una práctica que como modelo es incompatible con el principio de inclusión. La autora destaca, además, la dificultad para acompañar la tarea del no-docente, la reducción del *feedback* entre profesionales afectando a la calidad del apoyo. En el modelo (2) *uno a uno* estos profesionales ofrecen apoyo directo e individual a los estudiantes pudiéndolos separar físicamente o curricularmente de sus compañeros, pero dentro del aula; uno de los modelos más utilizado a pesar de ser restrictivo. El modelo (3) *itinerante* es uno de los que mejor explica el despliegue de estas figuras en Cataluña ya que a lo largo del día o de la semana van cambiando de aula, de curso (incluso de etapa educativa) y de docente con quien poner en práctica el apoyo. Sin embargo, este modelo no explica la proximidad entre estudiante y no-docente en el apoyo. Es decir, el personal no docente que itenera por las diferentes aulas puede estar apoyando *uno a uno* a un alumno que se le ha asignado, puede estar apoyando, pero a cierta distancia mientras ayuda a otros alumnos o incluso puede estar ayudando exclusivamente al resto de alumnos.

Figura1: Modelos de implementación de Teacher Assistants desde una perspectiva inclusiva



El modelo (4) *unidad* contrarresta las dificultades del anterior en relación a la planificación y el currículum ya que el personal no docente de apoyo se mantiene en un mismo curso académico. Es por ello que este modelo aumenta un peldaño respecto a los dos anteriores, a menos itinerancia más oportunidades para conocer y ser un referente más para todos los alumnos y personal. Las posibilidades de intercambio y trabajo en equipo en el apoyo aumentan con el modelo (5) *apoyo de aula* ya que la persona de apoyo se asigna a un grupo clase y a un/a tutor/a. No obstante, tal como sucede con el modelo *itinerante*, ni el modelo de *unidad* ni el modelo *apoyo de aula* explican la proximidad y el grado de dependencia alumno-personal no docente de apoyo. Finalmente, el modelo (6) *auxiliar como facilitador* propuesto por Butt (2016) va un paso más allá haciendo que el personal no docente de apoyo ayude al alumnado relativamente más autónomo. De esta manera, el profesorado, personal teóricamente más cualificado, puede dar apoyo al alumnado que requiera medidas intensivas más especializadas. Es decir, la investigación recomienda un trabajo más en equipo en el que los profesionales se puedan llegar a intercambiar los roles. En efecto, entendidos como apoyos de aula o facilitadores, estos profesionales pueden anticipar, contribuir más eficientemente a las dinámicas planificadas por los docentes y dar apoyo a cualquier estudiante. No obstante, estas prácticas requieren experiencias de aprendizaje más activas para poder aprovechar la presencia de dos adultos dentro del aula.

Los autores citados coinciden en la importancia de mantener distancia con el alumno concreto andamiando su autonomía e interacción con los compañeros asegurando, así, una proximidad efectiva. Tener un adulto siempre al lado puede hacer que las interacciones iniciadas por los alumnos tiendan a dirigirse hacia este. Por ello, la dinamización de las ayudas y su retirada tendría que formar parte del minuto a minuto de los profesionales de apoyo. En este sentido, es conflictivo concebir estos profesionales como agentes ligados a determinados alumnos tal y como sucede en muchos sistemas educativos. En suma, compartiendo más las tareas de atención directa del alumnado se podrían contrarrestar, en parte, resultados como los del Proyecto DISS (Blatchford et al. 2009) que, con una amplia investigación en el Reino Unido, constató que cuanto más apoyo del personal no docente recibían los alumnos, menor era su progreso. Unos resultados no explicables ni por el nivel de afectación de estos alumnos ni por las iniciativas propias del personal no docente. Los factores que mejor lo explicaban eran de ámbito institucional, es decir, cómo se preparaban y desplegaban las prácticas de estos profesionales.

Además, Bosanquet, Radford y Webster (2016) observaron que la interacción entre profesor y alumno es de una calidad superior a la de personal no docente-alumno. Esto refuerza la trascendencia de formar a cualquier profesional en estrategias específicas de apoyo como, por ejemplo, las de andamiaje y retirada de ayuda, de interacción abierta y generadora, de desescalada de conflictos, de autorregulación, de dinamización de oportunidades de aprendizaje o de enriquecimiento de las experiencias de aprendizaje. Con capacitación efectiva, el personal no docente de apoyo puede implementar con éxito prácticas educativas (Bosanquet, Radford y Webster, 2016;

Brock y Carter, 2013). Esto no quiere decir que este colectivo actualmente no esté formado, sino que las exigencias de acceso a la profesión no se corresponden con el grado de trascendencia que tiene su tarea. De hecho, en Cataluña, de 106 experiencias de personal no docente de apoyo analizadas conjuntamente con las aportaciones de dos sindicatos mayoritarios, se observa que estos profesionales están sobrecualificados respecto a los requisitos de ingreso (Jardí, et al., 2018). Recordemos que, tal como se muestra en el cuadro 1, la cualificación exigida para acceder a un puesto de trabajo como educadora de educación especial es un ciclo de grado superior y para acceder a auxiliar o monitora de apoyo, el graduado escolar.

El sistema se encuentra en una encrucijada entre la provisión de apoyos inclusivos con todo lo que conlleva y los aspectos éticos y de justicia social relacionados con los requerimientos, exigencias y contratación de personal educativo. Hay que señalar que ningún profesional debe tomar decisiones pedagógicas para las cuales no está preparado específicamente (Webster et al., 2011). Por lo tanto, para asegurar la calidad y coherencia de las prácticas educativas escolares, estos agentes deben formar parte del equipo, ser entendidos como profesionales de los centros educativos, participar en reuniones y coordinaciones, tener voz y tomar decisiones conjuntamente con el resto del personal, siendo un eje más de un amplio sistema de apoyos en red. Esta inclusión de cualquier figura de atención educativa en el funcionamiento del centro educativo también facilita su trabajo con profesionales especializados con los cuales ha de poder intercambiar, crecer y mejorar las prácticas de apoyo. Respecto a compartir estrategias o guiar, los orientadores escolares de secundaria, los psicopedagogos o los maestros de atención a la diversidad, en el caso de primaria, juegan un papel clave. A pesar de ello, no hay que perder de vista que el primer responsable en el ámbito escolar es el tutor o tutora de cada grupo. Es quien tendrá que trabajar en primera instancia con el personal no docente y crear sinergias de trabajo conjunto en lugar de derivar al alumno. Es decir, es trabajo de todos romper con la falsa profesionalidad ya que el apoyo educativo es una tarea de todos, compartida, no solo de los especialistas.

En definitiva, la meta es conseguir una intervención conjunta más completa ya que la multiprofesionalidad contribuye a entender al alumno de una manera más global. No se trata de que todos los agentes que intervienen en el aula sean competentes en todo ya que sería laboralmente injusto, pero sí se tendría que valorar el recurso como fuente de posibilidades ya que se puede aprender de todo y de todos, no exclusivamente del profesorado. Las oportunidades que posibilita el personal de apoyo educativo para facilitar interacciones entre alumnos y dar apoyo tendrían que ser mejor exploradas.

Conclusiones

- El personal no docente de apoyo con un rol orientado a la inclusión es un agente necesario para lograr un sistema educativo inclusivo.

- No existe justificación pedagógica para mantener tres figuras de apoyo que realicen las mismas funciones, cuando solo las funciones oficiales de una de estas figuras son educativo-inclusivas.
- El trabajo balcanizado de agentes educativos dificulta la atención global del alumnado por lo que ningún profesional de apoyo debería quedar excluido de coordinaciones y reuniones que afecten directamente a sus prácticas.
- Para conseguir un sistema realmente inclusivo los requerimientos iniciales, así como la formación continuada de estas figuras profesionales debería ser coherente con las funciones a desarrollar.
- Para optimizar los apoyos es necesaria una transformación estructural de la forma de concebirlos por la escuela y por el propio sistema educativo.
- Los psicopedagogos, orientadores de secundaria, maestros de atención a la diversidad y tutores son piezas clave para la optimización de los recursos, incluyendo la figura del personal no docente de apoyo.

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**Appendix 5: Building successful partnerships between
Teaching Assistants and Teachers: Which interpersonal
factors matter?**



Research paper

Building successful partnerships between teaching assistants and teachers: Which interpersonal factors matter?

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Achieving effective TA-teacher partnerships is a complex process that requires time, effort, and external support.
- Interpersonal factors that affect TA-teacher partnerships should be considered when analysing their impact.
- Personal affinity, open communication, the sense of belonging, and professional compatibility are key to feel at ease.
- Trust can be achieved when partners' expectations are fulfilled, with open communication and teamwork.
- The role attributed and the interpersonal treatment are essential to feel respected and valued.

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ABSTRACT

This article identifies the factors that characterise effective interpersonal partnerships between teaching assistants (TAs) and teachers working in inclusive schools in Catalonia (Spain). This phenomenological study, based on 40 semi-structured interviews with 22 TAs and 18 teachers revealed that the main interpersonal factors affecting partnerships were: feeling at ease; trust; respect; and valuing one another. Participants detailed key aspects such as personal affinity, professional compatibility, open communication, a sense of belonging to a class-group, and teamwork, as additionally important for successful partnerships. The findings provide insight into how schools can support the development of effective TA-teacher partnerships. Implications are discussed.

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Inclusive education for all children is a worldwide goal, underpinned and promoted by the United Nations (2015) with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In many western education systems, the employment and deployment of Teaching Assistants (TAs) has emerged as a popular model for reducing forms of exclusion and marginalization and facilitating access to general or mainstream education for children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities (Blatchford, 2012; Butt, 2016b; Giangreco & Doyle, 2007; Jardí et al., 2021). However, there are concerns that this practice, often when used further contextual support, has

unintended consequences (Giangreco et al., 2010; Lim et al., 2014; Webster et al., 2011). Blatchford et al. (2012), for example, observed stark differences between the quantity and the quality of the support from teachers and TAs for pupils with and without SEN in UK schools. Pupils with SEN spent more time being supported by TAs, and less time taught by teachers, compared with their typically-developing peers. What is more, the quality of support from TAs was lower.

The issue of role clarity is a consistent theme within the literature on TA deployment and practice (Brock & Carter, 2016; Radford et al., 2015; Slater & Gazeley, 2018). When role boundaries are unclear, responsibility for teaching pupils with SEN has been found to drift away from teachers and towards TAs (Blatchford et al., 2012). Some researchers have recommended replacing TAs with qualified teachers for certain specific supports (Bairbre et al., 2020),

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while others suggest defining and upholding clearer boundaries and roles can improve experiences for learners with SEN. Butt (2016a), for example, proposes the *Teacher Assistant as Facilitator* (TAAF) model, in which teachers assume the responsibility of supporting students with disabilities or learning difficulties in the classroom, while the TA supports students' interactions.

In order to address the aforementioned gaps in support quality, previous studies have investigated the appropriate training and supervision of TAs and teachers, working environment and conditions of employment (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012; Giangreco et al., 2010; Sharma & Salend, 2016). Many of the strategic and day-to-day factors affect the deployment and impact of TA provision are captured in the *Wider Pedagogical Role* (WPR) model (Webster et al., 2011). The WPR model was developed to explain findings from the large-scale UK Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project, which found widespread dysfunctions and inconsistencies regarding the use of TAs (Blatchford et al., 2012). In summary, the WPR model contextualises the fine point of TAs' practice – specifically, their interactions with pupils – within a wider set of parameters and related factors, including: how effectively schools and teachers deploy TAs in mainstream classrooms; how well trained teachers are to know how to deploy TAs; the extent to which they plan lessons which make the most of having a TA in the classroom, and the opportunities teachers and TAs have to discuss lessons beforehand. Crucially, the WPR model highlights how the effectiveness deployment of TAs does not depend on the TAs themselves, but on the decision-making of school leaders and teachers.

1. Conceptual framework of partnership

While significant research exists on the preparedness, deployment and employment conditions of TAs, there is comparatively less on the factors that comprise and underpin successful working relationship between TAs and teachers. To date, research has focussed on how to foster teamwork and interprofessional collaboration between TAs and teachers (Capizzi & Fonte, 2012; Cremin et al., 2005; Devecchi & Rouse, 2010). However, the process of building partnerships itself and the 'soft' characteristics, crucial to an effective and efficient partnership working in schools, has received relatively less attention from researchers. For this reason, we looked to teacher-teacher relationships as well as relationships in other environments and services that depend on collaboration between professionals and paraprofessionals – such as in health-care (nurses and healthcare workers) or law (solicitors and paralegals) – as they are likely to be the closest antecedents for TAs-teachers relationships.

As to *building partnerships*, Pratt (2014) proposed the *Achieving Symbiosis* model for the development of a successful co-teaching relationship. The first phase of this three-phase model is the 'initiation', when teachers are paired on the basis of a screening for their shared attitudes towards partnership work. The continuum of feelings experienced when beginning a new relationship (ranging from hesitation to anticipation) can be mostly applicable to the TA-teacher partnership. However, the formation of partnerships is directed by the school leadership and will be based on broader range factors – principally relating to the needs of the children in the class – with comparatively less consideration given to the personal qualities and dispositions to partnership working held by teachers and TAs.

In the second phase, teachers test the waters of their relationship, getting to know their partners and learning how to work together. Through this process, co-teachers begin to complement each other, build positive interdependent partnerships, and engage in professional reflection to improve joint practices. This phase is mediated by: interpersonal factors, such as the compatibility of the

two teachers, parity, trust, and rapport; and external factors such as opportunities for professional development, co-planning time, and administrative support. Finally, the author highlights strategies to become more effective partners based on individual strengths, including being openminded, using open communication, finding common ground, using humour, being selfless, and offering to help.

In the third phase of achieving symbiosis, all the pieces of the partnership come together and work effectively. This phase begins when the participants in the relationship are fulfilled both personally and professionally. In this final stage partners value the relationship, handle challenges smoothly, and have similar instructional styles.

On the basis of their study of teachers' stories about creating shared spaces for co-teaching, Rytivaara et al. (2019) concluded that partnerships are not something that happens suddenly. They are developed through negotiation and considerable time and effort. They highlighted three steps to their development: 1) commitment to building a partnership with a colleague; 2) learning to share practical knowledge through discussing their personalities, professional backgrounds, and classroom practices; and 3) joint reflection.

Another study of multi-professional cooperation in teaching dyads, conducted in Germany, found that, despite the theories, in practice teachers fail to develop as a dyad. Teachers in the study were found to be at an early stage of developing skills for collegiate working; they were neither sharing their understanding about cooperation nor adapting to each other (Jurkowski & Müller, 2018). Likewise, Scruggs et al. (2007) metasynthesis on co-teaching in inclusive classrooms found no evidence within the qualitative research base of true collaboration between two equal partners. Moreover, something similar has been concluded in investigations that included TAs, with Mulholland and O'Connor (2016) referring to collaboration implementation as 'aspirational'.

As regards specific literature on TAs, Capizzi and Fonte (2012) designed a systematic tool that should help TAs and teachers create a collaborative setting. Their four components – orientation to the setting, professional duties and responsibilities, communication, and professional development – are particularly relevant for this investigation since they are aimed at fostering teamwork. With this tool, partners can clarify their roles and expectations and renegotiate them; essential steps for effective collaboration.

The models described above have a common phase of negotiation and reflection about both personal and professional issues that may affect practices. This discussion most likely takes place when stakeholders are planning their co-taught lessons and spending time together. In fact, literature about co-teaching highlights that for its successful implementation both teachers must be involved in co-planification, co-construction and co-evaluation (Murawski & Dieker, 2004; Pratt et al., 2016; Scruggs et al., 2007). Scantlebury et al. (2008) focused on more relational factors such as co-respect and co-responsibility but the third one, co-generative dialogue, also depends on external deployment factors. In addition, knowledge about team teaching also facilitates collaborative practices (Mulholland & O'Connor, 2016).

Concerning the *interpersonal relationship* between stakeholders, the items from the Schutz and Valley (1992) questionnaire are useful to operationalize the construct. For this qualitative article, the dimensions that have relevance are *interpersonal behaviour* and *interpersonal feelings* because they can contribute to describing what makes partners feel at ease, respected, valued, and trusting towards the other from a more interpsychological perspective. As to *interpersonal behaviour*: *inclusion* considers how much a person desires to be involved in groups; *control* concerns the balance between control and being controlled by others and has to do with decision making and responsibilities assumed; *openness* involves

how much people enjoy sharing thoughts and feelings with others. Regarding *interpersonal feelings*, *significance* explains how relevant and valued a person is perceived to be. The *feeling of competence* describes the capacity that someone has to cope with situations, handle problems and be self-sufficient. Finally, *likability* is based on how much people like to be with each other because of their behaviour or the atmosphere created. It has to do with liking oneself when being with the other.

Other qualitative studies have considered interpersonal factors such as openness, mutual respect, trust, parity, mutuality, personal and professional compatibility and rapport (e.g. [Devecchi & Rouse, 2010](#); [Ekornes, 2015](#); [Hall, 2005](#); [Pratt, 2014](#); [Scruggs et al., 2007](#); [Slater & Gazeley, 2018](#)). However, few of these studies are focused on TA-teacher relationships. Relationship between TAs and teachers can be slightly different on a purely relational level since the partners do not have the same status and working conditions ([Butt, 2016b](#); [Riggs & Mueller, 2001](#); [Smith, 2017](#)). Therefore, a comprehensive and holistic study on the dyad TA-teacher is needed to fill this gap in the literature.

Within the TAs field, but not exclusively focused on partnerships, [Giangreco et al. \(2001\)](#) explored the perceptions of different stakeholders — including TAs themselves — as regards respect, appreciation and acknowledgement of TAs, important interpersonal factors for the current investigation. Additionally, [Biggs et al. \(2016\)](#) investigated TA-teacher partnerships considering the influences between and beyond them as well as administration influences. They highlighted the importance of TA and teacher attitudes, their proficiency, professionalism and initiative, and other external factors such as supporting their needs, clarifying direction and expectations, and monitoring their performance to provide support if necessary. They also analysed what they called shared and underlying influences, including concepts consistent with the interpersonal factors priorly mentioned. Therefore, the qualitative investigations carried out by [Giangreco et al. \(2001\)](#) and [Biggs et al. \(2016\)](#) are important antecedents for the present research. However, we specifically focus on the interpersonal factors that emerge from TAs' and teachers' discourse, shedding light on the details provided regarding the process of building their partnership.

1.1. Contextualisation

This research is conducted in Catalonia, a Spanish region which has its own education legislation based on a general state law. Catalonia's decree on inclusive education states that the inclusion of all children in regular schools should be guaranteed ([Catalunya, 2017](#)). To foster inclusive education the Department designed a multi-tiered system of support that classifies supports and measures according to their intensity. TA direct support is conceived as one of the intensive measures to foster students' participation and achievements. In Catalonia there are five types of TAs: the Pre-school Education Specialist (PES), the Social Integration Specialist (SIS), the Special Education Educator (SEE) and the Special Education Assistant (SEA) —hired by the Department of Education— and the Carer —hired per hours by subcontracted companies. The main role of SEEs, SEAs and Carers is to support students with severe disabilities, behaviour difficulties or students whose situation is supposed to require intensive support. PESs are assigned to the first year of preschool (3 years old). Finally, SISs are not assigned to any class group and intervene directly with students in at-risk situations, their families, and other social agents from their communities ([Catalunya, 2020a, 2020b](#)). In practice, all these TAs are providing educational support to vulnerable students.

Therefore, research on TAs is important for inclusive education, especially in little-studied contexts such as Catalonia. Moreover, as

shown in the literature review, there is scarce research on TA-teacher partnership and the more generic research does not delve into interpersonal factors. Taking all of this into account, this article is aimed at identifying the factors that define the interpersonal relationship between TAs and teachers in order to ensure better partnership experiences within classrooms.

1. How do TAs and teachers describe their interpersonal experiences?
2. How do TAs and teachers explain the process of development of their partnership?

2. Methods

To provide an insight into the interpersonal relationship between TAs and teachers and to examine how a favourable partnership is built, we conducted a qualitative phenomenological study. This approach enhances the stakeholders' voices through studying the meaning they attribute to their experiences within a particular context ([Brantlinger et al., 2005](#)).

2.1. Settings

The study participants were public school teachers and TAs working in 14 inclusive schools. The inclusiveness of the school was defined using the results of an external investigation that classified schools into three levels of inclusion ([Sabando et al., 2019](#)) (see procedures). They used 'The Questionnaire on the inclusive profile of primary schools in Catalonia' which measured the schools' inclusive profile according to six dimensions: school organization — organisational characteristics and inclusive functioning of the school (e.g., student distribution and barriers for inclusion); inclusive school climate — measures to foster collaboration, coexistence and respect between stakeholders (e.g., welcome plan for students and professionals, measures to ensure a good coexistence and against bullying, measures to reduce absenteeism); classroom organization — classroom arrangements and adult participation within classrooms (e.g., grouping criteria and frequency of two adults in classrooms); educational support — description of how, who, where and when the support is provided (e.g., role of special education teachers and participation of different stakeholders in support decisions); community involvement — kind and level of participation of different stakeholders (e.g., volunteering composition and levels of family participation); and lifelong learning — instances of training and professional reflection (e.g., spaces for reflection and percentage of teachers involved in trainings).

From the 615 urban Catalan schools (54.6% of the population) classified, we selected the 10 early childhood and primary schools that ranked as the most inclusive in all dimensions, and the next 4 schools that had the 'lifelong learning' dimension at a medium level of inclusion. The schools additionally reflected different socioeconomic contexts: 2 schools were classified in the lowest level of complexity,¹ 7 in the medium level and 5 in the highest level (see the distribution in [Table 1](#)).

2.2. Participants

We recruited 22 TAs and 18 form teachers from the 14 schools. In terms of the participants' background characteristics, 90.9% of

¹ A status established by the Department of Education according to various indicators related to socioeconomic data. High complexity schools should have a lower student-to-teacher ratio, faster teacher replacement, preferential access to student grants and larger budgets.

Table 1
School description and participant distribution.

School	Complexity level	Dimensions at the highest level of inclusion	Participants
1	High	5	TA14, TA1, T1 & T2
2	Medium	6	TA15, TA2, T3 & T4
3	Medium	5	TA3, TA16, TA17, T5 & T6
4	High	6	TA18, TA4 & T7
5	Medium	6	TA5, TA19 & T8
6	High	6	TA6 & T9
7	High	5	TA7, TA8, TA20, T10 & T11
8	Medium	6	TA9 & T12
9	High	6	TA10 & T13
10	Low	6	TA11 & T14
11	Medium	6	TA12 & T15
12	Medium	6	TA21 & T16
13	Low	6	TA13 & T17
14	Medium	5	TA22 & T18

the TAs were female, ranging from 22 to 58 years old ($M = 42$, $SD = 9.8$). The TAs had work experience ranging from 1 to 20 years ($M = 9.41$, $SD = 6.19$), and 12 were hired by a subcontracted company (carers), while 10 were directly hired by the Department of Education. Most TAs worked across different classrooms, providing individualised (one-to-one) support to 6 students with severe disabilities or behaviour difficulties on average. For more detailed sociodemographic information see Table 2.

All the teachers in the sample were female, and aged 28–65 years old ($M = 40.3$, $SD = 13.4$). Their work experience ranged from 3 to 26 years ($M = 13.11$, $SD = 7.1$) and they had 2 pupils with severe disabilities or behaviour difficulties in their classroom on average (see Table 2). The maximum class size in Early childhood and Primary Education in Catalonia is 25 students, 22 in high complexity schools.

2.3. Instruments

For this study, 40 semi-structured interviews were conducted and lasted an average of 43.5 min. The interview guide was designed on the basis of four main topics that emerged from prior research (e.g. Capizzi & Fonte, 2012; Giangreco et al., 2010; Pratt, 2014; Schutz & Valley, 1992): 1) roles, 2) communication, 3) interpersonal interaction and 4) professional identity (see supplementary material). The content of this guide was trialled through a focus group with university teachers ($n = 2$) and schoolteachers from a university-school network on inclusive education ($n = 6$). They found the questions appropriate only suggesting vocabulary nuances (e.g., to replace 'role' for a clearer word or expression). They also stressed the relevance of making the questions as open as possible.

2.4. Procedure

The Consell d'Avaluació Superior (Catalan Government) authorised the research and facilitated the identification of the most inclusive schools. Following the European Commission (2013) ethical guidelines, schools were informed about the project, the research goals and the confidentiality of both the school and participants. We also explained that participants could withdraw their consent at any point of the investigation and their right to know the findings of the research. All the schools showed an interest and in the first instance, TAs were invited to participate. Those who agreed to take part were asked to identify the teacher with whom they considered they worked best with; some TAs chose the same teacher. Those teachers selected by the TAs were then invited to participate. Before the interview, each participant was informed

again about the research and the ethical aspects and signed an informed consent form. Interviews were individual and were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. Transcriptions were sent to each interviewed stakeholder to guarantee that their words correctly represented their perspective. Only comments on accurate vocabulary or expressions were returned. Nobody withdrew consent or asked to change content.

2.5. Data analysis

After transcribing all the interviews, an initial coding scheme based on semi-structured questions and existing research in the field was presented to the research team. The coding scheme drew together main themes, categories, and sub-categories and was applied to a preliminary content analysis of 10 interviews (4 teachers and 6 TAs) in order to gain an overview of the data. Emerging sub-categories were added inductively while analysing data with the Nvivo 11 pro software. Despite taking consideration of prior research as a measure of credibility, an inductive coding process was used in order to more accurately reflect stakeholders' voices as somewhat ambiguous themes —such as *openness*, *significance*, *inclusion*, *likability* (Schutz & Valley, 1992) or *rapport*, *hierarchy* and *shared challenges* (Biggs et al., 2016)— did not fully capture the meaning provided by the participants from this particular context.

Researchers agreed on the meaning of each category and sub-category; code and meaning saturation were reached (Hernández et al., 2006). Then, the 40 interviews were analysed, and a second researcher analysed each sub-category in the research data set. To complement this peer debriefing strategy of credibility, the level of agreement was tested. The Kappa coefficient illustrated excellent and good levels of agreement across experts in each category (*feeling at ease*, Kappa = .91; *trust*, Kappa = .84; *respect and value*, Kappa = .92; and *building partnerships*, Kappa = .78; with a 95% Confidence Interval) (McHugh, 2012). In addition to the thematic analysis with the identification of the reciprocity of concepts among the multiple perspectives (Larkin et al., 2019), less reported but highly descriptive information was also included. The coding provided exact counts of all the mentions of a given code (see Table 1).

3. Findings

This section is organised in four sub-sections which are consistent with the four main categories of analysis: *feeling at ease*, *trust*, *respect and value*, and *building partnerships*. The first three sub-sections describe TAs' and teachers' interpersonal experiences

Table 2
Sociodemographic data of participants.

School	Participant	Professional profile	Educational stage	Highest education level	Experience (years)	Pupils with SEN assigned	Contract
1	T2	Teacher	ECE ^a	Tertiary education (teacher)	12	1	full-time (37,5 h.)
	T1	Teacher	PE ^b	Tertiary education (teacher)	26	1	full-time (37,5 h.)
	TA14	SEE	ECE and PE	Vocational education-2 (SIS)	4	4	full-time (37,5 h.)
	TA1	Carer	ECE and PE	Vocational education-2 (administrative)	11	5	piece work (14 h.)
2	T3	Teacher	ECE	Tertiary education (teacher)	13	2	full-time (37,5 h.)
	T4	Teacher	PE	Tertiary education (teacher)	20	1	full-time (37,5 h.)
	TA15	SEE	ECE and PE	Vocational education-2 (PES)	16	10	full-time (37,5 h.)
	TA2	Carer	ECE and PE	Tertiary education (teacher)	15	4	piece work (20 h.)
3	T5	Teacher	ECE	Tertiary education (teacher)	24	3	full-time (37,5 h.)
	T6	Teacher	PE	Tertiary education (teacher)	4	4	full-time (37,5 h.)
	TA16	SEE	ECE and PE	Tertiary education (psychologist)	16	12	full-time (37,5 h.)
	TA17	SEA	ECE and PE	Tertiary education (teacher)	3	7	half-time (31,25 h.)
4	TA3	Carer	ECE, PE and SE ^c	Tertiary education (journalist)	11	10	piece work (18 h.)
	T7	Teacher	PE	Tertiary education (teacher)	22	1	full-time (37,5 h.)
	TA18	SIS	ECE and PE	Vocational education-2 ^d (SIS)	4	No assignment	full-time (37,5 h.)
	TA4	Carer	ECE and PE	Vocational education-1 ^e (administrative)	13	3	piece work (25 h.)
5	T8	Teacher	PE	Tertiary education (teacher)	9	2	full-time (37,5 h.)
	TA19	SEE	ECE and PE	Vocational education-2 (SIS)	1	7	full-time (37,5 h.)
	TA5	Carer	ECE and PE	Vocational education-1 (nurse assistant)	12	7	piece work (20 h.)
	T9	Teacher	ECE	Tertiary education (teacher)	10	2	full-time (37,5 h.)
6	TA6	Carer	ECE and PE	Vocational education-2 (PES)	11	4	piece work (20 h.)
	T10	Teacher	ECE	Tertiary education (teacher)	9	1	full-time (37,5 h.)
	T11	Teacher	ECE	Tertiary education (teacher)	3	2	full-time (37,5 h.)
	TA20	PES	ECE	Vocational education-2 (PES)	4	1	full-time (37,5 h.)
7	TA7	Carer	ECE	Tertiary education (teacher)	2	1	piece work (10 h.)
	TA8-C	Carer	ECE	School graduate	17	3	piece work (15 h.)
	T12	Teacher	PE	Tertiary education (teacher)	16	3	full-time (37,5 h.)
	TA9	Carer	ECE and PE	Tertiary education (psychologist)	1	7	piece work (25 h.)
8	T13	Teacher	ECE	Tertiary education (teacher)	3	1	full-time (37,5 h.)
	TA10	Carer	ECE and PE	School graduate	18	5	piece work (25 h.)
	T14	Teacher	ECE	Tertiary education (teacher)	9	1	full-time (37,5 h.)
	TA11	Carer	ECE and PE	Tertiary education (teacher)	20	3	piece work (25 h.)
9	T15	Teacher	PE	Tertiary education (teacher)	21	3	full-time (37,5 h.)
	TA12	Carer	ECE and PE	School graduate	5	3	piece work (25 h.)
	T16	Teacher	PE	Tertiary education (teacher)	9	2	full-time (37,5 h.)
	TA21	SEE	ECE and PE	Vocational education-2 (SIS)	13	6	full-time (37,5 h.)
10	T17	Teacher	PE	Tertiary education (teacher)	15	2	full-time (37,5 h.)
	TA13	SEE	ECE and PE	Vocational education-2 (SIS)	8	11	full-time (37,5 h.)
	T18	Teacher	PE	Tertiary education (teacher)	11	1	full-time (37,5 h.)
	TA22	SEE	ECE and PE	Tertiary education (social educator)	2	7	full-time (37,5 h.)

^a ECE: Early Childhood Education.^b PE: Primary Education.^c SE: Secondary Education.^d Vocational education-2: ISCED-4, post-secondary non-tertiary education level (UNESCO, 2014).^e Vocational education-1: ISCED-3, Upper secondary education level (UNESCO, 2014).

(research question 1) while the last one explains how they developed partnerships (research question 2). Table 3 shows the prevalence of codes for TAs and teachers per each sub-category.

3.1. What makes TAs and teachers feel at ease?

When two professionals are working together in the same space, they need to feel at ease and comfortable with each other. Half of the participants (12 TAs and 11 teachers) reported *affinity* as the most relevant factor to feel at ease with one another (see

Table 3
Categories, sub-categories, and frequencies (n) per profile of participant.

Category	Sub-category	TAs	Teachers	TOTAL
Feeling at ease	Affinity	12	11	23
	Open communication	12	10	22
	Sense of belonging	15	4	19
	Professional compatibility	9	9	18
	Autonomy	6	5	11
	Feeling welcome	5	1	6
Trust	Fulfilment of professional expectations	11	12	23
	Open communication	5	5	10
	Working as a team	2	6	8
	Inherent	2	5	7
Respect & Value	Role attributed	14	11	25
	Interpersonal treatment	10	5	15
Building partnerships		13	10	23

Table 1). Some described affinity as an intangible sensation or synergy of harmony, or chemistry between them. Teacher-15 specified that this can happen with any kind of school professional, and that it is not exclusive to TAs and teacher. There are people with whom one can feel 'good vibes', 'in tune' with or easily establish a bond. Teacher-8 reported:

Every person is different, as it is different with every teacher. In fact, in this school there are a lot of half groups and these are not the same with one teacher or another. It's the same, in the end, it's a personal affinity issue. It should not matter if there is affinity or not but matters. We should agree and work for and with children. [...] Sometimes someone with whom you feel at ease comes [into the classroom] and sometimes someone else comes and you feel more uncomfortable or it's harder to work with them.

Teacher-18 described how this connection made communication easier, as non-verbal interactions, such as a glance could convey meaning and information. Participants explained that mutual understanding emerged through working together over time. Some participants linked likeability of the other to being able to support each other professionally and personally. Having a collaborative and supportive attitude is described as relevant to achieving affinity.

Connectedness was perceived as a key factor for partnership that could be fostered through frequent and quality communication (Teacher-18). Ensuring *open communication* was key for partnerships. Most TAs ($n = 12$) and teachers ($n = 10$) deemed important to regularly talk about educational practices and address issues calmly together. As teacher-8 said, when the interactions are not flowing as they should, professionals should sit and tackle conflicts. In order to agree, partners should focus and keep in mind their shared professional goals.

