Article

From Specialised Classrooms to Mainstream Classrooms: A Study on the Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs from the Voices of Their Mainstream Peers

Carmen María Caballero

Department of Education, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Atlántico Medio University (UNAM), Tafira Baja, 35017 Las Palmas, Spain; carmen.caballero@pdi.atanticomedio.es

Abstract: The modalities of schooling and the educational measures for students with special educational needs (SENs) are postulated as important aspects within the field of study of inclusive education. The general objective of this research is to analyse the processes, through the voice of their peers, for the inclusion of students with SENs enrolled in specialised classrooms (SCs) in mainstream centres in Spain when they attend mainstream classrooms (MCs). The design of the research is mixed (QUAN-Qual), non-experimental, and descriptive. The participants in the quantitative phase were 2649 peers from MCs that have students enrolled in the SCs, and the participants in the qualitative phase were 57 students from MCs. A questionnaire designed ad hoc was used for collecting the quantitative information and discussion groups for the qualitative information. This study shows the barriers and facilitators towards the inclusion of students in the SU within mainstream centres or classrooms. Among the facilitators which stand out is the wish of classmates from mainstream classrooms to share times, spaces, and activities with their classmates with SENs from the SU. Among the barriers highlighted by a large number of students in the MCs are the fact that they do not participate in group activities with their peers with SENs and that the latter do not usually participate in common activities developed at the centre (like celebrations or excursions).

Keywords: schooling; specialised classrooms; mainstream centres; special educational needs; student voice

1. Introduction

The advance in the inclusion of students made in education systems has been very significant in recent years. When considering education as a fundamental right of people, progress has been made in politics, culture, and teaching practice in trying to achieve an inclusive education for all students [1]. The compromised systems on inclusion face the challenge of ensuring democratic, equitable, and quality education, allowing all students to develop to the maximum their skills and competencies, regardless of their ability or cultural, social, or economic origin [2]. From this perspective, schools should assume an inclusive orientation, pedagogy, and practice in all educational stages, since this model is the most effective way to eliminate any inequality or processes of exclusion and marginalization still suffered by the most vulnerable children in mainstream schools [3,4]. In this regard, it is important to highlight the difference between the concepts of integration and inclusion. Taking as a reference Hausstätter and Jahnukainen [5], the objective of integration is that all children have the guaranteed right to education within local schools, thereby avoiding attendance within segregated educational systems. According to the aforementioned authors, integration requires reorganization to establish special education as a part of the general education system and also to ensure that all students receive the necessary learning support within mainstream schools (including those with disabilities). For its part, following the contributions of the aforementioned authors, inclusion, as an educational paradigm, is concerned with the integrity of all children, who must be permitted to be

active members of a school class and participate and learn together within the social life of the school. Therefore, inclusion requires the creation of opportunities for all students to engage socially with others, regardless of their personal or social conditions, which is why the democratization of school spaces must be increased (ensuring that all voices are equally heard). It is precisely this model of inclusion that this research focuses on.

The modalities of schooling and the educational measures available for students with special educational needs (SENs, from now on) are postulated as important aspects within inclusive education [6,7]. Reflection, evaluation, and analysis about these are essential in determining how progress towards inclusive education is taking place. However, as stated by Alcaraz and Arnaiz [8], there are scarce and intermittent works that deal with the issue of schooling and the placement of students with SENs and their impact on the development of the principle of inclusion movement. In spite of this, the existence of relevant research that exposes very significant evidence within the Spanish framework [9–11] and also within the international context [12–15] is acknowledged.

At this point, we consider it necessary to refer to the different modalities of schooling that the Spanish educational system lays out for students with SENs during the compulsory basic education stage. As established in the current Organic Law of Education enacted in 2020 (LOMLOE), whenever possible, the schooling of students with SENs in Spain will be carried out within a full-time mainstream classroom modality with all the necessary support (organizational, material, and human resources). However, only when it is not possible to provide a quality educational response in mainstream classrooms to students with very specialised SENs or when specific support cannot be offered for those educational needs of a serious or permanent nature is there the possibility of them being schooled in a special education centre or in a specialised class in mainstream centres. In fact, schooling in specialised modalities (in a special education centre or in a specialised classroom in a mainstream centre) is considered a specific and exceptional measure of attention to diversity in the Spanish educational system.

Specifically, as it is indicated above, among the different modalities of schooling for students with SENs, in most of the autonomous communities in Spain, there are specialised classrooms (hereafter SCs) within the mainstream centres. Likewise, students who are schooled in SCs in Spain, for the majority of their time, carry out their teaching–learning process together with specialised teachers within these SCs. Also, these students attend mainstream classrooms—called reference classrooms (hereafter MCs)—with other schoolmates in different curriculum subjects (Arts, Physical Education, Music, Religion, etc.) [16], with the aim of ensuring their maximum participation, socialization, and inclusion in common activities with the rest of the pupils of mainstream centres.

Nevertheless, relevant authors, like Echeita and Simón [17] or Wehmeyer [18], criticise the existence of this type of SCs in mainstream centres, since these cause students with SENs to be separated from the rest of their peers and friends without SENs, sharing very little time with them within MCs. Therefore, from an inclusive point of view, SCs or units, even though they are located in mainstream schools, are considered to be an important barrier to fulfilling the right to the true inclusion, participation, and presence of all students in mainstream centres [19]. In this sense, Zakai-Mashiach [15] affirms that SCs in mainstream centres for young people with disabilities or ASD have increased the opportunities of SEN students for physical integration in mainstream schools; however, this type of classroom is not enough to achieve inclusion for these students, because inclusion is broader and requires many more challenges to be overcome than simple integration or presence in mainstream centres.

In order to ascertain if this modality of schooling really favours—or not—educational inclusion, it is necessary to know the perception of all the educational actors involved, including students with and without disabilities, taking as a reference the work by Subban et al. [4]. In addition, it should be noted that the voice of the students has been frequently forgotten by researchers in the investigations of their educational and social situation [20,21].

For this reason, this research aims to find out the opinions of the classmates without SENs of students with disabilities and SENs who are enrolled in SCs in mainstream centres.

There is some research in which the voice of students is heard on the different modalities of schooling for students with SENs, recognizing their opinion concerning the benefits and difficulties for inclusion, presence, participation, and learning processes. In the research by Vetoniemi and Kärnä [22], the presence of negative emotions in students with SENs related to participation and social interaction with other classmates without disabilities is revealed. Also, the conclusions of the research of Holt et al. [23] demonstrate the limitations that SCs present for the actual inclusion of students with SENs and autism in mainstream centres, due to the fact that schooling within these classrooms causes the separation of students considered "different". However, the study of Avramidis [24] shows that students with SENs or with other learning difficulties have the same possibilities as their peers without SENs to be part of a group, and, therefore, the probability of isolation is the same for all students.

Various studies indicate the benefits for all students' learning, and for the self-efficacy of educational systems, when students with SENs are present in MCs together with other classmates without disabilities [25,26]. The term presence is understood as the attendance of students with SENs or with other learning difficulties in an MC (during all or part of the school day) [27], which implies carrying out the same dynamics and educational activities as their peers without SENs [28]. There are different investigations in which a positive attitude of peers in MCs is observed towards the presence of peers with SENs [29,30]. However, despite the positive attitudes found in these works, the studies by Marini [31] or Schwab et al. [32] indicate that students with SENs have fewer friends and a higher risk of social isolation, spending most of the time with friends who also have SENs, which represents a substantial barrier to the progress of inclusive education. Taking into account the above, it is important to point out how children with positive attitudes towards their peers with disabilities are more willing to interact with them, compared to those children who have negative attitudes [33,34], so the attitudes of those peers without SENs represent a key element which can favour or hinder educational inclusion.

