

Evaluation of inclusive measures against educational dropout

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Suggested Citation:

Garcia, M. M., Toledo, L. D., & Rodriguez, M. L. H., (2020). Evaluation of inclusive measures against educational
dropout. *New Trends and Issues Proceedings on Humanities and Social Sciences*. 7(3), pp 34–44. Available
from: www.prosoc.eu

Received from June 29, 2020; revised from September 12, 2020; accepted from November 20, 2020.

Selection and peer review under responsibility of Prof. Dr. Huseyin Uzunboylu, Higher Education Planning,
Supervision, Accreditation and Coordination Board, Cyprus.

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Abstract

In recent years, the degree of inclusion in universities has increased, although this has been to a lesser extent in the case of on-site universities. For this reason, experiences are needed that encourage young people with disabilities to consider attending these centres in order to achieve greater normalisation of disability. The present study analyses the experience developed at the University of Granada with regard to inclusion: 'Inclusive Campus 2019'. The methodology is based on univariate analysis and non-parametric tests. The degree of inclusion and awareness of university education achieved by the Campus is also analysed. Among the most significant results, the high evaluation of the Campus, especially in terms of staff, and the probability of recommending the experience stand out. The degree of integration and inclusion has been especially relevant for those participants without disabilities.

Keywords: Inclusion, educational policies, disability, teaching experiences.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been greater inclusion of the population with disabilities in education. This fact has been extended to all educational stages from early childhood education to higher education (Mortimore, 2013; Suarez Riveiro, 2011). The implementation of educational systems that promote inclusion, therefore, is a crucial step for the normalisation and achievement of the social model of disability.

One of the main consequences of this greater degree of inclusion has been the increase in the university population of students with some type of disability. In Spain, where this study is contextualised, according to data provided by the study conducted by the Fundacion Universia and CERMI (2013), in the Spanish university environment, 1.7% of students have some type of disability (referring to the 2015–16 academic year). The important thing about this figure is that there has been a continued increase in the population with disabilities, but serious deficiencies continue to be detected in the university environment as indicated below.

As indicated in the aforementioned report by the Fundacion Universia and CERMI (2013), within this population, more than half of the students with disabilities study either in person or at a distance (Lagoke, Komolafe, Ige & Oladejo, 2010; Richardson, 2010). Within the Spanish context, it is precisely the National Distance University that has the largest number of students with disabilities. Therefore, as Munoz-Cantero, Novo-Corti and Espinera-Bellon (2013) point out, it is necessary to carry out tools and experiences that create a favourable environment among the peers with whom young people with disabilities have to share classrooms within on-site universities. All this is carried out with the aim of achieving a greater awareness of the inclusion and normalisation of the situation of people with disabilities.

Within universities, there are various units and services to help students with disabilities; however, there is little assistance and training when it comes to choosing and selecting university studies (Vieira Aller & Ferreira Villa, 2011). Despite the considerable increase in the number of students with disabilities at the university, they still have less access to university education than the population as a whole (Comes Nolla, Parera Pozuelo, Vedriel Sanchez & Vives Garcia, 2011) due to reasons such as lack of information or inappropriate social and educational environments. Azorin and Ainscow (2020) state that it is not possible to consider quality education without making training processes more flexible and promoting the principle of equal opportunities in access to university training for persons with disabilities.

One of the main problems that represents a barrier for students with disabilities to university is their own relationship with their future classmates, since one of the crucial aspects for the inclusion of students with disabilities lies precisely in the interpersonal relationships that they establish with their group of peers (Alonso, Navarro & Vicente, 2008). It is vitally important to make the leap from integration to inclusion and to accept that this student body must acquire, like the others, basic skills and that they must reach high levels of socialisation, as well as develop their abilities to the maximum and achieve the skills required for their incorporation into the world of work and society, within their personal possibilities (Alhumaid, Khoo & Bastos, 2020).

It is important to bear in mind that inclusion in postgraduate university education (masters and doctorate) is still deficient as there are hardly any students with disabilities (Fundacion Universia, 2017).

Therefore, it is a priority objective to improve the inclusion of students with disabilities since an inclusive university not only benefits them but all students in general (Morina Diez, 2008) since higher education is more effective the more inclusive the institution is (Nilholm & Goransson, 2017).

A heterogeneous student body is desirable and positive as it brings value to the university and allows for the advancement of students with disabilities as confirmed by numerous studies which

show that a change in mentality is possible which allows for inclusion in leisure, cultural, sporting and, most importantly, educational activities (Egido et al., 2009).