Most TAs ($n = 15$) described the *sense of belonging* as fundamental to feeling at ease within the classroom. While this interpersonal factor was very relevant for TAs, fewer teachers ($n = 4$) stressed on this as an important factor for their partnership. As TA-11 put it, TAs need to be considered as professionals within classrooms, not feeling 'like furniture'. Teacher-17 explained that when the TA was in the classroom, she prepared the type of learning activities that she would be unable to carry out properly when the TA was not there. TA-17 reported that when she feels part of the classroom, she feels more comfortable. An example of feeling included are instances when teachers asked for her opinion and she felt heard. Feeling excluded from classroom processes prompted feelings of sadness, although she said she tried not to take it personally.

Participants reported that TAs can feel integrated into a classroom, but not the whole school, and vice versa. The school level is an important context for interpreting 'sense of belonging' as wider deployment conditions, such as the amount of time teachers and TAs spend together, their participation in meetings or opportunities for any kind of coordination, have an impact at the classroom level. TA-11 illustrated this point, describing how, if she had been hired at the same time as teachers (almost two weeks before the school term started), she would not have missed important information that directly informed her daily practices (such as a training on Fragile X syndrome).

TAs also described a need to be presented to the whole classroom group as professionals, and to *be welcomed* on a daily basis when they go into classrooms. For example, teachers saying hello when they arrive, showing interest in them, being attentive, etc. (e.g., TA-11, TA-16, TA-22). This factor, despite not being reported by many stakeholders was another factor to which TAs are more

sensitive than teachers (5 TAs contrasting with 1 teacher).

Participants reported that sharing perspectives on education, goals and agreeing on classroom practices were also important to their sense of feeling at ease with their partners. This *professional compatibility* included having a shared perspective on inclusive education and was highlighted by the same number of TAs ($n = 9$) and teachers ($n = 9$). Some TAs highlighted the importance of the teacher being fully involved with students with SEN and noticing when they are not in the classroom. For TA-16, it is 'hurtful' when the teacher overlooks a child and does not support them as she thinks they should. For TAs and teachers, professional compatibility is not only about individual character, but about their values and commitment towards education. Thus, achieving professional compatibility is easier when teachers and TAs share the same perspective on which are the milestones of education, how to better include students, share the same management style, and when both have high expectations on students.

Some TAs described wanting teachers to provide some general direction to their work, but preferred working with the teachers who allowed them some *autonomy*. TAs ($n = 6$) and teachers ($n = 5$) reference this factor in roughly equal proportions. Flexible teachers let them take the initiative, move around the classroom, and sometimes lead activities. TAs felt more comfortable when teachers provided them some room to use their discretion in decision-making.

3.2. What makes TAs and teachers trust each other?

Participants felt that they could trust their colleagues when they believed their practices and actions were in line with their own, and that they would have a positive impact, and *fulfil* their *professional expectations*. This is the most reported factor among TAs ($n = 11$) and teachers ($n = 12$) when delving into what makes them trust each other. Two teachers described that their trust in TAs was derived through the experience of working alongside them. As Teacher-2 put it:

I don't trust them because of their qualifications or professional profile. It's more the experience they have [...] the trust happens when they start to work and you can see how they work, doesn't it? And you see how they work with the child. If I see that the child is calmer with a TA, I will ask for her.

Seven participants (2 TAs and 5 teachers) said that trust should be automatic on the basis that their partner was a professional. Some participants also highlighted more trust when their partners transmitted security or self-confidence. Teacher-10 said this has a calming effect.

Participants, in a consistent proportion of TAs ($n = 5$) and teachers ($n = 5$), linked trust in their partners with *open communication*: the space and opportunity to talk openly about children, and to share opinions and feelings. Such talk was described as transparent and sincere, direct and unmediated by a third person (Teacher-2). Receiving and providing feedback about practices, negotiating and being able to suggest and refuse proposals was only possible when trust exists between partners. TA-3 remarked that open communication made her feel secure and more confident in the classroom. For teacher-10, trustworthiness was related to an individual's personality:

For me it's the personality. If you see that it is a humble and open person that wants to learn. You are with her and you feel the trust to say to her: look, the session hasn't worked. Let's learn about this ... If you can say this, you are in. If you don't have enough trust to say this, or if you feel that this person will turn

against you using your words or actions ... it would be difficult to work together.

Finally, participants described the complementary and reciprocal nature of *working as a team* as a contributory factor in increasing trust. However, more teachers than TAs mentioned this factor ($n = 6$; $n = 2$, respectively). This can be explained by perception bias as regards teamwork among teachers, since in Catalonia most TAs are not included in the teamwork (Catalunya, 2020a). Consistently, only two TAs mention teamwork when delving into 'trust'. Teacher-3 described how in working together one partner is able to see things that the other cannot. Teacher-18 said that she helped the TA and the TA helped her because they trusted one another. TA-13 additionally described that participating in leisure activities for teachers inside or outside the school helped to improve relationships, and to work better.

3.3. What makes TAs and teachers feel respected and valued?

Though two different concepts, participants associated feeling respected and feeling valued with the same aspects: the *role attributed* to them; and the *interpersonal treatment* they received. While both TAs and teachers associate the perception of respect and value to the roles and responsibilities that TAs assume in practically equal proportions, interpersonal treatment is a factor that concerns more TAs ($n = 10$) than teachers ($n = 5$). TAs belong to a lower employment category and have a worse status than teachers, so TAs might be more sensitive or be more affected by how others address and treat them.

TAs felt respected when teachers asked for their opinion and advice, and they felt listened to when their ideas were considered (TA-16). This was not the experience of all TAs, as TA-3 described:

In general, I don't feel respected professionally. For them you're someone who takes a problem off their hands, nothing more. I don't participate and they don't ask me to. It depends on the attitude of each form teacher, but you're like the refuse collector that comes to take away the garbage, yeah? [...] I don't care about attending the meetings or not, but they could ask you for written, spoken, recorder, telephone, information. And, once the meeting is over, they should give you a report of what's happened. Why? Because it has implications on the state of the kid, and you never know what happens; you're left behind.

TAs associated being included in meetings and participating and being heard with feeling valued. They also reported the responsibilities that teachers shared with them influence feelings of value. There was an indication that TAs felt more valued when the roles they undertook were more pedagogical in nature.

TA-18 explained that she feels respected when she feels she is treated like another professional, and that it is 'impossible to work without respect'. Respect implies that partners appreciate one another's work.

3.4. Building partnerships

Building an effective working partnership is a process that requires time and commitment. TA-1 explained it is a process that should flow and grow. Participants agreed that the dynamics were more established with partner they had worked with for longer. But effort is needed too, if a productive relationship is to flourish, as TA-10 explained:

I believe that when you begin a relationship with someone it's not the same the first year than the second, never mind the third. It can grow, or it can diminish, you decide. It's like when you start a romantic relationship. That is, in the beginning with the teacher I didn't know how to move, I didn't know her. One day she saw me pissed off and asked what's wrong, I told her my personal situation and she calmed me down and hug me. I believe it's the relationship between two people.

The process of getting to know each other evolves until both professionals start trusting one another, until they start fitting together as TA-21 details:

I believe that you don't have to just look at the child, you need to have some foresight and know who you're going to be with in the classroom. Then, somehow, you need to often know how to play more with the adult than the student, because you will manage more if you get to know how the adult works. A great deal of my job is more finding the terrain with the adult [...] You're not there to judge anyone. You should observe what they actually like, what they don't, everyone's a world of their own, their own quirks, their own hang-ups, and, in the end, you follow a path that sometimes is a little longer, but you have to follow this path to reach the student as well as the teacher.

Some teachers suggested that partnerships with TAs could be strengthened if TAs were not rotated around classrooms and stayed in the same room as much as possible. In this way, a 'co-tutoring' dynamic might be created. Teacher-5 added the following:

So, if it were two of us in the room, and we were always the same people, then it's very easy because then there's like a series of agreements, yeah? It just flows smoothly. But if there isn't even a referent, first someone comes in, then someone else and like this all day long, when you find a thing you don't know if you should say something, or not.

4. Discussion

Teaching assistants and teachers are meant to, together, carry out a huge variety of roles and responsibilities and deal with complex situations. To do it properly some interpersonal factors contributing to building favourable partnerships should be enhanced. Exploring how TAs and teachers describe their interpersonal experiences, the present investigation sheds light on what makes them feel at ease, trust, respect and value each other. These interpersonal factors (if favourable) lead to greater partnership experiences, having direct consequences on the educational support offered by those adults. In this section we discuss these interpersonal factors highlighting, in each one, their implications for practice. Finally, we list, as summary, the main implications and contributions of our study, its limitations and prospects.

One of the key factors that made participants *feel at ease* was *affinity*. Prior research on co-teaching broadly included this factor as part of compatibility, emphasising its relevance for the success of co-teachers' partnership (Scruggs et al., 2007). In contrast, in Pratt (2014) this personal agreement or sympathy between co-teachers can be considered within rapport. The novelty of the term affinity is that it is specific for the personal connection among TA and teachers, which was differentiated from the professional one. Consistently with Hall (2005) and Pratt (2014), we found that there are elements such as people's personalities and characteristics, gender, background, life stage, hobbies, attitudes, communication

style, and conflict style that can help to develop this close and good relationship. Thus, to ensure effective partnerships, school leaders should pair teachers and TAs considering their personalities and preferences. Despite its unintentional nature, affinity can also be worked on.

Hence, administrations should guarantee quality time in which TAs and teachers could get to know and understand each other to ensure collaborative and supportive attitudes. This quality time includes formal and informal school situations (e.g. regular meetings, spaces to provide and receive feedback, the coffee break, etc.) as well as leisure time (e.g. Christmas team-building activities). Therefore, school leaders should schedule compatible timetables for partners. Moreover, once time for meetings is guaranteed, it should be also structured to maximise it (e.g. Capizzi & Fonte, 2012 proposal).

Ensuring quality time is also essential to achieve an *open communication* between stakeholders. However, discrepancies within the workspace or relationships are usual, so administrations should provide training opportunities to jointly learn communication and collaborative skills (e.g. workshops addressed at raising assertiveness). This would help partners to proactively handle interpersonal problems rather taking offense. This skill is particularly relevant in TA-teacher partnerships since they have different professional backgrounds and responsibilities. As is stated for other interprofessional partnerships (Borg & Drange, 2019; Hall, 2005), TAs and teachers might have to overcome communication barriers due to profession-specific worldviews, different approaches and vocabulary or a lack of communication or common understanding. Individuals are not the only ones responsible in ensuring that their partnership flows smoothly, administrations and school leaders play an important role too.

Our study suggests that the *sense of belonging* and the perception of being *welcomed* are key to feeling at ease but they are more relevant for TAs than for teachers. In fact, TAs experience more barriers in this area than teachers. The insignificant proportion of TAs within Catalan classrooms, the model of deployment —TAs working across several classes with different teachers and multiple students (Jardí et al., 2021)—, and their working conditions, might explain why TAs are more sensitive to the sense of belonging at classroom- and school-level as well as to the perception of being welcomed. The sense of belonging to a classroom had more to do with the partnership quality, whereas to the whole school it was related to external factors. Thus, in addition to prior recommendations on including TAs in formal and informal situations, school leaders should foster TA participation in decision-making as well as in co-planification, co-reflexion and co-assessment as TAs are also involved in teaching and learning processes. Co-planification would also help teachers to include TAs in lesson planning, ensuring they are welcomed and included everytime they enter each classroom. To make TAs feel informed, welcomed, and valued as a part of the school staff, school leaders should democratically design a reception plan addressed at TAs (clarifying school principles, policies, and practices). They should also introduce TAs to the whole school-team showing their position and raising awareness of the importance of welcoming attitudes.

These recommendations should help to achieve *professional compatibility* since they should serve as professional growth spaces for teachers and TAs to together reflect, discuss and learn about education, inclusion, students, and their general practices. Partners should reach consensus on the methods, lesson plan, priority objectives, and learning philosophy as well as matching their expectations of roles. Partners' choices should not only be evidence-based and clarified at school level but also adjusted individually according to TA preferences, feelings, experience, and expertise. This support should help teachers to include and empower TAs

fostering their *autonomy* if they want to achieve a relationship of collaboration instead of a non-recommended 'master-servant' relationship (Quicke, 2003). To feel at ease, TAs need to perceive that they are supported but also that they have autonomy to carry out the agreed tasks, no matter the role attributed (e.g., clerical, educative, assistance/care).

Despite the need for autonomy, as early described by Giangreco et al. (2001), the role attributed does have implications towards feeling *respected* and *valued*. To achieve effective partnerships, partners should tackle this issue finding a balance between making TAs feel "undervalued" and "taken advantage of". Thus, administrations should support them in achieving this matching not only providing adjusted guidance and training on effective roles (informed by research) but also on skills to tackle the continuum of feelings and to build effective partnerships. In fact, another contribution of this study regarding feeling respected and valued is the stress on the *interpersonal treatment*. That is, even when the above-mentioned factors were favourable, to feel respected and valued TAs needed to perceive they were treated as relevant professionals. Despite having different roles and responsibilities, TAs and teachers are both education professionals that contribute in different ways to achieving the same goals. Everybody should be treated equally as every task is important for the students' learning and wellbeing. This interpersonal factor goes beyond the employment conditions, training opportunities and other important external factors because it is finally influenced by the partners attitudes and culture. Thus, this should be purposefully addressed at system-, school- and individual-level.

All these recommendations for adjusting roles also considering partners' feelings led us to take a stance on roles and responsibilities despite being widely discussed in prior research (Brock & Carter, 2016; Butt, 2016b; Sharma & Salend, 2016; Slater & Gazeley, 2018). Most TAs agree to performing a role that exceeds the mere assistance, because to ensure inclusive education not only should the presence of students be guaranteed, but also their participation and achievements. Performing an educative role rather than an assisting one would be consistent with prior research recommendations on role models if TAs are part of a network of support. These inclusive and interdependent roles based on evidence, partnership, and teamwork should not be confused with assuming teacher duties without adequate preparation, training, direction, or supervision since this was linked to feelings of disrespect and isolation (Giangreco et al., 2010). Overreliance on TAs should be avoided (Biggs et al., 2016; Butt, 2016b; Giangreco et al., 2005). Therefore, to ensure that the stakeholders are properly prepared to implement more interdependent and inclusive roles, also considering interpersonal factors, skill training and ongoing support addressed at both TAs and teachers would be necessary.

Regarding *trust*, participants described aspects that required time as opposed to unintentional or instant connexions for feeling at ease. Partners trust each other when they think they are professionally compatible, when they feel confident to share their thoughts without feeling judged, and when they achieve the complementarity and reciprocity that teamwork brings. However, our findings show that another barrier to trust is inequality; partners should perceive that they can complement each other, mutually rather than hierarchically (Slater & Gazeley, 2018). This parity helps to achieve a sort of fluidity in teamwork which is helpful in practice (Pratt, 2014), especially considering their careers, as teachers are not always the ones who know the most about something. Collaborative teams share responsibility for actions and take into account personal needs for autonomy, independence and reciprocity enabling them to be and become (Devecchi & Rouse, 2010), which is relevant for partnership formation. Nevertheless,

while working conditions and time for coordination do not improve, teachers should chip in to keep TAs informed about the most relevant issues as part of their tasks. TAs need not know everything about the students, only some useful aspects for their practices. In addition to the formal meetings focused on work, assertive and open communication as well as teamwork can be fostered in informal situations; leisure activities were recommended by our participants to establish bonds of trust.

Building a partnership is reported to be a long-term pathway, it is a process that should be purposefully fostered and adjusted through time. Partnerships are reported to grow with time, facing first impressions and checking and considering each other's working preferences and behaviours. Working together is challenging in itself (Mulholland & O'Connor, 2016). Our study suggests that achieving an effective partnership is as important as knowing how to support the child. To build an effective partnership TAs and teachers should work on the highlighted interpersonal factors that make them feel at ease, trust, respect and value each other. The resulting supportive relationship sometimes goes beyond the strictly professional. Most of the interpersonal factors detailed in our study can be fostered with proactive attitudes towards partnership as well as ensuring regular time for meetings, communication, reflection and collaboration (Capizzi & Fonte, 2012; Mowrey & King, 2019; Rytivaara et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, implications are not limited to what teachers and TAs can achieve on their own because, as mentioned, they need support from school leaders and administration as well. In Catalonia, the need for joint time and training contrasts with poor TA employment conditions: TAs are moving from classroom to classroom hired as specific support for some students with SEN, and, most, without remunerated hours for meetings, co-planning, teamwork or training (Jardí et al., 2021). In these itinerant models of deployment (Butt, 2016b) TAs work with several teachers having fewer opportunities to proactively work on their partnership. In addition, even the participation in meetings of those TAs that can (those hired by the Department of Education) depends on whether they are invited by teachers (Catalunya, 2020b). These conditions are barriers to achieving successful partnerships since the blooming of favourable interpersonal factors would be more difficult. Thus, administrations should foster models such as the teacher as facilitator models (e.g., Brock & Carter, 2016; Butt, 2016b) instead of assigning TAs to individual students. This might help to mitigate the 'velcro effect' between TAs and the students supported one-to-one described by Giangreco et al. (2005), as well as the double standards shown when using TAs as the primary educators of pupils with SEN (Webster et al., 2010). Finally, as to our study, these models of deployment ensure more time together to work on partnerships favouring educational support and school practices.

In short, the main implications are the following: 1) administrations and schools should seek to create stable and compatible pairings of teaching and non-teaching staff based on their interpersonal factors; 2) administrations and schools should also assign TAs to groups instead of to students with disabilities; 3) administrations should guarantee time for TAs (as support stakeholders) to fit their roles, co-plan, co-reflect, co-assess and build their partnership with teachers, including them in the school day-to-day; 4) schools should establish a reception plan to properly receive TAs; 5) administrations should support schools with ongoing training addressed at implementing effective role models that also consider how to achieve successful partnerships (e.g. a sort of team-teaching model) adjusted to TA responsibilities; and 6) In teacher colleges, universities and in initial TA training they should also teach and strengthen skills to build successful partnerships.

In addition to the highlighted implications for policies and practices, this article suggest to complement the WPR model

proposal (Webster et al., 2011) by adding the resulting interpersonal factors, thus contributing to theory. The interpersonal factors described should be understood considering the external factors that affect their deployment and practices. This even wider approach might help to discuss the impact of the support provided by TAs and teachers in future research. Moreover, this research informs of the deployment of TAs in a scarcely investigated context. From these 14 schools we can learn that despite meeting, at school level, the inclusion principles, the cultures, policies and practices are far from being inclusive for the TAs and, in turn, for the students that they support. We also learn that even not having the optimal conditions, successful partnerships can be built.

Findings should be contextualised and approached cautiously since qualitative research is often not as generalizable as results from large-scale research driven by, quantitative methods. The frequencies reported should only be used to see which interpersonal factors concerned each stakeholder profile of these particular schools. This study sought to provide depth via describing a range of experiences rather than finding a single truth. Thus, despite interviewing partners as inclusion criteria, participants were encouraged to refer to past partnership experiences contrasting them with their current ones. Finally, the analysis and interpretations were validated with a peer debriefing strategy instead of a second level of member checking as a measure of credibility (Brantlinger et al., 2005) which is a limitation in terms of ensuring that participant meanings are correctly interpreted.

Future research can quantitatively analyse the relationship between the factors that emerged and their impact on school practices. As relationships are social, they depend on the context where they take place (Slater & Gazeley, 2018), similar qualitative studies on the continuum of feelings and actions that help build more effective partnerships between TAs and teachers are needed to complement or expand the present one. Work on feelings within partnerships would be helpful itself as an introspective practice to self-knowledge and empowerment, to develop assertiveness between partners. Furthermore, to complement the interpersonal factors underlined, in future articles we will provide details on those external factors highlighted by TAs and teachers.

5. Conclusions

The education systems of many countries have attributed to TAs an important role for inclusive education. They are meant to work in close proximity with teachers, in a coordinated way to together achieve the same goals. Prior research highlighted important system- and school-level recommendations regarding TA working conditions, preparedness, and deployment. However, even when all these contextual factors are put into practice, there is something else in the relationship between teachers and TAs that contributes to a better or worse partnership. The present study contributes to this data gap describing the interpersonal experiences between TAs and teachers.

The stakeholders emphasised what does or does not help them feel at ease, trust, respect, and value the person with whom they support students. Participants provided details about personal affinity and professional compatibility with their partner, the importance of an open and honest communication, the sense of belonging to each class-group, feeling welcome every time they came in and experiencing autonomy when sharing about feeling at ease inside classrooms. To trust each other, participants pointed out the need that their partner fulfils their professional expectations, the importance of maintaining and open communication and working as a team. Finally, the key aspects that made stakeholders feel respected and valued depended on the perceived relevance of the role attributed to TAs and the interpersonal treatment

perceived.

These interpersonal factors that describe a quality partnership are not only ensured with favourable external factors (e.g., employment conditions, opportunities for professional development, time for coordination, appropriate supervision, and administrative support) which are the main recommendations of prior research (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012; Giangreco et al., 2010; Sharma & Salend, 2016). In fact, our findings showed that stakeholders built favourable relationships, even though the contextual factors were not the optimal. The interpersonal arena is even more important in TA-teacher partnerships since in this study stakeholders described factors such as interpersonal treatment, type of communication, the sense of belonging or the need for autonomy and mutuality in teamwork, which are linked to the perception of hierarchy, status differences and cultural barriers. Therefore, although we appeal to individual attitudes, efforts must also be made to change the culture of schools and communities.

A successful partnership is not something that just happens but something that teachers and TAs develop and improve together. Thus, schools should proactively address this relevant issue that directly affects support practices. In this article TAs and teachers explained how favourable partnerships can be achieved. Schools should consider what contributes to achieve positive interpersonal experiences and develop favourable partnerships to pair TAs and teachers. If the composition works, dyads should be maintained. Thus, administrations should not link TAs to students with SEN but to classrooms, as happens with teachers and ensure co-planification, co-reflexion and partnership-building time.

In addition to the implications for policies and practices highlighted, this article proposes a model to approach the specificities of the TA-teacher partnership which should be added to prior models that fail in considering and understanding the interpersonal factors that affect TA-teacher practices in order to achieve an even wider and more holistic perspective on TAs.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103523>.

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Appendix 6: The role of teaching assistants in managing behavior in inclusive Catalan schools.

ARTICLE



The role of teaching assistants in managing behaviour in inclusive Catalan schools

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive behaviour management and the roles of the various stakeholders involved continues to be of concern in education. As paraprofessionals within mainstream classrooms, many teaching assistants (TAs) assist with managing disruptive behaviour. This article explores how TA and teacher teams manage disruptive behaviour situations in 14 inclusive urban schools in Catalonia. Behaviour cases were reported by 17 TAs and 12 teachers through semi-structured interviews. A thematic analysis produced three main categories under which results are organised: roles; coordination; and behaviour management procedures. The experiences reported reflect the importance of having more than one adult in a classroom to manage quality, reciprocity and to avoid excessive responsibility delegation. Limits must be consensual, coherent, contextualised and consistent between all stakeholders involved in education, including the students themselves. Finally, teachers and TAs share proactive strategies for prevention and anticipation, and reactive strategies for de-escalating behaviours.

KEYWORDS

Teaching assistants; paraprofessionals; behaviour management; network of support; inclusive education

Introduction

One of the support measures various education systems (e.g. in USA, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Canada, Cyprus, Finland, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Austria, Bulgaria, Portugal, Slovakia, and Spain) have implemented to facilitate the presence of students in mainstream schools is the provision of teaching assistants (TAs) (Breyer, Lederer, and Gasteiger-Klicpera 2020; Jardí, Puigdemívol, and Petreñas 2018; Sharma and Salend 2016). The progressive transfer of students from special education schools to mainstream schools, which involves hiring non-teaching support personnel (Blatchford et al. 2009; Butt 2016), has also led to TAs becoming a key stakeholder in inclusion. Once students are present within classrooms, TAs and teachers have an important role to ensure the other two main principles of inclusion: participation and achievement (UNESCO 2009).

Much of the literature on TAs concerns their role relating to teaching and learning, and addresses matters such as the role and responsibilities of TAs and their training and supervision (Giangreco, Suter, and Doyle 2010; Sharma and Salend 2016). Webster et al. (2011) proposed the wider pedagogical role which considers contextual factors, such as contract

terms, preparation, provision of support and practices, which affect how TAs are deployed in instructional roles, but over which they have little or no control. High intensity support for learning from a TA can restrict peer interactions and perpetuates a sense of the TA as the main person responsible for the student. Researchers recommend the sharing and exchange of roles, avoiding an overreliance on TAs (Biggs, Gilson, and Carter 2016; Butt 2016; Giangreco et al. 2005). The heavily reported '*Velcro effect*' – whereby a student receives high amounts of intense one-to-one support from a TA – can be mitigated by not allocating a TA to a particular student (Giangreco et al. 2005). Butt (2016) proposes the Teacher Assistant As Facilitator (TAAF) model, whereby TAs help relatively more autonomous students in order to release teachers to support students who require more specialised or intensive forms of support.

Sharma and Salend (2016) systematic review showed that the main instructional roles of TAs are academic support for students with disabilities and behaviour management. TAs assume this role in educational stages from pre-kindergarten classrooms to secondary school. Their contributions have been reported as helping to reduce the number of challenging behaviours (e.g. Walker and Snell 2017). A survey by Gibson, Paatsch, and Toe (2016) found that both TAs and teachers had similar perception of behaviour-related roles. In an exploratory study conducted in Catalonia by Jardí, Puigdemívol, and Petreñas (2018) contrasted the perceptions of the role TA should perform with the role they actually perform. They observed that a high percentage of TAs believed that they had been hired to deal with the students' behavioural problems, with even more TAs stating they were doing just that in practice. Moreover, almost one-fifth of the TAs questioned were solely responsible for the behaviour of the students.

Despite the fact that TAs take on behaviour management responsibilities, few descriptive studies have shown what they specifically do to manage student behaviour. Harris and Aprile (2015) found that as well as supervising students for behaviour reasons, TAs recorded behaviour-related information and participated in school committees and programmes on behaviour. McConkey and Abbott (2011) described TA participation in behaviour support teams (debating and making suggestions). While they stated that the primary responsibility for managing behaviour lies with the teacher, Radford et al. (2015) included behaviour management as part of the 'support role' for TAs. They proposed three functions: *recruitment* to get students involved, encouraging and engaging them in the main classroom activities; *direction maintenance* to guide students back to being on-task; and *contingency management/frustration control* which encompasses actions to help reduce anxiety or discomfort in students.

Rubie-Davies et al. (2010) showed that behaviour management by TAs is more reactive than when done by teachers. This suggests that teachers use strategies to prevent misbehaviours, perhaps handling them in a more inclusive way. Madden and Senior (2017) mixed-method study showed that training has a positive impact on the use of more effective proactive strategies among teachers. However, Clunies-Ross, Little, and Kienhuis (2008) observe that the use of proactive strategies is not significantly associated with increased on-task behaviour. Although the use of reactive strategies is strongly associated with decreased on-task behaviour, they argue this is less due to using proactive strategies but rather replacing reactive strategies.

Beyond the integration of on-task management techniques within TAs' everyday classroom practice, some TAs implement specific behaviour regulation programmes and interventions. Examples include: *function based classroom interventions* —which

consist of understanding patterns of challenging behaviour and selecting effective strategies (Walker and Snell 2017); and *response interruption and redirection* — based on interrupting the target behaviour and redirecting it to a non-harmful response — (Giles et al. 2018). When TAs are specifically trained to deliver such interventions, they are reported to be effective; however, there are limitations insofar as the transferability of single-case designs, as well as no data tracking the long-term maintenance and generalisation of these interventions.

That said, outside this context, there seems to be a persistent problem in that TAs are not generally trained for specialised behaviour interventions (Cardinal et al. 2017). Gibson's (2015) descriptive study noticed that implementing behaviour management programmes is one of the three tasks for which TAs feel least prepared. In a Northern Ireland study, behaviour management was identified as the greatest challenges by 84% of TAs (McConkey and Abbott 2011).

Managing student behaviour is not exclusive to TAs, but rather the responsibility of the whole school community. Giangreco (2021) emphasises that the roles of TAs must not be determined in an isolated manner and that teacher roles must first be established to then create opportunities for teacher-student collaboration and support. Yet, as Hendrix et al. (2018) mentioned, most research into behaviour interventions focuses on teachers, which means further study on how other stakeholders, including TAs, contribute to behaviour regulation is needed. The aim of the work reported in this article, therefore, is to address this gap by describing how TA-teacher teams manage disruptive behaviour in inclusive schools.

The Catalan context

Education in Spain is delegated to the 17 autonomous regions. Each region has its own education laws. In the Catalan education system, there are four types of TA role hired by the Department-of-Education: Preschool Education Specialists (PES), Social Integration Specialists (SIS), Special Education Educators (SEE) and Special Education Assistants (SEA). The SEEs and SEAs along with carers (subcontracted TAs) provide direct attention for students with disabilities or behaviour difficulties. The roles of SEEs, SEAs and Carers align with those internationally attributed to TAs. PESs are assigned in the first year of preschool (3 years old) in public schools, while SISs work support students in at-risk situations by intervening directly with them, their families and other social agents in the education community (Department-of-Education 2019).

Methods

The research reported in this paper used a qualitative phenomenological approach in order to understand the qualities of a phenomenon within a particular context by studying the meaning people attribute to their experiences (Brantlinger et al. 2005).

Participants

Schools were selected on the basis of achieving high scores on the 'Survey on the Inclusive Profiles of Primary Schools in Catalonia' (Sabando, Puigdemívol, and Torrado 2019). The survey identifies the degree of inclusion at each school based on six

dimensions: school organisation; inclusive school climate; classroom organisation; educational support; and community involvement and lifelong learning.

TA-teacher teams in 14 Early and Primary schools took part in the study. Each participating TA was asked to identify the teacher with whom they felt they worked most effectively. These teachers were then approached to participate in the study. In some cases, the more than one TA identified the same teacher. In total, the study recruited 17 TAs (94.12% women, aged 22–58, $M = 41.35$ $SD = 11.06$ years) and 12 form teachers (100% women, aged 31–49, $M = 39.58$, $SD = 5.78$).

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants on a one-to-one basis. Questions were structured around four themes: roles (including behaviour management); communication; interpersonal interaction; and professional identity. The average duration of the interviews was 43:30 minutes (range = 39–68).

Procedure

Authorisation was requested from the Consell d'Avaluació Superior (Catalan Government) to contact the most inclusive urban schools. They were informed of the aims of the research and the ethical aspects (European Commission 2013), ensuring their anonymity, confidentiality, feedback and the possibility of withdrawing consent at any time during the research. Participants agreed with the ethical aspects and signed an informed consent sheet. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and transcripts sent to each stakeholder to verify that their perspective was accurately represented, and provide any clarifications (e.g. nuances in vocabulary or expressions).

Data analysis

The interview data were subjected to an inductive thematic analysis. The analytical strategy for this multi-perspective design was the identification of the reciprocity of concepts (Larkin, Shaw, and Flowers 2019), whereby the perceptions of and points raised by the different stakeholders (TAs and teachers) are shared in a complementary way.

A coding scheme relating to the experiences of disruptive behaviours was developed on the basis of a complete reading of all the interview transcripts. Themes and findings from prior research (e.g. Clarke and Visser 2016; Harris and Aprile 2015; Rubie-Davies et al. 2010; Walker and Snell 2017) were additionally considered in the development of the coding scheme. Consensus on the final coding scheme, shown in Table 1, was reached via a process of debate and validation among members of the research team. The interview data were analysed thematically using NVivo Plus 11.

Results

The presentation of the results of the analyses of the interview data on how TAs and teachers manage disruptive behaviour in inclusive Catalan schools is structured using the three main coding categories.

Table 1. Coding categories and sub-codes.

Code	Sub-code
Roles in behaviour management	Need for more adults Responsibilities
Coordination in behaviour management	Rules Teamwork
Behaviour management procedures	Teaching method Background identification Anticipation Systematic intervention procedures Strategies

Roles in behaviour management

Participants described the externalisation of behaviours they considered disruptive. These ranged from screaming to physical aggression against classmates and/or materials. Schools assigned TAs to address disruptive behaviour even if their role was legally associated with supporting another student. This was due to the need to guarantee all students' safety and wellbeing. Teacher-1 explained the difficulty of managing behaviour incidences when there was only one adult in the classroom:

I think we need many aides in mainstream classrooms. He can be so calm and then suddenly two minutes later, bam! You know? So, what am I supposed to do with him and 23 more? I want him to be just another student. If he takes off running, what do I do? Do I leave the 23 inside and go running after him? What am I supposed to do? [TAs] are absolutely important in schools.

All the teachers interviewed mentioned how important TAs are to working inclusively. As Teacher-12 articulated, they were essential to schools being able to offer a proactive and good quality response to disruptive behaviour incidents:

Last Monday, I had to engage in real physical restraint. We were doing a group activity he didn't want to do. I gave him one opportunity after another and he continued bothering everyone, interrupting and increasing [...] we warned him, he got angry and that's when we had to engage in physical restraint because he was super angry, was spitting, biting, scratching and everything. But those things happen a lot more when you're alone in a classroom. If a carer is there, we can anticipate it all and the carer just says, "Let's go out to the playground" and there's no conflict because someone was able to calmly and peacefully offer such a solution. This really minimized these behaviours. When there's just one person in a classroom, we're much more likely to end up with disruptive behaviour in the same situation.