If we ask ourselves how to improve the presence of students with SENs in ordinary classrooms, there are works that explore various teaching strategies used by teachers to promote the inclusion of students with SENs within MCs [35–40]. Studies have also analysed existing educational policies and modalities, in different territories, that favour or hinder the presence of students with SENs in mainstream settings [8,41]. However, these investigations usually capture the voice of adults, so there is insufficient research that takes into account the voice of students with and without disabilities about the methods or modalities to improve the presence of young people with SENs in mainstream contexts.

There are also studies that address the topic of the participation of students with SENs within MCs [42,43]. The concept of participation, from the perspective of inclusive and democratic education, is understood, following Booth and Aisncow [44], as the performance of common and shared activities in mainstream educational contexts by all students. Moreover, this participation supposes the appreciation of all students' opinions, perspectives, and ideas for decision making regarding the organization and development of the educational process (regardless of whether they have a disability). Recent studies have focused on analysing the level of social participation of students with SENs in mainstream centres or classrooms [22,45,46]. Other works have investigated the degree of participation of students with SENs in mainstream activities or educational tasks with the rest of the students without SENs [47,48], and other studies have also listened to the voices of students in this regard [49].

Finally, studies that have addressed the issue of the relationships and socialization of students with SENs in mainstream educational settings are also acknowledged [50–52]. The study by Kart and Kart [53] states that the inclusion of children with SENs in MCs and the interaction between diverse students produce positive effects for all members of an MC: for example, a reduction in fear, hostility, prejudice, and discrimination, as well as increased

tolerance and acceptance of differences. However, the work of Hoffmann et al. [54] high-lights that students with SENs have a greater difficulty than other young people without disabilities in establishing friendships with other peers, even though they prefer peers without disabilities as friends. Likewise, Pinto et al. [55] state that children with SENs tend to be less accepted in the social environment. In this way, we consider that the inclusion of students with SENs within MCs is essential to overcome this difficulty when it comes to establishing good relationships among all students—with and without SENs—promoting their maximum emotional and social development.

In relation to the reference framework set out, the general objective of this research was to analyse the process of inclusion of students enrolled in SCs in mainstream centres in Spain when they attend MCs through the voice of their peers from said MCs. The following specific objectives were determined in order to respond to this general objective:

1. Examine the attitudes of the mainstream classrooms' peers towards the presence of students with SENs in their mainstream class.
2. Analyse the level of participation of specialised classrooms' students when they come to attend mainstream classrooms.
3. Evaluate the relationship between mainstream classrooms' students and their specialised classrooms' peers.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Design

The design of this research was mixed (QUAN → Qual), non-experimental, and descriptive. The design used followed a dominant (quantitative) status, in which quantitative and qualitative research techniques were developed, integrated, and combined sequentially [56]. Thus, this study followed an explanatory sequential process—a first quantitative phase and a second qualitative phase—since the qualitative results were used to explore the quantitative results, with an emphasis on explaining relationships through a triangulation process.

A sequential mixed research design was chosen because, principally, we wanted to obtain the global perspective of a representative sample of all peers belonging to MCs on their schoolmates enrolled in SCs in the region of Murcia (Spain), and, to achieve this, we used a questionnaire. Thus, once the information had been obtained, on a large scale, from the study context, we sought to delve deeper, through qualitative processes, into those aspects that provoked the most interest in the researchers or that required greater clarification on the part of the participants.

2.2. Participants

Quantitative phase. To obtain the participating sample in the quantitative phase of this study, probabilistic sampling was used. Accordingly, 74 mainstream centres located in different locations in the region of Murcia (Spain) participated, in which, 108 SCs were based. In relation to the social context of the participating centres, 7 belonged to a low sociocultural level, 20 centres to a medium–low level, 37 centres to a medium–high level, and 10 centres to a high level.

The invited global sample was 13,500 students from MCs attended by students enrolled in SCs. To ensure the participation of MC students, an information sheet was sent to all educational centres containing an introduction of the research team, the objectives of this research, and an explanation of the procedure for its development. The management teams of the centres were responsible for disseminating this information sheet to the families of all the students. Ultimately, the sample participating in this phase of the study was composed of 2649 students from MCs. This assumed a sample size with a confidence level of 99% (Z = 2.575) and a margin of error of less than 3.0%.

Of the 2649 participants in the quantitative phase, 51.5% (N = 1364) were female students and 48.5% (N = 1285) were male students. Also, 62.7% (N = 1662) were from centres with infant or primary education stages, and 37.2% (N = 987) were from secondary

educational centres. In relation to the type of educational centre in which the participants in this phase were enrolled, 54.3% (N = 1438) were from public schools and 45.7% (N = 1211) from private schools. The mean age of the infant- and primary-stage students was 7.46 years old (SD = 2.73). The mean age of the secondary-stage students was 13.52 years old (SD = 2.09).

Qualitative phase. For the selection of the participating sample in the qualitative phase, non-probability judgmental sampling was used—also called purposive sampling. According to Martín-Crespo and Salamanca (2007), this type of deliberate sampling is typical of qualitative research that is based on information needs detected in the first results of a study.

Specifically, the participants were 57 students from MCs attended by students enrolled in SCs. Of these, 54.4% (N = 31) were female students and 45.6% (N = 26) were male students. Also, 71.9% (N = 41) were in the primary education stage and 28.1% (N = 16) were in the secondary education stage. The mean age of the primary students was 10.22 years old (S.D. = 0.91), and the mean age of secondary-stage students was 13.80 years old (S.D. = 1.07). Of the students participating in the qualitative phase, 7.0% (N = 4) belonged to a low sociocultural context, 36.8% (N = 21) to a medium–low context, 40.3% (N = 23) to a medium–high context, and 15.8% (N = 9) to a high context.

2.3. Instrumentation

Quantitative phase. A questionnaire designed ad hoc (EVABIMUR: questionnaires for the evaluation of SCs from the voice of classmates in MCs) was used [57]. This questionnaire was specifically designed with the intention of collecting information on the perception of MC students about the inclusion of their peers with SENs enrolled in SCs, since there was no previous questionnaire which had been validated and designed for this purpose. This instrument presented a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.760.

Qualitative phase. For this phase, student discussion groups in the MCs were used. From these groups, data were collected about the attitudes of the MCs towards the presence, participation, and relationships of students with SENs from SCs into mainstream educational spaces. In the discussion group, questions were asked referring to three dimensions of analysis (1. presence, 2. participation, and 3. relationship), complying to the three specific objectives of this study. Specifically, the questions asked were the following:

- Presence: Do you like that your schoolmates from the SC attend the MC so you can work together? What does the presence of schoolmates with SEN in the MC mean to you? Is there any aspect which needs improvement concerning the presence of your schoolmates with SEN in the MC?
- Participation: Do classmates with SEN participate in the activities carried out in class when they are in the MC? Do you carry out group activities with your schoolmates with SEN in the MC? Do classmates with SEN participate in other school activities, such as excursions or festivals?
- Relationship: Do you interact with your SC schoolmates when they attend the MC? Do you help classmates with SEN when they need it, inside or outside of class? Do you consider that your SC schoolmates are your friends?