2. Inclusive education as an objective of sustainable development

Terms such as justice, equality and equity are often used interchangeably, although conceptually they are framed in differentiated paradigms. If from the equality paradigm all people should always receive the same treatment, then from the equity framework people are different from each other and therefore deserve differentiated treatment that eliminates or reduces the initial inequality. Therefore, equity is sensitive to the differences in human beings, treating them 'unequally' in order to restore equity. Social justice in education should aim at equity; i.e., distributing means to serve the most disadvantaged, not at the equal distribution of resources among all students. In short, equity in education turns the question of education justice to how it resolves the situation of those who are worse off in their distribution proportional to needs (Armstrong, Armstrong & Barton, 2016; Bolivar, 2013).

One of the issues that promotes equal opportunities or equity in the school environment is initially integration, although as Arnaiz Sanchez (2012) and Winter and O'Raw (2010) state, this idea does not reach a definitive conclusion, leaving this focus more on the defence of physical location, rather than on the implementation of a truly inclusive process, being present, and as Lopez (2011) states, certain modes of exclusion in the school of integration. Hence, the process of inclusion, which involves those processes that lead to increasing participation and reducing exclusion, is gaining strength (EcheitaSarrionandia & Ainscow, 2011).

Inclusive education is a recent concept of the 21st century. Until then, we have gone through different stages that have evolved along with the disability model. But it was not until the advent of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006, which in its article 24 recognises the right to education, on the idea of non-discrimination and equal opportunity, urging state parties to ensure an inclusive education system, guaranteeing access under equal conditions, as well as reasonable accommodation and support as necessary.

The UNESCO (2012) states that inclusion is a movement to transform education systems to respond to the diversity of the student body in order to realise the right to education with equal opportunities. Implementing educational inclusion involves working on issues such as social justice and equality of opportunity that are not covered by integration (Parrilla, 2002).

This is an aspect that is currently reinforced by the UNESCO (2015) itself with the development of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, which has as its main objectives the creation of more inclusive and equitable societies (SDG 16), starting with inclusive education systems, an aspect that is stated in SDG 4.

Ainscow and Sandill (2010) understand that inclusion means inserting the student in a space of socialisation and learning, fostering educational interaction and participation in the process of building knowledge: from difference to learning.

Essentially, inclusion is the realisation that every girl, boy, adolescent and young person is equally important to the education system. This concern has to do with guaranteeing equitable and quality learning conditions, processes and results for all (Polat, 2011).

Inclusive education is based on the idea of student diversity in all its aspects and considers that the education system should be adapted to each student (Qu, 2019). Therefore, we must avoid falling into the widespread error that inclusion only refers to the education of students with disabilities. Inclusive education and attention to diversity do not refer to how a special group of students are educated, but how all of them are educated (Toboso Martin et al., 2013).

The model of inclusion is beginning to take hold at the expense of the inclusive one. As Morina Diez (2002) points out, the differences between inclusion and integration lie in aspects such as the fact that the inclusive school focuses on diagnosis, while the inclusive school focuses on collaborative problem-solving.

In short, the inclusion movement introduces a strong critique of the deficit approach implicit in school integration practices, considering that, in educational practice, integration in turn generates processes of segregation even when these may have been considered more subtle. Undoubtedly, with the emergence of the inclusive model, we are facing a new transformation of the school reality, a process of ideological and conceptual rearmament of the approaches to school integration (Gonzalez, 2010).

In recent years, it has become necessary to address diversity in order to make one of its basic principles a reality: opportunity and equality for all, i.e., a school for all (UNESCO, 2009). Inclusive education is that which is based on the paradigm of offering equal educational opportunities for all those involved in the educational process (Smyth et al., 2014).

Given this analysis, we can conclude that the right to education encompasses the right to an inclusive education, since it is established as a mechanism to guarantee human rights, equal opportunities and justice (Medina Garcia, 2017). The implementation of educational inclusion involves working on issues such as social justice and equal opportunities (Howe, 1996; Slee, 1996).

3. Programme 'Inclusive Campus, Granada 2019' as a proposal against school abandonment

In this context, mentioned in the previous section, it can be concluded that the university needs to stimulate inclusion, not only during the university stage, but that there is a need for early education and awareness of inclusive education among pre-university youth. It should not be forgotten that the role of the university is not only an academic one, but that it is one of the main institutions that should generate and foster human and social progress and development. The OECD (2018) states that there is a positive relationship between the level of education in society in general and aspects such as health, quality of life or happiness of the members of a country where the university facilitates social progress and evolution. Within the dimension of social responsibility of the university (Rahman, Castka & Love, 2019), equal opportunities and the theme of inclusion are framed.