Having two adults in the classroom allowed one to proceed with classroom activities and routines, while the other was free to intervene in the early stages of a disruptive, or potentially disruptive, incident. This complementarity had an effect on professionals' wellbeing. Teacher-7 mentioned feeling relaxed when two people were in the classroom as there was a sense of peace. Teacher-3 and Teacher-14 described how TAs calmed students outside of the room so that they were able to rejoin the group. Carer TA-18 explained how the educational attention students received was dependent on the teacher's attitude and their involvement in behaviour management to ensure students spend more time in the classroom.

The responsibilities TAs and teachers perceived as being attributed to TAs with respect to disruptive behaviour management depended on each teacher and the school's organisation. In general, TAs felt responsible for the students they had been employed to support, yet recognised that the teacher had the greater authority. Some professionals believed behaviour management was a shared task. There was a pragmatic dimension to this, insofar as 'whoever is closest' to the incident (Teacher-15; TA-15), or which adult had the stronger skills or better knowledge of the student (TA-21), responded first. In other cases, managing disruptive behaviour was delegated to the TA. Some participants (Teacher-9; TA-7) felt that teachers had given too much responsibility to TAs. TA-22 described how TAs had taken on the role of 'trouble-shooters':

Well, we've always got a phone on hand because the form teachers can call us at any time. They'll say "hey, Sara's really edgy or José's ..." They call us for everything. [...] We feel quite responsible. I mean, they make us feel responsible. If there's any kind of problem, they call us. [...] In this case, that's the way it is. I feel that's what it's like and the special education teacher does too. If the head teacher needs to speak to someone about those kids because there's been an issue, they talk to us, not the form teacher.

Teacher-15 described how TAs helped with behaviour in a broader sense. For example, the SIS (TA-8) was responsible for dealing with certain disruptive behaviours (e.g. disrespect, insults, threats) before (or to prevent) escalation to the head teacher. The SIS also provided mediation between students and held individual guidance sessions to identify causes of their troubles; for instance, problematic situations at home or social shyness. TAs in the SIS role also acted as a communication link with families.

Coordination in behaviour management

Teachers mentioned the existence of and adherence to basic school rules and routines, and some modelled these for students in their everyday practice. However, as one TA described, students with an intermittent record of attendance (e.g. for medical reasons) had difficulty retaining these routines.

Participants talked of the need to co-create and share rules and routines with students, and ensuring a consistent approach when teachers and TAs work alongside each other in the classroom. Teacher-14 remarked how it was considered important for adults to project unity and consistency to the students. TA-21 described the need for prior agreement on rules and coherent consequences in order to guarantee co-existence in the classroom:

I think communication among everyone, teachers and non-teaching staff working with these students, is very important to uniting efforts. What I mean is that everyone should work in the same way. Agreeing "we're going to do it like this if there are certain behaviours" in the case of behaviour disorders is very important to setting up certain frameworks, you know? "If this happens, everyone has to do the same thing," talk about what can be allowed when the child may not be doing something on purpose but rather just can't control themselves and determine to what extent "this is allowable yet this should never be accepted". Communication is essential in these cases as is reaching an agreement on how to work.

Depending on the specific instance, some adults may deliberately ignore certain behaviours. This again required agreement between teachers and TAs in terms of which

behaviours could be ignored and which could not. In Catalan schools, TAs often move from classroom to classroom, which means teachers must build consistent relationships with several TAs, and vice versa. Teacher-14 explained that this may lead to discrepancies and differences between teacher-TA teams within the same school.

Participants described the need to avoid the perception of a hierarchical relationship, where one adult gave orders to the other or was at risk of undermining them. Through their interactions with one another in the classroom, teachers and TAs wanted to ensure that students did not perceive one adult having less authority than the other. As TA-17 put it, practitioners did not want to appear as playing 'good cop/bad cop'. Teachers and TAs gave one another space to complete a behaviour correction, and not intervene.

Teacher-5, Teacher-18 and TA-8 mentioned *Attention to Diversity Committees*¹ as a formal meeting space to discuss student behaviours and effective responses. These meetings were described as useful in preventing instances disruptive behaviour (TA-8). The SEA (TA-7) and SEE (TA-10) explained how they made notes based on observations to discuss at these meetings. Less informal exchanges of information were also important to day-to-day operation.

Teacher-8 highlighted the importance of involving students in management and support processes and reminding them of their responsibilities, as a way of ensuring coherence and maintaining good classroom order. TA-8 mentioned the importance of involving other school staff in behaviour process and routines, such as in the canteen, and how effective communication is key to ensuring consistency:

I normally stay for lunch and am around. If there's a conflict they can't handle or if children I normally work with are involved, they come get me. It happened a lot last year; this year not as much. But, we all have to work together. It doesn't matter if you're leading an extra-curricular activity, monitoring the canteen or whatever. And it's important for the kids to know that. I see it like that and think if the children know we're all communicating, that I talk with the canteen supervisor, the girl who gives homework help ... Then, they say, my goodness everyone knows everything around here and we can also later talk about it more easily. I think communication is so very important. Good communication and always in a positive way. Of course, I'm always working with problems and you have to try to see the positive side of it all!

Behaviour management procedures

Participants mentioned the importance of the approach to teaching (teaching method) and the design of lesson activities as a strategy for minimising the potential for disruptive behaviour by maximising students' engagement (TA-7):

His attention span is quite low, possibly three or four minutes when the others can concentrate for 20 minutes. So, when he gets bored, I tell him to do something else and this is the way it is all the time. You really need a lot of imagination or a whole lot of resources. They need double the material the others do. Why? Well, because they get tired and their boredom can turn into aggression or disconnection (sleeping).

Carer TA-5 believed it was important to have an adult nearby who encourages students to remain focussed on tasks and to persist with them. Teacher-3 indicated that it was necessary to anticipate how disruptive behaviour might affect a lesson, and make changes, if a particular activity was not going well. Designing suitable activities that

best ensured student participation and engagement was a first prevention measure. TA-8 explained that supported students need activities that were similar to tasks given to the rest of the class, so supported students feel included.

Participants talked about how TAs were timetabled. The allocation of TAs' hours – and consequently how they were timetabled – were specified in a student's individual plans (Teacher-4). Teachers emphasised the importance of arranging TA support around the subjects and locations that caused students to be anxious (Teacher-1; Teacher-15), while being flexible and amenable to change part way through a course of study (Teacher-18). Teacher-15 mentioned the importance of avoiding grouping particular students with particular needs (e.g. relating to self-regulation) together.

Another element of effective behaviour management mentioned by participants was good knowledge of the students and the situations that can trigger disruptive behaviour, and which behaviour mitigation strategies they responded to (TA-13; TA-16). Carer (TA-5) explained the case of a student whose mood can be determined from the moment he enters the school, so welcoming him at the door in the morning, assessing his support needs throughout the day, and supporting basic needs such as sleep and physical well-being all helped to stabilise his behaviour.

Relatedly, participants talked about 'warning signs': the signals that indicate when students' behaviour is escalating. In such instances, practitioners could manage the situation and prevent negative behaviour by supporting verbal regulation (TA-1) or by deploying de-escalation strategies (Teacher-14; Teacher-8; Teacher-12; Teacher-3). Carer (TA-17) talked about a de-escalation strategy that required cooperation with the teacher and administrative personnel:

When I would see her getting really distressed, I learnt to anticipate her actions. So, when I would see her getting angry for any reason: because her pencil was too short and she wanted another one or she would demand the tallest chair, I'd say "I have to go get something from the photocopier. Shall we go? Will you come with me?" and I'd take her to the porter: "We've come to get a paper from the photocopier" and, of course, she'd say "Yeah, this is it" and would give me a sheet from the recycling paper. "OK, this is what I needed" and while going down a floor in the building and going back up, she would change and could return to the class.

When there are serious cases of disruptive behaviour, school-wide agreements were reached on how to proceed by systematising intervention procedures. For example, TA-1 explained a process whereby a student is removed from the classroom (to protect him or her as well as the rest of the class) if prior steps to managing disruptive behaviour (e.g. talking to the student) are unsuccessful. The student returns to the class when they feel calm and their behaviour had stabilised. TA-22 said staff used mobile phones to call colleagues for support, while the teacher spoke with the student outside the classroom.

Discussion

The present study has provided evidence of TAs taking on specific roles in student behaviour management in Catalan schools, which is reflected in the broader international literature (Sharma and Salend 2016). Although the teacher is legally the main professional responsible for managing student behaviour, our data show that, in practice, TAs take on at least responsibility for behaviour management. Our study found experiences where

there was a high level of reciprocity and equity, as well as others with an excessive delegation of responsibilities.

The literature on the role and impact of TAs has consistently shown that if TAs are not appropriately supported and trained, their interactions tend to be of lower quality than that of teachers (Rubie-Davies et al. 2010), and that the effects of this are greatest for the students most in need (Blatchford et al. 2009; Giangreco, Suter, and Doyle 2010). Teamwork leads to better professional experiences for teachers and TAs, and the inclusive experiences for the students they teach and support (Ainscow 2001).

In the Catalan context, there is one type of TA role, the SIS, who has a specific role in managing co-existence in the school. Despite being trained in social integration (non-tertiary education) (Department-of-Education 2019), questions still remain as to the degree of responsibility and competencies with regard to certain behaviour-related practices. They are not 'miracle workers' (Lim, Wong, and Tan 2014), however, and their work requires close collaboration with teachers, and so ought to be coordinated by support specialists with whom they can better overcome the barriers and foster inclusive education (Gómez-Zepeda et al. 2017).

Despite this, and contrary to some evidence (e.g. Walker and Snell 2017), our study found that TAs do not engage in behavioural interventions beyond the application of some protocol-based prevention strategies. The roles described here were more in line with Wilson, Schlapp, and Davidson (2003) description of providing an extra 'set of hands' in situations that can be more difficult to manage by one adult (the teacher) in the classroom. The presence of the TA makes proactive responses more achievable, which can prevent behaviour escalation (Webster-Stratton 2012) and the stigmatisation of students for whom regulating their behaviour is a particular challenge. Participants stated that preventive action to minimise disruptive behaviour contributes to all students' engagement and participation within classrooms, and avoids more restrictive and less inclusive measures. Prevention was considered essential for dealing with behaviour problems in an inclusive way, whenever they did arise.

Participants highlighted the importance of rules, routines and responses being consensual, coherent, contextualised and consistent. Professionals must analyse the behaviours, classify them, study measures and generalise them in appropriate contexts. *Attention to Diversity Committees* appear to provide a useful space for this. This practice is consistent with *consultation groups* (Hayes and Stringer 2016) in which teachers can raise opportunities for reflection, mutual support, and generate and discuss strategies in order to improve their behaviour management skills. We argue that there is much to be gained from TAs also participating in these meetings.

Students must develop a system of values with socially accepted rules that help them choose more acceptable behaviours (Rokeach 1973). Professionals must not take these rules and functional routines for granted. Restorative practices can help to this end by putting students at the centre of behaviour management and co-existence (Bob, Wachtel, and Wachtel 2010). Students must be sensitive to diversity and understand that in order to ensure overall compliance with the school's behaviour standards, some degree of flexibility is required. In the experiences reported, we observed that certain management situations involve turning the rest of the group into accomplices, and thereby turning peers into support agents. Beyond this, coherence and complicity must be guaranteed in all contexts, meaning communication with other stakeholders (e.g. families; canteen supervisors) is key to operating as a real support network (Puigdemívol et al. 2017) fostering inclusive education.

In addition to clarifying roles, responsibilities and expectations regarding behaviour, the findings reported here highlight the importance of the teaching approach to behaviour management. Planning and designing teaching sessions can help eliminate some of the barriers participants perceived as stimulating disruptive behaviours. In other words, prevention involves considering all students from the beginning as reflected by UDL (CAST 2011). Some of the strategies reported by the participants contributed to a decrease in absenteeism, sensitising students and other stakeholders, providing strategies and areas for mediation and conflict resolution and engaging the whole community as support stakeholders, as more inclusive and universal measures.

Participants highlighted the significance of anticipating behaviours in prevention; therefore, it is important to acknowledge precedents so as to improve the context in which they occur and study their functionality, so as to avoid them (Walker and Snell 2017). Participants described how identifying the warning signs of escalating behaviour helped minimise incidents. Although TAs and teachers in our study reported that challenging behaviours could not always be de-escalated, in such cases, they removed students from the class and worked with them outside the room in order to facilitate a safe return. As a last resort, some participants described having to use physical restraint, which is a widely-debated responsive strategy requiring caution, consent and specific training (Madden and Senior 2017). Beyond the negative impact of reactive strategies (Clunies-Ross, Little, and Kienhuis 2008), our participants agreed on the usefulness of sharing systematic intervention procedures whether they are proactive or reactive, always maintaining inclusion as the goal.

Conclusions

Our findings have implications for school administrators since the presence of more than one adult within classrooms can help in preventing disruptive behaviours and assisting all students in a more inclusive way. Administrators should provide teamwork time to ensure reflection, discussion, learning and the implementation of consistent measures. TAs and other stakeholders who work with students should be included. Furthermore, schools should involve students considering them as support agents to ensure a good co-existence. The detailed first-hand experiences and strategies shared by TAs and teachers from inclusive-oriented schools may have implications for practices in other schools.

Note

1. A multi-professional body that proposes, monitors, assesses and adjusts supports (Department-of-Education 2019).

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Appendix 7: Tackling disruptive behavior from an inclusive perspective.

El abordaje de conductas disruptivas desde una perspectiva inclusiva

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Resumen

El abordaje de conductas disruptivas desde una perspectiva inclusiva

La gestión de las conductas disruptivas es una de las grandes preocupaciones en el ámbito escolar. Esta gestión a menudo acaba siendo reactiva, en lugar de proactiva, focalizada en un alumno y delegada a determinados especialistas distando, así, de ser una atención realmente inclusiva. El propósito de este artículo es compartir experiencias de gestión de conducta implementadas en escuelas con un carácter marcadamente inclusivo. Mediante las experiencias de un grupo de profesionales de escuelas inclusivas se presenta el enfoque y algunas de las estrategias que destacan como clave para un abordaje más inclusivo de las situaciones con conductas disruptivas. Explicitan la importancia de implementar metodologías activas, una organización eficiente de los profesionales, el acuerdo de normas coherentes con toda la comunidad educativa (incluyendo familia y alumnado) y el establecimiento de un vínculo afectivo con el alumnado.

Palabras clave: gestión de la conducta, educación inclusiva, estrategias proactivas, red de apoyo

Abstract

Addressing disruptive behaviours from an inclusive perspective

The management of disruptive behaviours is one of the great concerns within schools. This management often ends up being reactive, rather than proactive, focused on one student and delegated to specific specialists, thus far from being truly inclusive. The purpose of this article is to share experiences of behaviour management implemented in schools with a markedly inclusive character. Through the experiences of a group of professionals from inclusive schools, the approach and some of the strategies that they highlight as key to handle situations with disruptive behaviours in a more inclusive way are presented. They explain the importance of

implementing active methodologies, an efficient organization of professionals, the agreement of coherent norms with the entire educational community (including family and students) and ensuring an affective bond with students.

Keywords: behaviour management, inclusive education, proactive strategies, support network

Lograr sistemas educativos cada vez más inclusivos es un hito mundial reafirmado por las Naciones Unidas (2015) con la Agenda 2030 para el Desarrollo Sostenible. De hecho, la mayoría de los sistemas educativos europeos afirman estar guiados por el principio de inclusión (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2019). Esto implica que, en cualquier aula ordinaria, todo el alumnado debería poder participar en las dinámicas de aprendizaje con sus iguales (Booth y Ainscow, 2002). Consecuentemente, el profesorado, contando con toda la comunidad educativa, debe estar preparado para gestionar una realidad de aula donde la complejidad ha aumentado. Sin embargo, diferentes estudios ponen de manifiesto que el profesorado siente que no dispone de suficiente preparación o herramientas para la gestión de las conductas en el aula (Hepburn y Beamish, 2019; Reinke et al., 2014). Esta gestión es una de las mayores preocupaciones entre el profesorado (OECD, 2014). De hecho, el último informe TALIS (OECD, 2019) muestra que, de los países de la OECD, el 60% del profesorado a menudo o siempre realiza tareas para mantener el orden en el aula como, por ejemplo, pedir al alumnado que siga las normas (71%). Sin embargo, son menos los y las docentes que reportan que a menudo o siempre deben estar reaccionando a conductas disruptivas para controlar a ~~los y~~ las estudiantes que "son disruptivos" (61%) o pidiendo a ~~los~~ las estudiantes que se tranquilicen (61%). Afortunadamente, el profesorado del 2018 pierde menos tiempo que el de 2013 calmando a ~~los y~~ las estudiantes para comenzar la clase o gestionando las interrupciones del alumnado. Esta mejora no se evidencia en España, ya que los datos empeoran ligeramente.

En cuanto a la perspectiva inclusiva, aunque en el citado informe (OECD, 2019) la falta de disciplina es asociada a la presencia de alumnado con problemas de conducta, hay que destacar que el resto de los aspectos que informan de la diversidad en las aulas (p. ej. el multilingüismo) no están relacionados con mantener la disciplina en el aula. Por lo tanto, es necesario adoptar un enfoque más holístico y contextual de las situaciones para gestionar más efectivamente las conductas en el aula. Esto implica poner énfasis en el diseño de medidas universales dirigidas a todo el alumnado, evitando sobreculpabilizar y estigmatizar determinados grupos de alumnos (Humphrey, 2013 en Humphrey et al., 2016). Es decir, gestionar de forma inclusiva el aula es clave para asegurar una docencia efectiva con entornos de aprendizaje que faciliten el aprendizaje académico y social de todos y todas (Dicke et al., 2015; Korpershoek et al., 2016).

Justificada la relevancia de un enfoque más universal, las categorías de Simonsen et al., (2008) derivadas de revisar prácticas basadas en evidencias de gestión de aula nos son de utilidad, ya que muestran en qué aspectos tenemos que poner el foco cuando diseñamos, planificamos e intervenimos. Estas son (1) la disposición física del aula, (2) la estructuración del clima de aula, (3) la gestión de los propios procesos de enseñanza y de aprendizaje, (4) los procedimientos

diseñados para aumentar las conductas apropiadas y (5) los procedimientos diseñados para disminuir las conductas inapropiadas. Por lo tanto, además de garantizar un entorno seguro donde el alumnado pueda desarrollar y aprender, es necesario que la comunidad educativa tenga claros y consensuados una serie de procedimientos proactivos para poder prevenir y saber cómo actuar de forma coherente ante las conductas del alumnado. Estas medidas se podrían resumir en dos: por un lado, garantizar que toda intervención educativa se focalice en asegurar el máximo tiempo de aprendizaje para todo el alumnado mediante la organización de actividades que maximicen su participación académica y rendimiento; y, por otro, aplicar prácticas proactivas de gestión de la conducta.

Además de la prevención generalizada, la literatura hace énfasis en la anticipación como medida más específica. Reconocer los antecedentes que generan una situación de conducta disruptiva —p. ej., ¿qué había sucedido previamente? — y conocer su funcionalidad —p. ej., ¿por qué lo hace? ¿qué consigue o evita haciéndolo? — hace que los profesionales puedan mejorar el contexto minimizando o incluso evitando la reacción no deseada (Walker y Snell, 2016). Es decir, la identificación de signos de alerta ante una escalada de conducta ayuda a intervenir de una forma más inclusiva asegurando el bienestar del alumnado para que pueda volver lo antes posible a las rutinas y dinámicas de aprendizaje. En este sentido, el estudio de Lavelle et al., (2016) en el ámbito sanitario muestra que las técnicas de desescalada reducen en aproximadamente el 80% de los casos el paso de agresiones verbales a violencia física y la consecuente aplicación de medidas restrictivas. A pesar del consenso existente sobre la importancia de aplicar medidas proactivas, un estudio que comparaba la asociación entre el tipo de estrategias (proactivas o reactivas) y mantener el alumnado concentrado en las actividades de aprendizaje mostró que conseguirlo se debía más a no hacer uso de estrategias reactivas que en la propia aplicación de estrategias proactivas (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008).

Dados los antecedentes y la necesidad, este artículo pretende compartir algunas de las estrategias priorizadas por un conjunto de docentes de un grupo de trabajo centrado en la educación inclusiva para gestionar las conductas de una forma más inclusiva. A continuación, se presentan diferentes relatos de docentes con las estrategias que utilizan organizadas en tres apartados: en un primer apartado se hace énfasis en la metodología y organización escolar; en el siguiente se destaca la importancia de la coordinación e implicación de los diferentes agentes de la red de apoyo; y el último se centra en el vínculo adulto-alumnado.

Implementación de metodologías activas y organización eficiente de los recursos

Cuando hablamos de escuela inclusiva nos referiremos a una escuela que se estructura para acoger a todos sin distinciones en cuanto a origen, capacidades, cultura, etc. Por lo tanto, hablamos de una escuela de calidad que, además de asegurar una buena cohesión social y bienestar, vela por el rendimiento académico del alumnado. Si hablamos de una escuela donde todo el alumnado aprende, hablamos de una escuela donde se respetan los diferentes niveles de aprendizaje de todos y cada uno de sus alumnos y alumnas. Una escuela donde se implementan unas metodologías diferenciadas a las conocidas como tradicionales donde el docente explicaba y el alumnado hacía, normalmente de forma individual, ya que de esta manera es muy difícil llegar a conseguir que todo el alumnado aprenda lo máximo posible con la ayuda de todos los soportes. En ninguna escuela nos hemos encontrado dos alumnos iguales

(mismos intereses, conocimientos, vivencias, recursos personales y comunitarios, etc.). Por lo tanto, nuestras maneras de hacer tampoco pueden ser homogéneas.

Los cambios metodológicos son esenciales para caminar hacia una escuela inclusiva de éxito. Hablamos por tanto de utilizar metodologías donde el alumnado es protagonista de su aprendizaje y consciente de su proceso. Hacemos especial énfasis, por ejemplo, a trabajar por proyectos, por rincones, por ambientes, en grupos interactivos, etc. Dar mucha importancia a la cooperación entre iguales, a las asambleas de clase con poder decisorio sobre qué se quiere aprender y cómo se quiere aprender para que el alumnado sea el eje central. Por lo tanto, también es necesaria una evaluación que haga consciente al alumnado de su proceso de aprendizaje, los progresos y los retos que tiene por delante. Toda esta serie de medidas universales son esenciales antes de plantear cualquier otro tipo de intervención ante situaciones concretas y es donde muchas veces las escuelas fallamos. Nos centramos en los soportes intensivos sin tomar perspectiva y reducir las barreras más generales que hemos normalizado.

Hay que matizar que entendemos por conducta disruptiva todas aquellas respuestas inadecuadas que cualquier alumno o alumna puede manifestar ante una situación social que interfieran en su desarrollo y aprendizaje —p. ej., incumplimiento de normas, rebeldía, agresividad y otras conductas socialmente problemáticas (Durlak et al., 2010). Concretando en las situaciones de conducta que en este artículo queremos abordar, vemos que cuando se consigue trabajar de una manera más activa, el alumnado con conductas disruptivas se puede incorporar con más facilidad al trabajo participando más de las dinámicas y, así, la disrupción se reduce. Por lo tanto, con la ayuda necesaria para aprender se pueden reducir los conflictos tal y como compartimos con la siguiente experiencia:

En la escuela tuvimos un alumno que manifestaba rechazo hacia el trabajo y molestaba tanto a compañeros como a los docentes que estaban en clase. Un día la tutora habló con él y el alumno expresó que se aburría durante las clases, que para él no era nada interesante lo que se hacía. Sabíamos que tenía un nivel muy bajo respecto a otros compañeros y para dar respuesta colegiada a la situación se organizó una Comisión de Atención a la Diversidad (CAD)¹. Las estrategias de trabajo que acordamos fueron: establecer tutorías individualizadas con la tutora para ir siguiendo como se iba encontrando al alumno en todo momento, organizar una pareja de tutoría entre iguales con un compañero más animado con las dinámicas de aula y mejores resultados académicos que él; impulsar un cambio de mirada y de actitud por parte de los y las profesionales con altas expectativas respecto a sus resultados y tranquilidad ante las actitudes desafiantes. Además, también organizamos medidas específicas para cuando fueran necesarias, por ejemplo, un sistema de triangulación con otros profesionales [medida explicitada más adelante]. No fue fácil, pero a medida que el alumno pudo trabajar con el resto del alumnado y fue consciente de los resultados, su actitud cambió. Cuando el alumnado está ocupado aprendiendo, se dan menos conductas disruptivas en el aula.

De entre las actuaciones metodológicas en el ámbito escolar resaltamos la importancia de sistematizar la codocencia como medida para poder atender más proactivamente a todo el alumnado, desde la prevención. Además de metodologías que favorezcan que el alumnado

esté más animado en las dinámicas de aula y tareas, maestros, maestras y personal no docente de apoyo —celadores/as, auxiliares (AEE), educadores/as (EEE), integradores/as (TIS) y técnicos/as de infantil (TEEI)— destacan la importancia de una buena coordinación para clarificar y consensuar normas y modos de proceder para actuar de forma más coherente y preventiva. Es decir, destacamos la relevancia de implementar una especie de codocencia práctica en la que los y las profesionales, independientemente de si son docentes o no, al estar juntos en un espacio con el alumnado, alcancen una especie de simbiosis entre ellos. De esta manera sus prácticas podrán ser más complementarias, ayudándose y compartiendo experiencia por un objetivo común, en lugar de ser suplementarias o asumir que un profesional sólo es el encargado del apoyo y de la gestión de los conflictos.

Lo cierto es que en las prácticas escolares nos encontramos que la gestión de determinados conflictos con determinado alumnado se delega al personal que entra a apoyar al equipo directivo, personal que puede tener más o menos herramientas o sensibilidad hacia el alumnado pero que no es el tutor o la tutora, la persona con la que más horas está el alumnado. Dejando de lado lo que es laboralmente justo o injusto, este hecho puede cargar emocionalmente en exceso a determinados profesionales, normalmente los considerados de atención a la diversidad. Sin embargo, en caso de conflicto grave, como desarrollamos más adelante, es útil que participen los y las profesionales que el alumnado ha dibujado como referentes, ya que pueden facilitar la desescalada del conflicto. El conjunto de profesionales, como equipo, deberían sentirse responsables de esta gestión adquiriendo estrategias de manera que se pueda aplicar una codocencia eficiente en la que ambos profesionales puedan intervenir efectivamente, que actúen como tándem. Todos y todas debemos apagar fuegos si surgen, debemos acabar con las figuras apagafuegos y tomar medidas para lograr atender de forma más inclusiva partiendo de la organización escolar.

La codocencia práctica, la simbiosis entre profesionales, también tiene efectos en actuar de una forma más inclusiva. Cuando hay más de un adulto en el aula, independientemente de su categoría profesional, es mucho más fácil poder actuar preventivamente. Personal docente y no docente apuntan que cuando un adulto está solo muchas veces no puede detectar aquellos signos de alerta que indican que un alumno se está poniendo nervioso y que pueden derivar en un grave conflicto. De hecho, aunque el adulto que está solo en el aula lo detecte, su posibilidad de gestión está limitada a la situación que está dinamizando y, por tanto, puede que intervenga demasiado tarde. En cambio, cuando hay más de un adulto en el aula es más fácil detectar signos de alerta e intervenir proactivamente, en muchos casos sin ni siquiera tener la necesidad de ir a un entorno seguro para ayudar a que el alumno se relaje, ya que el adulto quizá puede eliminar o gestionar el estresor. La prevención en estos casos es clave, ya que implica que el alumno podrá estar más tiempo participando y aprendiendo con sus iguales. En ocasiones, una situación de conflicto grave puede suponer que este alumno prácticamente "pierda" lo que queda de jornada porque emocionalmente no está en disposición de seguir aprendiendo. En adición, este hecho provoca que un profesional de la escuela deba dedicarse exclusivamente a este alumno. Por lo tanto, además del agravio principal (el bienestar y aprendizaje del alumnado) estaríamos ante un desperdicio de recursos humanos fruto de una mala planificación y gestión, ya que el recurso no se ha usado para prevenir; "curar" por lo tanto cuesta más tiempo y esfuerzo.

Como conclusión, se destaca la importancia de un abordaje preventivo y en equipo de las situaciones conflictivas. Lo cierto es que el simple castigo puede incluso empeorar la situación provocando reacciones violentas y malestar. El foco no es solo la conducta del alumnado sino el análisis de los antecedentes estresores, el contexto, su funcionalidad y lo que funciona y no funciona para colegiadamente establecer medidas efectivas. A continuación, compartimos un caso de organización escolar y trabajo en red:

En la escuela teníamos un caso muy preocupante por el tipo de conductas disruptivas y su frecuencia. Lo primero que hicimos fue estudiar el caso, ¿qué podía provocar la reacción violenta del alumno? ¿cuáles eran los síntomas evidentes de la alteración de su comportamiento?, etc. Paralelamente pedimos ayuda al servicio específico externo de conducta [Centro de Recursos Educativos para alumnos con Trastornos del Desarrollo y la Conducta, CRETDIC]. Fueron horas de observación entre maestros y celadoras que concluyeron con el establecimiento de dos líneas principales de actuación a las cuales llamamos triangulación. La primera se activaba cuando el alumno empezaba a alterarse, cuando la conducta todavía estaba en proceso de escalada, sin llegar al pico de la conducta. Consistía en enviarlo a la conserje de la escuela con un mensaje, ella sabía cómo tenía que actuar con el alumno: le mandaba trabajo, lo enviaba a hacer pedidos o simplemente salían al patio a correr un rato. Mientras tanto, avisaban a alguien del equipo directivo quien gestionaba su incorporación en el aula. La otra estrategia se activaba cuando la conducta llegaba a ser agresiva y el docente se encontraba solo como adulto en el aula. La estrategia es de ayuda entre adultos: conociendo la distribución de todos los y las profesionales, cualquier compañero que estuviera en un aula donde ya había un adulto podía ser avisado, priorizando aquellos que tienen un mejor vínculo con el alumno. Por lo tanto, en el aula teníamos colgada la distribución de los profesionales por aulas de manera que en caso de conducta disruptiva pudieran ser avisados. Así, uno de los adultos sacaba al alumno de clase para garantizar su seguridad y la de los compañeros e intentaba controlar y gestionar la situación. Según el alumno, era útil que esta persona fuera la externa al conflicto, ya que era independiente a la situación y no había podido hacer algo que actuara como estresor en la escalada de la conducta. Además, esta persona era capaz de gestionar más calmadamente el conflicto. Sin embargo, para otros alumnos era más útil que fuera la persona conocedora de la situación. Por lo tanto, era necesaria una total corresponsabilización e intercambio en el rol de ayuda. Estas medidas tranquilizaron mucho a la tutora porque pasó a ser una responsabilidad de escuela, un caso de todos y no de un grupo-clase, la maestra podía compartir y se veía acogida y acompañada por los otros compañeros que se corresponsabilizaban. También tranquilizó al resto del alumnado del aula porque no había tantas alteraciones y el alumno fue bajando el grado de agresividad en la escuela.

Uso y sentido de las normas: comunidad, escuela, aula y alumnado.

Además de una metodología que anime el alumnado y que permita el aprendizaje multinivel y una organización eficiente de los recursos, para una gestión efectiva es necesario que todos los profesionales compartan unas normas básicas. Este marco común de convivencia y saber cómo

gestionar de forma inclusiva debe partir de una visión común plasmada en un documento vivo y útil elaborado colaborativamente por todos los profesionales del centro: las Normas de Organización y Funcionamiento de Centro (NOFC). Algunas de las premisas básicas serían el abordaje democrático y formulación positiva de las normas haciendo el alumnado partícipe y responsable de su elaboración y cumplimiento. Esto permite que el alumnado sea conocedor de las bases de la convivencia, no se puede dar ningún hábito ni rutina por sabida, ya que cada familia tiene su idiosincrasia. Por lo tanto, en la escuela tenemos que generar espacios tanto de escuela como de aula para ir debatiendo, revisando y ajustando. Las asambleas de delegados y delegadas sirven para hacer este trabajo más escolar mientras que las de aula, además de propiciar el espacio para discutir y acordar, ayudan a regular las conductas y permiten realizar un trabajo tutorial que favorece la creación de un clima de confianza y seguridad.

En el espacio de asamblea revisamos "la caja de: hablemos" donde a lo largo de la semana el alumnado deposita aquellos temas que quieren tratar en la asamblea: problemáticas de patios, disputas con compañeros, preocupaciones... En los cursos más grandes son el/la "secretario/a" y "moderador/a" los encargados de realizar el orden del día y guiar la asamblea donde, el adulto es un participante más que, al igual que el alumnado, debe pedir el turno de palabra para poder intervenir. El adulto no alecciona, el adulto escucha y propone reflexiones, pero la resolución de los conflictos la hace el alumnado mismo.

En este espacio de confianza todo se puede decir siempre que se diga bien dicho y con respeto. Lo cierto es que no podemos pedir al alumnado que se autorregule si no tiene claro lo que se espera de él o ella, los límites, ni es acompañado al respecto. El trabajo de la convivencia y autorregulación no es un mero trámite de inicio de curso.