The discussion groups were coordinated and directed by the researcher, who was accompanied by an MC tutor. In the focus groups, the researcher used clear and understandable language, ensuring that the children could understand the questions easily. Technical terms or abstract concepts that could lead to confusion were avoided. The researcher maintained a neutral and objective attitude during the discussion groups. Facial expressions or gestures that could suggest approval or disapproval of the children's responses were avoided.

2.4. Data Analysis

Quantitative phase. The analysis of quantitative data began with a descriptive study, based on the calculation of the frequencies of each of the items which made up the analysis

dimension of the questionnaires. The analysis of this phase was carried out with the statistical program SPSS, version 28.

Qualitative phase. For the treatment of the data collected through the qualitative technique, content analysis was carried out through a deductive process. To achieve this, the most relevant text fragments were identified, labelled, and reduced, classifying them into three categories or dimensions (presence, participation, and relationship). Once all the text units had been incorporated into their respective category, the analysis codes were created, regrouping the fragments according to the main content to which they were referring. So, the qualitative categories and codes were intrinsically linked to the items of the quantitative phase since the purpose was to explain and connect the different pieces of information. For the qualitative analysis, the Atlas.Ti software was used in V.9.

2.5. Ethics

This research complied with the criteria established in the Code of Ethics of the University of Murcia (approval code was 4312/2023) for the development of research with minors or with people in a situation of disability. So, this study received a favourable report from the Research Ethics Commission of the Universidad de Murcia (Spain), whose approval code was 1741/2017. For this reason, before starting this study, an informed consent form was given to the parents of the participating students as well as an informed assent that had to be signed by the students.

To guarantee the anonymity and maintain the privacy of the participants, codes or identifiers were used, instead of real names. This fact prevented the data collected from being directly linked to the identity of the students (or their centres of origin). Likewise, to ensure the confidentiality of the data, they were stored securely, with access only permitted to a small group of researchers involved in this research. In addition, security measures were used to access folders shared between researchers (such as encryption and passwords), thus protecting sensitive information. It should be noted that the personal data of the participants were not shared with third parties who were not involved in the research, a fact of which the parents or legal guardians had been explicitly informed.

Similarly, the participants were informed that, if at any time during the research the parents or the students themselves did not want to continue participating in this study, they could communicate this to the main researcher or the research team, withdrawing their information without this resulting in any negative consequences. Furthermore, they were not required to provide an explanation for their decision to withdraw from this study.

3. Results

The results of this research were examined according to the three specific objectives mentioned above:

Objective 1. Examine the attitudes of the mainstream classrooms' peers towards the presence of students with SENs in their mainstream classes.

Referring to quantitative information, all the items obtained high mean scores close to the maximum value of 3 (Table 1). Specifically, there were two items that received the highest rating. The first one, Item 1.1. ($\overline{X}$ = 2.73, S.D. = 0.514), was evaluated positively by 76.1% of the students of the MCs. The second item that also obtained the highest score was Item 1.3. ($\overline{X}$ = 2.73, S.D. = 0.584), obtaining 80.0% positive evaluations. The item with the lowest score was Item 1.2. ($\overline{X}$ = 2.40, S.D. = 0.725), with 54.3% of positive responses.

Next, we will show the qualitative results obtained that refer to the presence of students from the SCs in the MCs. Thus, these were classified into five analysis codes: 1.1. the MC classmates show satisfaction with the presence of their peers from the SC; 1.2. the classmates from the MC show dissatisfaction with the presence of the students from the SC; 1.3. the students from the SC contribute to a good atmosphere in the MC; 1.4. the students from the SC improve respect towards diversity; and 1.5. the classmates of the MC demand more time together with the students of the SC. Specifically, the distribution of the

54 textual citations (expressed in frequencies and percentages) referring to the reception of the students from the SCs in the MCs is shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Items referring to the presence in the MCs of peers from SCs.

S.D.	Mean ($\overline{X}$)	Total	Educational Stage			Items
			Secondary	Primary		
0.514	2.73	88 (3.3%)	37 (3.8%)	51 (3.0%)	**NO (1)**	1.1. I like that the classmate from the SC comes to my class
		544 (20.6%)	217 (22.0%)	327 (19.7%)	**SOMETIMES (2)**	
		2016 (76.1%)	732 (74.2%)	1284 (77.3%)	**YES (3)**	
		2648 (100%)	986 (100%)	1662 (100%)	**TOTAL**	
0.725	2.40	378 (14.3%)	192 (19.4%)	186 (11.2%)	**NO (1)**	1.2. Being with the classmate of the SC helps us all treat each other better
		832 (31.4%)	337 (34.1%)	495 (29.8%)	**SOMETIMES (2)**	
		1438 (54.3%)	458 (46.45)	980 (59.0%)	**YES (3)**	
		2648 (100%)	987 (100%)	1661 (100%)	**TOTAL**	
0.584	2.73	190 (7.2%)	96 (9.8%)	94 (5.7%)	**NO (1)**	1.3. Being with the classmate of the SC helps make me respectful towards people who are different from me
		338 (12.8%)	121 (12.3%)	217 (13.0%)	**SOMETIMES (2)**	
		2117 (80.0%)	766 (77.9%)	1351 (81.3%)	**YES (3)**	
		2645 (100%)	983 (100%)	1662 (100%)	**TOTAL**	

Table 2. Qualitative results referring to the presence in the MCs of peers from SCs.

Codes Associated with the Category "Presence"	Num. Textual Citations (N)	%	Num. Textual Citations (N)	%	Num. Textual Citations (N)	%
	Primary		Secondary		Total	
1.1. The MC classmates show satisfaction regarding the presence of their peers from the SC	6	11.1%	9	16.6%	15	27.8%
1.2. The classmates of the MC show dissatisfaction with the presence of the students from the SC	1	1.8%	2	3.7%	3	5.5%
1.3. The students from the SC contribute to a good atmosphere within the MC	7	13.0%	7	13.0%	14	26.0%
1.4. The students from the SC improve respect towards diversity	4	7.4%	4	7.4%	8	14.8%
1.5. The classmates of the MC demand more time together with the students from the SC	4	7.4%	8	14.8%	12	22.2%
1.5.1. They point out the need for a support teacher	0	0%	2	3.7%	2	3.7%
TOTAL	**22**	**40.7%**	**32**	**59.2%**	**54**	**100%**

As it is seen in the table above, the largest number of qualitative results referring to the reception of SC students in MCs indicate that their MC classmates showed satisfaction regarding the presence of their peers from SCs (N = 15, 27.8%). So, this ratified the previously shown quantitative results. The following quotes stood out:

I like that children from SC come to my class because I learn what these people are like and how to treat the diversity of people outside the school. I learn a lot from each of them: how to talk to them, how to treat them, etc. (Mainstream classmate, Secondary School).

I do want the child in the SC to be here in the class playing and working with all of us. I like him very much and he greets me when he sees me. In addition, he also likes to come to us a lot, he is always happy and with a smile when he sees us (Mainstream classmate, Primary School).

In addition, the next highest number of citations were also positive towards the presence of students with SENs in MCs. They alluded to the fact that the students of the SCs help to create a good atmosphere within the MCs (N = 14, 26.0%). The following quotes demonstrated this aspect:

The classmates from the SC help us to have more consideration for others and to be more tolerant or respectful among ourselves. They make us better people (Mainstream classmate, Secondary School).