At the University of Granada, the total number of students who have accessed university studies in the 2018/2019 academic year was around 60,000, while the number of students with disabilities who registered for that year was around 500. Therefore, with the aim of improving inclusion and access and university success for students with disabilities, the University of Granada is developing the programme 'Inclusive Campus., Campus No Limits'. This is a project that aims to motivate young people with disabilities and special educational needs in the last years of compulsory secondary education and high school to continue their post-compulsory studies, mainly to encourage them to access university and at the same time to offer them a real opportunity for inclusion, since they share experience with young people without disabilities in the same age range.

This project has been carried out at the University of Granada since 2013, where the aim is precisely to improve accessibility, inclusion and to adapt education to the European higher education area, where improving the possibilities for people with disabilities is a priority.

Specifically, the programme 'Inclusive Campus. Granada 2019' had the following main objectives:

- To encourage students with disabilities not to abandon their studies at the end of the secondary level by continuing their training in the university environment.
- To make the university environment aware of the needs of students with disabilities, so that the experience of the development of the programme 'Inclusive Campuses' serves to promote in the university environment the adaptation of its systems, methods and educational

materials to these students with disabilities, thus facilitating the development of their talent, creativity and the full acquisition of skills.

- To promote mutual knowledge of the realities of young people with and without disabilities in a truly inclusive environment.
- To spread the idea that the completion of university studies facilitates access to better quality jobs, which in turn ensure a greater degree of autonomy and independence in adulthood.
- To make society aware, through the educational community, of the importance of the right to higher education on an equal footing for people with disabilities, for the sake of the development of our society.
- To achieve a real inclusive experience that is extrapolated to their daily lives and to establish bonds of friendship among our participants that serve as support and reference.

The sixth edition of the 'Inclusive Campus' took place in July 2019 with the participation of 16 students from secondary level education, 10 of them with different disabilities (hearing impairment, visual impairment, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy and Asperger's syndrome).

Over the course of 7 days, the students carried out various academic and leisure activities with the aim of promoting inclusion among students with and without disabilities, as well as bringing them closer to the university environment in an attractive and informative way by visiting different centres, giving talks on the degrees, providing information on university aids and carrying out activities to promote integration and normalisation among their classmates.

These activities include: talks on the experience of students with disabilities who are currently studying at the university, sessions to attract them to the different degrees offered by the university, cultural and leisure visits that promote inclusion (visits to the Alhambra, museums, etc.), sessions that also promote sports inclusion (activities in the Sierra Nevada, the Yacht Club, etc.) or educational and employment orientation workshops (for example, entrepreneurship workshops). We must emphasise that for the development of all these activities, in addition to the services of the UGR, public and private entities and companies have been involved. The aim is to disseminate this initiative and most of the community in its development, thus trying to contribute to social awareness.

4. Method

4.1. Objectives

This paper aims to analyse the practice of the 'Inclusive Campus. Campus sin limite, 2019' of the University of Granada in order to understand if it can be established as an example of good practice and to what extent it should be encouraged in order to avoid school dropouts.

The objectives set are the following:

- To assess whether it has been possible to promote inclusion among students with and without disabilities,
- To know if the access to university of pre-university students with disabilities has been stimulated in an exploratory way.
- To analyse the Inclusive Campuses as a method of inclusion and as a positive experience.
- To know the evaluation of the participants in the Inclusive Campuses.
- To find out students' satisfaction with the activities carried out.
- To analyse if there are differences in satisfaction according to the criteria of disability.

4.2. Instrument

In order to evaluate the different objectives and to know the satisfaction of the participating students, a questionnaire was elaborated and completed by the students on the last day of the

Campus. The questionnaire consisted of the following sections in order to achieve the most complete and possible view of the different aspects involved in their evaluation:

1. Choice of the Inclusive Campus of the University of Granada: source of information and reasons for choice.
2. Evaluation of the activities carried out: satisfaction and opinion of all academic and training and leisure activities carried out by the participants. The questions were formulated on a 5-point Likert scale in this section and the following three.
3. Evaluation of the organisation of the Campus: monitors, sign language interpreters, coordination, accommodation, travel, meals, timetable, etc.
4. Usefulness of the Campuses: evaluation of the inclusion, the impact on the attitude in carrying out a university career, personal and academic development, etc.
5. General assessment of the Campus: satisfaction, intention to recommend, fulfilment of expectations, etc.