El anterior espacio también se aprovecha para abordar situaciones más concretas que, además, requieren un trabajo de coordinación adicional. Siempre es importante compartir con la familia y el alumnado las estrategias que se llevarán a cabo con el fin de ayudar a su autorregulación, pero en casos de conductas disruptivas es vital:

Desde hace algunos años en nuestra escuela dejamos escritas las estrategias específicas en un documento donde, además, se añaden los acuerdos con la familia y con el alumno. Se tomó esta decisión para tener las acciones recogidas, ya que hasta entonces se llevaban a cabo y simplemente quedaban anotadas en actas de evaluación y propuestas de acción del alumno y no siempre se compartían con el alumno ni con la familia (o se hacía demasiado tarde).

Compartir los objetivos de autorregulación de la conducta con el alumno-hace que la implicación de este sea mayor, ya que juntos decidimos por dónde empezamos y generalmente son alcanzables porque es el compromiso que él o ella toma. Le transmitimos la confianza que favorece que pueda hacer cambios y al mismo tiempo tome conciencia de la situación. Además, con unas líneas de actuación consensuadas y consultables, los adultos nos aseguramos de que tenemos claras las acciones que llevaremos a cabo. No obstante, hay que tener en cuenta que el grado de implicación en la elaboración de los objetivos y compromisos por parte del alumnado depende de la madurez y la capacidad de poder contribuir, pero es relevante que participe.

Este documento se elabora conjuntamente entre el maestro de atención a la diversidad y el tutor o tutora y se comparte también con el resto de profesionales que intervienen: profesorado de codocencia, de especialidades, personal no docente de apoyo, monitores/as de comedor y extraescolares, etc. Es un documento vivo con la intención de poder ir modificándolo de acuerdo con las necesidades, con los avances que pueda haber y la disposición y posibilidades de implicación de la familia. Este documento se personaliza en cada caso y suele constar de los siguientes apartados en formato breve, claro y conciso para que resulte útil:

- Justificación del plan
- El horario del curso con los apoyos, desdoblamientos, personal no docente, etc.
- Las actuaciones de centro, de ciclo y de aula que facilitan la regulación de la conducta de todo el alumnado.
- Actuaciones específicas individuales (tutorías individualizadas, entradas, salidas, momentos de calma ...).
- Acuerdos con el alumno/a y la familia.
- Anexo con objetivos y registro de control.

En el momento que se consensúa el plan es importante establecer las reuniones en las que se hará una evaluación de la eficacia de las medidas establecidas, el progreso y los acuerdos junto con el alumno. La evaluación del progreso se hace con los registros de control de forma semanal y se van espaciando a medida que vamos consiguiendo cambios. Con las familias no es tan necesaria esta frecuencia porque es poco sostenible, aunque se planifica según las necesidades.

También es importante situar los compañeros como agentes de apoyo, como cómplices que ayudan lo que requiere un trabajo de sensibilización:

Favorecemos espacios que permitan verbalizar sentimientos que, una vez compartidos con la clase, se hacen más fáciles de llevar. Poder compartir con los demás como me siento, qué me pasa, como estoy ..., esto hace que los demás comprendan y puedan ser más flexibles ante ciertas conductas o comentarios. Con el alumnado más pequeño lo que hacemos, para que el grupo sea conocedor de lo que le pasa a su compañero y entender algunas de sus conductas, es explicarlo a través de un cuento. De esta manera el grupo-clase identifica rasgos del protagonista del cuento con los de su compañero y entonces es más fácil que empaticen.

En algunos casos hemos hablado de la situación del alumno un día o momento en que no estaba (respetando la ética y privacidad) o bien hemos hablado de las conductas sin identificar al alumno. Con ello buscamos complicidad y que comprendan que los límites pueden ser diferentes; el resto del alumnado deberá dejar pasar algunas conductas para evitar sentimientos de frustración, rechazo, baja pertenencia en el compañero y más disrupción mientras que no podrán permitirse otras conductas. Las veces que mejor nos ha funcionado, sin embargo, es cuando el alumno nos da su aprobación para hablar en la asamblea con el resto de la clase. Este se siente acompañado y comprendido y el resto genera empatía. De hecho, cuando el alumno mismo pide ayuda a la asamblea después de salir varias veces en “la caja de: hablemos” y explica al grupo qué le pasa cuando siente que no controla, en este

momento es cuando vemos cambios más grandes, ya que es cuando el alumno o la alumna en concreto quiere. El grupo ayuda a autorregular, hace el seguimiento semana a semana, anima y felicita.

Relación profesional-alumno: establecimiento de un vínculo favorable.

Determinadas acciones que se dan entre el alumnado y el profesorado pueden ayudar a tejer un vínculo afectivo. Este vínculo se ha valorado como muy positivo e incluso indispensable para regular la conducta de algunos alumnos, sobre todo de aquellos y aquellas que presentan conductas disruptivas. Para ejemplificarlo compartimos el siguiente caso vivido con un alumno de ciclo inicial:

Desde el inicio nos preocupó un alumno que mostraba actitudes contrarias a las normas de convivencia y dificultades para relacionarse con el entorno. No podía pensar con claridad, se sentía herido con facilidad, incluso ante situaciones cotidianas como pasar la lista del comedor. Su umbral de tolerancia a la frustración era muy limitado, especialmente ante los cambios o situaciones imprevistas. Era muy poco flexible y tenía poca capacidad de adaptación. En algunas ocasiones incluso mostraba un comportamiento explosivo.

Dadas las dificultades de gestión y la impotencia ante ciertas conductas, la tutora pidió ayuda a su equipo de ciclo. Además, se observó que tanto ella como otros docentes que entraban en el aula tenían actitudes (indiferencia, enfado, autoridad, control ...) que no ayudaban a gestionar la conducta del alumno. Para darle respuesta, el equipo de ciclo, junto con el asesoramiento del EAP y del CRETDIC, diseñaron un protocolo con una serie de medidas pactadas entre todos los docentes.

De todas las medidas llevadas a cabo, una de las que tuvo más consecuencias positivas a largo plazo fue la creación de vínculo entre el alumno y su tutora. Para ello se establecieron una serie de estrategias que fueron haciendo cambiar la tarea docente. La tutora, debía ser asertiva, ofrecer al alumno seguridad, proximidad, enseñarle formas adecuadas para enfrentarse en su día a día, proporcionarle ayudas y hacerle notar su apoyo de forma incondicional. Para aplicar todo ello, se buscaron diferentes momentos del día (asambleas, tutorías individualizadas, ratos de juego ...) para ofrecer el acompañamiento emocional, el refuerzo positivo y el contacto físico que permitió crear vínculo entre ella y el alumno. No fue una tarea fácil, pero fue fundamental para mejorar las conductas del alumno.

Así pues, algunas de las estrategias que en la escuela llevamos a cabo para crear vínculo afectivo entre los profesionales de la educación y el alumnado con dificultades para regular su conducta son las siguientes:

- Conocer el alumno: qué le gusta, qué aficiones tiene, a qué le gusta jugar, qué amigos tiene, etc. Así verá que tenemos interés, que nos importa y al mismo tiempo nos será más fácil conectar cuando tengamos que sacar algún tema de conversación con él o ella. Este tipo de información la podemos extraer haciendo tutorías individualizadas.

- Observar qué reacciones tiene ante algunas situaciones y comentarlas después (qué le molesta, cuando se enfada, cuando llama...). Así nos podemos anticipar.
- Recibimiento matinal: para generar empatía y hacer notar nuestra presencia cada mañana podemos hacerle un recibimiento personalizado. Dedicar un rato a mirarlo, preguntarle cómo está, qué lleva para el desayuno, como ha pasado la noche, si lleva un juguete, interesarnos por él o ella, etc.
- Fomentar el diálogo con él o ella, dedicarle tiempo, buscar momentos de complicidad, hacer que se siente al lado del adulto y pasar ratos agradables, distendidos (por ejemplo, jugando a un juego de mesa).
- Descubrir que se le da mejor en cuanto a aprendizajes, sus fortalezas. De esta manera podemos ajustar las actividades para que sean más estimulantes y priorizar las más fáciles y asequibles dada una situación de frustración. El enfado ante una tarea puede provocar problemas de conducta.
- Poner límites y normas para que se sienta seguro y así se dé cuenta de que nos interesamos, que le prestamos atención. La relación con el alumnado se crea y se regula desde el respeto, no desde la autoridad. Se deben sentir queridos y queridas pero esto no se contradice con tener unos límites claros, al contrario, prevé incertidumbres y malentendidos.
- Uso del refuerzo positivo, los profesionales que están allí tienen que poner el foco en lo que sabe, lo que hace bien, aceptar su singularidad, etc. No partir de sus carencias o de sus problemas. Se debe empoderar al alumnado para que se sienta seguro. El docente debe cambiar la mirada hacia el alumno, debe tener expectativas altas hacia él o ella.
- Escuchar, no quitar importancia a lo que nos explica, ya que si nos lo comparte, para él o ella es relevante. Darle confianza, hacer que sienta que vale.

Conclusiones

- Hay que asegurar que las rutinas y dinámicas de aula estén favoreciendo la participación y el aprendizaje de todo el alumnado antes de implementar medidas específicas hacia las conductas.
- La codocencia entre personal docente y no docente contribuye a la prevención de situaciones de conflicto y una gestión más inclusiva de las mismas. Esta es una responsabilidad compartida, no delegada.
- Todos los agentes educativos deben actuar de forma coherente y consensuada para lograr una gestión efectiva de las conductas. Las CAD y los documentos compartidos vivos son unos de los mecanismos útiles.
- El alumnado mismo es un agente cómplice en el soporte de la autorregulación de su conducta y la de los compañeros y compañeras.
- Se debe analizar y reflexionar colegiadamente sobre cada situación y caso para poder establecer medidas efectivas y actuar aprovechando toda la red de apoyo.
- Toda medida consensuada requiere seguimiento y revisión por parte de todos los agentes implicados (incluyendo la familia y el alumnado).

- Crear un vínculo relacional-afectivo favorable entre profesionales y alumnado partiendo de la comprensión y de un cambio de mirada es esencial para conectar con el alumnado y conseguir regular y que autorregule su conducta.

Notas

1. La CAD es una estructura organizativa del centro que debe proponer la organización y la gestión de las medidas y los apoyos para atender a todo el alumnado del centro, y que tiene que hacer el seguimiento y la evaluación para ajustarlas a sus necesidades.

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**Appendix 8: Educational Support in an Expanded Learning
Time initiative: Optimizing its components to promote
inclusive education.**

Educational support in an Expanded Learning Time initiative: Optimizing its components to promote inclusive education

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Abstract

Expanded Learning Time (ELT) measures have been implemented internationally to reduce the likelihood of academic underachievement among students at risk. The goal of this article is to examine the components of an ELT initiative aimed at supporting students at risk of academic failure in order to optimize the components that can improve its use and organization. Through a mixed method research approach, we have analyzed the experiences of 1,786 5th through 10th graders, 238 teachers and 126 instructors of a city-wide after-school initiative in Spain. This within-group study examines the design of the support, the environment, and the interactions between stakeholders as key components to optimize this support and promote equity. The results show which support components are related to greater support use. The results also suggest understanding these measures as additional support placed within an enriched support network. Implications for practice, research and policy towards this type of initiative are also discussed.

Keywords

ELT, afterschool/after-school programs , educational support, inclusive education, achievement gap

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Introduction

International guidelines on inclusive education place emphasis on quality and equity by linking them as two sides of the same coin to achieve quality education and overcome educational inequalities (UNESCO, 2017). As regards inequalities in Europe, Spain is among the countries with higher rates (Marcos and Ubrich, 2017). The European Union (2010) sought to address this by reducing the school dropout rate below 10% by 2020. This was a goal that was almost achieved in 2018, when statistics showed that, on average, only 10.6% of young people (aged 18–24) in the EU had completed a lower secondary education and did not follow further education or training (Eurostat, 2019). The proportion of early dropouts in Spain, however, was the highest (17.9%) among the EU Member States and remained far from EU goals (Eurostat, 2019). These data do not point out a particular individual's problem, but a generalized one at all levels of the education system, which has implications on policies and practices. Thus, policymakers should seriously consider measures aimed at reducing inequalities, specifically, the deployment of educational reinforcement policies targeted at students at risk of academic failure or dropping out. Educational support is essential to eliminate the barriers of each context and accelerate the learning of disadvantaged students inside and outside schools (Puigdemívol et al., 2017).

UNESCO (2005) has emphasized non-formal education as one solution to the educational needs of the most vulnerable groups. Moreover, public support policies in non-school hours play a relevant role when considering indicators that are strongly associated with the risk of school dropout – underachievement, low participation in school, low levels of attention or not doing homework (UNICEF and UIS, 2016) – because some of these internationally implemented after-school initiatives are specifically thus aimed (Jez and Wassmer, 2015; Kanchewa, et al., 2016). However, the proportion of children (aged 6 to 11) in centre-based out-of-school-hours care services differs considerably across OECD countries. The lowest participation rates are in Croatia, Spain, the United States (US) and Italy (6–8%) while the highest are in Denmark and Sweden (about 60%); the OECD average is 28% (OECD, 2018).

Educational Support in Expanded Learning Time (ELT)

The OECD (2015) defines ‘centre-based out-of-school-hours care services’ as those that provide care for school-going children outside of school hours, inside or outside the school building. The activities carried out should be aimed at some ‘care’ element, not only leisure. This out-of-school time can be supported following different structures such as small group tutoring (Cappella et al., 2017) or one-on-one tutoring (Beckett et al., 2009; Raposa et al., 2017). Jean Rhodes referred to this as mentoring, enhancing the bond formed between mentor and mentee based on empathy, trust and mutuality (Rhodes, 2002). Mentoring can be classified into two types: formal and natural mentoring. Formal mentoring is designed and monitored throughout a program while natural mentoring considers unrefined relationships between youth and older individuals within their regular network (Van Dam et al., 2018). This additional support can be placed within schools or out of school, it can be publicly or privately promoted, and found in religious/non-religious settings.

To understand out-of-school initiatives, the people who support students and their profile should also be considered. This supporting stakeholder has been named differently: mentor, monitor, instructor, big brother/sister, etc. They can be familial such as a sibling or extended family or non-parental (e.g., neighbours, teacher, friends or schoolmates) (Ahrens et al., 2010; Lahoz, 2015; Liao and Sanchez, 2016). Some studies only recognized people as mentors if they met characteristics such as being an unpaid volunteer; being at least a 20-year-old-person, five years older than the youth; somebody with a relationship with the youth for at least two years; or somebody similar to

the youth with respect to ethnicity and socioeconomic background (Ahrens et al., 2010; Hurd et al., 2016; Liao and Sanchez, 2016; Raposa et al., 2017); however, peers are not usually included as possible agents of support. Mentor background may have an effect on mentoring. Van Dam et al. (2018) found a larger effect size in natural mentoring when the mentor had a helping profession (teacher, counsellor, religious leader, etc.). Comparing US and European programs, Preston et al. (2018) reported that the typical mentor in the US is a working adult while in Europe they are college students or older youths. Others have shown that there is no substantially lower effect size depending on mentor background regardless of whether they are high school or college students (Herrera et al., 2011).

Access to extracurricular activities and their design differs depending on the target population. The OECD report on out-of-school care services shows that there are statistically significant differences in participation rates across income groups; children from relatively advantaged socioeconomic backgrounds are most likely to use centre-based out-of-school-hours care services (OECD, 2018). Differences according to socioeconomic status (SES) not only depend on the availability and access to extracurricular opportunities, but inequalities can also be found in the type of activity or the main purpose of the extracurricular initiative. Its design can be different depending on the SES of students to whom the programs are addressed as shown in Roda (2017): depending on the school SES, schools were offering creative extracurricular activities or school reinforcement. Thus, in low SES contexts, after-school programs tend to be focused on overcoming challenges and obstacles (Guest, 2018). This left the most vulnerable students without the most imaginative or according-to-interests' activities, not to mention the effects that this sort of discrimination can have on student's self-efficacy. However, other studies highlighted that with the mere provision of successful learning experiences within the ELT program, the staff perceived improvements in students' self-efficacy (Manzanares and Ulla, 2012).

Publicly run after-school programs are usually aimed at reducing school failure and improving academic achievements and social and emotional development (Durlak et al., 2010; Jez and Wassmer, 2015). The target population are usually children and youths at risk (including academic, behavioural, psychosocial, poverty, homelessness, themselves or their parents being incarcerated, of a racial, ethnic or sexual minority and refugee or migrant youth) (Preston, Prieto-Flores and Rhodes, 2018). However, there are contextual differences: the comparative study of Preston and colleagues (2018) showed that most programs in the US have focused on addressing the needs of SES youth and fostering positive outcomes, while in Europe programs are commonly addressed to migrants and refugees, with social inclusion goals. Nonetheless, in Europe, when extracurricular activities are aimed at homework support and remedial education, students tend to come from low SES backgrounds as well (Lahoz, 2015; Manzanares and Ulla, 2012; Steinmann et al., 2019; Ulla and Manzanares, 2014).

This focus on specific groups of so-called 'vulnerable students' can have negative connotations as it labels them (Dougherty, 2015); not to mention the negative effects from supporting students in homogeneous groups (Francis et al., 2017; McGillicuddy and Devine, 2020), effects that might also arise in out-of-school programs. Without underestimating this sort of level grouping, after-school programs provide additional opportunities to learn in reduced ratios, a support measure considered in studies on support policies (Pedró, 2012). Rodríguez et al. (2012) studying an ELT program reported an increase in interactions between students and learning acceleration, as Vygotskian theories support. The amount of learning time is important (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011), although it is not the cause of student underachievement or risk of early school leaving. The provision of time alone would not improve students' trajectories; what matters is the quality of the time: how programs are implemented and structured (Leos-Urbel, 2015).

Research on quality of after-school programs can be organized following the three elements proposed by Smith et al. (2010): (a) ensuring a supportive environment, (b) providing opportunities for purposeful engagement, and (c) fostering structured interactions between staff and supported youth. The first refers to the structure of the program and how the group is managed to achieve a respectful climate (Cross et al., 2010), that is, the classroom ecology with its dynamics and a welcoming atmosphere (Cappella et al., 2017; Dawes and Larson, 2011). To achieve this, programs should be properly designed. Regarding after-school design, the research of Durlak et al. (2010) is relevant, despite being focused on programs aimed at fostering personal and social skills, as their recommendations can be implemented in other types of programs. They proposed the ‘SAFE’ criteria that consists of (a) providing a *sequenced* set of activities to foster specific goals, (b) fostering *active* forms of learning, (c) ensuring that program components are *focused* on the goals, and (d) *explicitly* targeting them.

The environment has an impact on student engagement (Wang and Holcombe, 2010), contributing to purposeful engagement (Smith et al., 2010). Cognitive engagement (Vance, 2016) and active participation — including higher-order decision-making — require programme flexibility and relevant as well as target appropriate activities (Barron, 2006; Pierce et al., 2010). Staff should encourage youth to take the lead in selecting and implementing activities, and in setting goals, and also consider the priorities of the families, schools and the program (Larson and Walker, 2010). The third element highlights the importance of organizing the interaction between youths as well as the youth-staff interaction (Pierce et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2010). Several investigations emphasize establishing close and caring relationships with non-parental adults (Kanchewa et al., 2016; Rhodes, 2005). This also has effects on self-reported engagement and learning (Grossman et al., 2007).

Focusing on the effects, investigations have reported different benefits related to extracurricular participation, such as the reduction of school dropouts (Neely and Vaquera, 2017), educational attainment (Haghighat and Knifsend, 2019) and school engagement (Forneris et al., 2015). Most research is focused on the student’s achievements and, despite studying different kinds of programs and considering different moderators, its effect size is small (Dubois et al., 2002; Thompson et al., 2016; Van Dam et al., 2018). Raposa et al. (2019), considering the empirical guidelines derived from universal prevention programs for youth, found effect sizes between medium to moderate. There are other studies that found little or no links between the amount of participation and student outcomes (Roth et al., 2010; Steinmann et al., 2019).

While accountability is important to track programs, assess their impact and improve them, further detail about experiences is needed to better understand and change what has been quantitatively found. As has been highlighted previously, ELT initiatives are one of the measures implemented to overcome inequalities, but this goal is still not achieved in Spain. Thus, support policies and practices such as ELT initiatives should be specifically studied. Prior data pointed out access barriers, but presence itself does not guarantee inclusion and equity (UNESCO, 2017). It is, therefore, important to examine the quality of the additional time provided, as well as, how programs are implemented and structured. Moreover, despite being a measure implemented in several countries (OECD, 2018), most of the existing research on out-of-school time comes from the US (Preston, Prieto-Flores and Rhodes, 2018). This study will contribute to closing these gaps in the literature. The goal of this article is to examine the components of an ELT initiative aimed at supporting students at risk of academic failure in order to optimize the components that can improve its use and organization. This study will provide insight into a Spanish ELT initiative, its key components, and how they relate to each other from the perspective of its protagonists. To this end, we analyze the experiences of the three main stakeholders of a city-wide after-school initiative in Barcelona, Catalonia (Spain). The following research questions guided this study:

- How is support in ELT perceived by teachers, instructors, and students considered to be at risk of failure and/or from low SES families?
- Which are the relationships between support components (in terms of design, support environment and interaction) according to each stakeholder (teachers, instructors and students)?
- Are there differences between teachers and instructors in terms of how they perceive these support components?
- What is seen as optimal to provide support in ELT from students', teachers' and instructors' perspective?

Context and ELT initiative characteristics

The Spanish state is administratively divided into 17 regions with their own education legislation (e.g. Catalonia, Andalucía, etc.). The Catalan Education System promotes the right to a quality education favouring inclusive education, equal opportunities and language immersion, establishing Catalan as the vehicular language for learning (Catalunya, 2009). Despite having a decree-law on inclusive education that articulates the support measures addressed to all students (Catalunya, 2017), out-of-school initiatives are not included. ELT public support programs in Catalonia are usually run by municipalities, regional councils or non-profit organizations (Collet-Sabé and Martori, 2018; Longás et al., 2013). As happens at the state level and in other regions, ELT initiatives are usually focused on homework support and remedial education aimed at students with low performance in poverty contexts (Lahoz, 2015; Manzanares and Ulla, 2012). But the scarcely available research on the matter created some concerns about these designs (Collet-Sabé and Martori, 2018; Rodríguez et al., 2012).

This study analyses the support provided in a city-wide ELT initiative with explicit educational purposes run by the Barcelona Education Consortium (the education board) implemented in Barcelona (Catalonia). The three main stakeholders involved are 5th- to 10th-grade students selected by schools for being at risk of failure and dropout, their instructors and form teachers. The ELT support is free for the students and also rewards instructors through grants. Instructors are the stakeholders that support students in this ELT initiative (non-teaching staff); they should be college students, as is characteristic of European programs compared to those in the US (Preston et al., 2018). The same instructor can get up to two grants to work with two different groups on alternate days. Each group of students is supported two days a week after class (three hours per week) in their high school building. There are several school and high school groups in each high school building managed by a coordinator, forming a team. Lastly, teachers, who are the ones mainly in charge of the students during school hours, are meant to collaborate in this ELT initiative by selecting the students and getting their family's agreement, communicating information to instructors and families and monitoring the students.

Methods

A mixed-methods approach was used to investigate how the different stakeholders involved (teachers, instructors, and students) perceive the support provided, what aspects worked well and in what ways they did so. The analysis was based on the main support components identified in previous studies (e.g., Durlak et al., 2010; Pierce et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2010; Yohalem and Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010).

Participants

There were 1786 5th to 10th-grade students (10–16-year-olds) in the sample: 65.62% of them were in secondary school. Regarding nationalities, 63.8% of the participants self-reported as being

Spanish, 21.5% South or Central American and 8% Asian. There is an over-representation of immigrant students in the ELT program with respect to Barcelona's student population, where 12.14% is a foreign national (Department of Education, 2017). One hundred and twenty-six instructors participated in this study. Many instructors were studying or had completed education-related studies at the university (57.94%), although 51.59% had never been responsible for student groups. The study also counted with the participation of 238 teachers, of which 81.93% ($n = 195$) were working at a secondary school level. Finally, 43 teams of several instructors (of some primary schools and a secondary school) and a coordinator participated in the debrief meeting as to which components of the program worked well and which ones should be improved.

Instructors provided information on 176 ELT support groups. Among the participating groups, there were 66 of primary education and 110 of secondary education. Groups were organized mainly according to academic years (52.84%), although there were inter-level groups between the third and fourth year of secondary school and primary school.

The participation in this study was voluntary and participants were promised anonymity and confidentiality. The research goals were explained as well as the ethical guidelines published by the European Commission (2013a) and were agreed to by the participants before completing the instruments.

Measures

Data collection was done through four instruments. For students, we utilized a questionnaire developed by the Barcelona Education Consortium and applied annually to assess the ELT program studied. The questionnaire consisted of 54 close-ended questions (13 Likert scales with four response options) and 22 open-ended questions organized into three blocks: (a) demographic data, (b) habits and expectations and (c) support assessment. For the purpose of this study, we only focused on the questions regarding the support (9 Likert scales, for example, '*How much do you think you have used this educational support?*' and 3 open-ended questions such as '*Value the support received in the program and explain why*'). Cronbach's alpha showed an internal consistency of 0.767 for the 12 items.

The questionnaires for teachers and instructors were developed by the researchers for this study, based on previous investigations about after-school program quality (Pierce et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2010). Yohalem and Wilson-Ahlstrom's (2010) synthesis of different assessment tools used in the field also guided the design of both questionnaires. From this synthesis, the components considered were routine and program structure, environment, engagement, social or behavioural norms and relationships between adults and students. Content validation was carried out by three experts in the field, the seven general coordinators and the person responsible for the ELT program during the pre-test. All comments regarding wording, answer choices and length were considered. They were also asked about the instrument's content in terms of its relationship with their everyday reality. The final instructor questionnaire was 35 close-ended questions (23 Likert scales [0–10], example, '*The program has been a place where the students have been able to work*' and 12 multiple choice '*What support would you have needed to improve your educational support practices?*' and 3 open-ended questions). All the scales showed internal consistency (*support deployment*: $\alpha = 0.895$, *teamwork*: $\alpha = 0.815$, *communication*: $\alpha = 0.812$, *institutional procedures*: $\alpha = 0.681$ and *support effects*: $\alpha = 0.768$).

The final questionnaire for teachers included 29 closed-ended questions [25 Likert scales (0–10), example, '*Value how the relationship between your students and the instructors has worked*', four multiple choice] and 4 open-ended questions, example, '*Among all done with the students within this program, what has been the most beneficial aspect for your students?*' The internal

consistency of each dimension was calculated with Cronbach's α : *support deployment* ($\alpha = 0.869$), *communication* ($\alpha = 0.905$), *institutional procedures* ($\alpha = 0.643$) and *support effects* ($\alpha = 0.894$). In addition to the questionnaires, the debrief meeting report of each ELT team was a source of qualitative data. These documents considered aspects that according to each team worked and that they wanted to maintain, and those that should change or improve.

Procedure

The student questionnaire was administered online and was completed at the schools during one of the final support sessions. The questionnaire for teachers was distributed on paper and collected during the debrief meeting by the coordinators. The questionnaire for instructors was administered online at the end of the support sessions. Completion time for all questionnaires was between 15 to 30 minutes. Finally, the reports of the debrief meeting were written by each team (instructors and coordinator) after the corresponding debate at the debrief meeting of the program. They wrote these conclusions in a one-page table, but extra space was provided when needed. The person responsible for the program collected all the debrief meeting reports and provided a copy of them to the researchers.

Data analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed with the software SPSS v. 24, which was used to compute descriptive statistics, Mann-Whitney U Tests and Spearman correlations. The analysis of the open-ended questions of the questionnaires and the reports of the debrief meeting were carried out with the Nvivo 11 Pro program, with an inductive procedure using categorical coding. After having analyzed 50% of the dataset, the first author proposed a coding scheme with categories and subcategories. The team discussed their disagreements to reach consensus on each set of coded text, obtaining internal validity. This ensured a shared understanding of the categories, subcategories and their meaning. The categories that emerged were consistent with the dimensions from the quantitative analysis. These categories and subcategories are presented in Table 1.

Three kinds of triangulation were applied to achieve rigour and a better understanding of support components: (a) methodological triangulation, using quantitative and qualitative methods; (b) data triangulation, studying pieces of evidence from four data resources; (c) and stakeholder triangulation, providing an insight from their own perspective (Trainor and Graue, 2014).

Results

In each section, we present the results of the quantitative and qualitative procedures from the four instruments in an integrated way, beginning with descriptive statistics, followed by Spearman correlations and Mann-Whitney tests, ending with the qualitative part. In addition, results are also organized according to instructor, teacher and student data, following the same order in each section. Data cited along the results are compiled into seven tables.

ELT support orientation and design

The first part of the analysis focused on how instructors, teachers, and students perceived the design and goal of the ELT program. For this purpose, we looked at what activities were performed in the ELT groups and how their effects were perceived by all involved parties. Accordingly,

Table 1. Emergent categories, subcategories from instructors', teachers' and students' questionnaires and debrief meeting reports.

Categories	Subcategories	Instructors'- Questionnaire (n = 125)	Teachers'- Questionnaire (n = 138)	Students'- Questionnaire (n = 561)	Debrief meeting reports	Total item	Total dimension
(1) On-site support management and operation: organization climate and practices	Holistic support and mentoring	26.19% (n = 33)	8.7% (n = 12)			45	747
	Reinforcement and follow-up time	25.4% (n = 32)	82.61% (n = 114)			146	
	Study and organization habits	23.02% (n = 29)	48.55% (n = 67)			96	
	Student-instructor interaction	13.49% (n = 17)	13.77% (n = 19)		13.95% (n = 6)	42	
	Student-student interaction	7.14% (n = 9)	9.42% (n = 13)	2.85% (n = 16)		38	
	Material and equipment			11.76% (n = 66)	83.72% (n = 36)	102	
	Organization and environment	26.19% (n = 33)	2.9% (n = 4)	13.72% (n = 77)	100% (n = 43)	157	
	Activities	17.46% (n = 22)		11.59% (n = 65)	44.18% (n = 19)	106	
	Reinforcement strategies	11.9% (n = 15)				15	
	Staff distribution			7.13% (n = 40)	55.81% (n = 24)	64	
(2) Structural organization and operation policies	Student selection				53.49% (n = 23)	23	330
	Ongoing training				32.56% (n = 14)	14	
	Documentation				88.37% (n = 38)	38	
	Schedule and working conditions			23.35% (n = 131)	44.19% (n = 19)	154	
	Instructor profile	1.59% (n = 2)	7.25% (n = 10)	5.35% (n = 30)	2.33% (n = 1)	37	
(3) Team interaction	Team-team	3.97% (n = 5)			60.47% (n = 26)	31	86
	Team-teachers	3.97% (n = 5)	1.45% (n = 2)		100% (n = 43)	50	
	Team-family				11.63% (n = 5)	5	
(4) Perceived learning	Changes in students	7.94% (n = 10)	18.84% (n = 26)	21.93% (n = 123)	11.63% (n = 5)	164	172
	Monitor's learning				18.6% (n = 8)	8	

Percentages are calculated considering those stakeholders that answered the open questions.

Table 2. Spearman's significant correlations for dimensions according to instructors.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Support deployment	1				
2. Support effects	.671**	1			
3. Teamwork	.379**	.381**	1		
4. Communication	.401**	.387**	.345**	1	
5. Institutional procedures	.567**	.594**	.417**	.392**	1

** $p < .01$.

Table 3. Spearman's significant correlations for dimensions according to teachers.

	1	2	3	4
1. Support deployment	1			
2. Support effects	.794**	1		
3. Communication	.681**	.558**	1	
4. Institutional procedures	.615**	.490**	.755**	1

** $p < .01$.

instructors reported that their main activities were to support students with their tasks (93.75%) and exams (82.95%), followed by other topics of concern (68.75%). They also carried out activities related to what students worked on during school lessons (42.61%), activities based on their interests and needs (39.77%) and study habits (42.04%). Conversely, according to teachers (99.15%), the most important thing of the ELT initiative was that it provided a *space* where students could be helped ($M = 9.19$; $SD = 1.16$).

Furthermore, to understand what makes the ELT initiative effective in terms of student improvement, a series of Spearman correlations were carried out. Both instructors and teachers perceived that support deployment was the most relevant dimension with respect to support effects (see Table 2 and 3). Delving into the dimension support effects, teachers and instructors equally valued the support provided in *homework and study*, $U = 19237$, $p = 0.71$, $r = .02$. However, instructors valued *attitudinal and emotional support* more than teachers did, $U = 16211$, $p = .01$, $r = .13$, while teachers valued more than instructors the support provided in *study and organization habits*, $U = 16611$, $p = .01$, $r = .13$ (see Tables 4 and 5 for the corresponding medians and IQRs).

Finally, analyzing the students' perception of the ELT initiative, it is worth noting that the vast majority of students (91.77%) positively valued the *support* received. Of these, 54.4% reported that the *support* helped them 'a lot' and 37.4% 'enough'. What they valued most of the academic support was that it clarified concepts (59.2%) and that instructors helped them plan (39.1%). However, when asked about their *use of the support* provided, most of the students (59.7%) said they *used* the support 'enough'. Delving further, we see that the items that maintain higher positive correlations with *support use* are the perception of *grade improvement* and *enjoyment of attendance* (see Table 6), which indicates that these are key components to keep them more engaged.