The schoolmates with SEN, when they are with us in the mainstream class, make the classroom atmosphere better. Therefore, there is no conflict when they are with us. I think this is because we try to take care of them and make them feel comfortable (Mainstream classmate, Secondary School).

In relation to the reception topic, it is important to point out that citations were detected in which the students of the MCs demanded a greater presence of their classmates from SCs in more mainstream times and spaces (N = 12, 22.2%):

I think that the kids from the SC should spend more time with us in the MC. I consider that this is the best for their learning and for us all to improve coexistence (Mainstream classmate, Primary School).

Objective 2. Analyse the level of participation of specialised classrooms' students when they come to mainstream classrooms.

Next, the results of the quantitative items that described the degree of participation of the students from the SCs with their classmates in the MCs are detailed in Table 3. It should be noted that two of them (Item 2.1. and Item 2.2.) obtained mean ratings close to the intermediate value of 2, "sometimes". The item that obtained the highest score was Item 2.3. ($\overline{X}$ = 2.69, S.D. = 0.549), with 73.5% answering positively.

Table 3. Items referring to the participation in the MCs of students from SCs.

S.D.	Mean ($\overline{X}$)	Total	Educational Stage			Items
			Secondary	Primary		
		235 (8.9%)	132 (13.4%)	103 (6.2%)	**NO (1)**	
0.630	2.32	1321 (49.9%)	490 (49.7%)	831 (50.1%)	**SOMETIMES (2)**	2.1. The classmates from the SC participate in activities that we do in the MC
		1090 (41.1%)	364 (36.9%)	726 (43.7%)	**YES (3)**	
		2646 (100%)	986 (100%)	1660 (100%)	**TOTAL**	

Table 3. *Cont.*

S.D.	Mean ($\overline{X}$)	Total	Educational Stage			Items
			Secondary	Primary		
0.720	2.35	387 (14.6%)	218 (22.1%)	169 (10.2%)	NO (1)	2.2. We carry out group activities with the classmates from the SC
		959 (36.2%)	397 (40.2%)	562 (33.8%)	SOMETIMES (2)	
		1303 (49.2%)	372 (37.7%)	931 (56.0%)	YES (3)	
		2649 (100%)	987 (100%)	1662 (100%)	TOTAL	
0.549	2.69	116 (4.4%)	82 (8.3%)	34 (2.0%)	NO (1)	2.3. Classmates from the SC participate in activities organised by the school such as celebrations or excursions
		586 (22.1%)	318 (32.3%)	268 (16.1%)	SOMETIMES (2)	
		1943 (73.5%)	583 (59.3%)	1360 (81.8%)	YES (3)	
		2645 (100%)	983 (100%)	1662 (100%)	TOTAL	

Turning to the qualitative information, the distribution of the 33 citations referring to the participation of students from SCs with classmates from MCs, according to the opinion of the latter, is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Qualitative results referring to the participation in the MCs of students from SCs.

Codes Associated with the Category "Participation"	Num. Textual Citations (N)	%	Num. Textual Citations (N)	%	Num. Textual Citations (N)	%
	Primary		Secondary		Total	
2.1. Little participation of students from the SC in the MC activities	3	9.1%	2	6.1%	5	15.2%
2.2. Scarce performance of group work or activities in the MC	2	6.1%	7	21.2%	9	27.3%
2.3. Little participation of the students of the SC in excursions with their classmates of the MC	6	18.1%	6	18.1%	12	36.3%
2.4. High participation of SC students in celebrations with their classmates of the MC	4	12.1%	1	3.0%	5	15.1%
2.5. Low participation of SC students in celebrations with their classmates of the MC	0	0%	2	6.1%	2	6.1%
TOTAL	**15**	**45.4%**	**18**	**54.5%**	**33**	**100%**

Specifically, the classmates from the MCs denoted a low participation of the students from the SCs in mainstream activities (N = 5, 15.2%), which confirmed the previous quantitative results. They affirmed that, when the students from SCs attended the MCs, they would carry out different activities or individual worksheets designed specifically for them. The following quotes are presented in this regard:

The SC classmate does only some activities with us in the mainstream class, since some tasks are very difficult for him to do (Mainstream Classmate, Primary School).

The classmates from the SC only participate in the easiest activities, in those that are simple for them (Mainstream Classmate, Primary School).

Likewise, the contributions of the students from the MC confirmed a limitation when carrying out group work or activities within the MCs in which classmates from SCs could take part (N = 9, 27.3%):

Activities that we have all done together in a group in the class, with the children of the SC… I remember only once or twice. I remember one about analysing the anatomy of a fish (Mainstream Classmate, Secondary School).

I remember that once we all did a job together, a team project in the mainstream class. But I think that was the only time we have worked together (Mainstream Classmate, Secondary School).

In addition, many comments from the mainstream classmates (N = 12, 36.3%) showed that there was low participation of the students from the SC on excursions with the classmates from the MCs. In some of them, the students from the MCs expressed their wish that their classmates from the SCs would accompany them on more excursions out of school:

I think it is important that classmates with SEN from the SC come on more excursions with us because they go on very few outings. Also, I believe that excursions outside of school are necessary to get to know their neighbourhood and nearby environment (Mainstream Classmate, Primary School).

I remember that we went with the science teacher on an excursion and the boys from the SC did come with us. I only remember one in which they participated, although we have gone on more excursions. I wish they would come to all those that we do [. . .] So, they will be more included with all of us (Mainstream Classmate, Secondary School).

Objective 3. Evaluate the relationship between mainstream classrooms' students and their specialised classrooms' peers.

Two of the items referring to the relationship between the students obtained mean scores close to the maximum value of 3 (Item 3.2. and Item 3.4.), and the other two obtained scores closed to the intermediate value of 2 (Item 3.1. and Item 3.3.). Specifically, the item with the highest mean score was Item 3.2. ($\overline{X}$ = 2.82, S.D. = 0.440), having obtained 84.7% positive evaluations. The second item with the highest mean was Item 3.4. ($\overline{X}$ = 2.76, S.D. = 0.503), with a total of 79.7% of positive votes. Finally, the item with the lowest mean was Item 3.3. ($\overline{X}$ = 2.25, S.D. = 0.941), with 35.0% negative evaluations overall (Table 5).

Table 5. Items referring to the relationship with students from SCs.

S.D.	Mean ($\overline{X}$)	Total	Educational Stage			Items
			Secondary	Primary		
0.723	2.28	424 (16.0%)	221 (22.4%)	203 (12.2%)	NO (1)	3.1. In class I interact with the classmate from the SC
		1052 (39.7%)	466 (47.3%)	586 (35.3%)	SOMETIMES (2)	
		1172 (44.3%)	299 (30.3%)	873 (52.5%)	YES (3)	
		2648 (100%)	986 (100%)	1662 (100%)	TOTAL	
0.440	2.82	64 (2.4%)	24 (2.4%)	40 (2.4%)	NO (1)	3.2. We help our classmates in the SC if necessary
		340 (12.8%)	146 (14.8%)	194 (11.7%)	SOMETIMES (2)	
		2244 (84.7%)	816 (82.8%)	1428 (85.9%)	YES (3)	
		2648 (100%)	986 (100%)	1662 (100%)	TOTAL	

Table 5. *Cont.*

S.D.	Mean ($\overline{X}$)	Total	Educational Stage			Items
			Secondary	Primary		
0.941	2.25	926 (35.0%)	610 (61.9%)	316 (19.0%)	NO (1)	3.3. I have friends who are educated in the SC
		142 (5.4%)	51 (5.2%)	91 (5.5%)	SOMETIMES (2)	
		1579 (59.7%)	325 (33.0%)	1254 (75.5%)	YES (3)	
		2647 (100%)	986 (100%)	1661 (100%)	TOTAL	
0.503	2.76	94 (3.6%)	46 (4.7%)	48 (2.9%)	NO (1)	3.4. I get along well with my classmates from the SC
		443 (16.7%)	171 (17.4%)	272 (16.4%)	SOMETIMES (2)	
		2110 (79.7%)	768 (78.0%)	1342 (80.7%)	YES (3)	
		2647 (100%)	985 (100%)	1662 (100%)	TOTAL	

Turning to qualitative information, the distribution of the 61 citations referring to the relationship of students from SCs with their classmates from MCs, according to the opinion of the latter, is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Qualitative results referring to the relationship with students from SCs.

