

Article

Training and Support for Inclusive Practices: Transformation from Cooperation in Teaching and Learning

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Abstract: In this article, we present the four-year actions carried out at a public school in Meco (Madrid, Spain). Through the research contract (LOU, Art. 83) “Cooperative teaching and learning to respond to the diversity of students”, during the years 2014 and 2018, various actions were carried out by the school in its process of methodological and organizational transformation towards a more inclusive model based on the cooperation of teachers and students. A journey was made from the actions aimed at traditional training through courses and seminars to the accompaniment actions in the classroom to implement the cooperative learning methodology. Results of the actions and analysis of the interviews carried out with teachers participating in the process during the four years of work as well as field observation notes are presented. The results show the transformation and improvement of teaching practices based on inclusion and the cooperative learning methodology. Among the central conclusions, there is evidence of internal improvement in organizational management and inclusive teaching practices from the involvement, support, and continuous training of teachers in educational quality towards students.

Keywords: cooperative learning; education change; inclusive education; teacher’s education; teaching practices



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1. Introduction

When we talk about inclusive education, we think of education as a right, and participate in a debate regarding the school restructuring process related to the implementation, precisely, of innovation and improvement processes that bring schools closer to the objective of promoting presence, participation, and performance of all students in their locality, including those vulnerable to exclusion processes. We thus learn to live with difference and to improve, thanks precisely to those same differences among students [1], the nuclear purpose of which is that all students leave the school system, particularly in the compulsory stage, with a fair and sufficient training background to continue further studies or move with dignity into the world of work [2] (p. 110).

Inclusive education can be conceived of as a process that allows addressing and responding to the diversity of the needs, strengths, and potentials of all learners through greater participation in learning, cultural and community activities, and reducing exclusion inside and outside the educational system. The preceding statement implies changes and modifications of the content, approaches, structures, and strategies based on a common vision that encompasses all school-aged children and the conviction that it is the ordinary educational system’s responsibility to educate all students. This implies a break with certain practices, cultures, and policies that have been happening in our country, and that have to do with specialization, and the belief that each type of child should be assisted by a type of specialist teacher. These changes fundamentally go through the teacher, in the

words of [3]: “Building commitment and capacities in schools to become more just and inclusive every day cannot be achieved without the professional involvement of teachers around a collective educational project and effective leadership” (p. 2).

There are many definitions of what inclusive education is, but as [4] defends: internationally, it is increasingly seen as a principle that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners. This means that the aim is to eliminate social exclusion resulting from attitudes and responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender, and ability. As such, it starts from the belief that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just society (p. 17). We would not be talking about special education or special educational needs, we would be talking about school improvement from the perspective of quality education for all and achievements for all, not only for a specific group of students. Along these lines, we understand that in inclusive schools, all students “go to the same schools as their brothers and sisters, have access to the same learning opportunities as other students, and participate in both academic and social activities of the classroom.” In this way, they can have the opportunity to belong, learn, and maximize their potential [5,6].

This is from the conviction that educational inclusion has its origins in the conception of the right of all students to quality education, which establishes an education in which diversity and inclusion is a positive characteristic and not a pretext for exclusion. According to [7], educational inclusion should be conceptually implied to the extent that each educational school autonomously generates inclusive policies, practices, and cultures within the specific definition that the educational community changes as goals are achieved. Thus, the members of the educational community are expected to be active participants, which leads to the development of new equitable educational models to address the imbalances present in the classroom. According to [8], in the proposal of the “ecology of equity”, the impartial experiences and results obtained by the students depend on the context both internal and external to the educational establishment [9].

In this sense, the education system must respond to the plan that emerges from the 2030 agenda [10], where education must be transformed into learning to achieve quality education and the rights of all, to promote social justice and reorganizing institutions and their policies based on management, planning, and budgets based on the different resources (economic, material, human, etc.). To achieve and develop inclusive schools, a change in the paradigms and their educational approaches is required that arises from the internal processes of the schools, and that leads to integration towards other more ambitious, complete, comprehensive, and complex processes. The previous statement entails development in the pursuit of inclusion, where the educational transformation [11–16] is developed from endogenous educational management and policies to advance towards inclusion and the sustainable achievement of the 2030 agenda with objective no. 4 of sustainable education. Inclusive educational change should be a sustainable change; by no means should inclusive education be seen as an innovation or eventual policy trend [17]. Inclusive and transformative education has to take into account concepts such as equity, social justice, and equal opportunities for success in learning. Training teachers in methodologies that promote these types of values is a good approach to transform education toward more inclusive models that also reflect changes in the social model [18,19].

Fundamental changes in attitudes about diversity and equity are needed at all levels of society in order for the schools and communities they serve to transform and become truly inclusive [20]. Research on teacher change suggests challenging and changing teachers’ beliefs. They need the opportunity to actively participate and experience success in using inclusive practices in their classrooms. Only then will they experience a positive change in attitude and perception of inclusion [21]. In this sense, the studies by [22,23] on the implementation of cooperative learning (CL) in schools indicate that teacher training is essential but must be accompanied by experiential learning.

Support networks among teachers or professional learning communities are increasingly seen as a way to implement policy, improve practice, undertake innovations, and create community and system coherence. With the right resources and supports, pro-

professional networks offer an especially promising strategy for schools and teachers who experience considerable isolation and distance themselves from readily available traditional supports [24]. As [25] states, collaboration is needed amongst teachers to support the introduction of new ways of working.