The qualitative analysis reinforces this observation since 21.93% of the 561 students that answered how the support could be improved reported self-attributed actions – e.g., I must 'work harder', 'take more time to study', 'behave better', etc. (Table 1, changes in students) – denoting improvements in their disposition towards learning. The acknowledgement of self-responsibilities

Table 4. Spearman's significant correlations and descriptive statistics for variables according to instructors.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Respect	1										
2. Compliance with rules	.680**	1									
3. Relationship between students	.580**	.502**	1								
4. Student-instructor relationship	.643**	.497**	.568**	1							
5. Group management	.548**	.621**	.486**	.524**	1						
6. Conflict resolution	.534**	.472**	.451**	.447**	.531**	1					
7. Support satisfaction	.539**	.567**	.500**	.595**	.627**	.510**	1				
8. Working environment	.530**	.617**	.428**	.451**	.576**	.432**	.584**	1			
9. Support in study and organization habits	.347**	.416**	.368**	.372**	.468**	.505**	.552**	.458**	1		
10. Support in homework and study	.459**	.456**	.371**	.424**	.487**	.436**	.462**	.450**	.564**	1	
11. Attitudinal and emotional support	.450**	.339**	.409**	.597**	.526**	.468**	.549**	.355**	.531**	.498**	1
M (SD)	7.89(1.6)	7.34(1.64)	7.43(1.55)	8.16(1.39)	7.39(1.47)	7.98(1.35)	7.94(1.24)	7.94(1.23)	7.65(1.34)	8.27(1.08)	8.07(1.29)
Mnd (IQR)	8 (2)	8 (3)	8 (1.75)	8 (2)	8 (1)	8 (2)	8 (2)	8 (2)	8 (2)	8 (1)	8 (2)

Table 5. Spearman's significant correlations and descriptive statistics for variables according to teachers.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Group management	1						
2. Conflict resolution	.775	1					
3. Student–instructor relationship	.685	.652	1				
4. Working environment	.422	.409	.601	1			
5. Support in homework and study	.665	.560	.634	.543	1		
6. Support in study and organization habits	.649	.599	.575	.539	.794	1	
7. Attitudinal and emotional support	.730	.697	.663	.430	.655	.680	1
<i>M (SD)</i>	7.32(1.62)	7.10(1.64)	8.11(1.49)	8.44(1.31)	8.25(1.36)	7.99(1.48)	7.64(1.52)
<i>Mnd (IQR)</i>	7 (2)	7 (2)	8 (2)	8 (2)	8 (2)	8 (2)	8 (2)

$p < .01$.

Table 6. Spearman's significant correlations and descriptive statistics for variables according to students.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Support	1								
2. Support use	.267**	1							
3. Enjoyment of attendance	.328**	.316**	1						
4. Working environment	.219**	.258**	.314**	1					
5. Physical space	.259**	.244**	.240**	.322**	1				
6. Schedule	.237**	.260**	.390**	.229**	.294**	1			
7. Material	.259**	.226**	.296**	.210**	.362**	.370**	1		
8. Grade improvement	.284**	.344**	.358**	.284**	.216**	.253**	.255**	1	
9. Friendship formation	.210**	.179**	.278**	.233**	.197**	.223**	.208**	.253**	1
<i>M (SD)</i>	3.44(.71)	3.13(.65)	3.03(.85)	2.68(.85)	3.22(.78)	3.13(.88)	3.26(.76)	3.00(.81)	2.96(.95)
<i>Mnd (IQR)</i>	4 (1)	3 (1)	3 (1)	3 (1)	3 (1)	3 (1)	3 (1)	3 (1)	3 (2)

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

showed the presence of internal and controllable attributions that are more favourable to learning. In order to optimize support, it is essential to consider these conditions and encourage students to perceive the usefulness of what they do, and to ensure awareness of their short- and long-term results thereby fostering high expectations about themselves. This must be considered as a strategy in this type of support. In fact, intra-psychological changes are also reported as the most beneficial by some teachers (7.97%) and instructors (4.8%):

It is necessary to emphasize the positive self-concept that each of them has achieved. Now they know what they are better and worse at and where they need more help (Instructor-27)

Students are more aware that without working it's difficult to achieve their goals. (Teacher-56).

However, as stated previously in the quantitative part, the mere provision of time and space for students to study is highlighted as an important opportunity by instructors (25.4%) and teachers (82.61%):

It is very beneficial to have a time during the week to devote to study and to do homework assisted by an instructor. Many [students] need it because at home they do not do their homework because they either do not understand or they do not have anyone to be with them. (Instructor-77).

Nevertheless, once they have this support, this extended learning time should be properly used to have a better impact on students. In addition to supporting students in doing homework and studying for exams, instructors (23.02%) and teachers (48.55%) expressed that support in planning and organization of tasks is very important, for example: 'the most beneficial thing of what is done is to create the habit of working and studying, prioritizing tasks, choosing and doing them' (Instructor-82).

The type of activity carried out is a relevant structural component of the ELT support (Table 1). For instance, some students (11.59%) would improve activities to make them more diverse and entertaining: for one student 'Improvement would be to do half an hour of homework and the rest of the time doing academic things but in learning corners, something more interesting' (Student-1134), for another 'Improvement would be to make more didactic and dynamic activities, when we don't have any homework, not wasting time' (Student-1676). In 44.18% of the reports of the debrief meeting, the teams also proposed to improve activities by reporting more active designs as good practices to implement: 'To propose activities or sessions aimed at working the content through leisure' (Team-20). In this sense, in 34.66% of the groups, instructors expressed that they needed to have prepared material while 29.54%, expressed needing an initial training focused on learning better routines and dynamics. In fact, this ELT program did not give time for instructors to prepare the sessions.

Having clear goals, dynamics and activities, the qualitative analysis also showed the importance that students give to the schedules (23.35%) and space in which the support is provided, insisting on equipment and materials (11.76%) as support components to restructure. Clear examples of this were the students who claimed they did not have enough time to complete homework and study or to eat or rest between school and after-school time.

Supportive environment

The following step was to further analyze how support is implemented. For this purpose, Spearman correlations were used to identify the relationships between the items within support deployment. Considering the instructor sample, *working environment* correlated strongly with *compliance with rules* and *group management* (see Table 4). To properly provide support, instructors should create a safe environment where students can concentrate and work. Remarkably, *group management* was the item within the support deployment dimension highest correlated with the support provided in *homework and study*. *Group management* was also the item highest correlated with instructor *satisfaction*. However, in more than half of the groups (56.9%) instructors would improve the organization and group management carried out. In this sense, they reported needing initial training focused on group management and behaviour (32.54%), 'ad hoc' training according to the needs of the group (27%) and advice when there were conflicts (19.05%).

In the teacher sample (Table 5), in contrast, the *working environment* was more highly correlated with *instructor-students relationship* than with *classroom management*. In fact, the worst valued items by them were *classroom management* and *conflict resolution*. It is noteworthy that

group management was the item among teachers that maintained the highest positive correlations with the support provided in *homework and study*, *study and organization habits*, and *attitudinal and emotional support*. Thus, *group management* is a fundamental component for achieving the goals of this ELT initiative.

A series of Mann-Whitney tests indicated that there were statistically significant differences in the perception of the *working environment*, which was higher for teachers than for instructors, $U = 15555.5, p = .000, r = .19$. In contrast, the assessment of *conflict resolution* was higher in instructors than in teachers ($U = 11296, p = .0, r = .3$). Nonetheless, teacher perceptions of *group management* did not seem to differ from that of the instructors', $U = 14461.5, p = 0.58, r = .03$ (see Tables 2 and 3 for the corresponding medians and IQRs).

Despite its importance, the *working environment* was the least valued item among students: 8.8% considered that it did not help them in any way, while 30.6% considered that it helped them a little. Among students (Table 6), the items that correlated highly with the *working environment* were *enjoyment of attendance* and the perception of *grade improvement*, in addition to the adequacy of the *physical space* where support happened.

The qualitative data provides insight into how to achieve a favourable support environment (sub-category *organization and environment*, Table 1). Participants highlighted group management aspects such as the importance of setting limits, changing groupings to promote collaborative learning among peers, encouraging students to adopt the role of the instructor with the younger students, or decreasing the ratio. There were also references related to institutional policies regarding staff distribution such as increasing the number of instructors or retaining or maintaining stable teams (64 logs, 7.13% of the students and in 55.81% reports). In 15.34% of the groups, instructors would put an extra instructor inside the classroom, a need that some students also perceived:

It would be important that there were two instructors in a classroom because sometimes it happens that one person needs help, and another person as well, and the instructor cannot be everywhere (Student-1094)

The organization and group management are essential components for the functioning of this type of support. Given the complexity of its deployment, when training and support for instructors are not ensured, the quality of the support is affected, since the instructors are not expert professionals. Thus, this has implications at group level as well as at public administration level.

Interpersonal relationships for educational support

As the instructors were the stakeholder responsible for supporting students during this extended time, they were asked about more specific items such as *respect*, the *relationship between students* and *compliance with the rules*. These three items, along with *attitudinal and emotional support*, *group management* and *working environment*, strongly correlated with *instructor–students relationship* (Table 4). A positive environment is not only achieved through adequate group organization and classroom management. As shown in Table 5, teacher assessment of *group management*, *conflict resolution* and the *attitudinal and emotional support* were highly associated with *instructor–students relationship*. The interpersonal bond is essential to achieve a supportive environment in which students feel comfortable in general and with their peers so that they can concentrate and be empowered to ask questions:

It has been very beneficial to maintain a good environment in the class and a very good personal interaction to make students have confidence in us to express their concerns and come ask for our help.

(Instructor-106)

The transcendence of interpersonal relationships is also reinforced by the 42 logs on the *student–instructor relationship* and the 38 on *student–student relationships* (table 1). In fact, instructors considered that their interaction with students should improve in 31.03% of the groups. For their part, students highlighted interactive qualities such as the patience of their instructor (53.5%) and the ability to make them feel comfortable during sessions (38%). It is evident that support is not merely academic. Some teachers (8.7%) and instructors (26.19%) reported that the comprehension of the student as a whole was the most beneficial part of the ELT support:

The most important thing is talking and listening to them. Knowing what moves them to behave better or worse and talking about it; regardless of their homework, if they have someone who listens to them and can provide solutions, they value it much better. (Instructor-114).

The most beneficial thing of this initiative is the attention, support and guidance that students receive because these students have often complicated family situations. (Teacher-236)

Despite the concerns about having non-professionalized staff supporting vulnerable students, some instructors (1.59%), teachers (7.25) and students (5.35%) positively highlighted the fact that support was offered by young people who were not their teachers or family members, as they were another reference or model to follow:

I think that what benefits students the most is to have the opportunity to talk without problems about what concerns them without fears, from a more horizontal perspective compared to the relationship they have when they talk to teachers. (Instructor-10)

Space where, in addition to being helped, one can be heard, understood, emotionally supported and accompanied: ‘I think that the most important thing I do is believe in them when they feel that nobody has done it with enough sincerity’ (Instructor-126). In 15 groups, instructors claim to use positive reinforcement strategies to improve intrapersonal aspects such as motivation, self-concept, goals or work awareness. For an instructor ‘The most beneficial thing has been to help them see that if they make an effort, they are capable of everything they set their minds to’, contributing to generating a more favourable self-image and increasing their predisposition to learn.

Teacher–instructor interaction

In addition to the instructor–student relationship, to ensure coherent and consistent support, the interrelation of school and after-school settings is fundamental. In this regard, 58.73% of the instructors indicated in the questionnaire that they would have offered better support if they had had more contact with teachers, while some of them (63.07%) reported that school-program communication needs to be urgently addressed. Consistent with this result, instructors valued the item ‘*ordinary communications by the centre*’ the least.

A Mann-Whitney test indicated that *ordinary communications by the program*, *ordinary communications by the centre* and *meetings* were significantly greater for teachers than for instructors (see Table 7). In *conflict* situations, instructors perceived significantly greater *communications by the program* than teachers. Both stakeholders only had similar perceptions about *communications* regarding *conflict by the centre*.

We observe that instructors and teachers value the transfer of information related to *conflict* situations more than *ordinary* issues. The interaction between teachers and instructors was a major concern: it was the most recorded item in debrief meeting reports, emerging in the conclusions of

Table 7. Descriptive statistics and Mann-Whitney U Tests for teacher–instructor interaction variables.

Item	Stakeholder	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>Mdn</i> (<i>IQR</i>)	<i>U</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Ordinary communications by the program	Teachers	7.93 (1.61)	8 (2)	16609	.007	.19
	Instructors	7.41 (1.87)	8 (3)			
Ordinary communications by the centre	Teachers	7.73 (1.72)	8 (2)	9461.5	.000	.43
	Instructors	5.81 (2.4)	6 (3)			
Meetings	Teachers	7.69 (1.7)	8 (2)	14452	.001	.17
	Instructors	6.82 (2.4)	7 (3.75)			
Communications for conflict by the program	Teachers	7.81 (1.83)	8 (2)	12301	.000	.24
	Instructors	8.65 (1.28)	9 (2)			
Communications for conflict by the centre	Teachers	7.59 (1.92)	8 (2)	14408.5	.066	.1
	Instructors	7.2 (2.02)	8 (3)			

all teams on repeated occasions (Table 1). Overall, we see a predominance of interactions due to restrictive motivations in order to solve problems. To improve support, it would be important to clarify the kind of communication needed, sharing objectives, expectations and concerns. Thus, stakeholders would be coordinated, fluidly exchanging relevant information, and identifying support as a resource from the centre itself:

The most beneficial thing has been the support that the school staff has given us when there has been conflict. The teacher made them [the students] see that this extended support is part of the regular functioning of the school and that rules must be respected in the same way. (Instructor-17)

It is important to agree on what will be done during the support time with schools. We have to clarify expectations because, otherwise, they [teachers] do not know what we do and can expect other things that, on the other hand, we could do. (Meeting-Team-10)

The communication and interaction between instructors are also important in support practices. What instructors value most positively in support execution is *the relationship with the coordinators* ($M = 9.02$, $SD = 1.28$), the *mentoring they do* ($M = 8.89$, $SD = 1.25$) and also the *internal meetings* ($M = 8.47$, $SD = 1.39$) of the ELT team in which they support each other. Of the teams, 60.47% reported exchanges within the instructor team in the debrief meeting:

For me, the most beneficial thing was being able to share specific concerns with the coordinator as it has helped me to see that what I felt was totally understandable. Feeling that he trusted me and what I did. Also, he was open to explaining things and experiences and finding solutions for specific situations. Once, we went together to the high school to have a very important conversation with the teachers. (Instructor-126)

It would be great to find moments to grow with the team, to be able to think about what happened during the support time, sharing perspectives to improve. (Team-34)

Discussion

The aim of this research was to explore the components of a city-wide after-school initiative (ELT) in Spain to better understand how ELT can be used to improve school engagement by considering ELT features and context. The results suggest that these type of support initiatives in ELT have great potential to foster greater equity because they offer free academic support to those students

who are at risk of school failure. ELT initiatives focused on academic support are relevant in Europe, as trends show that some groups of young people are still encountering difficulties in educational achievement; the underachievement rates in literacy, numeracy and science are not improving (European Commission, 2018). In addition, free access for the students also reduces these inequalities present in OECD countries (2018). Participating students are aware and value this opportunity to improve academically, although they do not always get the most out of it. Hence, it is important to know the ELT support components, focusing on those that contribute to optimizing their use. The discussion, therefore, is organized by support components, and approaches the research questions accordingly.

While the structure and type of activities carried out in ELT programs are still under debate (Leos-Urbel, 2015), our results show that an appropriate distribution of learning time and more attractive and relevant designs and activities for students can contribute to better support use. This result is consistent with prior investigations showing that ‘how’ after-school programs are deployed is important and that engaging students should be a priority (Cross et al., 2010; Dawes and Larson, 2011; Vance, 2016). ELT initiatives should implement activities with school entrusted contents, fostering student participation and self-responsibilities. In this study, the enjoyment of students when attending the support, their favourable disposition, is related to greater support use and the perception of improving grades.

Our findings on ELT design also suggest that it is relevant that teachers, instructors, family and students clarify their goals and expectations for this space of educational support; they should agree with the support’s orientation and participate, at least, in structural decision-making. This helps students be aware of the benefits and have a voice in the support process, which is key to the support practices and can contribute to greater interest and involvement (Hidi and Renninger, 2010; Mortier et al., 2011; Vance, 2016).

Previous studies assessing the effects of these support programs tend to yield significant but small effects on most outcomes (DuBois et al., 2011; Raposa et al., 2019). However, they suggest that these results should be read considering mean effect size distributions for universal prevention programs. Despite the greater benefits when programs are focused on at-risk students (Dougherty, 2015; Heath et al., 2018), when selecting a group of underachieving students there can be interpretation bias because those students are facing several barriers that are not addressed within ELT initiatives. Support experiences should always be analyzed within their context considering other support policies and practices, including the point of view of all stakeholders involved. However, it is difficult to contrast contexts because European countries have failed in collecting and monitoring data to have a whole vision of students’ situations, including data from ELT initiatives (European Commission, 2013b; Preston et al., 2018).

Our investigation is not focused on outcomes, but on the experiences of the stakeholders, shedding light on possible improvements to the process. Our results link support use with greater success perception by the students. A success that, with guidance and positive reinforcement focused on learning goals, should have a continued effect, so that students are aware that learning is a process. That is, it is important that students perceive academic improvements and that they enjoy attending because, then, they make better use of the support generating a virtuous circle that brings into play fundamental intra-psychological learning factors. Making explicit small improvements, then, is a necessary strategy in this type of support to facilitate the use of working time, especially when success is not immediately noticed by the students. From the moment in which different stakeholders, including students, state an increase in the completion of homework and study, we consider that this support contributes to the change of the student’s learning behaviour. This is critical considering that this support is mostly targeted at students with previous unsatisfactory learning experiences. Therefore, this can contribute to the student’s self-concept, self-expectations and the

expectations of those around them: instructors, teachers and families. As theorists have pointed out (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968; Zimmerman, 2000), the dynamics based on the beliefs of the stakeholders that interact in the learning process and that greatly affect self-perception come into play. Making academic progress visible empowers students, they become more involved in learning tasks and can increase their self-confidence, their expectations and the acceleration of their learning.

Overall, the design of the analyzed ELT initiative is consistent with the few reported programs that provide extra academic support to pupils outside the classroom as an intervention measure to reduce ESL in Europe (European Commission, 2013b). In contrast, one-to-one mentoring designs, despite existing studies (e.g. De Witte and Cabus, 2013; European Commission, 2013b; Preston et al., 2018), are less reported in the literature compared with those conducted in the US. Generally, publications from the US predominate in high impact journals on matters that contrast with their low participation rates in out-of-school services (OECD, 2018). This can be partially explained by language barriers, data tracking, transparency and reporting policies. In addition, the current publication tendency in Europe is more focused on health and sports promotion rather than on academic support (e.g. Løndal et al., 2020; Riiser et al., 2019) even having published a Consensus statement (Bangsbo et al., 2016). Thus, the present study attempts to contribute to filling this reporting gap.

This support is not only perceived as important in an academic sense. The different stakeholders emphasized the importance of having their concerns addressed. This initiative is understood as holistic and more personalized support where students can share their thoughts. The instructors in this study implemented a kind of mentoring that in some cases was perceived as friendlier and more affectionate, as highlighted by Davis and Fullerton (2016). This support was valued for being different from the one received from family members or teachers. Instructors, being students as well, offered valuable educational help as they might be experiencing similar learning issues, so they can interact on an even playing field. This characteristic exposed students to good models, a resource that provided protective factors, as Woodland (2016) points out.

Our results highlight the importance of creating this affective instructor–student relationship, another key component. This generates an environment that favours participation and question formulation, which is necessary to learning. Recent research, especially regarding mentoring, highlights the influence of close relationships and trust in the improvement of academic results (Liao and Sanchez, 2016; Pierce et al., 2010) and a reduction in teacher-reported behavioural evidence of rejection sensitivity (Kanchewa et al., 2016).

In addition to the bond and mutual respect between students and instructors, we see that components such as classroom management and compliance with the rules are relevant to creating an appropriate environment in which students can concentrate and work. To achieve this safe environment, some participants requested more instructors, but, even if the ratio and other institutional factors were addressed, if the type of support is not optimized, students cannot take full advantage of it. Therefore, any stakeholder responsible for student support should know how to group them and know how to optimize interactions to accelerate learning by grouping students in an inclusive manner. To contribute more effectively, the instructor should promote peer support arrangements which increase the number of possible supports. Instructors are not the only support stakeholder in ELT. With distributed academic support, the instructor can be more proactive and intervene when more specific help is required.

Moreover, instructors reported training needs on key components such as behaviour management or routines and dynamics. Quality support programs should be accompanied by training tailored to the arising needs of the instructors. As with other types of support offered by non-specialized professionals (paraprofessionals), the goodwill and effort of the team are not

enough to ensure that their practices are oriented towards inclusion and contributing to reducing inequalities. As support stakeholders, they are contributing to education, but they should not make pedagogical decisions they are not prepared for, as happens with other paraprofessionals (Webster et al., 2011). Assigning support to non-specialized people without adequate follow-up and ad hoc training implies an impoverishment of the inclusive nature of support. Beckett et al. (2009) recommend specific training adjusted to the experience of the instructor in order to implement the support program while also emphasizing the importance of observation and coaching to control support quality and identify additional training needs. They advise that the organizers or coordinators should lead the instructors' training in accord with teacher expectations. In our study, instructors claimed they would have liked to have guiding supervision throughout. In addition, moments of exchange and reflection in teams are necessary to improve practices.

Future research will further examine the interactions between the main stakeholders of this kind of educational support from an inclusive perspective with a qualitative approach as interactions were revealed as a fundamental component for its success. Despite the large sample handled in this research and its representativeness, there were limitations regarding the group of teachers as their participation was lower and biased: only those who attended the debrief meeting answered the questionnaire, possibly because of being more involved than the teachers that did not participate in this research. Another limitation was the shortage of answers in the optional open questions, which might be explained by the length of the questionnaire.

Conclusions

In this article, through the analysis of the experiences of students (described as at risk of failure and low SES), their teachers and instructors, we suggest some dimensions – highlighting the ELT support deployment, stakeholder communication and teamwork – that may theoretically contribute to framing and organizing the components of similar initiatives and that administration should purposefully address for their proper implementation. We showed the relationships among support components and how they are associated with support effects perception delving, with the qualitative part, into what would be optimal to providing support.

Regarding this ELT initiative, despite the need of getting the most out of each component, this support measure contributes to equity through providing an additional supported learning space where some learning barriers can be collaboratively addressed. Moreover, we highlight the components that have a greater effect on enhancing the perception of achievement. Thus, this article shed light on what makes students make better use of this extended support. The perception of improving grades or the awareness of little changes that could not be reflected in final marks is fundamental for the development of those students that are underachieving since it contributes to changing their self-concept and expectations. This can generate a win-win dynamic: the higher perception of improvement, the higher support use.

As to ELT initiative deployment, policymakers should structure and design these kinds of initiatives together with stakeholders to take into account contextual needs. This implies an equal evidence-based discussion between the stakeholders of each centre on specific goals, routines and activities held annually before each initiative implementation. Sharing objectives (Davis and Fullerton, 2016), rules and information will make actions more coherent and proactive and expectations towards support better adjusted. Additional support measures in ELT should be accompanied by the universal support measures of each school. Its functioning should not be conceived as segregated but as part of the set of school policies and practices (Patall et al., 2010). The connection between schools and the extracurricular support should be fostered by administrators so that

this resource is deemed as being their own and not wholly external. Educational support should be conceived as a continuum, as a network activity born out of the interaction between multiple stakeholders (Puigdemívol et al., 2017).

Regarding stakeholder communication, in our study, we emphasize the need to interrelate different contexts in which learning happens, with regular exchanges with teachers. Teacher perceptions are important to improve the performance of the programs (Lahoz, 2015) because they are qualified professionals and they teach these ‘shared’ students during school time. Teachers are also the ones with most interaction opportunities with families. Purposefully not involving families is a limitation addressed in other initiatives (e.g. Collet-Sabé and Martori, 2018). This issue may be better dealt with mentoring designs, which in Europe are reported to be mostly community-based (Preston et al., 2018).

Considering that the instructors are college students (non-teaching staff) that have to perform pedagogical roles, quality training and supervision, and preparation time should be guaranteed. Instructors should know the deployment components to create support-positive environments where students can concentrate and work. This recommendation can be extended to other European ELT initiatives, as instructors are usually college students (Preston et al., 2018) but also to US initiatives because instructors or mentors are not required to be support professionals. As to the student profile of the instructors, based on the proximity and reciprocity reported, we suggest maintaining it. Future research could investigate the mutual benefits of hiring teachers-to-be as instructors in light of the reported larger effect when mentors had helping professions (e.g. teacher, therapist) (Van Dam et al., 2018). Fundamentally, public policies should ensure the quality of their support practices rather than only seeking to reach more population.

Finally, support initiatives should be seriously studied, especially if they are targeted at the so-called vulnerable population and run by public funds. Administrations should collect, monitor, analyze and share data in order to improve initiatives and contribute to society. We encourage European, as well as worldwide researchers, to partner with administrations, complementing each other to overcome the identified reporting gap.

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Appendix 9: Collaboration between schools and an expanded learning time initiative in Catalonia: A pending issue for inclusive support?

Collaboration between schools and an after-school initiative in Catalonia: A pending issue for inclusive support?

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Educational support in after-school time is one of the mechanisms used to provide additional support to vulnerable students. This study aims to explore the interactions between teachers and instructors of an after-school initiative and the role of the frequency of communication in educational support and interpersonal connection. A total of 158 instructors and 191 teachers participated in a mixed method study in which questionnaires and six case studies were analysed. Results showed that communication is essential for educational support especially if some support tasks are shifted to instructors within a multi-tiered systems of support approach. Implications are discussed.

Keywords: afterschool/after-school programs, collaboration, educational support, MTSS, inclusive education

1. Introduction

Promoting inclusive education for all is a worldwide goal reaffirmed by the United Nations (2015) through the 2030 Agenda, “Education 2030”. In order to achieve inclusive education systems, not only is it necessary to focus on what happens inside the classroom or within the school, but also to take into account the community (OREALC-Unesco, 2007). In this regard, Ainscow et. al (2012) emphasized the importance of interactions between inside and outside the school (e.g., relationships, economic reality, school histories) with the concept of “ecology of equity”. Hence, the barriers (Booth & Ainscow, 2002) that must be removed so that all students participate and learn in their regular context are found both inside and outside the school. Likewise, there are supports beyond the school that, if properly used, can favour inclusion processes. Thus, educational support should also be conceived from a community perspective that enhances the collaboration of the different stakeholders in the students' context instead of conceiving it as an exclusive task of professional specialists such as special education teachers, psychologists or therapists (Parrilla, 2002; Petreñas et al., 2020; Puigdemívol et al. 2017).

In addition to the community support approach, support should be understood as a system of gears that work in coordination and not in isolation. To this end, one of the most significant advances in schoolwide inclusive school reforms is structuring the educational support within a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) with an embedded response to intervention (RTI) (Sailor, 2015). Multi-tiered systems of support are implemented in different countries but, in many cases, they are focused on behaviour management (Armstrong, 2019; Berkeley et al., 2020; Braun et al., 2020). This system articulates a set of supports with different degrees of intensity based on both research evidence and student progress, which are cyclically evaluated and readjusted (Fuchs et al., 2003; Johnson et al., 2006). However, to achieve a more systemic and ecological approach to a culturally responsive, research-based, data-driven service delivery, a readjustment of the roles of the stakeholders involved is needed (see Eagle et al., 2015; Freeman et al., 2015; Gómez-Zepeda et al., 2017; Loftus-Rattan et al., 2021). In this integrated support approach, MTSS can be used as a structure for building partnerships with out-of-school services as well as families (Hart et al., 2021; Weingarten et al., 2020).

1.1. After-school initiatives

After-school initiatives are educational measures that should be integrated as part of this multi-tiered systems of support approach (Hart et al., 2021), especially if they are considered to be “care services” (OECD, 2015) and not only aimed at leisure. These initiatives can take the form of private extracurricular activities (e.g., math or foreign language tutoring) or afterschool or mentoring programs funded by non-profit organisations or by state or local authorities where students can be supported one-on-one or in small groups —e.g., Beckett et al., 2009; Cappella et al., 2017; Haghighat &

Knifsend, 2019; Raposa et al., 2017). Those that are designed for vulnerable youth are usually aimed at reducing early school leaving, improving educational attainment, school engagement or socio-emotional development (Durlak et al., 2010; Forneris et al., 2015; Haghighat & Knifsend, 2019; Jez & Wassmer, 2015; Neely & Vaquera, 2017). These kinds of initiatives are especially relevant in urban contexts to avoid young people spending too much time on the streets as well as for supporting those whose families are unable to do so.

The typical profile of an educator of an after-school initiative — also called instructor, monitor, mentor or big brother/sister— is an employed adult or college student although their profile varies across programs and continents (Ahrens et al., 2010; Liao & Sanchez, 2016; Preston et al., 2018; Yohalem et al., 2006). Fewer educators are teachers or teaching assistants (e.g., Frazier et al., 2019; Ulla & Manzanares, 2014). Regarding differences between programs, some afterschool programs are part-time jobs, while mentoring is recommended as volunteer work (Frazier et al., 2019; Raposa et al., 2017). As for transnational differences, European mentors are usually college students or older youths while US mentors are employed adults (35-54 years) (Preston et al., 2018; Raposa et al., 2019). However, mentors' background matters as those who previously worked in a helping profession (e.g., teacher, counsellor, or religious leader) tend to have a greater impact on mentees (Raposa et al., 2019; Van Dam et al., 2018).

In fact, educators play a key role as main support providers in these after-school initiatives even acting as a positive role model for the students (Woodland, 2016). The interactions between them and the students are one of the main components highlighted in several studies in afterschool programs quality (Durlak et al., 2010; Pierce et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2010; Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010). Other relevant

components pointed out in these studies are program orientation and structure, group management to ensure supportive environments and the design of routines and activities to foster students' engagement. Fewer investigations on out-of-school programs (excluding community-based mentoring) considered the linkages to family and community as quality indicators (Collet-Sabé & Martori, 2018; Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010) and the same happens with the partnership between educators and teachers (Authors, 2021). However, considering the theoretical framework regarding the need to interrelate the different contexts in which learning happens —e.g., Bonfenbrenner, 1987; Tseng & Seidman, 2007— and the integrated approach to educational support (Hart et al., 2021; Puigdemívol et al., 2017), this suggests that interprofessional collaboration should be included amongst the criteria that shapes the quality of afterschool programs.

1.2. Collaboration between stakeholders with educational support roles

Most of the previously mentioned components that contribute to improving program quality and the most well-grounded recommendations —e.g. aligning the after-school program academically with the school day, sharing goals or adapting instruction to individual needs (Beckett et al., 2009)— require coordination between schools and after-school initiatives. This inter-institutional collaboration is a key measure to prevent early school leaving (ESL) (European Union, 2013). However, it is necessary to define what is inter-institutional collaboration, teamwork, coordination and networking among other terminologies used since there are different conceptualizations and nuances depending on the stakeholders involved (e.g., healthcare professional, teachers, etc.).

In a clinical setting, Reeves et al. (2018) analysed over 20 descriptions of teamwork identifying five main elements in common: shared team identity, clear roles/tasks/goals, interdependence of members, integration of work, and shared responsibility. They added a sixth element termed “team tasks” to capture to what extent joint work is predictable, urgent and complex. Considering these elements, Reeves et al. (2018) classified the forms of interprofessional work with a gradient of intensity of joint work that would go from "interprofessional teamwork" to "interprofessional network", teamwork being where all of the above-mentioned elements should be fulfilled for it to function properly since professionals, in general, must face unpredictable, urgent and complex tasks.

Another recent systematic review showed that professionals contribute to interprofessional collaboration in three ways: 1) bridging professional, social, physical and task-related gaps, 2) negotiating overlaps in roles and tasks, and 3) creating spaces to do so (Schot et al., 2020). It was made obvious that there were differences between collaborative settings and subsectors, which could also be occurring in the educational field, justifying the need for this research.

Focused on the education field, there are several influential works that describe teachers’ collaboration or collegial relations —see Hargreaves, 1994; Harris & Anthony 2001; Little, 1990; Lortie, 1975. Hargreaves (2019) reviewing his last 30 years on teachers’ collaboration research shared a definition of “collaborative professionalism” from the Ontario Ministry of Education that not only includes teachers but all the staff in the education system. They are meant to work together, share knowledge, skills and experience to improve achievements and well-being of both students and staff. However, as highlighted by Borg & Drange (2019), few studies have investigated the effects of involving multiple professionals in a team-based collaboration with teachers.

The scarce research available shows that collaboration with external partners and the school organisation should improve (Borg & Drange, 2019; Mowrey & King, 2019).

Moreover, communication and collaboration on a regular basis between support staff is essential for MTSS implementation (Freeman et al., 2015). In fact, Hart et al. (2021) in their model for integrating youth mentoring within MTSS was based on the direct communication between programs and schools to ensure real-time data-based decisions, evidence-informed practices, supervised training, and shared values. In addition, as happens with teaching assistants, instructors are not teachers, so factors that affect collaboration (e.g., trust, respect, acknowledgement, appreciation, sense of belonging and perception of hierarchy) should be specifically analysed (authors, 2022; Giangreco et al., 2001; Nelson et al., 2019; Pratt, 2014; Slater & Gazeley, 2018). Furthermore, there is a need for more research to capture the complexity of after-school educators' experiences (Hwang et al., 2020).

To this end, this study seeks to shed some light on how communication between instructors and teachers affects the support provided to the students as well as the importance given to trusting each other, their partnership, having shared goals and considering the after-school initiative as one belonging to the school.