Codes Associated with the Category "Relationship"	Num. Textual Citations (N)	%	Num. Textual Citations (N)	%	Num. Textual Citations (N)	%
	Primary		Secondary		Total	
3.1. The students of the MC relate with those of the SC	7	11.4%	4	6.6%	11	18.0%
3.2. The classmates of the MC help or would help the classmates of the SC	3	4.9%	6	9.8%	9	14.7%
3.2.1. Help them in the classroom	2	3.3%	3	4.9%	5	8.2%
3.2.2. Help them outside of the classroom	4	6.6%	5	8.2%	9	14.7%
3.3. Classmates from the MC get along well with students from the SC	4	6.6%	4	6.6%	8	13.1%
3.4. Classmates in the MC do not consider their classmates in the SC as their friends	5	8.2%	5	8.2%	10	16.4%
3.5. Classmates in the MC consider their classmates in the SC as their friends	9	14.7%	0	0%	9	14.7%
TOTAL	34	55.7%	27	44.3%	61	100%

The qualitative results indicated that the students in MCs, in general, did relate to the students from the SCs when they attend the MCs (N = 11, 18.0%). The following quotes were said in this regard:

I interact with the SC classmate in the common mainstream class. We all get along very well with him; many times we talk to him and ask him about his life and interests (Mainstream Classmate, Primary School).

I also interact with the boy with SEN from the SC. I talk to him a lot and ask him how he is, and all those types of things (Mainstream Classmate, Primary School).

Similarly, the mainstream classmates stated in many citations (N = 9, 14.7%) that they did help their peers from the SCs:

I am always willing to help classmates who need it, always. And not just the ones I like best, I would help them all (Mainstream Classmate, Secondary School).

Next, the mainstream classmates also confirmed that they were willing to help their classmates from the SCs outside the MCs such as, for example, on the street (N = 9, 14.7%). In this regard, the following quotes stood out:

On the street, if something happens to them, I would help them even more than here at school. Outside they -students of SC with SEN- may be more dangerous/may be in more danger and I think they would need us much more (Mainstream, Secondary School).

Outside of school I would also help them if they needed something from me, just like here at school. I mean if I have to accompany him somewhere or go to his house to do some homework (Mainstream Classmate, Primary School).

Regarding whether the students in MCs got along with their classmates in SCs, the information collected indicated that they did and that there were usually no conflicts between them (N = 8, 13.1%):

Of course, we get along with the SC students when we're all together. They are good boys and we never have fights or problems within the class (Mainstream Classmate, Secondary School).

I do get on well with my classmate with SEN who has been in my class. He is a very good and happy boy who is always happy (Mainstream Classmate, Primary School).

However, we found a disparity in quotes when it came to the fact that some MC students did consider SC classmates as their friends (N = 9, 14.7%), while others claimed that they were not (N = 10, 16.4%). Some quotes are pointed out below that show the lack of friendship between MC students and their SC classmates:

I don't consider them my friends. I also consider them as acquaintances because they have spent some days working with us here in the mainstream class (Mainstream Classmate, Secondary School).

The children with SEN in the SC are not my friends; they are my classmates at school. Because I don't spend a lot of time with them, nor do I invite them to play outside of school (Mainstream Classmate, Primary).

4. Discussion

This research allowed us to find out the current state of one of the existing schooling modalities for the inclusive educational efforts towards students with SENs: SCs in the region of Murcia (Spain). This is an aspect of great importance [6,7] because it can help in detecting the barriers that inclusion must face and overcome in order to guarantee the presence, participation, and learning of all students in mainstream contexts [17,18]. Accordingly, there are previous studies of the national [10,11,20] and international situation [6,12–15] that have studied this aspect. Therefore, this study contributes to a topic of great interest within the field of study of inclusive education from a seldom-heard point of view: that of the perception of the students without SENs in MCs (students whose voices have rarely been acknowledged in research processes). Likewise, this research developed a mixed methodological approach, which made possible an exhaustive collection of information. Therefore, this study can guide the development of this type of methodological design in other educational contexts—both national and international—for which we want an in-depth understanding of the situation of students with SENs in mainstream contexts and the status of their educational inclusion.

In relation to the presence of students with SENs from SCs in MCs, the UN [1] noted the importance of establishing, in students in mainstream educational environments, positive attitudes and a culture of welcoming diversity. Also, this fact has a direct influence on

the progress of inclusion [2–4], especially of the most vulnerable groups, as is the case for students enrolled in SCs [16].

There are investigations, such as those by Alhumaid [23] and Ayasrah [30], that have indicated the high respect, appreciation, and good reception that students in MCs have towards classmates with SENs, which coincides with the results of our research. This positive attitude of students without disabilities towards their peers with greater learning difficulties has been considered an essential aspect to ensure effective inclusion and social participation within mainstream classes. In this regard and agreeing with the aforementioned authors, the majority of the students in the MCs who participated in this research affirmed that they liked to share time and learning with their classmates enrolled in SCs. Despite this, these results should not ignore the situation of vulnerability that students with SENs experience in MCs; as it was pointed out by Marini [31] or Schwab et al. [32], children with SENs have a greater risk of being excluded and have greater difficulties in creating friendships with other classmates.

Nevertheless, in this research, we discovered in both the quantitative and qualitative results that students from MCs like to share time and learning with students from SCs. It stood out how the students expressed that sharing time with their classmates with SENs from the SCs taught them to get to know each other better, to treat each other appropriately according to their needs, to value their own individual capacities, and to feel fulfilled when they had to help them during the teaching sessions. In fact, the students in the MCs demanded a greater presence—and more time—of their schoolmates from SCs within mainstream spaces or classes, which is linked to the results of Ref. [16]. Thus, in relation to the present work, the aforementioned study also highlights that classmates without SENs in MCs request that students with SENs spend more time with them in classes, since, according to the students themselves, students with SENs help and improve the way in which everyone treats one another well and create an atmosphere of respect and tolerance in MCs.

There are studies that have detailed various strategies that favour the presence of students with SENs in MCs [38–40], which would help to fulfil the demand of the students who participated in the present investigation: spending more time in more spaces together with students from SCs in MCs. For example, the study of Arztmann [35] shows the positive results of the use of STEM games in education, and, in the work of Barahora et al. [36], the use of the Universal Design of Learning (UDL) is recommended to diversify the representation of contents and make language more understandable, while the research of Bravou et al. [37] exposes the functionality of virtual reality as a resource for a more inclusive education. In this sense and based on previous findings, teachers who support SC students can use these resources to favour the inclusion of students with SENs alongside the rest of the students in a class.