In addition, open questions (of a qualitative nature) were also asked in order to learn more about the opinion and suggestions for improvement.

4.3. Sample

A total of 16 students participated during the Inclusive Campuses in 2019. A sample of 13 was obtained (81% response rate among participants), and nine of them had some kind of disability. The recommendation of friends and family was the main reason for choosing the Inclusive Campus of the University of Granada. Table 1 summarises the characteristics of the sample.

Table 1. Characterization of the sample

Variable	Category	Sample	
		n	%
Gender	Man	6	46.2
	Woman	7	53.8
Disability	Yes	9	30.8
	No	4	69.2
Motivation for choosing the Campus	Proximity to my place of origin	3	23.1
	For the city of Granada	2	15.4
	For the University of Granada	1	7.7
	On the recommendation of friends and family	6	46.1
	Others	1	7.7

5. Results

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 20.0 was used for coding, analysis and statistical testing of the questionnaire responses. The data techniques used to test the objectives set are basically descriptive analyses and non-parametric tests due to the small sample size.

In the first place, to ascertain one of the main objectives proposed in terms of whether greater inclusion has been achieved, the surveyed persons were asked for their opinion, once the campuses had ended, regarding whether they believed that the campuses had helped them to have greater inclusion with other people (referring to the coexistence of persons with and without disabilities), as well as whether they believed that the campuses had been useful in establishing new friendships and in normalising the relationship as equals between persons with and without disabilities, and that this had resulted in greater personal and academic development. The results are shown in Figure 1.

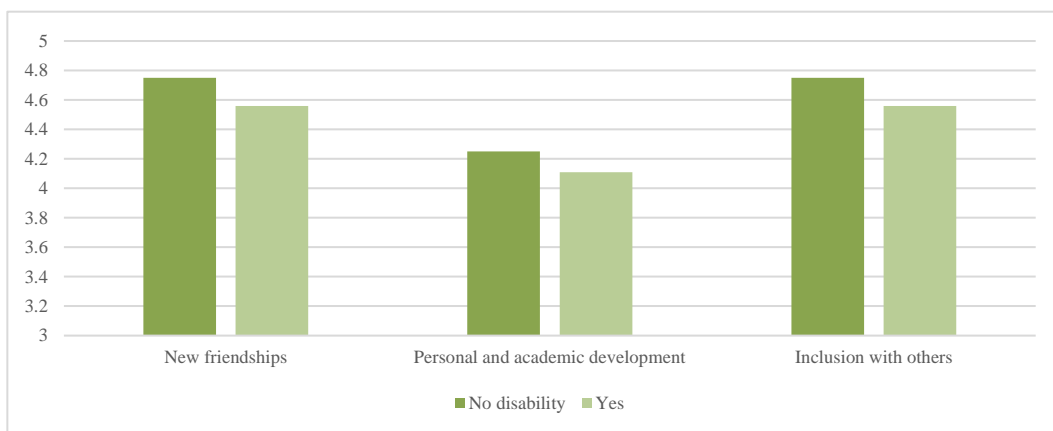


Figure 1. Inclusion of the inclusive campus

With regard to the results achieved that can be extracted, it should be noted that in all cases high scores were obtained by the participants. In all cases there are scores higher than 4.1 points on the scale. No significant differences were found in any case in the Mann–Whitney test. However, it should be noted that the scores are lower for those students with disabilities, with a greater positive perception of their experience by those who do not have disabilities. This is congruent with the fact that these students may have little contact with people with disabilities and the Campus has managed to make them feel involved.

Secondly, referring to the fact that if the Campuses have been useful to motivate students to continue their studies by taking university courses, the questionnaire was posed through several items: ‘The Campus has encouraged me to study a university course’, ‘The Campus has served to clarify that I want to study in the future’ and ‘The Campus has served to know first-hand the functioning and structure of the University’. Again, the results obtained are shown in a simplified form in Figure 2.

In general, the participants have considered the Campus as a positive experience that has encouraged them to consider studying a university career, especially in those students with disabilities (who are as specified in the introduction), and those who perceive the university as a less probable bet on their academic future. In terms of the students having perceived the usefulness of the Campus as a way of clarifying their future (e.g., which career to study exactly), it is the item that obtains the lowest score where students without disabilities have been much more critical (3.25), although no significant differences are reached. Finally, the participants consider that the greatest usefulness of the Campus has been to understand the functioning, the academic offer and the structure of the university (in our case, that of Granada). In none of the questions was there, a significant difference in the assessment was seen according to whether the person was disabled or not (through Mann–Whitney’s non-parametric test).