1.3. Catalan context

In 2017, as a result of the Decree 150/2017 on inclusive education, a MTSS model was launched in Catalonia (Spain). The intensity of the supports is laid out in three tiers: tier 1 is universal; addressed at all students and eminently proactive and preventive; tier 2 is additional; encompassing flexible measures targeted at students that temporarily need them; and tier 3; the intensive one, with extraordinary and individualised supports addressed at less autonomous students. However, the non-profit or publicly-funded

after-school initiatives implemented in Catalonia are not included among the support measures described in this MTSS framework. Most of them are aimed at students at risk of academic failure and ESL (Collet-Sabé & Martori, 2018; authors, 2021; Longás et al., 2013).

This study is conducted in Barcelona in a city-wide after-school initiative run by the Barcelona Education Consortium. In this after-school initiative, students from secondary education and the two last years of primary education (11 to 16 years old) at risk of academic failure and dropout receive free academic support twice a week (3h/week) from instructors. Those instructors are required to be college students under 30 years old. They can provide support for up to two groups of 12 students during a week and are being remunerated through grants. All students, including the primary education groups, are given this support in the secondary school building. In each secondary school, a coordinator supervises the support offered. Instructors are meant to stay in contact with students' form teachers and meet them at the beginning of the support, after that at midterm and finally once the support ends. Form teachers' participation is rewarded by recognising this as computable training in their job bank. Families play a secondary role in this after-school initiative only receiving a report of youths' performance at the end of each term together with the school grades.

2. Methods

This phenomenological study was focused on an after-school program in Barcelona, Spain, that targets students who are most at risk of dropping out of school and experiencing academic failure. Their form teachers and program instructors were asked to answer a questionnaire to explain their experience regarding the program. Moreover, interviews with the form teachers and instructors of the six groups, as well as focus

groups with their students were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences through these six case studies. The study was performed using a convergent parallel mixed method design (Creswell, 2014) involving a simultaneous quantitative and qualitative collection of data. Data was then merged and interpreted obtaining a comprehensive analysis of the research problem.

2.1. Participants

A total of 191 teachers (73.8% female, $M = 43.61$, $SD = 9.04$) participated in the quantitative part of the study; 41.6% of them were from primary education (5th and 6th grade) while the others were from the remaining four grades of compulsory secondary education. Most teachers (62.3%) had prior experience with the program but few of them (25.9%) were priorly paired with their current instructor. There were 158 instructors (66.5% female, $M = 21.66$, $SD = 2.59$) that provided information on the 204 after-school support groups. Instructors should be college students under 30 years old. For most instructors (62.7%), this was the first year in the program, while only 17.7% had three years of experience or more as instructors.

Six groups composed of students, instructors and teachers were selected for the multiple case study. Heterogeneity was sought among the cases including groups from each school level, different school complexity level^a, neighbourhood and instructor performance^b (see table 1). A total of 57 students (11-16 years old) participated in six focus groups; 6 instructors (33.3% female, $M = 22.67$, $SD = 2.42$) and 12 teachers (91.7% female, $M = 46$, $SD = 14.64$) were interviewed.

Table 1: *Inclusion criteria and stakeholders' distribution.*

School	School level	Performance ^b	Interviews	Focus Group (n)

Case 1	5 th and 6 th grade (primary school)	100%	Teacher-1 Teacher-2 Teacher-3 Instructor-1	8 students
Case 2 ^a	2 nd (secondary school)	90.75%	Teacher-4 Teacher-5 Instructor-2	10 students
Case 3 ^a	1 st (secondary school)	33%	Teacher-6 Teacher-7 Teacher-8 Instructor-3	14 students
Case 4 ^a	3 rd (secondary school)	100%	Teacher-9 Teacher-10 Instructor-4	8 students
Case 5 ^a	5 th and 6 th grade (primary school)	18.75%	Teacher-11 Instructor-5	9 students
Case 6	4 th (secondary school)	46.17%	Teacher-12 Instructor-6	8 students

Note: ^aSchools considered as high complexity, a status established by the Department of Education according to various indicators related to socioeconomic data; ^bThe after-school coordinators assessed instructors' performance through a rubric with the following indicators and weightings: pedagogical style (20%), group management (50%) and communicative attitude (30%).

2.2. Instruments

Data was collected using five instruments: two questionnaires, two interview guides and a focus group guide.

The questionnaires for teachers and instructors were an adapted version of the ones used in a prior study (authors, 2021). The changes, aimed at better capturing interactions between teachers and instructors, were based on prior research —e.g., authors, 2021; Reeves et al., 2010. The new content was validated by the person

responsible for the after-school program, the 7 head coordinators and a sample of 20 teachers and 20 instructors. They were asked about the pertinence of the questions, the length as well as wording and answer choice issues. The nuances of the vocabulary they suggested were considered. Communication was assessed using categorical questions focusing on the type and the frequency of communication. Interactions (e.g., relationship between teachers and instructors, trust, shared goals) were measured using four items on a 4-point Likert scale. Similarly, support effects (e.g., improvements in homework and study) were assessed using five items on a 6-point Likert scale.

As regards the case studies, 6 focus groups and 16 semi-structured interviews were conducted and lasted an average of 49.34 minutes and 40.53 minutes respectively. The interview and focus group guides were designed according to the above-mentioned precedents regarding: 1) support, 2) role, and 3) interpersonal interaction. All these were validated by the head coordinators of the program.

2.3. Procedure

The Barcelona Education Consortium authorized the research and facilitated the online distribution of the questionnaires. Ethical aspects such as the research goals, voluntary participation, confidentiality, the possibility of withdrawing their consent and the right to receive feedback once the results were analysed (European Commission, 2013) were reported in the first screening of the survey. Completion time for all questionnaires was between 15 to 30 minutes.

The Administration also facilitated the recruitment of the six heterogeneous groups for the multiple case study. All teachers and instructors of each case, with the agreement of their supervisors, were invited to participate and were informed about the research and the previously-mentioned ethical aspects (European Commission, 2013). Those

who showed interest signed an informed consent form before being interviewed.

Interviews and focus groups were audiotaped, transcribed and transcripts were sent to instructors and teachers giving them the opportunity to amend the transcripts and verify that their perspective was accurately represented. Participants agreed with the content and just suggested nuances in vocabulary or expressions used.

2.4. Data analysis

Quantitative data was analysed with the software SPSS v. 24, which was used to compute descriptive statistics and Mann-Whitney U Tests. As regards the thematic analysis, the interview transcripts from all participants were firstly reviewed to get an insight of the data. Then, significant statements for all cases were identified and compared across-cases producing a coding scheme. Commonalities of the communicative experience across cases were captured without losing sight of individual points of view to keep their uniqueness. To ensure credibility, researchers agreed on the meaning of each category and subcategory —debriefing strategy, Brantlinger et al. (2005)— so the coding process was completed using the Nvivo 11 plus software.

3. Results

The results were organised into three subsections that corresponded to the study questions. In each of them, the results of the descriptive analysis were set out first, followed by the results of the qualitative analysis.

3.1. Communication between teachers and instructors

Teachers and instructors offered information regarding the *frequency* of their in-person and online communication. As it can be seen in table 2, more than 40% of both instructors and teachers stated that they only attended the three meetings stipulated: the

initial, follow-up and final meetings. 6.8% of the teachers and 18.9% of the instructors attended less than the required meetings, some of them never meeting in person. On the other hand, 21% of the teachers maintained in-person communication with the instructors monthly, while another 23% had in-person meetings weekly. Similarly, 24.86% of the instructors maintained such communications daily or weekly. Communication, according to the instructors, occurred only with some form teachers (47.9%); a smaller percentage (17.6%) claimed to have communicated with all form teachers. Some instructors did not communicate directly with the form teachers themselves, but with their coordinators (14.8%).

Online means of communication (e.g., e-mails or Google Drive) was used relatively infrequently, observing that 46.4% of the teachers and 51.5% of the instructors surveyed affirmed that they used emails only for general information or not at all.

Table 2: *Percentages of the type and frequency of communication per stakeholder.*

		Percentage of participants	
		Teachers	Instructors
In-person communication	We communicated in person almost daily	9	11.9
	We communicated in person weekly	23	13
	We communicated in person monthly	21.3	11.9
	With the exception of the three routine meetings, we did NOT use the in-person route	40.4	44,3
	We had less in person meetings than required	3.4	10.8
	We have not communicated in person	2.8	8.1
	We communicated online (emails, drive, etc.) almost daily	1.4	2.2
Online communication	We communicated online (emails, drive, etc.) weekly	2.9	1.7
	We communicated online (emails, drive, etc.) bimonthly	7.2	22.7
	We communicated online (emails, drive, etc.) monthly	22.3	15.5
	Except for receiving emails with general information, we have not use online channels	45.3	33.7

I have not used online channels to communicate	20.9	24.3

Regarding the *content* of the first meeting between teachers and instructors, most teachers reported that they agreed with the instructors that, during the reinforcement, the students should study and finish homework (85.9%) and work on study and organization habits (76.3%). The instructors' reports followed a similar pattern, with 59% stating that they had agreed to study and finish homework and 46.8% to work on study habits and organization. However, 17.1% of the instructors stated they did not agree on anything at all with teachers. The second meeting was aimed at tracking the students' progress and the final meeting was the closing one once the program had ended.

Nonetheless, communication was perceived as sufficient by the teachers, as 45% of them claimed to have the necessary information and 41.3% would not have had any trouble asking for more, if needed. Similarly, 87.2% of the teachers believed that the instructors had enough information to support the students. Conversely, in a 6-points Linkert scale, 44.4% of the instructors valued between 0 and 2 the usefulness of the communication with the form teachers when giving support, indicating a need for improvement.

From the six case studies, both instructors and teachers indicated being dissatisfied with their communication in four of them. In these cases, the instructors agreed that the information received was insufficient and, if they received it, it was too late. They would have needed more continuous information to be better prepared and have the opportunity to rethink and adjust the support offered (Instructors 2, 3, 5 and 6).

Instructor 2 remarked:

It would be important to be informed about the syllabus, having access to the digital books and, in that way, know what they're doing and preparing. Or

sending an email, for example, saying that Jaime has failed the mid-term, be on top of him...

In fact, these instructors complained about knowing their students' marks and development only from the students themselves, and only in the cases where they wished to share them honestly. Instructors 2, 3 and 6 even emphasized having sent e-mails with information or questions that the teachers never answered. Instructor 4 remarked on the importance of obtaining teacher feedback since the objectives are shared; and instructor 6 added that having a minimal influence on grades, without using it as a coercive measure, could positively contribute to the predisposition of the students during the support session.

Most of the teachers in these four cases agreed that the communication was insufficient to monitor and support the students (Teachers 4, 5, 7, 8, 11 and 12). In practice they communicated only in conflict cases, guided by the idea that "if they don't say anything, it's because everything is fine" (Teacher 8), thus, maintaining a reactive communication.

Additionally, some believed that the students were aware of the lack of coordination (e.g., Teachers 7 and 11). The added difficulty perceived by those instructors in secondary education is in exchanging information with so many agents since there is one teacher per subject. For this reason, teachers 4 and 7 proposed the creation of a shared diary or document where teachers, and the students themselves, reported on homework and the syllabus. To ensure follow-up and offer more effective support, Teacher 12 proposed adding a "pre-evaluation". Nevertheless, there were those reluctant to increase communication, with efficiency arguments —e.g., Teacher 6: "if there is an incident, let's communicate, but, if it's not necessary, we need to be efficient, people

don't have time" —, and arguments for the protection of the minor's personal information (Teacher 8).

In the two cases where communication worked, the via of interaction between teacher and instructor was different. In the first case, as well as the two exchange meetings specified by the program, they talked about what needed to be worked on when the instructor picked up the students at the school. They also exchanged e-mails to work together (Teacher 1):

We have daily contact. We agreed with her that if anything happened, she would send us an e-mail that same afternoon to deal with it the following day. We want the students to see that we are a united front, that everything that happens there echoes in the classroom. [...] We also tell her when a student is cross, has been fighting or is going through a complex family situation so that she knows and therefore is a little more patient. Communication is the most important thing. If they see that when something happens, it reaches us quickly, and ultimately fewer things happen since they see we are connected, and that the support is holistic.

In the fourth case, except for two mandatory meetings, the communication was carried out through the coordinator of the program and the school counsellor. As Instructor 4 explained:

In this secondary school, communication is well forged because there is always a physical person, in this case the counsellor you can address who responds to you. Ideally, we could talk to all the teachers, but that has never worked. Being realistic, they don't want you to bother them outside their working schedule.

Therefore, it is a school stakeholder who acts as a referent transmitting the information to the teachers, thus assuring bi-directional communication. All stakeholders seemed

satisfied, although Teacher-9 believed that some details might be lost due to the limited direct communication with the instructor.

The perception of communication by the students was more positive since a lack of it was only perceived in cases 3 and 6. In case 6, they attributed it to the fact that form teachers, even if some asked, did not give it enough importance:

Student-5: My form teacher has come twice. She asks, but that's all, she then leaves and forgets all about it...

Student-2: Basically, they don't care.

Student-1: Mine hasn't even come to ask.

However, in all cases the students agreed on the usefulness of communication between the adults with an exchange of academic information, specifying, in case 6 (last year students, 15-16 years old), that it should not be personal or behavioural information unless they give their consent. They argue that each agent should get to know them without prejudice; they do not want it to have a negative influence or to feel controlled.

Student-2 comments:

If I tell my instructor something I don't want half of the teachers to know. If they know, they'll talk to one another, and rumours always spread among teachers.

They could ask beforehand 'Do you want me to talk about it with your teacher?'

3.2. The role of communication in educational support

The participants were divided into two groups: frequent communication (they communicated in-person monthly, bimonthly, weekly, or daily) and infrequent communication (they communicated only during the required meetings or less than that). Online communication was not considered due to the scarcity of individuals who frequently used this route. There were 200 participants who reported frequent

communication: 83 teachers and 117 instructors. Conversely, 163 participants (95 teachers and 68 instructors) communicated infrequently. A series of Mann-Whitney tests were conducted to examine the relationship between the frequency of in-person communication and how the support worked. Frequent communicators reported that students received support with their habits and organization to a higher degree than the infrequent communicators ($U = 18818$, $p = .007$, $r = .14$) (see table 3). There were no differences with respect to the support with homework and studying ($U = 17382$, $p = .234$, $r = .06$) or attitudinal and emotional support ($U = 17972$, $p = .076$, $r = .09$).

Table 3: *Descriptive statistics of interpersonal factors and support effects according to the frequency of communication*

	Infrequent communication		Frequent communication	
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>Mdn</i>
Relationship between teachers and instructors	3.06 (0.70)	3	3.38 (0.59)	3
Trust in each other	3.11 (0.73)	3	3.40 (0.60)	3
Shared goals	3.40 (0.59)	3	3.47 (0.55)	3.50
Understanding the after-school initiative as a school one	3.15 (0.82)	3	3.29 (0.68)	3
Students benefitted from the support received in the after-school initiative	3.43 (1.08)	4	3.80 (0.83)	4
Satisfaction with one's contribution to students' support	3.92 (0.98)	4	4.18 (0.82)	4
Support with homework and studying	4.20 (0.94)	4	4.35 (0.77)	4
Support with habits and organization	3.82 (1.01)	4	4.08 (0.94)	4
Attitudinal and emotional support	3.86 (1.06)	4	4.06 (0.95)	4

The frequency of communication was also related to the perceived results and benefits of the after-school program and to the degree of satisfaction with one's own contribution to the support received by students in this after-school initiative. Frequent communicators perceived better results and benefits of the after-school program in comparison with the infrequent communicators ($U = 19260$, $p = .002$, $r = .17$).

Similarly, participants who communicated frequently reported higher levels of satisfaction than those who communicated infrequently ($U = 18643$, $p = .012$, $r = .13$).

Furthermore, teachers and instructors valued similarly how much students benefited from the after-school program ($U = 17335$, $p = .112$, $r = .08$) (see table 4). However, when analysing satisfaction with one's support and contribution, instructors were more satisfied than teachers ($U = 21940$, $p = .005$, $r = .14$). Comparing teachers' and instructors' perceptions regarding support, instructors rated both support with homework and studying ($U = 25217$, $p < .001$, $r = .31$) and attitudinal and emotional support higher than teachers ($U = 23227$, $p < .001$, $r = .20$). On the other hand, there were no differences between instructors and teachers regarding support with habits and organization ($U = 20813$, $p = .086$, $r = .09$).

Table 4: *Descriptive statistics of interpersonal factors and support effects according to stakeholder*

	Teachers			Instructors	
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>Mdn</i>		<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>Mdn</i>
Relationship between teachers and instructors	3.27 (0.66)	3		3.05 (0.70)	3
Trust in each other	3.34 (0.63)	3		3.06 (0.75)	3
Shared goals	3.55 (0.51)	4		3.26 (0.65)	3
Understanding the after-school initiative as a school one	3.38 (0.59)	3		2.97 (0.87)	3
Students benefitted from the support received in the after-school initiative	3.66 (0.96)	4		3.52 (0.99)	4
Satisfaction with one's contribution to students' support	3.90 (0.97)	4		4.17 (0.83)	4
Support with homework and studying	4.03 (0.90)	4		4.51 (0.77)	5
Support with habits and organization	3.84 (0.98)	4		4.00 (0.99)	4
Attitudinal and emotional support	3.77 (1.00)	4		4.13 (0.99)	4

As Instructor-3 mentioned: "communication affects support since the school context is the same, and as it isn't something disassociated with the school, so it does affect it. Both feed into each other because, in the end, the support objective is the school." The

benefits of good communication were also perceived by the students. In fact, in all cases, they believed that communication between teachers and instructors was positive for the support:

Student-3: I believe it's good because if you're not good at a subject and you are working hard in the program, the instructor can tell the teacher and they'll realise you're working hard.

Student-5: I wanted to say the same and I would add that if, for example, you say that you never have homework and they don't have meetings with your form teachers, they can never know if what you're saying is true or false.

Student-1: Yeah, and if you don't work in class and in the program yes, they need to know.

(Case 4)

Student 7: That they talk helps because, they then know what you have to work on and they help more in those subjects.

Various students said: Yes!

Student 1: If my form teacher knew what I do, I would behave better.

(Case 3)

3.3. Communication and interpersonal relationships

We analysed how teachers and instructors valued the importance of interpersonal factors that affect relationships in benefitting the students attending the after-school program. First, a series of Mann-Whitney tests were conducted to investigate whether the two groups shared similar perceptions. Regarding the *relationship* between teachers and instructors, teachers rated it more importantly than instructors ($U = 12457$, $p = .004$, $r = .16$) (see table 4). Similarly, teachers seem to give greater importance to *trusting*

each other ($U = 11900$, $p < .001$, $r = .19$), having *shared goals* ($U = 11383.5$, $p < .001$, $r = .23$) and understanding the after-school initiative as *a school one* ($U = 11173.5$, $p < .001$, $r = .23$) than the instructors.

Furthermore, the results of the Mann-Whitney tests indicated that teachers and instructors that communicated frequently gave a greater importance to their *relationship* ($U = 15538$, $p < .001$, $r = .23$) than those who communicated infrequently (see table 3). Similarly, *trusting* each other was perceived as more important by those who communicated frequently compared to those communicating infrequently ($U = 15251$, $p < .001$, $r = .20$). However, there were no differences between the levels of communication with respect to the importance of having *shared goals* ($U = 13344$, $p = .302$, $r = .06$) and understanding the after-school initiative as *a school one* ($U = 13571$, $p = .194$, $r = .07$).

From the cases studied, only one teacher blamed the deterioration of communication on the instructor because of a lack of reciprocity and not following what was agreed (Teacher-11):

At first, I went to see the instructor and told him what we were doing. Also, to the students “remember to tell the instructor this and that...” or “grab your notebooks”. But when the time comes and you see that they haven’t done anything, that [the instructor] doesn’t talk to you, that there is like a barrier... well, you think, never mind and you stop getting involved.

In this sense, Teacher-5 emphasised the importance of managing the students jointly so that they perceive there is a connection, but in practice they didn’t intervene like this because their relationship wasn’t close enough to meddle in each other’s practices.

Thus, the type of relationship, the connection and trust between stakeholders is very relevant to effectively contribute to this educational support.

In line with the qualitative data, there is a divergence between understanding the support as part of school measures or understanding it as external. Teacher-2 understood it as part of the school, arguing:

Mondays and Wednesdays we have this after-school initiative; Tuesdays we have PSS [personalised school support] which is also a reinforcement done in the school and Fridays, the homework space. So, we have distributed the kids between all the supports we have. We have never seen it as an extracurricular activity; it's a support, like PSS that is done by teachers of the school. It's an activity that has an impact in the kids' learning and has a direct impact on us because if these kids bring their homework done, it boosts their self-confidence. Because they can't get help at home or they would go to the street and so it would be left undone. They help them, they make them read... [...] It's not like another extracurricular activity; the instructor also helps us in establishing communication spaces between the professionals, and it makes it a more intense relationship between teachers and instructors, and this is not so with the judo coach.

Delving into those who saw it as an external support, they also differentiated it from other extracurricular activities stressing the need for more teamwork. Teacher-9 even considered it moderately external because it is managed by outside parties, like she considers external art therapy activities that they do during school hours; meaning that by "external" she does not mean unrelated to the school's measures. In fact, one of the measures that Teacher-11 proposed for primary schools was that it was carried out in

the school itself to “ensure proximity, better communication, and being able to use their own materials.”

4. Discussion

Studying interactions between instructors that support students in after-school and teachers is relevant since difficulties that affect students are multi-causal and interconnected in the different contexts in which they develop. Schools will only be successful in their quest to educate if they work in partnership with students, parents and other stakeholders of support such as instructors of extracurricular activities. Communication between schools and the after-school support studied is generally scarce and reactive, either in-person or online. Although teachers and instructors attend the initial meetings to specify how to support, as in other initiatives, this transfer of information may be too generalized because they do not yet know the students and it is even non-existent for the new staff replacing those who have left, an important issue given the turnover rates in these initiatives (Frazier et al., 2019). In addition, the teachers of our study seem to be unaware that instructors would need more information to enable them to provide proper educational support. This mismatch of perceptions with reality is a barrier to optimizing support. Maintaining fluid communications proves to be essential for more proactive practices so as to address difficulties before they occur and to adjust support before it is too late, to better manage behaviours, and to show students the importance of what they do in support. In this regard, the stakeholders who communicated more frequently offered better educational support to their students in terms of learning and organization habits. They also valued more highly the program’s results and benefits for their students as well as being more satisfied with their contribution to the support. Although we are talking about

perceptions instead of longitudinal impact, these are relevant since they influence stakeholders' practices (Bandura, 1997).

Connecting, agreeing on the orientation of this support and following it up is even more necessary in the current context in which different schools choose not to set homework (Lluch, 2019), since the educational role of instructors has shifted. Task-shifting consists of moving the services that were typically delivered by professionals to less qualified individuals. This strategy, embedded in a MTSS frame and supported by efficient emphasis on on-demand training, is theorised to be a feasible solution to meet social demands in mental health services (Hart et al., 2021; McQuillin, Lyons, Becker, Hart, & Cohen, 2019). Our results on the benefits of connecting school and afterschool time supported the idea of applying this approach in educational after-school settings. However, this task shifting within a MTSS approach cannot be translated into delegating tasks that require skills and expertise to untrained or unqualified stakeholders (Giangreco, 2021). Mutually agreed roles and goals (including families and students as well) should be coherent with instructors' preparedness and being fair from an inclusion and equity point of view. These roles should not be seen as interfering in other professionals' fields but as a collaboration to support routinary and less expertise-demanding tasks.

Regarding interpersonal relationships, despite the communicative role assumed by teachers, they are the ones who are clearer about the importance of the relationship with instructors, trust, having the same goals and understanding the initiative as part of the school's support. In other words, they are clear about the theory, but they still need to put it into practice. In consonance with other collaborations, either with other teachers or with paraprofessionals, this seems to be aspirational rather than a generalised reality (Jurkowski & Müller, 2018; Mulholland & O'Connor, 2016). The relevance attributed

to their *relationship* and *trusting* each other depends on the frequency of communication, the stakeholders who communicated frequently being more aware of their benefits. In fact, trust is achieved with contact and time, and it grows through interactions in relationships of interdependence (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Paxton and Glanville 2015). Thus, in addition to systematizing communication to make it more frequent and effective, it is important to maintain stable teams of teachers and instructors. To improve relationships and trust in each other, in addition to formal collaboration (e.g., meetings) (Mowrey & King, 2019), it is important to foster informal contact and communication between the stakeholders, as it generates trust. Thus, in this sense, it is desirable to provide the support physically in each school or that the teachers who collaborate with after-school initiatives purposefully schedule their coordination time to favour meaningful informal exchanges with instructors. Online communication is another avenue to exploit. It has great potential if a simple, clear and little-time consuming contact is agreed upon. Additionally, there are many technological tools that can be used for this purpose.

In addition, with respect to the interaction between stakeholders, surprisingly, the communication they maintained did not affect how necessary they perceived the fact of sharing objectives and understanding the after-school support as a school measure. This after-school initiative, like most such initiatives is focused on vulnerable students (e.g., Ulla & Manzanares, 2014), is clearly aimed at supporting homework, study and organisation habits. This might explain the lack of differences in this regard. However, interviewed participants stressed the relevance of not taking objectives and expectations for granted; they should be shared and continuously readjusted. As for understanding the after-school support as an additional school measure, the qualitative data shows that after-school support should be integrated. All interviewed stakeholders, including those

who consider that this initiative is external, emphasised the need to work together in an integrated way, meaning that by external they referred to the organisation that launched and runs the initiative rather than viewing it as unrelated to school measures.

Ultimately, and despite the need for institutional support, one of the most influential issues is interaction at individual level (instructors-teachers). Their attitudes towards the other is what ultimately determines the success of the collaboration, as there are collaborations of lower and higher quality within the same school and after-school team.

It should be clarified that the kind of interprofessional collaboration needed is not as tight as the partnership between co-teachers or teaching assistants and teachers. Unlike instructor-teacher collaboration, they support students within the same classroom, fostering a partnership that requires a high level of symbiosis (see Pratt, 2014). Taking into account the gradient of the forms of interprofessional work proposed by Reeves et al., (2018) —teamwork, collaboration, coordination and networking—, the one that would be necessary between teachers and instructors of after-school initiatives is “interprofessional collaboration”; to provide effective support, they should share common goals and their roles should be clear and interdependent. Instructors reinforce and complement the content and skills worked in schools. Shared team identity (Reeves et al., 2010) is less relevant, since team tasks are generally more predictable and less complex and urgent than the ones faced, for instance, by teams of social workers and teachers. Contrasting with the proposal of Reeves et al. (2010) and supported by the MTSS approach, our findings suggest that the integration of individuals is also a relevant element in school to after-school collaboration. This is not about a sense of belonging, as each part belongs to a particular organisation, but about working in an integrated fashion with one another and interacting on a regular basis.

Nevertheless, team identity is something to further explore since instructors might not even have constructed an identity (Beijaard, et al., 2004) as instructors; this is a part-time job done while finishing their university degree. Currently, this could not be considered a profession so interpersonal factors affecting professional-paraprofessional interactions might differ slightly from the ones of the collaborations examined by previous studies. Despite similarities such as status and hierarchy constraints with collaborations that involve paraprofessionals (e.g., healthcare workers, solicitors or paralegals), collaborations with after-school instructors are of a different nature. Given the lack of precedents, interpretations should be approached cautiously. In addition, due to the local geographic scope, generalisations to other situations should also be approached cautiously considering the characteristics of this after-school initiative.

5. Conclusions and implications

Instructors of after-school initiatives assume important roles in educational support, specially with task-shifting. Therefore, collaboration between them and teachers is more relevant than ever. The empirical data shows that the kind of communication affects some aspects of both educational support, as well as the relevance attributed to interpersonal factors. Teachers and instructors should have proactive attitudes towards collaboration because trust and effective partnership develop through time and working together. Thus, in addition to considering the orientation, supportive environment, structured interactions and students' engagement in after-school initiatives (Pierce et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2010), we suggest including across-sites collaboration as a defining component of their quality. As pointed out in other studies (Borg & Drange, 2019), our results suggest that educational systems should reorganise the available resources and facilitate across-sites collaboration to optimise them. The current policies supporting the

MTSS approach are on the right track, but it is necessary to articulate how to put them into practice emphasizing its RTI philosophy to continue overcoming the remaining barriers.

This study showed different barriers that should be addressed to achieve effective collaborations. In addition to the 1) scarce and reactive communication, 2) time constraints, 3) concerns over confidentiality identified in school-mental health services collaborations (Ekornes, 2015), we find challenges regarding 4) stakeholders' attitudes towards collaboration, 5) conflicting perceptions (not knowing the needs of the other), 6) misuse of technologies to enhance communication, interpersonal relationships and educational support, 7) putting into practice the MTSS approach, and 8) the scant administrative support to MTSS implementation. Even though these challenges as well as the existence of poor employment and deployment conditions of instructors, our findings pointed out that successful collaborations can be achieved.

To this end, the parties involved should purposefully consider how across-sites effective communication and collaboration should be implemented. This way of collaborating should be flexible to the preferences of the stakeholders as we observed that there is no single valid way. In addition to the formal meetings between teacher and instructor, which should take place at least at the beginning of each term to support the instructors, readjust objectives, tasks and routines, thus adopting a proactive and preventive character, the stakeholders interviewed recommend using e-mail with short and urgent messages (e.g. "Julia is not bringing in work, is this usual?", "I notice Pol is very irritable, what do we do?") and/or a table with minimum and fundamental aspects in a shared online document to keep the partner informed (e.g., with a Likert-type scale assessing how the students' attitude towards each other and towards the tasks was). Any form must be agreed by both parties and be acceptable otherwise it will only serve to

deteriorate the collaborative relationship by affecting the educational support offered. Their communication should be considered and scheduled in teachers' regular time for coordination, as it is currently done with other professionals with whom the teachers work. The same with the instructors, as collaboration with teachers should be part of their routinary tasks so it must be remunerated. Despite the evidenced need to expand access to extracurricular programs for disadvantaged youth (Heath et al., 2018), if there are budget constraints, organizations could opt for reducing students' support time because it is not only the amount of time that matters but its quality, and how this additional support is implemented and structured (Leos-Urbel, 2015).

Instructors are not teachers so they might not know how to effectively implement active methods, support students and network with stakeholders. Across sites collaboration is not only an individual responsibility, but something that should be supported and integrated at organizational level (Ekornes, 2015). Consistent with other investigations, a leader with clear roles regarding network coordination is essential (Borg & Drange, 2019; Díaz-Gibson et al., 2016). In particular, it is relevant that as regards schools with numerous professionals involved (e.g., secondary schools) there is a contact person serving as the point of reference, who can encourage or foster contact without becoming a traditional supervisory figure, always bearing in mind the importance of contact and sharing first-hand information between instructors and teachers. In fact, when a fluid communication is obtained, it is easier to realize the benefits it entails. Knowing that if attitudes are favourable, interpersonal factors improve through contact, teacher-instructor pairs should be maintained through time; after-school organisations should assign instructors consequently. Proximity among stakeholders can improve familiarity and lead to other formal and informal collaborations within the network (Mowrey & King, 2019) such as attending school

trainings for free, being included in pertinent meetings to give their point of view and discuss the kid with other professionals, or participating in community events, thus creating a win-win situation.

This kind of collaboration and supervision with the opportunities to review goals, share ideas and learn from one another is already a form of ongoing training. However, to properly support an effective implementation of MTSS, both instructors and teachers need training in this task shifting —e.g., addressed at clarifying roles and jointly scaffold learning for independence (Radford, Bosanquet, Webster, & Blatchford, 2015)— and collaborative skills. This training must involve both stakeholders as recommended in other kinds of hierarchical relationships (Webster et al., 2013). Policymakers should, therefore, provide paid time for instructors' training as well as improving the system currently used to reward those teachers involved in this after-school initiative. Participating teachers are rewarded by recognizing the time spent in coordination as training hours in their job bank. Having this option and despite the extrinsic motivation behind it, we recommend only rewarding those teachers who really get involved as our results show that teachers' participation should improve.

To articulate a sustainable training model, Frazier's et al. (2019) three-tiered proposal might be an effective option. The first tier consists of self-training supported through a virtual platform with training capsules on the most relevant topics for the practice (with slides, materials and video exemplars from frontline staff). Tier 2 involves in-person workshops and tier 3, real-time on-site coaching addressed at these struggling stakeholders, supporting them, for instance, in problem-solving, modelling skills or whatever they need. Again, quality must prevail over quantity so organizations should plan how to deal with this, perhaps prioritising the most vulnerable schools or

networking with universities with a *service learning* (Vess et al., 2018) or including some of the initiative's needs as an applied project within a subject.

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Appendix 10: Results on formal communication opportunities, teamwork, hierarchy and sense of belonging

Appendix 10: Results on formal communication opportunities, teamwork, hierarchy and sense of belonging

The findings are presented in four sub-sections that correspond to the four main categories that emerged from the data analysis: opportunities for formal communication, teamwork, hierarchy, and sense of belonging to the school.