In relation to the second specific objective of this research, we must consider that the principle of participation of all students within mainstream educational contexts is, together with presence and academic success, one of the intrinsic and fundamental conditions that must govern inclusive education for all [8,44]. In this study, the information from the classmates in MCs reflected a significant barrier in the degree of participation of students with SENs in mainstream spaces, which is similar to the results of Hodges et al. [47] or O'Connor and McNabb [48]. These two works also show that students with SENs suffer restrictions in school participation and that these are due to various intrinsic factors (such as their sense of belonging to a school) or extrinsic factors (such as the prevailing culture of the school or the skills and training of the teachers).

In the present research, more than half of the total number of students in MCs confirmed that their peers with SENs from the SCs did not participate—or only did so "sometimes"—in MC activities. This shows that MC teachers do not adjust or design activities according to the needs and knowledge of all students, which could explain why children with SENs achieve a worse performance and lower levels of social participation inside MCs than their peers without SENs. With respect to this, the work of Tometten et al. [43]

shows that students with SENs and specifically those who present behavioural or emotional problems (as is usually the case with SC students) are the ones who feel less included in the dynamics and activities within MCs. Likewise, their work highlights the need for teachers to be adequately trained and understand the characteristics of students with SENs in their classroom, with this being essential to adjust their educational response and encourage the students' complete participation.

In addition, less than half of the students who participated in this research affirmed that they carried out group activities with their partner in SCs, while the rest of the MCs indicated that they only carried out group activities with SEN peers "sometimes" or "never". Likewise, the existing limitation in the level of participation of students from SCs within MCs extended to carrying out activities in the mainstream spaces and times of the educational centres (such as outings, excursions, or celebrations, etc.). In this way, it can be considered that the low levels of participation of SC students in mainstream school activities may lead to less social participation among young people with and without SENs, as shown in previous works [42,49,50], which can directly affect the full inclusion of all students [4].

The quantitative results presented regarding participation were confirmed with the qualitative data collected in the present study. In this way, the students in the MCs denoted a low participation of the students from the SCs in the mainstream activities within the MCs, affirming that students with SENs, as a rule, would only participate in the easiest activities and in those which were easy for them.

In relation to the third specific objective, which deals with the level of relationship between the students from the SCs and their classmates in the MCs, the quantitative results offered by the students in the MCs indicated contradictory aspects. Thus, less than half of the students in the MCs affirmed that they did interact with their peers with SENs from the SCs when they would attend the MCs but that they helped them when they needed it. These attitudes on the part of the MC classmates towards the SC students could be related to the findings of Vyrastekova [51], in which it is stated that SEN students who attend mainstream schools (together with classmates without SENs) have more friends than those students with SENs who attend special schools. Also, following Kart and Kart [53], the contact between all students in mainstream spaces has important social effects such as reducing fear, hostility, prejudice, and discrimination, as well as increasing tolerance and acceptance of difference.

However, notwithstanding the fact that there was a good attitude towards the students with SENs—according to which the majority of the classmates in the MCs indicated that they got along well with their peers from the SCs and there was a high percentage of students in the MCs who stated that they helped their classmates in the SCs when they needed it—there was not a high level of relationship or social participation between them (more than a third of the MC students indicated that they did not have friends with SENs from the SCs). This finding coincides with the results of the study of Hoffmann et al. [54], in which it was determined that students with SENs have fewer friends than students without SENs. This may be due to one of the main findings of the aforementioned study, which refers to the fact that students without SENs prefer their peers without SENs as friends. Therefore, this preference would have repercussions when it comes to establishing friendships between classmates with SENs from SCs and their classmates from MCs.

Regarding the qualitative results obtained in the third specific objective about relationships, these also showed contradictions in relation to the quantitative data found. Thus, it stood out that the students of the MCs who participated in this phase of this study showed a high degree of relationship with their classmates from the SCs within their mainstream classes. Finally, following the contributions of Zvoleyko et al. [52], to achieve this adequate socialization or relationship between students with and without SENs within MCs, a specific organization in inclusive educational environments is necessary (and not a simple transfer of special education centres into mainstream schools), as well as classroom structuring and practices which are flexible, long-term, and future-oriented. Therefore, it

is considered essential to continue deepening the study of this phenomenon in order to find possible barriers that limit the promotion of real inclusion and better interpersonal relationships among all students [50,55].

This research also presents some limitations. In the first place, this work analysed the status of the inclusion of student with SENs from the SU in their MCs in a much localised context in Spain (in the region of Murcia). It is true that there are, in most national and international territories, similar measures of attention to diversity to include students with SENs in mainstream schools and classrooms, but each of these measures have some legislative nuances that can be used to analyse each educational reality. In this sense, it would not be possible to fully generalise the results found in this work, but rather they can serve as an orientation and background to develop broader investigations in the present field of study. Secondly, in the present investigation, only the voice of one of the parties involved in the presence, participation, and relationship of students with SENs was collected: the voice of their peers in MCs. In this sense, it would be convenient to expand the qualitative study we carried out, collecting the perception of students with SENs from the SU who attend MCs for some time during their school day. Thus, one would have a broader vision of their inclusion, points of view, and feelings perceived when they share time and activities with peers without SENs in the same educational spaces.

5. Conclusions

The majority of the students in MCs liked to share time and learn with their classmates in SCs, indicating that interaction with them made them respectful of all people. In fact, such was their liking that the students in the MCs demanded a greater presence of the students from the SCs within MCs. In addition, there are very few data found that allude to dissatisfaction, on the part of students in MCs, towards the presence of schoolmates from SCs within their class, these being linked, essentially, to some insignificant conflict between the students. In this way, the good climate in MCs is ratified when students from SCs are present with the rest of their schoolmates.

Regarding the degree of participation of the students from SCs when they attend mainstream classes, according to the opinion of their mainstream peers, an important barrier or limitation has been found. In this regard, more than half of the participants indicated that the students from the SCs did not always participate in the activities developed in the MCs, while less than half indicated that they carried out group activities with them within the mainstream classes. Likewise, this study indicated the recognition of a substantial barrier in the participation of students of SCs, together with their classmates from MCs, in activities that were carried out jointly for the entire educational centre (celebrations, outings to the nearby environment, or excursions). This highlights the development of school structures that are not geared towards the inclusion of all students and, therefore, the need to reflect on them to bring about change and improvement. In this sense, the students in the MCs expressed their wish that their classmates from the SCs would participate with them in many more excursions or celebrations, recognizing that this was quite limited at the time.

Regarding the degree of relationship between the students of MCs and SCs, this study obtained contradictory results. Along these lines, less than half of the students in the MCs confirmed that they interacted with the students in the SU when they would go to the MCs. In addition, more than a third of their classmates in the MCs stated that they did not have school friends within the SU. Despite these results, favourable aspects were found in the relationship dimension. In this sense, almost all the students in the MCs claimed to help their classmates in the SU if they needed it. Most of these students confirmed that they got along well with their classmates from the SU. For this reason, it was strange that there were no friendlier ties between these students, a fact which will need continued studying to find out the cause.