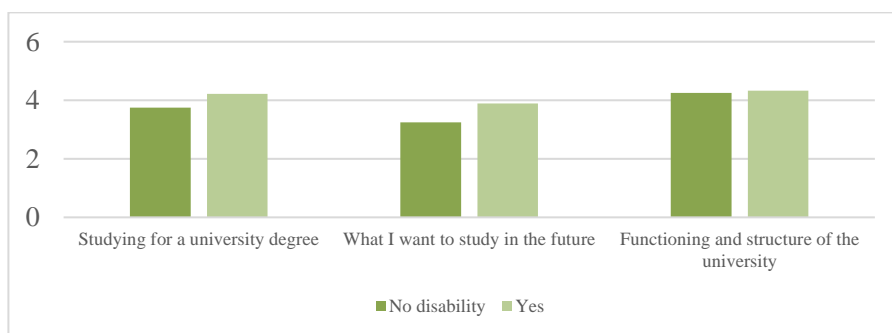


Figure 2. Encouraging university studies

- Continuing with the objectives set out in this evaluation study of the Inclusive Campuses, thirdly, we proceed to analyse the assessment of the Campus in the opinion of the participants. The results offered here are about the general aspects of organisation and coordination. Students and participants were asked about their satisfaction and evaluation of each of the activities carried out specifically, but taking into account the general aspects (coordination, travel, monitors, lectures, general treatment, timetable, etc.) the following points can be highlighted (see Figure 3). No significant differences were found in non-parametric tests in any case in the assessment of the eight different aspects according to whether the person had a disability or not.
- Most of the items had very high scores (all above 4 on the 5-point Likert scale).
- The best rated aspects were the sign language interpreters with an average of 4.9, and the general treatment during the whole campus with an average of 4.8.
- On the other hand, those who were least valued were the speakers of the activities (3.8 in general) and the timetable (3.4) due mainly to the little free time programmed on the Campus.

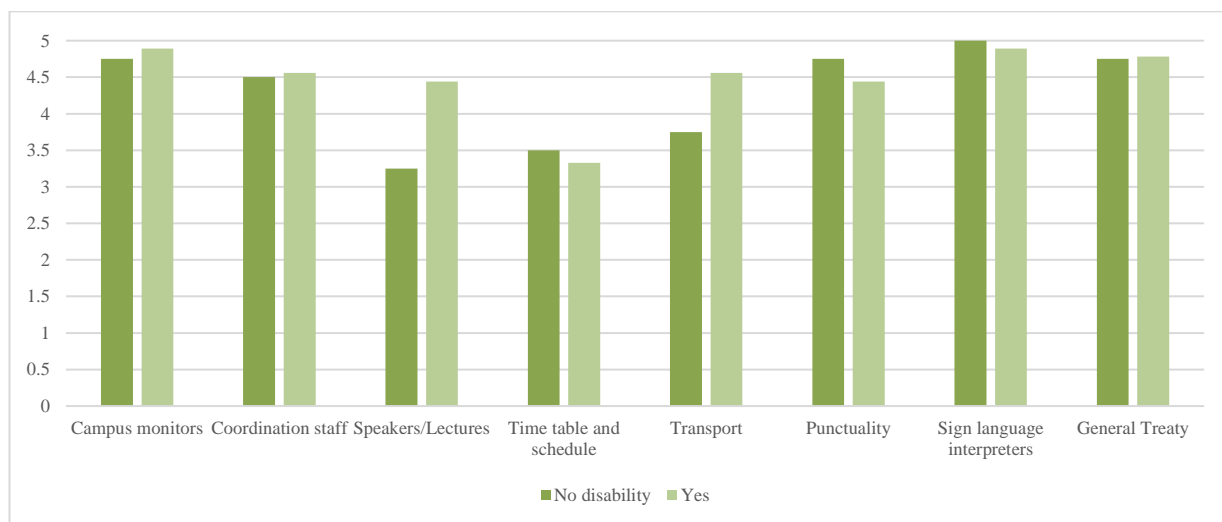


Figure 3. Coordination and activity assessment

Although not specified in the chart, the activities that were most popular with participants were the sports activities in Sierra Nevada and the visit to Alhambra. Finally, analysing satisfaction with the experience of the Inclusive Campuses, the overall assessment of the Campus was measured taking into account all its components, the intention to repeat the experience, the probability of recommending the Campus and the confirmation of initial expectations, as well as overall satisfaction. Figure 4 shows the results achieved. In all cases, there are very high ratings (even exceeding 4 on average) where the intention to recommend the experience stands out. In this item, the intention to recommend was the only item where there are significant differences through the Mann–Whitney test being higher in people with disabilities. The aspect that obtains the worst evaluation is the confirmation of the expectations about the Campus; so, it is necessary to investigate and know more deeply what was the vision and what the students were going to do before starting the Campus. In all cases, the assessments of students with disabilities are high.