1. Formal communication opportunities.

Out of the stakeholders that shared their experience with formal communication (n = 37), most stated that TAs did not participate in important meetings. Understanding as important meetings, those dealing with programming, student day-to-day, Attention to Diversity Committees, meetings where individual plans (IPs) are agreed on, assessment meetings or, even, interviews with the families. In fact, 25 stakeholders specifically mentioned that they didn't even meet with their support partner. The profile of those who did participate in said meetings was that of the TAs hired by the Department of Education. Let's remember that only the TAs hired by the Department have paid coordination hours, yet, even so, in 5 schools they were still not included in these meetings. The opposite is also true; carers who attended the meetings they were able too but were not paid for it (TA-1, TA-2, TA-4, TA-9 and TA-10):

I don't know if they pay them for it or not, if it's included in their timetable or not, but they always do more than they should, you know? I mean, she always comes to all the assessment meetings, the coordination meetings, and from one to three she's not working. She's here so she doesn't have to go home. She's here with us, if we have to prepare material, or have to create the schedule, restructure it, if we have to create the "IP", she's with us. We always try to speak, her and I, or with any people who come to assist the girl, because we're all together in this. [...] when the EAP physiotherapist comes, once a week, she also comes with us. Of course, communication is very important. [...] It's lucky that she's at the school the whole day. This doesn't happen with another carer who only comes two days. Then we need to stay longer, or she has to come to explain, to try... you know?
(Teacher-13)

The stakeholders agreed that formal communication between all the people who offer support is essential to complete the big picture and also act consistently (e.g., TA-6,

Teacher-11, TA-14, etc.). Even when they had meetings, Teacher-16 believes they were not enough since they were once a month:

Sometimes it's complicated, there are many cases, there are many different form teachers, and, yes, we do have some meetings, but they're once a month. And I think it should be like the class meeting, in the moment where you're planning what you'll do that week. That both the special education teacher and the TA can be there to know what we'll be doing, and between all of us prepare the work for these students. And this... it's difficult to find this space, really. We've been lucky that we understood each other very well and that we immediately, we planned things very quickly and very on the go, but it's true that we need this planning

As to the differences between TAs, Teacher-5 mentioned not understanding the reason for having three different support TAs with different conditions, that it was confusing that some of them could attend CADs and others coordination meetings, and others couldn't. Whether they had formal coordination forums or not, participants highlighted the importance of spontaneous informal exchanges; 25 stakeholders explained that in any moment they can find they agreed on and planned what they would do, how, and their objectives. They also mentioned exchanging information about the state of the students and their development in the corridors ($n = 31$), and, even still, 11 highlighted the importance of signals and non-verbal communication inside the classroom:

It's signalling to see how it's going, I'm very expressive, we also communicate out loud, we don't hide anything in the classroom, you see? How's the kid? How's it going? And she tells you what's happening. You see? There's a dynamic, an interaction, whether by looks, gestures, and also verbally, I mean, we speak plainly! (Teacher-1)

This more informal communication requires mutual understanding, having generated certain amounts of trust, a bond and symbiosis within the classroom:

We notice everything on our faces. We may not even need a gesture, yes? There are things that happen and we look at each other and you know what she's thinking, of course because it's been a long time, unless it's someone it's the first year you're working with them [...] you immediately create a bond and you know when something is going on, when not, to you. Then, how she looks at you, and he [the assigned student] is calm you get up and help. (TA-1)

2. Teamwork

Of the 29 participants who delved into teamwork, most of them specified working as a team. This fact allows the interaction to be complementary:

Four eyes see more than two. Where one can't reach, there's the other. She's still a professional! I think that if she can make contributions fantastic, in the end it needs to be teamwork [...] it's a plus; she contributed some things and I contributed others and we have listened to each other (Teacher-14)

In teamwork, where one doesn't reach, the other does (e.g., Teacher-8 and TA-18), thus being able to eliminate more barriers in participation and learning (TA14) while offering a more individualised attention (e.g., Teacher-10 and TA-20). In addition, the more points of view, the richer the information you gain (Teacher-6).

Comradeship is fundamental because it impacts the group: "I don't have to focus only on my two students, nor has the teacher to say that we each do our own job separately" (TA-13). It is a side by side job, where partners help each other (Teacher-8), and progress should be understood in this teamwork context, not just thanks to a teacher or TA (TA-10).

Teamwork helps maintain coherence between stakeholders, all working together (e.g., TA-1 and TA-5), something that is important that the students perceive as well, as TA-21 highlighted. In this sense, it is useful to systematise procedures and responses, and invite the participation even of lunch monitors (Teacher-4). Up to 10 participants reported experiences of systematised response. There needs to be communication and agreements since everyone has different experience, but they share the same objective (Teacher-14). In fact, Teacher-3 remarked that in the agreements and in the role carried out by each TA, everyone's knowledge needs to be taken into account; since, according to Teacher-16, TAs are the ones who are more used to working with these students. Highlighting her experience Teacher-4 specified guiding TAs when they are not sufficiently trained.

Participants also detailed other conditions that help teamwork such as: getting to know each other and developing trust (Teacher-2), that teachers take into account the TAs'

schedule to be able to plan accordingly (Teacher-17), or, guaranteeing both formal and informal communication and negotiation including in the work network all the stakeholders belonging to the educational community (TA-6):

It's not really so much adult-to-adult, but more structured. I'm used to working in a different way, more as a network or team. I'm not saying that we don't work as a team here [school], but in all the projects I've worked on outside every day we would have small meetings or once a week, to try on the strategies needed. Here, the meetings, even if they are stage meetings or only with the special education team, we would need more, we would need more coordination, in this sense.

This teamwork, therefore, is not just a merely interpersonal matter, but is also influenced by the traditional ways of school organisation and attention to diversity. As a matter of fact, TA-22 regrets having to start all over again not just with the measures but also with awareness-raising among teachers when the students change years or form teachers, showing a lack of teamwork at faculty level.

3. Hierarchy perception

Most of the teachers and TAs that addressed the subject of hierarchy perceived their relationship as equal, saying that they did not feel as if one of them was above the other or felt different, given that they shared a team dynamic with complementary roles (e.g., TA-1 and Teacher-14). Some (e.g., Teacher-14, TA-10, TA-8, TA-20, etc.), even used the word “teacher” to talk about how they treated TAs or how they felt treated: ‘I’ve always considered her like another teacher’ (Teacher-10) or “I don’t like having someone in the classroom that says -I’m the teacher and you’re the TA-, we are in the classroom and we are two adults and we are both working” (Teacher-18). In fact, Teacher-17 distinguished between a more assisting model and a more pedagogic one, linking it to the peer-to-peer treatment and teamwork between different professionals:

It's important to have a vision of equality. Otherwise, you have a more an assisting than a pedagogic vision, don't you? It's the crux of the matter. We're equal and we're working, I may have a different responsibility but at a pedagogic level we are the same. [...] she comes here because she's a professional that is at the same level as me in a lot of aspects and I believed that what sometimes fails is that we

believe that more than a team it's an assistance, I do and she helps me, instead of saying let's do it together, you have some functions I have some others but we do it jointly. [...] teamwork with the person in the classroom is paramount, that there isn't a hierarchical vision but a peer-to-peer one with different functions (Teacher-17).

The fact of not being conceived as the teacher's helpers but as specialists was relevant for TA-20. As Teacher-11 pointed out, it's that one of them is in charge of the other but that each has to know their functions clearly and that the form teacher has the last word, but as the one responsible for the students, not the TAs. As to the treatment given, Teacher-12 specified that it was the same she give any other stakeholder she work with:

I see the relationship as equal, I don't place myself above her, I'm simply the one who explains things because I'm the kid's form teacher, not because I'm the boss. Same as my colleague and if anyone else came because I'm the kid's form teacher, not because I feel like above them, but because I'm the one who has the information.

TA's perceive this equal treatment when they are allowed to participate, they are listened to, their opinions are considered and they are taken into account, decisions are made jointly, they can do and undo with autonomy, and they can talk openly without feeling self-conscious or small (e.g., TA-22, TA-4, TA-18, TA-16 and TA-9).

Nevertheless, these same aspects were also reported in the opposite case when TAs did not feel they were being treated equally, along with feeling under-informed and perceiving little respect for their functions (e.g., TA-13, TA-17, TA-16 and TA-3). For instance, TA-17 regretted being the only one who always changed [cleaned] the student regardless of whether she was in the room at the time or supporting another student in a different year. For the same reason, TA-3 ended up asking herself 'Who am I to you?'

Teacher-16 stated that it is also important that students perceive teachers and TAs as equals. The type of school and its classroom methodology contribute to blur or make clearer the hierarchy between stakeholders (Teacher-10). Teacher-3 added that the amount of hours a TA is in the classroom also makes students see a difference. In this

sense, the most reported factors that make achieving equal relationships between teachers and TAs are attributed to more external factors, such as the working conditions of some TAs (who hires them, work categories, type of workday, paid hours for meetings and coordination, etc.), than to interpersonal factors. For instance, TA-16 felt she was at a different level than the other professionals because of the lack of direct coordination: “The feeling is that there are levels, the form teachers talk to someone and that someone then talks to you... and if they tell you it’s in a more informal way, ... we have to go through a different path”. Teacher-8 specified that the system itself doesn’t allow TAs to feel equal, since it doesn’t make sure that they take part in everything that academic life entails. Given these conditions, carer TA-3 perceived the deployment of TAs as hierarchic:

As long as we don’t belong to the Department, we will be no one. Then there’s the SEA and all those people and they, although they also belong to the Department they are of a lower level. You are of a lower level. Your work category is on this line and, after that is the ground. (TA-3)

In addition, TA-19 manifested that this barrier is found in the school’s structure in general, the institution, in contrast with the horizontal manner in which work is structured in other community-based projects. Nonetheless, when the work is done on a peer-to-peer basis and everyone’s role is considered relevant, it is possible to make TAs feel more comfortable and respected (TA-18, Teacher-7). Therefore, the interpersonal factors as well as the management’s role (Teacher-4 and TA-14) can contribute to mitigate or expand these system deficiencies.

4. Sense of belonging to the school

From the 31 stakeholders who talked about the TAs’ feeling of belonging to the school, most of them perceived that the TAs in these inclusive schools felt like part of the team. They based this on the fact that they were taken into account both for formal and informal aspects, which foster group cohesion. They highlighted that there was a great deal of exchange of information (e.g., TA-12, Teacher-1, Teacher-13) where everyone knew them (Teacher-15) and a relationship had been forged (TA-2); TAs are like another member of the school (TA-22). They noted that the team made them feel valued (e.g.,

TA-1, Teacher-15, Teacher-16) and they perceived that they could participate and contribute everywhere (e.g., TA-21, TA-13). In fact, feeling like “a mushroom” at the school (TA-6), is attributed to the chances each one of them had of participating, of being able to take part in all aspects (TA-11). Teacher-14 attributes not feeling included to “not being part of school life”. The consequence, according to Teacher-12 is:

TAs disconnected from the school, that is, they are focussed on an activity with a child, but they lose the vision of a whole school, of certain operations... They are in the school and they aren't. [...] it's easy for a carer to feel alone in a school because they have a different schedule than the teachers, don't attend meetings, that's where teachers unite or get closer together, where we're more relaxed

TA-13, like TA-11, experienced that getting closer was more difficult with larger teams, schools with more lines and secondary schools. Therefore, to foster the feeling of belonging of TAs it's important for them to be included and have voice, not just in meetings and coordination that affect them (planning, assessment of the students they support, Attention to Diversity Committees), but a participation in decision-making at school and community level, just as Teacher-14 argued:

It's very important that all these people who participate take part in everything, no? Not just because of the interaction in the classroom but for their integration at school level. In the end, they are a member of the school, it's necessary that they can participate. [...] if for example you have a faculty meeting and talk about a party, she finds things as they come. It's not the same for people to talk to you about it or getting a piece of paper than being in the meeting and being able to speak and make decisions. If for instance this person needs to offer support at an event that takes place at the school, why can't they be there when how the event will be is explained? If it's seen as support! It's not the same that the information is transmitted than if there is involvement (Teacher-14)

It is also important for TAs to participate in informal moments that contribute to the cohesion of the group, like the fact of having lunch with the teachers, sharing coffee breaks or trainings; in short, to participate in the activities the team shares (TA-20). At the same time, the contract conditions that differentiate TAs according to their profile can pose a barrier to the feeling of belonging. Teacher-6 even added that ‘if they were fully

integrated, we [teachers] wouldn't have certain oversights towards them'. In fact, the different stakeholders actually perceived this difference:

We never have the carer in faculty or other meetings or anything like this. It's not that we don't count on her, it's that she isn't there because of time matter. Instead, the educator is just like one more in the faculty, if we have any faculty events, stage meetings, other meetings..., she's there, she's part of my stage, she's with us, and talks to us and participates just the same, and makes comments and contributes like everyone else, and her ideas have the same value as any other. [...] I believe that the figures of the carer and educator should be at the school, the work they do should be valued, it's a reality inside the classroom, they're not appreciated enough and the work they do is super important; this difference doesn't exist inside. (Teacher-18)

Despite the different profiles, there are schools that manage that all the team feel like part of the school. TA-1 attributed this to the school's way of doing or philosophy: 'There are some values, principles, some ways of doing that make that the whole community of workers feels this way'. In this sense, the management team is key, the welcome, treatment and inclusion of TAs by all the teachers (e.g., TA-18, TA-7, TA-10, Teacher-1). For TA-8, "feeling that it's my school has made me able to put up with the conditions we're under". Teacher attitudes can also, to a greater or lesser degree, compensate this system failure (TA-3):

There are teachers that don't count on me and don't ask me anything. I had another one who guided me with everything, shared projects, objectives, assessment, they would give me a grid and ask me how did it go? What did you see? What do you think? They always told me that if I noticed anything we would changed it and it was true. Then I had another one who didn't even say good morning to me, or what we'd do or anything for the child.

Regarding compensating these barriers, several stakeholders (e.g., Teacher-18, Teacher-7, Teacher-10) argued that keeping TAs the maximum of time in a same group is useful as much for the group to be able to count on them as for them to be able to feel like the group and school are theirs.

Appendix 11: Phase 2 informed consents

Consentiment informat

L'objectiu de la participació és *estudiar les interaccions que es produeixen entre docents i personal no docent de suport en el suport educatiu*. Les dades seran tractades de forma **anònima i confidencial** amb finalitats acadèmiques. Les **gravacions de veu** no seran reproduïdes en cap context públic sols s'utilitzaran per estudiar els components que poden contribuir a millorar el suport educatiu en el marc d'un sistema educatiu inclusiu. La investigació forma part de la tesi doctoral de l'Andrea Jardí dirigida pel Dr. Ignasi Puigdemívol (Universitat de Barcelona).

Per aconseguir el propòsit demanem **entrevistar-nos**, amb **personal no docent de suport** i amb un dels **docents** amb qui el propi personal no docent de suport o l'escola considera que forma un bon tàndem i també amb **representants sindicals**. En qualsevol moment el/la participant podrà enretirar-se de la recerca. Així mateix, serà informat/da dels resultats obtinguts gràcies a aquesta col·laboració.

El Sr./Sra. _____, amb DNI o passaport nº _____, dono el meu consentiment de participació a la **Universitat de Barcelona** en el marc d'una col·laboració per una tesi doctoral.

Firma

_____, _____ del 2016.

Appendix 12: Phase 2 instruments

Questionnaire for Teacher Assistants

Section 1:

1. Gender:

☐ Female

☐ Male

2. What year were you born? _____

3. As what kind of TA were you hired?

☐ Carer (external entity/company contract)

☐ Special Education Assistant (Department contract)

☐ Special Education Educator (Department contract)

4. Years (school years) working as a TA, SEA or SEE: _____

5. What was your original academic level?

☐ Did not have a high school diploma

☐ High school diploma

☐ Middle Grade Training Cycle⁴ (Vocational Education)

☐ Superior-level Training Cycle³ (Vocational Education)

☐ University studies related to education

☐ University studies **not** related to education

6. Have you continued your higher education studies?

☐ Yes (go to 6.1)

☐ No (go to 6.2)

6.1. What kind of higher education studies? (vocational training or university)

☐ Related to education

☐ Not related to education

6.2. Would you like at some point in the future to study a university degree or do some vocational training related to education?

☐ Yes

☐ No

7. Is being a Carer, SEA, or SEE the career you want to follow in life?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Section 2:

1.1. Kind of centre where you work:

☐ State school

☐ Private

☐ Semi-private funded school

1.2.

1.3. In what level of education are you currently working?

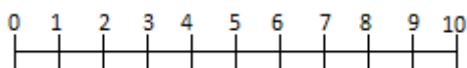
- ☐ Preschool
 ☐ Last 2 years of high school
☐ Primary (16 to 18 years old)
☐ Secondary

2. Did you receive initial training to perform your job?

- ☐ Yes sufficient
 ☐ Yes but insufficient
 ☐ No

3. Was the training your received useful to help you better work with the students?

Gradient (0 = it wasn't useful/I had none --> 10 = the training was perfect and well adapted to the necessities of practice)



4. Have you had any complementary training?

- ☐ No
☐ Yes with the school
☐ Yes on my own

5. Your last training (including on your own) was...

- ☐ This school year/term
☐ Last school year
☐ 2 school years ago

☐ 3 school years ago
☐ 4 school years ago
☐ 5 or more school years ago

Section 3:

1. What were you hired to do? (multiple choice)

- ☐ I don't know what my exact tasks /duties are
- ☐ **Be** with the students during academic activities
- ☐ **Be** with the students during academic and **extracurricular** activities
- ☐ **Supporting** students to participate in activities organised by the educational centre
- ☐ Fostering positive **relations** between the student and their environment
- ☐ **Helping** with the movement around the classroom and the centre (in general)
- ☐ **Helping** with different aspects of their personal autonomy (hygiene, eating, etc.)
- ☐ **Carrying out** specific **activities** set out by the tutor (teacher) with the students
- ☐ **Applying** work **programs** prepared by the **tutor** or **specialists**
- ☐ Applying work **programs** prepared jointly
- ☐ **Only** looking after the student for whom I have been hired
- ☐ Looking after **all students** but especially the one I have been hired for
- ☐ Collaborating in the development of activities to **make the use of leisure time more dynamic** and socially aware
- ☐ Collaborating with **conflict resolution**
- ☐ Intervening when there is **disruptive behaviour**
- ☐ **Only** in charge of **controlling** the student's behaviour
- ☐ Other: _____

Preparing

- ☐ Preparing didactic materials and supports for the progress of the sessions
- ☐ **Participating** on **creating** activities for the development of specific tasks (personal autonomy, obtaining hygiene habits, social abilities, mobility and movement, sensory stimulation, life abilities, etc.)
- ☐ **Creating** specific **tasks** (personal autonomy, obtaining hygiene habits, social abilities, mobility and movement, sensory stimulation, life abilities, etc.)
- ☐ Adjusting **the tasks** to the specific student
- ☐ Other:: _____

Cooperation

- ☐ Collaborating on **planning** and **developing** personal autonomy habits of the student
- ☐ **Sharing** the planning **prior** to every session (coordination) with each teacher
- ☐ Regularly **commenting** aspects of the **adjustments** with each teacher
- ☐ Collaborating with other professionals, services and specialists.
- ☐ Being part of the education team and participating in the implementation of the **centre's educational project**
- ☐ Informing and counselling **families**.
- ☐ Other: _____

Assessment

- ☐ Participating in the process of **observing** children
- ☐ Providing **information** for the assessment of the student
- ☐ **Assessing** the student's objectives

☐ Other: _____

2. What tasks do you CARRY OUT DAILY? (multiple choice)

- ☐ I don't know what my exact tasks /duties are
- ☐ **Be** with the students during academic activities
- ☐ **Be** with the students during academic and **extracurricular** activities
- ☐ **Supporting** students to participate in activities organised by the educational centre
- ☐ Fostering positive **relations** between the student and their environment
- ☐ **Helping** with the movement around the classroom and the centre.
- ☐ **Helping** with different aspects of their personal autonomy (hygiene, eating, etc.)
- ☐ **Carrying out** specific **activities** set out by the tutor teacher with the students.
- ☐ **Applying** work **programs** prepared by the **tutor** or **specialists**.
- ☐ Applying work **programs** prepared jointly.
- ☐ **Only** looking after the student for whom I have been hired.
- ☐ Looking after **all students** but especially the one I have been hired for.
- ☐ Contributing in the development of activities to **make the use of leisure time more dynamic** and socially aware.
- ☐ Collaborating with **conflict resolution**.
- ☐ Intervening when there is **disruptive behaviour**.
- ☐ **Only** in charge of **controlling** the student's behaviour.
- ☐ Other: _____

Preparation

- ☐ Preparing didactic materials and supports for the progress of the sessions.
- ☐ **Participating** on **creating** activities for the development of specific tasks (personal autonomy, obtaining hygiene habits, social abilities, mobility and movement, sensory stimulation, life abilities, etc.)
- ☐ **Creating** specific **tasks** (personal autonomy, obtaining hygiene habits, social abilities, mobility and movement, sensory stimulation, life abilities, etc.)
- ☐ Adjusting **the tasks** to the specific student.
- ☐ Other: _____

Cooperation

- ☐ Collaborating on **planning** and **developing** personal autonomy habits of the student.
- ☐ **Sharing** the planning **prior** to every session (coordination) with each teacher
- ☐ Regularly **commenting** aspects of the **adjustments** with each teacher.
- ☐ Collaborating with other professionals, services and specialists.
- ☐ Being part of the education team and participating in the implementation of the **centre's educational project**.
- ☐ Informing and counseling **families**.
- ☐ Other: _____

Assessment

- ☐ Participating in the process of **observing** children.
- ☐ Providing **information** for the assessment of the student.

- ☐ **Assessing** the student's objectives.

Other: _____

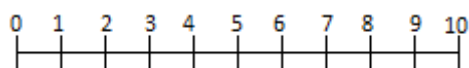
3. **What is the diagnosis or affliction of the students you usually support?** (for example, autism, intellectual disability, etc.)

4. **Where is the support usually carried out?**

- ☐ Inside the ordinary classroom
☐ In a Special Educational Support Unit (with other SEN students outside of the ordinary classroom.)
☐ Outside of the classroom
☐ Other: _____

5. **How do you take part?** (for example, I am by their side explaining again everything that has been said so that they can follow what is being done)

6. **Can you carry out the work you are supposed to for every student inside your working time slot?** Gradient (0= I never can, up to 10= I always can)



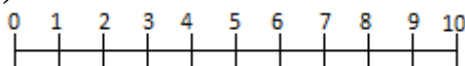
7. **Do you need more training to carry out these tasks?**

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

8. **Who supervises you and/or gives you support?** (for example, an educational psychologist, teachers, the headmaster/headmistress, etc.)

9. **Who do you coordinate with?** For example, teachers, educational psychologists, EAP, CDIAP, etc. (If you do not coordinate with anyone, write "no one".) _____

10. **Do you have time to coordinate?** Gradient 0= we don't have time – 10= We have all the time we need)



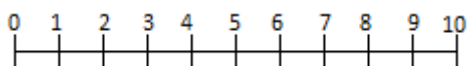
11. How does your professional relationship with the teacher in the classroom affect the student?

12. Which of the tasks you carry out do you think are more favourable for the improvement and progress of the student?

13. To what degree do the tasks of the previous question require a tight coordination with the tutor teacher or other adults?

14. What challenges do you find that can affect the attention of the students?

15. What is your degree of satisfaction with this job? Gradient(0 = none, to 10 = very satisfied)



16. Other comments:

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire. Your participation will help to identify the role performed by your group (TAs) and your situation.

Guiding questions for Teacher Assistants (Semi-structured Interview).

1. Where does the support take place?
2. How do you know who takes care of what inside the classroom? Did you know exactly what to do at the beginning, and now? Possible changes with experience.
3. In respects with the student with difficulties how do you operate? Do you keep rotating to tend to them?
4. Does your way of working change a lot from one student to the other? What about from one teacher to the other?
5. Who do you feel is responsible for the student?
6. How would you define your relationship with the teacher that is in the classroom?
7. Would you need to be given more training?
8. Do you feel like your point of view is being heard?
9. How do you participate in the student's assessment?
10. What improvements would you need?
11. What is the support that you need the most to carry out your job?
12. Is there anyone to supervise you or give you support? How?
13. From the tasks you carry out, which do you think are more favourable for the student's progress?
14. How does your presence affect your student in their relationship with the other students, from your point of view?
15. How does your presence affect your student in their relationship with the teacher, from your point of view?

Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

Guiding questions for Teachers (Semi-structured Interview).

1. How does the school coordinate with the TA? From the first day?
2. What does the TA do, how do they participate? What do you do in respect to them?
3. Do you act differently depending on whether it's an educator, an assistant or a carer?
4. Are there difficulties relating to this support in order to operate in an inclusive way?
5. How would you qualify your responsibility towards that student when the TA is present?
6. In your view, how does the TA's presence affect the relationship between the student and the other students?
7. Are you clear on how to work with the TA? Do you feel well prepared?
8. Of the tasks they perform, which do you think are more conducive to the student's progress?
9. What would you highlight from this interaction?
10. What difficulties do you observe to help with the student's inclusion?

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Guiding questions for Union Representatives (Semi-structured Interview).

1. Which is your role in supporting TAs?
2. Do you deal with *all* TA?
3. What are their current conditions? Hiring, training, management, roles? Are they clear on them?
4. How do they know how to best give support?
5. What are the difficulties with which they find themselves?
6. What do you think would be necessary to improve things?
7. Is there anything else we think it's important to talk about?

Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

Appendix 13: Phase 3 informed consents

Consentiment informat

L'objectiu de la participació és *estudiar les interaccions que es produeixen entre docents i personal no docent de suport en el suport educatiu*. Les dades seran tractades de forma **anònima i confidencial** amb finalitats acadèmiques. Les **gravacions de veu** no seran reproduïdes en cap context públic sols s'utilitzaran per estudiar els components que poden contribuir a millorar el suport educatiu en el marc d'un sistema educatiu inclusiu. La investigació forma part de la tesi doctoral de l'Andrea Jardí dirigida pel Dr. Ignasi Puigdemívol (Universitat de Barcelona) i hi col·labora el Consell Superior d'Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu (Departament d'Educació, Generalitat de Catalunya).

Per aconseguir el propòsit demanem **entrevistar-nos**, per un costat amb **vetlladors/es, educadors/es d'educació especial i auxiliars d'educació especial** i, per un altre, amb un dels **docents** amb qui el propi personal no docent de suport o l'escola considera que forma un bon tàndem. En qualsevol moment el/la participant podrà enretirar-se de la recerca. Així mateix, serà informat/da dels resultats obtinguts gràcies a aquesta col·laboració.

El Sr./Sra. _____, amb DNI o passaport nº _____, dono el meu consentiment de participació al **Consell Superior d'Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu** i a la **Universitat de Barcelona** en el marc d'una col·laboració per una tesi doctoral.

Firma

_____, _____ del 2019.

Appendix 14: Phase 3 instruments

Interview guide

This is a semi-structured interview guide¹ for TAs and teachers with a first structured part focused on collecting sociodemographic data. The content part is based on four topics — 1) roles, 2) communication, 3) interpersonal interaction and 4) professional identity — with two open questions in each.

Sociodemographic data

- Age:
- Gender:
- Professional profile:
- Highest education level:
- Years of experience as TA/teacher:
- Contract hours:
- School year/years where you work:
- Number of pupils supported (assigned):
- Diagnosis of the students supported:

1) Roles

- How do you support the students?
- How have you reached this way of practice?

2) Communication

- How and when do you communicate?
- How have you reached this way of communication?

3) Interpersonal interaction

- How is the relationship you feel more/less comfortable with?
- What makes you feel this way? How do you get there?

4) Professional identity.

- How do you feel professionally? / How do you see TAs as professionals?

¹It should be noted that this is a tentative guide that should be used in a flexible way. As Brantlinger et al. (2005) suggested questions might be modified or added to as evidence emerge.

Appendix 15: Phase 4 instruments

Èxit 1 i 3, formulari d'amics grans

Bloc 1: Dades socio-demogràfiques

1. **Sexe:**
2. **Edat:**
 - ☐ Formació universitària:Relacionada amb l'educació
 - ☐ No relacionada amb l'educació
3. **Has portat mai grups d' esplais, caus o altres projectes amb nens o adolescents?**
 - ☐ Sí
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Sí però no sent-ne responsable total (pràcticums)
4. **Cursos que portes fent Èxit durant el curs**
 - ☐ Aquest és el primer any
 - ☐ 2 cursos
 - ☐ 3 cursos
 - ☐ 4 cursos
 - ☐ 5 cursos
 - ☐ 6 cursos o més
5. **Has fet èxit estiu?**
 - ☐ Sí
 - ☐ No
6. **Tens doble beca?**
 - ☐ Sí (els portarà a una pàgina amb qüestions dels dos centres)
 - ☐ No (els portarà a una pàgina amb qüestions d'un centre)

BLOC 2: Centre 1

7. **Nom del centre** (si el grup el formen alumnes de diferents escoles, posar el nom de totes):_____
8. **Escola/curs de l'ESO:**_____
9. **Quants anys fa que treballes amb aquest grup?**
 - ☐ És el primer curs en aquest centre
 - ☐ És el primer curs amb els alumnes però repeteixo escola/curs d'ESO.
 - ☐ Ja havia tingut aquests alumnes el curs passat (més o menys la meitat són els mateixos)
 - ☐ Porto tres o més cursos amb aquests alumnes (més o menys la meitat són els mateixos)
 - ☐ Porto tres o més cursos treballant amb aquesta escola/curs d'ESO.
10. **Què és el que fas cada dia d'Èxit amb aquest grup?** (múltiple opció)
 - ☐ Breu intercanvi amb tutors/es
 - ☐ Acabar els deures
 - ☐ Estudiar per exàmens

- ☐ Treballar tècniques d'estudi
- ☐ Activitats relacionades amb el que treballen
- ☐ Activitats segons les seves necessitats i/o interessos
- ☐ Jocs de lleure
- ☐ Jocs amb rerefons acadèmic
- ☐ Jocs vinculats amb el que treballen
- ☐ Atendre els aspectes que els preocupen
- ☐ Altres: _____

11. En general, quins canvis perceps des de l'inici de curs fins ara? (conscients que no són atribuïbles només a l'Èxit sinó al conjunt de situacions i accions realitzades) Resposta múltiple:

- ☐ Han **empitjorat**
- ☐ Es mantenen **igual**
- ☐ Fan més els **deures**
- ☐ Tenen més **hàbits** d'estudi i **autonomia**
- ☐ Millores en els **aprenentatges** (millora de resultats)
- ☐ Millores en el **benestar** de l'alumnat
- ☐ Altres: _____

12. Com n'estàs de satisfet/a amb la feina que has fet a l'Èxit amb el "teu grup" aquest any (sent 0 gens satisfet/a i 10 molt satisfet/a)? _____

13. Valoreu el funcionament d'aquest curs (0-10) en relació amb els següents aspectes:

- Ha estat un espai on els alumnes han pogut **treballar** _____
- El **vincle** que he fet amb els alumnes _____
- El **respecte** que m'han tingut els alumnes _____
- La relació entre alumnes _____
- L'ajuda quant a **deures** i **estudi** _____
- L'ajuda quant a **hàbits** i **organització** _____
- L'ajuda actitudinal i **emocional** _____
- **Gestió** de grup -rutines de treball, respecte, propostes després dels deures- _____
- Els alumnes han respectat les normes _____
- Jo he mantingut i he estat coherent i consistent amb les normes _____
- Resolució de **conflictes** _____
- La **tria** d'alumnes que s'ha fet pel reforç _____
- **Comunicacions** i intercanvis **ordinaris**, per part de l'Èxit _____
- **Comunicacions** i intercanvis **ordinaris**, per part del centre _____
- **Comunicació** quan hi ha hagut **conflictes**, per part de l'Èxit _____
- **Comunicació** quan hi ha hagut **conflictes**, per part del centre _____
- Les reunions _____

- L'horari de l'ESO _____
- Els informes _____
- L'acompanyament del/de la coordinador/a _____
- La meua relació amb el/la coordinador/a _____

14. Quin suport haguessis necessitat per millorar el teu dia a dia? (múltiple opció)

- ☐ Tenir més contacte amb tutors
- ☐ Formació inicial per aprendre millors rutines i/o dinàmiques.
- ☐ Formació inicial centrada en la gestió de grup i/o comportament.
- ☐ Formació ajustada a les necessitats que tinc amb el grup
- ☐ Temps d'assessorament quan hi ha conflictes o per millorar el que faig
- ☐ Una altra persona dins l'aula
- ☐ Més acompanyament dels coordinadors
- ☐ Tenir preparat material
- ☐ Tenir unes millors normes des de l'inici
- ☐ Altres: _____

15. De tot el que heu fet, què creieu que ha estat més beneficiós pels alumnes?

16. Què voldries millorar pel proper any? (resposta múltiple)

- ☐ Aspectes relacionats amb la comunicació amb els **docents**.
- ☐ Aspectes relacionats amb la comunicació amb el/la **coordinador/a**.
- ☐ Aspectes relacionats amb la interacció i relació amb els **alumnes**.
- ☐ Aspectes relacionats amb l'**organització** i **gestió** de l'aula.
- ☐ Aspectes relacionats amb els **meus coneixements de les matèries**.
- ☐ No necessito millorar en res
- ☐ Altres: _____

Qüestionari per a docents

1. **Nom** del centre de primària o secundària: _____

2. **Curs** _____

3. **Marca el teu perfil:**

- ☐ Tutor/a
- ☐ Referent de centre (coordinador d'èxit)
- ☐ Tutor/a i referent

4. **Cursos que portes fent l'Èxit de durant el curs**

☐ Aquest és el primer	☐ 4 cursos
☐ 2 cursos	☐ 5 cursos
☐ 3 cursos	☐ 6 cursos o més

5. **En general, què considereu més important del programa Èxit? Valoreu cadascun dels aspectes de 0 (gens important) a 10 (molt important)**

- L'oportunitat de tenir un **espai** de treball amb l'**ajuda d'un adult** _____
- Les **relacions** que fan els alumnes amb la resta d'alumnes _____
- El **vincle** alumnes-personal de l'Èxit que no tenen el rol ni d'amics ni de docents _____
- Les activitats de **lectura** amb els voluntaris de lectura _____
- La **manera de fer** de l'amic gran quant a gestió d'aula, conflictes i que impliqui els alumnes _____
- Els **coneixements** acadèmics dels amics grans _____
- L'**experiència** de l'amic gran en aquest centre _____
- Haver fet una bona **selecció** d'alumnes que tinguin interès en fer un reforç compartit, d'uns 10 alumnes _____
- El **contacte** entre primàries i instituts _____
- Una bona **comunicació** tutors-Èxit _____
- Altres: _____
- Altres: _____

Del vostre grup _____

6. **En general, quins canvis percebeu des de l'inici de curs fins ara? (conscients que no són atribuïbles només a l'Èxit sinó al conjunt de situacions i accions realitzades) Resposta múltiple:**

- ☐ Han **empitjorat**
- ☐ Es mantenen **igual**
- ☐ Fan més els **deures**
- ☐ Tenen més **hàbits** d'estudi i **autonomia**
- ☐ Millores en els **aprenentatges** (millora de resultats)
- ☐ Millores en el **benestar** de l'alumnat
- ☐ Menys **absentisme**
- ☐ Més **informació** i **coneixement** dels alumnes (des d'un altre context)
- ☐ Altres: _____

7. Valoreu el funcionament d'aquest curs (0-10) en relació amb els següents aspectes:

- Ha estat un espai on els alumnes han pogut **treballar** (percepció) _____
- La **relació** dels alumnes amb l'amic gran (percepció) _____
- L'ajuda quant a **deures** i **estudi** _____
- L'ajuda quant a **hàbits** i **organització** _____
- L'ajuda actitudinal i **emocional** _____
- **Gestió** de grup -rutines de treball, respecte, propostes després dels deures- (percepció) _____
- Resolució de **conflictes** _____
- La **tria** d'alumnes que s'ha fet pel reforç _____
- **Comunicacions** i intercanvis **ordinaris**, per part de l'Èxit _____
- **Comunicacions** i intercanvis **ordinaris**, per part del centre _____
- **Comunicació** quan hi ha hagut **conflictes**, per part de l'Èxit _____
- **Comunicació** quan hi ha hagut **conflictes**, per part del centre _____
- Les reunions _____
- L'horari de l'ESO _____
- Els informes _____

8. Del que es fa a l'èxit amb els alumnes, què destaqueu com a més beneficis pel vostre grup?

9. Quin seria el mitjà més adequat i assumible per parlar de les dinàmiques a l'Èxit i a l'escola (tutor-amic gran)?

- ☐ Breu intercanvi directe quan s'acaben les classes i comença l'Èxit
- ☐ Correus setmanals
- ☐ Correus quinzenals

- Correus mensuals
- Drive setmanal
- Drive quinzenal
- Drive mensual
- Altres: _____

10. Altres observacions:

Appendix 16: Phase 5 informed consents

Consentiment informat amics grans

L'objectiu de la participació és *estudiar les interaccions que es produeixen durant l'Èxit per contribuir a millorar el suport ofert*. Les dades seran tractades de forma **anònima i confidencial** amb finalitats acadèmiques. Les gravacions no seran reproduïdes en cap context públic sols s'utilitzaran per estudiar els components que poden ajudar a millorar el suport en el programa Èxit. Aquest consentiment es pot retirar en qualsevol moment.