Finally, we wish to highlight the implications established in the present study on the educational practice of centres with SCs in the region of Murcia (Spain). The first is the

need to modify the internal organization of these centres—and their programs and plans for paying attention to diversity—in order to increase the time during which students with and without SENs share their learning within MCs. This would promote an inclusive and common teaching environment, where all students can interact and understand each other's needs and perspectives. In this regard, the present study has shown that MC students generally show positive attitudes towards the presence of SC classmates with SENs in their classrooms. In this way, MC students can actively participate and become a cornerstone in creating an inclusive environment where all students feel welcome and valued. This implies taking concrete measures in the centres to guarantee the interrelation between all students, ensuring that everyone is guaranteed their right to share the same spaces, times, and learning dynamics.

Secondly, arising from the results obtained, another educational implication would be to carry out self-evaluation and reflection processes in educational centres with SCs, which would allow us an insight into whether the adaptations that are carried out in these SCs (for example, in the groupings, methodologies, material resources, support from teachers, etc.) enable the complete participation of students with SENs in shared activities with the rest of their classmates. In this way, the individual analysis of each MC will make it possible to make changes and improvements that would be specifically adapted to the particular characteristics of each class and the students enrolled in it, thereby enabling the inclusion of all students. Finally, it is considered essential to carry out specific programs in the centres, aimed at establishing friendships and the social/community inclusion of all students. These programs must encourage the creation of positive friendships between all students—with and without SENs—and, also, the idea these relationships can transcend the walls of the school, which would signify the true social inclusion of all students.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Research Ethics Commission of the Universidad de Murcia (approval code 4312/2023, approved on 20 February 2024).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all the subjects involved in this study. In addition, the confidentiality of the participants was guaranteed by the use of numeration (with respect to questionnaires and focus groups).

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available for privacy reasons.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

References

1. Units Nations. *Educación Inclusiva Para Personas Con Discapacidades: ¿Estamos Logrando Avances?* UN: Paris, France, 2019.
2. Woodcock, S.; Sharma, U.; Subban, P.; Hitches, E. Teacher self-efficacy and inclusive education practices: Rethinking teachers' engagement with inclusive practices. *Teach. Teach. Educ.* **2022**, *117*, 103802. [CrossRef]
3. Moriña, A.; Orozco, I. Understanding inclusive pedagogy in primary education: Teachers' perspectives. *Educ. Stud.* **2021**, *47*, 137–154. [CrossRef]
4. Subban, P.; Woodcock, S.; Sharma, U.; May, F. Student experiences of inclusive education in secondary schools: A systematic review of the literature. *Teach. Teach. Educ.* **2022**, *119*, 103853. [CrossRef]
5. Hausstätter, R.S.; Jahnukainen, M. From integration to inclusion and the role of special education. In *Inclusive Education Twenty Years after Salamanca*; Peter Lang: New York, NY, USA, 2022; Volume 19, pp. 119–131.
6. Dalgaard, N.T.; Bondebjerg, A.; Viinholt, B.C.; Filges, T. The effects of inclusion on academic achievement, socioemotional development and well-being of children with special educational needs. *Campbell Syst. Rev.* **2022**, *18*, e1291. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
7. Finlay, C.; Kinsella, W.; Prendeville, P. The professional development needs of primary teachers in special classes for children with autism in the republic of Ireland. *Prof. Dev. Educ.* **2022**, *48*, 233–253. [CrossRef]

8. Alcaraz, S.; Arnaiz-Sánchez, P. La escolarización del alumnado con necesidades educativas especiales en España: Un estudio longitudinal. *Rev. Colomb. Educ.* **2020**, *78*, 299–320. [CrossRef]

9. Arnaiz-Sánchez, P.; Gallego, L.; De Haro, R.; Alcaraz, S. ¿Qué Modalidad de Escolarización Prefieren los Equipos Directivos para el Alumnado con Apoyos Educativos Generalizados? *REICE* **2020**, *20*, 25–44. [CrossRef]

10. Arnaiz-Sánchez, P.; De Haro, R.; Alcaraz, S.; Caballero, C.M. Perceptions of the educational community on the inclusion and presence of students with SEN in mainstream schools: A mixed Study. *Children* **2022**, *9*, 886. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

11. García-Guzmán, A. *Las Aulas Abiertas Especializadas Destinadas Al Alumnado Con TEA*; Pirámide: Madrid, Spain, 2021.

12. De Bruin, K. The impact of inclusive education reforms on students with disability: An international comparison. *Int. J. Incl. Educ.* **2019**, *23*, 811–826. [CrossRef]

13. Deliyore, M.R. Costa Rica, de la educación especial a la educación inclusiva. Una mirada histórica. *Rev. Hist. Educ. Latinoam.* **2018**, *20*, 165–187. [CrossRef]

14. Richter, D.; Hoffmann, H. Social exclusion of people with severe mental illness in Switzerland: Results from the Swiss Health Survey. *Psychiatr. Sci.* **2019**, *28*, 427–435. [CrossRef]

15. Zakai–Mashiach, M. "It is like you are in a golden cage": How autistic students experience special education classrooms in general high schools. *Res. Dev. Disabil.* **2023**, *134*, 104419. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

16. Arnaiz-Sánchez, P.; Caballero, C.M. Estudio de las Aulas Abiertas Especializadas como Medida Específica de Atención a la Diversidad. *Rev. Int. De Educ. Para La Justicia Soc.* **2020**, *9*, 191–210.

17. Echeita, G.; Simón, C. (Eds.) *El Papel de Los Centros de Educación Especial en El Proceso Hacia Sistemas Educativos Más Inclusivos. Cuatro Estudios de Casos: Newham (UK), New Brunswick (Canadá), Italia y Portugal*; Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional: Madrid, Spain, 2020.

18. Wehmeyer, M.L. From segregation to strengths: A personal history of special education. *Phi Delta Kappan* **2022**, *103*, 8–13. [CrossRef]

19. Luukkonen, J.; Bernelius, V.; Palmqvist, R.; Raitasalo, K. School segregation, selective education, and adolescents' alcohol use–is there a connection? *Scand. J. Educ. Res.* **2023**, 1–15. [CrossRef]

20. Arnaiz-Sánchez, P.; Carriquí, P.Z.; Alcaraz, S.; Caballero, C.M. A study of the barriers to communication and learning of university students with hearing impairment during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Eur. J. Spec. Needs Educ.* **2023**, *38*, 928–938. [CrossRef]

21. Goldberg, C.; Kleintjes, S. Hearing their voices: Self advocacy strategies for people with intellectual disabilities in South Africa. *Disabilities* **2022**, *2*, 588–599. [CrossRef]

22. Vetoniemi, J.; Kärnä, E. Being included–experiences of social participation of pupils with special education needs in mainstream schools. *Int. J. Incl. Educ.* **2021**, *25*, 1190–1204. [CrossRef]

23. Holt, L.; Lea, J.; Bowlby, S. Special units for young people on the autistic spectrum in mainstream schools: Sites of normalisation, abnormalisation, inclusion and exclusion. *Environ. Plan.* **2012**, *44*, 2191–2206. [CrossRef]

24. Avramidis, E. Social relationships of pupils with special educational needs in the mainstream primary class: Peer group membership and peer-assessed social behavior. *Eur. J. Spec. Needs Educ.* **2010**, *25*, 413–429. [CrossRef]

25. Breyer, C.; Wilfling, K.; Leitenbauer, C.; Gasteiger-Klicpera, B. The self-efficacy of learning and support assistants in the Austrian inclusive education context. *Eur. J. Spec. Needs Educ.* **2020**, *35*, 451–465. [CrossRef]

26. Tabroni, I.; Bagus, S.; Uwes, S.; Drajad, M.; Bahijah, I. The learning process of children with special needs at Salsabila Inclusive School, Purwakarta. *Fikroh J. Pemikir. Dan Pendidik. Islam* **2022**, *15*, 52–62. [CrossRef]

27. Ramberg, J.; Watkins, A. Exploring inclusive education across Europe: Some insights from the European Agency Statistics on Inclusive Education. *Forum Int. Res. Educ.* **2020**, *6*, 85–101. [CrossRef]

28. Moriña, A.; Perera, V.H.; Melero, N. Difficulties and reasonable adjustments carried out by Spanish faculty members to include students with disabilities. *Br. J. Spec. Educ.* **2020**, *47*, 6–23. [CrossRef]

29. Alhumaid, M.M. Primary Students' Attitudes towards Peers with Disabilities in Physical Education in Saudi Arabia. *Children* **2023**, *10*, 580. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

30. Ayasrah, M.N.; Shalaby, Y.M.A.; Elkasaby, W.H.; Al-Maraziq, I.A.M.; Alkhawaldeh, M.A. Peer Social Acceptance of Students with Special Needs. *Inf. Sci. Lett.* **2023**, *12*, 335–340.