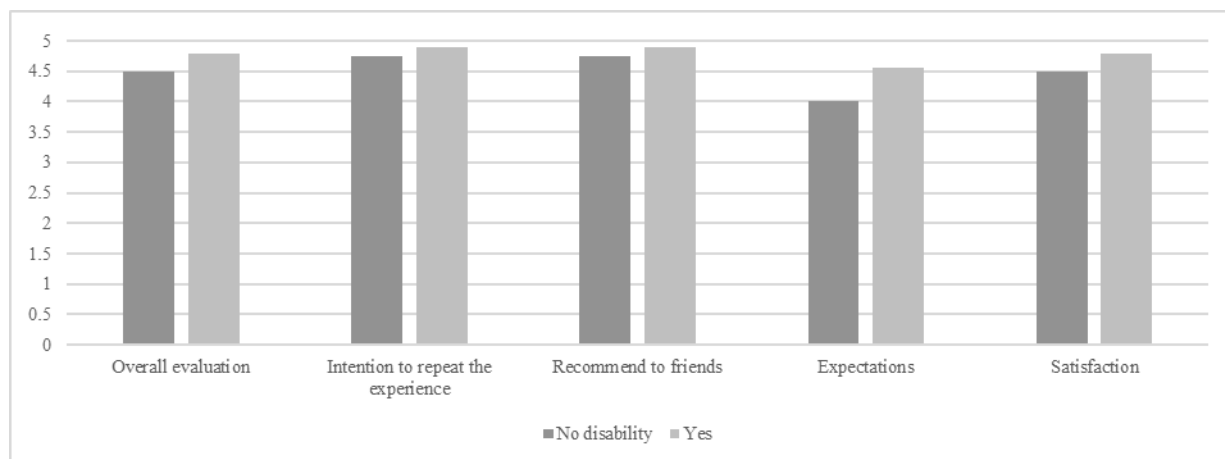


Figure 4. Satisfaction and overall assessment

Through the open questions of the questionnaire, it has been possible to know qualitative information to improve future editions. First of all, the participants emphasise that they would have liked more days of the Campus, the good treatment with the monitors, the difficulties of the high temperatures in the days in which they were held and the little free time without programmed activities.

6. Conclusions, discussion and recommendations

Inclusion is a priority issue for the improvement of educational quality as formulated in the different European education strategies or in the legislation on equality itself. The Inclusive Campuses of the University of Granada were created with the aim of promoting a greater presence of people with disabilities in the on-site universities, fostering coexistence and, above all, achieving greater normalisation in the relationship between people with and without disabilities.

The present study has allowed us to know the suitability, repercussion and satisfaction with the Campus from the point of view of its participants, which is fundamental as a strategic axis, in order to improve those aspects that are most deficient and to achieve a better achievement of the objectives in the future.

Among the results achieved, it is worth noting that the experience of these campuses has been more useful for young people without disabilities in terms of integration and personal development. Therefore, one of the main objectives of the Campus was to improve the social projection with their peers. Likewise, the Campus has been really useful when encouraging those students with disabilities to study a university career (although without statistically significant differences). However, one point for improvement is the fact that the Campus has not been so useful in channelling and raising certain vocations in areas of knowledge (since they were informed and motivated to different degrees offered). Likewise, there has been high appreciation of the coordination and activities carried out during the Campus and the satisfaction achieved. It is worth noting that the satisfaction, intention to repeat and probability of recommending are higher for participants with disabilities.

Finally, as possible future courses of action, it is important to develop inclusion activities from the university itself for those persons with disabilities once they enter the university. It is important for future editions to complete and influence university vocations, for example, through more specific experiences of the careers (laboratories, experiments, master classes, etc.).

The Inclusive Campus has been a unique experience that has fostered and strengthened strong ties between people with and without disabilities, has allowed for the promotion of new academic paths for students, has connected university and non-university life and, most importantly, allows for the

standardisation and visualisation of this type of action within the scope of higher education, configuring itself as a tool against school dropouts.

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