Per aconseguir el propòsit demanem **entrevistar-nos** amb l'amic o amiga gran dels alumnes del grup participant enregistrant únicament la veu. S'ha informat que amb l'alumnat, previ consentiment de pares, mares o tutors legals es realitza durant l'Èxit un grup de discussió i una entrevista amb els tutors corresponents.

El Sr./Sra. _____, amb DNI o passaport nº _____, dono el meu consentiment de participació al Programa Èxit del **Consorci d'Educació de Barcelona** i a la **Universitat de Barcelona** en el marc d'una col·laboració per una tesis doctoral.

Firma

Barcelona, _____ del 2018.

Consentiment informat docents

L'objectiu de la participació és *estudiar les interaccions que es produeixen durant l'Èxit per contribuir a millorar el suport ofert*. Les dades seran tractades de forma **anònima i confidencial** amb finalitats acadèmiques. Les gravacions no seran reproduïdes en cap context públic sols s'utilitzaran per estudiar els components que poden ajudar a millorar el suport en el programa Èxit. Aquest consentiment es pot retirar en qualsevol moment.

Per aconseguir el propòsit demanem **entrevistar-nos** amb els/les tutors d'alumnes del grup participant enregistrant únicament la veu. S'ha informat que amb l'alumnat, previ consentiment de pares, mares o tutors legals es realitza durant l'Èxit un grup de discussió i una entrevista amb els amics grans corresponents.

El Sr./Sra. _____, amb DNI o passaport nº _____, dono el meu consentiment de participació al Programa Èxit del **Consorci d'Educació de Barcelona** i a la **Universitat de Barcelona** en el marc d'una col·laboració per una tesi doctoral.

Firma

Barcelona, _____ del 2018.

Consentiment informat

Català

L'objectiu de la participació és *estudiar les interaccions que es produeixen durant l'Èxit per contribuir a millorar el suport ofert*. Les dades seran tractades de forma **anònima i confidencial** amb finalitats acadèmiques. Les gravacions no seran reproduïdes en cap context públic sols s'utilitzaran per estudiar els components que poden ajudar a millorar el suport en el programa Èxit. Aquest consentiment es pot retirar en qualsevol moment.

Com a pare/mare o tutor/tutora de l'estudiant li demanem permís per a que el seu fill o filla, si ho desitja, participi en un grup de discussió realitzat durant hores d'Èxit. L'estudiant, si vol, serà compensat amb un document de la Universitat de Barcelona que certifiqui la seva participació en la investigació.

El Sr./Sra. _____, amb DNI o passaport nº _____, pare/mare o tutor/tutora de l'estudiant _____, dono el meu consentiment al Programa Èxit del **Consorci d'Educació de Barcelona** i a la **Universitat de Barcelona** en el marc d'una col·laboració per una tesis doctoral.

Firma del pare/mare o tutor/a legal:

_____, dia _____ de _____ de 2018

Consentimiento informado

Castellano

El objetivo de la participación es *estudiar las interacciones que se producen durante el Èxit para contribuir a mejorar el apoyo que se ofrece*. Los datos serán tratados de forma **anónima y confidencial** con finalidades académicas. Las grabaciones no serán reproducidas en ningún contexto público, solo se utilizarán para estudiar los componentes que pueden ayudar a mejorar el apoyo en el programa Èxit. El consentimiento puede ser retirado en cualquier momento.

Como padre/madre o tutor/tutora del estudiante le pedimos permiso para que su hijo o hija, si lo desea, participe en un grupo de discusión realizado durante horas de Èxit. El estudiante, si quiere, será compensado con un documento de la Universidad de Barcelona que certifique su participación en la investigación.

El Sr./Sra _____, con DNI o pasaporte nº _____, padre/madre o tutor/tutora del estudiante _____, doy mi consentimiento al Programa Èxit del **Consorci d'Educació de Barcelona** y a la **Universitat de Barcelona** en el marco de una colaboración para una tesis doctoral.

Firma del padre/madre o tutor/a legal:

_____, día _____ de _____ de 2018

Appendix 17: Phase 5 instruments

Formulari d'Amics Grans 2018 (Instructors)

Bloc 1: Dades socio-demogràfiques

1. Sexe:

2. Edat:

- ☐ Formació universitària:Relacionada amb l'educació
- ☐ No relacionada amb l'educació

3. Has portat mai grups d' esplais, caus o altres projectes amb nens o adolescents?

- ☐ Sí
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sí però no sent-ne responsable total (pràcticums)

4. Cursos que portes fent Èxit durant el curs

- ☐ Aquest és el primer any
- ☐ 2 cursos
- ☐ 3 cursos
- ☐ 4 cursos
- ☐ 5 cursos
- ☐ 6 cursos o més

5. Has fet èxit estiu?

- ☐ Sí
- ☐ No

6. Tens doble beca?

- ☐ Sí (els portarà a una pàgina amb qüestions dels dos centres)
- ☐ No (els portarà a una pàgina amb qüestions d'un centre)

7. Quina importància donaries a les següents afirmacions pels BENEFICIS que comportarien als nens o adolescents amb que treballes? (1, gens important, 4 imprescindible)

- ☐ Oferir un ESPAI més adequat (que casa o altres) per fer DEURES i TREBALLAR
- ☐ Oferir un ESPAI més adequat que casa o altres per OCUPAR part de la tarda.
- ☐ Tenir en compte les NECESSITATS ACADÈMIQUES dels alumnes *
- ☐ Tenir en compte les NECESSITATS GLOBALS dels alumnes (atendre les preocupacions que comparteixin, més enllà del que és estrictament acadèmic)

- ☐ Partir dels INTERESSOS dels alumnes *
- ☐ Fer que els alumnes PERCEBIN la utilitat per VOLER assistir
- ☐ Que l'ajuda l'ofereixi una PERSONA que no és ni docent ni familiar (amb un roldiferent)
- ☐ La COMPETÈNCIA de l'amic/ga gran
- ☐ Establir conjuntament amb els alumnes normes d'aula i mantenir-les
- ☐ El bon AMBIENT dins l'aula de l'èxit (que els alumnes es vegin tranquils, a gust, quepuguin treballar)
- ☐ Aconseguir que els alumnes s'ajudin entre ells
- ☐ El feeling o BONA SINTONIA entre ALUMNES i amic/ga gran
- ☐ La bona RELACIÓ entre TUTORS i amic gran
- ☐ La CONFIANÇA entre TUTORS i amic/ga gran
- ☐ Compartir OBJECTIUS entre centre i Èxit
- ☐ Mantenir grup-amic gran més d'un curs
- ☐ Entendre l'Èxit com un SUPORT MÉS del centre (que es vegi com una activitat del propi centre i no pas una activitat que fan uns externs, llunyana al dia a dia del seu centre).
- ☐ Que els alumnes puguin decidir

8. Sobre què creus que els alumnes haurien de poder decidir?

9. Què estàs estudiant o has estudiat? *

- ☐ GRAUS UNIVERSITARIS d'Educació Infantil i/o Primària Altres GRAUS UNIVERSITARIS relacionats amb l'educació
- ☐ Altres GRAUS UNIVERSITARIS NO relacionats amb l'educació MÒDUL relacionat amb l'educació
- ☐ MÒDUL NO relacionat amb l'educació Altres (curso batxillerat o ESO)

10. T'agradaria ser docent en un futur?

- ☐ Sí
- ☐ És una opció, però no n'estic segur/a
- ☐ És una opció, però si puc NO HO SERÉ
- ☐ No

11. Qui creus que valora MÉS la teva feina

- ☐ L'alumnat
- ☐ El professorat del centre
- ☐ Les famílies de l'alumnat
- ☐ El/la coordinador/a de centre de l'Èxit
- ☐ El/la coordinador/a de zona de l'Èxit
- ☐ Ningú

12. Qui creus que valora MENYS la teva feina?

- ☐ L'alumnat
- ☐ El professorat del centre
- ☐ Les famílies de l'alumnat
- ☐ El/la coordinador/a de centre de l'Èxit
- ☐ El/la coordinador/a de zona de l'Èxit
- ☐ Ningú

13. Del que es fa a l'Èxit amb els alumnes, què creus que S'HAURIA D'EVITAR o MILLORAR pel proper any?

14. Quin rol tens a l'Èxit? (Si fas d'amic o amiga gran en un grup, marca "Amic o amiga gran" encara que en un segon centre siguis SUBSTITUT).

- ☐ Amic o amiga gran
- ☐ ÚNICAMENT amic o amiga gran de SUBSTITUCIÓ
- ☐ Tallerista

BLOC 2: Centre 1

CENTRE D'ÈXIT 1 (Beca 1)

Preguntes referents a l'únic grup on fas d'amic o amiga gran o al centre de dilluns on fas d'amic o amiga gran, si tens doble beca

15. Nom del centre (si el grup el formen alumnes de diferents escoles, posar el nom de totes): _____

16. Escola/curs de l'ESO: _____

17. Quants alumnes tens en aquest grup ?

18. Quants anys fa que treballes amb aquest grup?

- ☐ És el primer curs en aquest centre
- ☐ És el primer curs amb els alumnes però repeteixo escola/curs d'ESO.
- ☐ Ja havia tingut aquests alumnes el curs passat (més o menys la meitat són els mateixos)
- ☐ Porto tres o més cursos amb aquests alumnes (més o menys la meitat són els mateixos)
- ☐ Porto tres o més cursos treballant amb aquesta escola/curs d'ESO.

19. Quants anys fa que treballes amb aquest grup de TUTORS?

- ☐ És el PRIMER any amb aquests tutors
- ☐ És el SEGON any amb aquests tutors
- ☐ És el TERCER any amb aquests tutors
- ☐ És el QUART any amb aquests tutors
- ☐ Fa CINC o més anys que estic amb aquests tutors

20. Què és el que vau acordar fer durant l'Èxit amb els tutors?

- ☐ No vam acordar res en concret.

- ☐ Deures i estudi
- ☐ Hàbits i organització
- ☐ Llengua (oral o escrita)
- ☐ Matemàtiques
- ☐ Un acompanyament més global, en el que necessitin.
- ☐ Teatre
- ☐ El que els alumnes escollissin
- ☐ No vaig parlar amb els tutors/ no hi era
- ☐ Altres:

21. Amb QUI t'has comunicat habitualment o amb més freqüència del centre per parlar del grup que portes?

- ☐ Amb ALGUN O ALGUNS tutors concrets
- ☐ Amb tots els tutors per igual
- ☐ Amb el referent del centre (ex: coordinador/a pedagògic/a)
- ☐ No m'he comunicat jo, el/la coordinador/a de l'Èxit feia d'enllaç amb el centre.
- ☐ No hi ha hagut comunicació

22. Quina o quines afirmacions s'ajusten més a la comunicació CARA A CARA que has mantingut amb els tutors del grup?

- ☐ Ens hem comunicat cara a cara gairebé DIÀRIAMENT Ens hem comunicat cara a cara SETMANALMENT Ens hem comunicat cara a cara MENSUALMENT
- ☐ Exceptuant les tres reunions rutinàries, NO hem utilitzat la via cara a cara. Ens hem vist cara a cara menys que les reunions requerides
- ☐ No ens hem comunicat MAI CARA A CARA

23. Quina o quines afirmacions s'ajusten més a la comunicació TELEMÀTICA que has mantingut amb els tutors del grup?

- ☐ Ens hem comunicat via telemàtica (correus, dirve, etc.) gairebé DIÀRIAMENT Ens hem comunicat via telemàtica (correus, dirve, etc.) SETMANALMENT
- ☐ Ens hem comunicat via telemàtica (correus, dirve, etc.) MENSUALMENT
- ☐ Ens hem comunicat via telemàtica (correus, dirve, etc.) BIMENSUALMENT
- ☐ Tret de rebre correus amb INFORMACIÓ GENERAL, NO hem fet ús de la via telemàtica
- ☐ NO he utilitzat la via telemàtica per comunicar
- ☐ La comunicació amb els tutors ha estat l'òptima per donar suport als alumnes

24. En general, quins canvis percebeu des de l'inici de curs fins ara? (0, gens d'acord, 5 totalment d'acord)— Marca allò que representi millor el conjunt d'alumnes (LA MAJORIA) per cada canvi: empitjoren, es mantenen igual, milloren, no ho treballem, no tinc informació, no sé

- ☐ Entregar els deures
- ☐ Hàbits d'estudi i autonomia Aprenentatges (resultats acadèmics)
- ☐ Benestar PERSONAL de l'alumnat Comportament dels alumnes
- ☐ Relacions entre alumnes AUTOCONCEPTE
- ☐ ACADÈMIC (com es veuen com a estudiants?) Motivació per l'estudi
- ☐ AUTOESTIMA
- ☐ Menys absentisme a l'Èxit

25. Què és el que fas cada dia d'Èxit amb aquest grup? (múltiple opció)

- ☐ Ens veiem amb els tutors/es
- ☐ Acabar els deures
- ☐ Lectura
- ☐ Estudiar per exàmens
- ☐ Treballar tècniques d'estudi
- ☐ Activitats segons les seves necessitats i/o interessos
- ☐ Activitats segons els seus interessos
- ☐ Jocs amb rerefons acadèmic Fem allò que escullen, a vegades sense finalitat d'aprenentatge
- ☐ Debats
- ☐ Parlem del dia a dia, de com estan
- ☐ Altres:

10. Amb quina freqüència aproximada et trobes amb les següents situacions?

Valora quant sovint et trobes que has d'actuar de la següent manera; marca LA FREQÜÈNCIA EN QUÈ et veus en aquestes situacions amb AQUEST GRUP D'ALUMNES (Llegeix el missatge global de les 8 situacions i encara que no complexis un dels aspectes, marca si en general t'identifiques amb el quediú i la freqüència). (0 mai, 5 sempre) Mai -> 1.poques vegades -> 2.freqüentment -> 3.moltes vegades -> 4.gairebé sempre -> 5.sempre

- ☐ Dono responsabilitats i llibertat als estudiants, faig que treballin autònomament
- ☐ Em mantinc a l'espera per veure com va, deixo que facin i admeto quan m'equivoco
- ☐ Em mostro estricte/a, duc "les regnes" de la classe i poso unes normes clares i precises
- ☐ Espero que callin o es comportin millor, mostro el meu descontent amb la situació
- ☐ M'enfado i mano que treballin, he de donar "ultimatums"/càstigs

- ☐ Mostro interès pels alumnes, em mostro amable i amistós/a
- ☐ . Mostro que els entenc, empatitzo i els escolto amb interès
- ☒ Organitzo el que han de fer, decideixo i guio el que passa a l'aula

11. Valora el funcionament amb aquest grup (0-5) en relació amb els següents aspectes següents:

- ☐ La tria d'alumnes que s'ha fet perquè aprofitessin el suport ha estat l'adequada
- ☐ Ha estat un espai (CLIMA) on els alumnes han pogut treballar
- ☐ La DINÀMICA de treball (objectius, rutines, propostes després dels deures) ha estat la millor per aquest grup.
- ☐ La DINÀMICA de treball (objectius, rutines, propostes després dels deures) ha estat d'acord amb el que ELS TUTORS d'aquest grup volien
- ☐ La GESTIÓ que he fet del grup ha estat la més efectiva pels alumnes
- ☐ La manera en què he resolt els CONFLICTES ha estat la més encertada.
- ☐ Hem ajudat l'alumnat quant a DEURES i ESTUDI
- ☐ . Hem ajudat l'alumnat quant a HÀBITS i ORGANITZACIÓ
- ☐ Hem atès la vessant ACTITUDINAL i EMOCIONAL dels alumnes
- ☐ Noto que he connectat amb aquests alumnes
- ☐ Noto que els alumnes em respecten
- ☐ L'alumnat ha APROFITAT el suport i l'estona d'Èxit
- ☐ Estic SATISFET/A amb el SUPORT que he ofert als alumnes
- ☐ Crec que la feina que faig és eficaç en els alumnes (durant les 3 hores setmanals)
- ☐ Sento que els ESTUDIANTS em valoren positivament (com a suport)
- ☐ Sento que els DOCENTS em valoren positivament (com a suport)
- ☒ Sento que l'EQUIP de l'Èxit em valora positivament (com a suport)

12. Altres comentaris:

13. Tens doble beca d'AMIC

- ☐ Sí
- ☐ No Deixeu d'emplenar el formulari.
- ☐ No, a l'altre centre faig de coordinador/a Deixeu d'emplenar el formulari.

CENTRE D'ÈXIT 2 (en cas de doble beca) [bloc 2 repetit]

Preguntes referents al SEGON GRUP on fas d'amic o amiga gran.

Si abans has contestat considerant el grup de dm i dj, ara respon considerant el grup de dll i dc.

Valoració dels TUTORS i TUTORES del Programa Èxit (Curs 2017-18)

A. Curs del qual ets tutor/a *

☐ 5è de primària	☐ 2n ESO	☐ Només soc referent, NO TUTOR
☐ 6è de primària	☐ 3r ESO	
☐ 1r ESO	☐ 4t ESO	

B. Edat *: _____

C. Sexe *

- ☐ Masculí ☐ Femení

D. Nom del centre de primària o secundària *: _____

E. Nombre de cursos que portes sent tutor d'Èxit *

☐ Aquest és el primer any	☐ 3 cursos	☐ 6 cursos o més
☐ 2 cursos	☐ 4 cursos	
	☐ 5 cursos	

F. Nombre de cursos que et coordines amb l'actual amic/ga gran (que comparteixes alumnes) *

☐ Aquest és el primer any	☐ 3 cursos	☐ 6 cursos o més
☐ 2 cursos	☐ 4 cursos	
	☐ 5 cursos	

1. Què és el que vau acordar fer durant l'estona d'Èxit. *

☐ No vam acordar res en concret.	☐ El que els alumnes escollissin
☐ Deures i estudi	☐ Llengua (oral o escrita)
☐ Hàbits i organització	☐ Matemàtiques
☐ Un acompanyament més global, en el que necessitin els alumnes.	☐ No he parlat/No hi era
☐ Teatre	☐ Altres: _____

2. Parles de l'Èxit amb els alumnes? *

- ☐ Mai
- ☐ A vegades
- ☐ Sovint
- ☐ Sempre
- ☐ Quan hi ha hagut un problema

3. Valora el funcionament del grup d'Èxit s (0-5) en relació amb els següents aspectes (Ja tenim en compte que, com a tutor, no estàs dins l'aula de l'Èxit. Aquí et demanem la teva PERCEPCIÓ, la teva IMPRESSIÓ amb la informació que tens):

3.1. Ha estat un espai (CLIMA) on els alumnes han pogut treballar *

Gens d'acord Totalment d'acord

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3.2. La tria d'alumnes que s'ha fet perquè aprofitessin el suport ha estat l'adequada *

Gens d'acord Totalment d'acord
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3.3. La DINÀMICA de treball (objectius, rutines, qualitat de les propostes després dels deures) ha estat d'acord amb el que esperaves. *

Gens d'acord Totalment d'acord
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3.4. La GESTIÓ de grup per part de l'amic gran ha estat la més efectiva pels alumnes. *

Gens d'acord Totalment d'acord
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3.5. La resolució de CONFLICTES per part de l'amic gran ha estat la més encertada *

Gens d'acord Totalment d'acord
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3.6. Ha ajudat els alumnes quant a DEURES i ESTUDI *

Gens d'acord Totalment d'acord
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3.7. Ha ajudat els alumnes quant a HÀBITS i ORGANITZACIÓ *

Gens d'acord Totalment d'acord
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3.8. Ha atès la vessant ACTITUDINAL i EMOCIONAL dels alumnes *

Gens d'acord Totalment d'acord
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3.9. L'alumnat ha APROFITAT el suport i l'estona d'Èxit *

Gens d'acord Totalment d'acord
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3.10. Estic SATISFET/A de com he contribuït (COM A TUTOR/A) al SUPORT que han rebut els alumnes a l'Èxit *

Gens d'acord Totalment d'acord
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3.11. Es nota el VINCLE entre els alumnes i l'amic/ga gran *

Gens d'acord Totalment d'acord
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3.12. Els alumnes RESPECTEN l'amic/ga gran *

Gens d'acord Totalment d'acord
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3.13. El contacte entre èxit i centre per motius ORDINARIS ha resultat útil *

Gens d'acord Totalment d'acord
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3.14. El contacte entre èxit i centre per CONFLICTES ha resultat útil

Gens d'acord Totalment d'acord
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3.15. Les REUNIONS han estat d'utilitat *

Gens d'acord Totalment d'acord
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3.16. Els INFORMES ens han estat d'utilitat *

Gens d'acord Totalment d'acord
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3.17. Estic SATISFET/A del SUPORT que han rebut els alumnes A L'ÈXIT *

Gens d'acord Totalment d'acord
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. En general, quins canvis percebeu des de l'inici de curs fins ara EN ELS ALUMNES? (conscients que no són atribuïbles només a l'Èxit sinó al conjunt de situacions i accions realitzades)

Han empitjorat *

0. Ningú 1.Pràcticament ningú 2.Una minoria 3.La majoria 4.Pràcticament tots/es 5.TOTS/ES
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Es mantenen igual *

0. Ningú 1.Pràcticament ningú 2.Una minoria 3.La majoria 4.Pràcticament tots/es 5.TOTS/ES
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Entregar més els deures *

0. Ningú 1.Pràcticament ningú 2.Una minoria 3.La majoria 4.Pràcticament tots/es 5.TOTS/ES
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Tenen més hàbits d'estudi i autonomia *

0. Ningú 1.Pràcticament ningú 2.Una minoria 3.La majoria 4.Pràcticament tots/es 5.TOTS/ES
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Millores en els aprenentatges (millora de resultats) *

0. Ningú 1.Pràcticament ningú 2.Una minoria 3.La majoria 4.Pràcticament tots/es 5.TOTS/ES
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Millores en el benestar de l'alumnat *

0. Ningú 1.Pràcticament ningú 2.Una minoria 3.La majoria 4.Pràcticament tots/es 5.TOTS/ES
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Millora de l'AUTOCONCEPTE ACADÈMIC (com es veuen els alumnes com a estudiants?) *

0. Ningú 1.Pràcticament ningú 2.Una minoria 3.La majoria 4.Pràcticament tots/es 5.TOTS/ES
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Millora de l'AUTOESTIMA *

0. Ningú 1.Pràcticament ningú 2.Una minoria 3.La majoria 4.Pràcticament tots/es 5.TOTS/ES

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Menys absentisme a l'escola o institut

0. Ningú 1.Pràcticament ningú 2.Una minoria 3.La majoria 4.Pràcticament tots/es 5.TOTS/ES

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

- ☐ NO responc l'anterior pregunta perquè CAP alumne és o ha estat absentista

Altres canvis (especifica quin i la proporció

d'alumnes):_____

—

5. En quines reunions rutinàries has tingut l'oportunitat de participar? *

☐ Trobada d'INICI de curs	☐ Hem fet MÉS reunions presencials per qüestions que afectaven alumnes CONCRETS
☐ Reunió per grups DURANT el curs	☐ Hem fet MÉS reunions presencials per qüestions GLOBALS del grup
☐ Assistiré/assisteixo a la reunió de TANCAMENT.	

6.1. Quina o quines afirmacions s'ajusten més a la comunicació CARA A CARA que has mantingut amb l'AMIC o AMIGA GRAN? *

☐ Ens hem comunicat cara a cara gairebé DIÀRIAMENT	☐ Exceptuant les tres reunions rutinàries, NO hem utilitzat la via cara a cara.
☐ Ens hem comunicat cara a cara SETMANALMENT	☐ Ens hem vist cara a cara menys que les reunions requerides
☐ Ens hem comunicat cara a cara MENSUALMENT	☐ No ens hem comunicat cara a cara

6.2. Quina o quines afirmacions s'ajusten més a la comunicació TELEMÀTICA que has mantingut amb l'AMIC o AMIGA GRAN? *

☐ Ens hem comunicat via telemàtica (correus, dirve, etc.) gairebé DIÀRIAMENT	☐ Ens hem comunicat via telemàtica (correus, dirve, etc.) BIMENSUALMENT
☐ Ens hem comunicat via telemàtica (correus, dirve, etc.) SETMANALMENT	☐ Ens hem comunicat via telemàtica (correus, dirve, etc.) TRIMESTRALMENT
☐ Ens hem comunicat via telemàtica (correus, dirve, etc.) MENSUALMENT	☐ Tret de rebre correus amb INFORMACIÓ GENERAL, NO hem fet ús de la via telemàtica
	☐ NO he utilitzat la via telemàtica per comunicar

6.3. Has tingut la informació que necessitaves del que passava a l'Èxit *

☐ Sí	☐ No
☐ Sí i si n'hagués volgut més l'hagués demanat	☐ Altres:_____

6.4. Creus que els i les AMIGUES GRANS han tingut la informació suficient per ajudar EFECTIVAMENT a l'alumnat? *

- ☐ Sí ☐ Altres: _____
☐ No _____

7. Grau de satisfacció dels intercanvis amb els amics grans. *

Gens satisfet/a Totalment satisfet/a
☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. Quina importància donaries a les següents afirmacions pels BENEFICIS que comportarien als nens o adolescents amb que treballes? NO DEMANEM SI S'HA FET O NO, volem conèixer el vostre punt de vista pel suport

8.1. Oferir un ESPAI més adequat (que casa o altres) per fer DEURES i TREBALLAR *

1. No ho veig important; 2. Poc important; 3. Important; 4. Imprescindible
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

8.2. Oferir un ESPAI més adequat que casa o altres per OCUPAR part de la tarda. *

1. No ho veig important; 2. Poc important; 3. Important; 4. Imprescindible
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

8.3. Tenir en compte les NECESSITATS ACADÈMIQUES dels alumnes *

1. No ho veig important; 2. Poc important; 3. Important; 4. Imprescindible
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

8.4. Tenir en compte les NECESSITATS GLOBALS dels alumnes *

1. No ho veig important; 2. Poc important; 3. Important; 4. Imprescindible
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

8.5. Partir dels INTERESSOS dels alumnes *

1. No ho veig important; 2. Poc important; 3. Important; 4. Imprescindible
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

8.6. Fer que els alumnes PERCEBIN la utilitat per VOLER assistir *

1. No ho veig important; 2. Poc important; 3. Important; 4. Imprescindible
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

8.7. Que l'ajuda l'ofereixi una PERSONA que no és ni docent ni familiar (amb un rol diferent que trenqui amb el tipus de relació d'ajuda que pot oferir un docent o un familiar) *

1. No ho veig important; 2. Poc important; 3. Important; 4. Imprescindible
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

8.8. La COMPETÈNCIA de l'amic/ga gran *

1. No ho veig important; 2. Poc important; 3. Important; 4. Imprescindible
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

8.9. Establir conjuntament amb els alumnes normes d'aula i mantenir-les *

1. No ho veig important; 2. Poc important; 3. Important; 4. Imprescindible

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

8.10. El bon AMBIENT dins l'aula de l'èxit *

1. No ho veig important; 2. Poc important; 3. Important; 4. Imprescindible

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

8.11. Aconseguir que els alumnes s'ajudin entre ells *

1. No ho veig important; 2. Poc important; 3. Important; 4. Imprescindible

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

8.12. El feeling o BONA SINTONIA entre ALUMNES i amic/ga gran *

1. No ho veig important; 2. Poc important; 3. Important; 4. Imprescindible

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

8.13. La bona RELACIÓ entre TUTORS i amic gran *

1. No ho veig important; 2. Poc important; 3. Important; 4. Imprescindible

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

8.14. La CONFIANÇA entre TUTORS i amic/ga gran *

1. No ho veig important; 2. Poc important; 3. Important; 4. Imprescindible

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

8.15. Compartir OBJECTIUS entre centre i Èxit *

1. No ho veig important; 2. Poc important; 3. Important; 4. Imprescindible

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

8.16. Mantenir grup-amic gran més d'un curs *

1. No ho veig important; 2. Poc important; 3. Important; 4. Imprescindible

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

8.17. Entendre l'Èxit com un SUPORT MÉS del centre. (que es vegi com una activitat del propi centre, que guardi certa coherència i NO pas una activitat que fan uns externs allunyada del dia a dia del seu centre) *

1. No ho veig important; 2. Poc important; 3. Important; 4. Imprescindible

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

8.18. Que els alumnes puguin decidir *

1. No ho veig important; 2. Poc important; 3. Important; 4. Imprescindible

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

- Sobre què creus que els alumnes haurien de poder decidir? Per què? (Exemples: altes/baixes, rutines, normes, què reforçar...)

9. Del que es fa a l'Èxit amb els alumnes, què creieu que S'HAURIA D'EVITAR o MILLORAR pel proper any? *

10. Altres observacions:

Interview guide for instructors and teachers

This is a semi-structured interview guide² for instructors and teachers with a first structured part focused on collecting sociodemographic data. The content part is based on three topics — 1) support, 2) role, and 3) interpersonal interaction.

Sociodemographic data

- Age:
- Gender:
- Highest education level:
- Years of experience as instructor/teacher:
- Years of experience with groups of students:
- Years of experience as instructor/teacher with the current students:
- Years of experience as instructor/teacher with the current teachers/instructor:

1) Support

- How do you support the students?
- How have you reached this way of practice?

1) Role

- How is your day to day practice?
- How you define yourself as a instructor? (Friend-teacher)

3) Interpersonal interaction

- How and when do you communicate?
- How have you reached this way of communication?
- How is the relationship you feel more/less comfortable with?
- What makes you feel this way? How do you get there?

²It should be noted that this is a tentative guide that should be used in a flexible way. As Brantlinger et al. (2005) suggested questions might be modified or added to as evidence emerge.

Focus group guide for students

This is a semi-structured focus group guide for students. It should be noted that this is a tentative guide that should be used in a flexible way. As Brantlinger et al. (2005) suggested questions might be modified or added to as evidence emerge.

- What do you do here?
- What helps you the most?
- How is your relationship with the instructor?
- How your form-teacher and your instructor communicate?
- How does it affect the support received?
- What do you recommend for improving this support initiative?