31. Marini, M.; Di Filippo, G.; Bonuomo, M.; Torregiani, G.; Livi, S. Perceiving Oneself to Be Integrated into the Peer Group: A Protective Factor against Victimization in Children with Learning Disabilities. *Brain Sci.* **2023**, *13*, 263. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

32. Schwab, S.; Wimberger, T.; Mamas, C. Fostering social participation in inclusive classrooms of students who are deaf. *Int. J. Disabil. Dev. Educ.* **2019**, *66*, 325–342. [CrossRef]

33. Gaad, E. Cross-cultural perspectives on the effect of cultural attitudes towards inclusion for children with intellectual disabilities. *Int. J. Incl. Educ.* **2004**, *8*, 311–328. [CrossRef]

34. Babik, I.; Gardner, E.S. Factors affecting the perception of disability: A developmental perspective. *Front. Psychol.* **2021**, *12*, 702166. [CrossRef]

35. Arztmann, M.; Hornstra, L.; Jeuring, J.; Kester, L. Effects of games in STEM education: A meta-analysis on the moderating role of student background characteristics. *Stud. Sci. Educ.* **2023**, *59*, 109–145. [CrossRef]

36. Barahona, M.; David, V.; Gallegos, F.; Reyes-Rojas, J.; Ibaceta-Quijanes, X.; Darwin, S. Analysing preservice teachers' enactment of the UDL framework to support diverse students in a remote teaching context. *System* **2023**, *114*, 103027. [CrossRef]

37. Bravou, V.; Oikonomidou, D.; Drigas, A.S. Applications of virtual reality for autism inclusion. A review. *Retos Nuevas Tend. Educ. Fís. Deport. Recreación* **2022**, *45*, 779–785.

38. Hoekstra, N.A.; Van den Berg, Y.H.; Lansu, T.A.; Mainhard, M.T.; Cillessen, A.H. Teachers' goals and strategies for classroom seating arrangements: A qualitative study. *Teach. Teach. Educ.* **2023**, *124*, 104016. [CrossRef]

39. Laka, L.F. The Effort of Theacer to Help Children with Special Needs Who Have Learning Difficulties at SDI Bung. *J. Pendidik. Kebud. Missio* **2023**, *15*, 44–53.

40. Vidal, E.M.I.; Kossyvaki, L. The pillars of inclusive education for students with ASD: A scoping review based on the case of Spain. *Int. J. Dev. Disabil.* **2023**, 1–10. [CrossRef]

41. Samsari, E.P.; Nikolaou, G.; Palaiologou, N. Multicultural diversity and special needs education: Small steps towards a successful inclusive environment in Greece. In *International Issues in SEND and Inclusion*; Hodkinson, A., Williams-Brown, Z., Eds.; Routledge: London, UK, 2022.

42. Scharenberg, K.; Rollett, W.; Bos, W. Do differences in classroom composition provide unequal opportunities for academic learning and social participation of SEN students in inclusive classes in primary school? *Sch. Eff. Sch. Improv.* **2019**, *30*, 309–327. [CrossRef]

43. Tometten, L.; Heyder, A.; Steinmayr, R. Links Between teachers' knowledge About special educational needs and students' social participation and academic achievement in mainstream classes. *Contemp. Educ. Psychol.* **2021**, *67*, 102022. [CrossRef]

44. Booth, T.; Ainscow, M. *Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools*, 3rd ed.; Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education (CSIE): Bristol, UK, 2011.

45. Lüddeckens, J. Approaches to inclusion and social participation in school for adolescents with autism spectrum conditions (ASC)—A systematic research review. *Rev. J. Autism Dev. Disord.* **2021**, *8*, 37–50. [CrossRef]

46. Zurbriggen, C.L.; Hofmann, V.; Lehofer, M.; Schwab, S. Social classroom climate and personalised instruction as predictors of students' social participation. *Int. J. Incl. Educ.* **2023**, *27*, 1223–1238. [CrossRef]

47. Hodges, A.; Joosten, A.; Bourke-Taylor, H.; Cordier, R. School participation: The shared perspectives of parents and educators of primary school students on the autism spectrum. *Res. Dev. Disabil.* **2020**, *97*, 103550. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

48. O'Connor, U.; McNabb, J. Improving the participation of students with special educational needs in mainstream physical education classes: A rights-based perspective. *Educ. Stud.* **2021**, *47*, 574–590. [CrossRef]

49. De Boer, A.; Kuijper, S. Students' voices about the extra educational support they receive in regular education. *Eur. J. Spec. Needs Educ.* **2021**, *36*, 625–641. [CrossRef]

50. Schwab, S. Friendship stability among students with and without special educational needs. *Educ. Stud.* **2019**, *45*, 390–401. [CrossRef]

51. Vyrastekova, J. Social inclusion of students with special educational needs assessed by the Inclusion of Other in the Self scale. *PLoS ONE* **2021**, *16*, e0250070. [CrossRef]

52. Zvoleyko, E.V.; Kalashnikova, S.A.; Klimenko, T.K. Socialization of Students with Disabilities in an Inclusive Educational Environment. *Int. J. Environ. Sci. Educ.* **2016**, *11*, 6469–6481.

53. Kart, A.; Kart, M. Academic and social effects of inclusion on students without disabilities: A review of the literature. *Educ. Sci.* **2021**, *11*, 16–28. [CrossRef]

54. Hoffmann, L.; Wilbert, J.; Lehofer, M.; Schwab, S. Are we good friends?–Friendship preferences and the quantity and quality of mutual friendships. *Eur. J. Spec. Needs Educ.* **2021**, *36*, 502–516. [CrossRef]

55. Pinto, C.; Baines, E.; Bakopoulou, I. The peer relations of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream primary schools: The importance of meaningful contact and interaction with peers. *Br. J. Educ. Psychol.* **2019**, *89*, 818–837. [CrossRef]

56. Onwuegbuzie, A.J.; Leech, N.L. Linking Research Questions to Mixed Methods Data Analysis Procedures. *Qual Rep.* **2006**, *11*, 474–498. [CrossRef]

57. De Haro, R.; Arnaiz, P.; Alcaraz, S.; Caballero, C.M. Escuchar las Voces del Alumnado para Construir la Inclusión y la Equidad Educativa: Diseño y Validación de un Cuestionario. *Multidiscip. J. Educ. Res.* **2019**, *9*, 258–292.