Accompaniment to ensure that teachers can successfully engage in the implementation of inclusive practices, as well as the creation of support networks, is an important element. In these processes of joint reflection, the accompaniment by university experts as a critical friend, as already indicated by [26], can greatly favor the development of inclusive improvement plans in schools.

Inclusive education relates to the improvement of educational practices, as established by [27]: “improvement with an inclusive focus takes place when adults and students link their actions to inclusive values and jointly develop educational practices that converge towards those values” (p. 17). From this point of view, the relationship between inclusive education and cooperative learning is clear: the development of inclusive values by engaging in a type of learning based on cooperation, help between equals, respect, and the perception of individual differences as a value [18].

Cooperative learning has emerged as one of the fundamental teaching methods to promote inclusive education, along with others such as universal design for learning and differentiated instruction [28–30], since it maximizes the learning outcomes and social skills of all students [31,32]. Cooperative learning can be defined as the use of small groups among students: permanent heterogeneous base groups, understanding that heterogeneous grouping is the best way to support student learning and positive peer relationships in an inclusive classroom [33]. It involves a grouping model based on procedures and techniques in which students work together to maximize their own learning and the learning of others under the teacher’s supervision who performs as a learning facilitator [22,34–36]. The purpose of cooperative learning would be to generate the positive interdependence necessary for students to develop individual responsibility and learn to do things together and learn together to do things for themselves [18]. The implementation of cooperative learning is constituted as an effective educational resource to promote inclusive education, achieving positive interdependence, stimulating face-to-face interaction, individual responsibility, interpersonal skills, and the group process [37], based on the communicative interactions that occur between equals. This approach addresses the construction of learning from real situations where students share a leading role in the elaboration of a product for which everyone feels responsible for the personal contribution and the sense of belonging to the group [38].

In the implementation of cooperative work and learning in schools, we can visualize study experiences. In this sense, [39] indicates the importance of cooperative learning as an active strategy for the acquisition of learning, favoring the development of competence and academic performance in a transversal manner independent of the subject specialization and the educational stage. For their part, [40] points out that, based on the teachers’ beliefs regarding learning, difficulties are generated in the methodological application and, from that space of intervention, contribute to changes in the training of students. In this sense, teachers are a voice present in the reforms and actions in this material. In this way, these studies are taken as a reference for the discussion of the results in the teachers’ vision in the application of cooperative learning.

From a systematic comparative study on teacher collaboration, [41] examined the impact of a program, which showed how teachers adapt their cooperative learning practices in response to the learning needs of their students. Teachers began to develop a level of pedagogical fluency and in view of how teachers advanced in student learning, it reaffirms the complexity of the learning support required to participate in continuous curriculum development to positively impact student learning in this way, with the accompaniment against the work of collaborative methodologies in the implementation process.

From teacher training, bonding, and collaboration to work to collaborative learning, the research in [42] from 82 studies describes teacher collaboration and collaboration as

a continuum that ran from individual to strong team collaboration, indicating that the collaboration of teachers turns out to be a challenge. However, it is decisive in showing the various benefits for students, teachers, and the school, showing facilitating and hindering factors that can turn schools into learning organizations and anticipating the growth of the collaboration in collaborative work. In the study [43], the authors indicate the different levels of teacher collaboration emphasizing collaborative teaching: two teachers plan, implement, and evaluate the same lesson for a group of students. This shows how co-teaching allows teachers to meet the needs of their students, which is such an important tool in inclusive education and a learning tool for and from teachers, when it is approached from an experimental perspective. The study by [44] demonstrates the benefits of the approach and the factors that influence collaborative work from the participation of teachers and training students, where the results indicate that teachers and future teachers benefit in many ways through cooperative learning.

On the other hand, [45] provides a review of 20 schools in a network in Spain and generates a description of a peer learning network of the teacher staff development model indicated in three levels of learning simultaneously (between students, teachers, and schools) linked through a network, to use cooperative learning in their classrooms through the implementation of an adjustable peer tutoring program. They show the effects on teachers' learning proving to be an effective and efficient way to help teachers introduce and use, in a sustained way, a cooperative learning method in their classrooms.

In this article, we detail the process and actions of accompaniment by a team of university teachers and students to a school in its transformation towards more inclusive practices, cultures, and policies based on cooperative learning—towards an educational model in constant search of better ways to meet the academic and social needs, strengths, and potential of all its students. The aim of the study was to understand the perception of teachers about the changes that have taken place in their teaching practice and in the school organization after four years of training and support for cooperative learning.

2. Methods

2.1. Context

The public school is located in a town called Meco, in the province of Madrid. This small town close to Madrid has 13,570 inhabitants. There are three schools for nursery and primary education, two of them public and one private. This school welcomes children from 3 to 11 years old and has more than 700 students. Diversity is present in the school as all the schools in this province may admit children with diverse needs and characteristics. That means that in all classes, one may find students with special educational needs. The socioeconomic level of the families is medium-low.

2.2. Participants

In total, forty teachers participated in the project (all the schoolteachers), but not all of them participated in all the actions described. All the teachers participated in the training course and seminars and 16 teachers volunteered to be observed in their lessons. The school has approximately 702 students divided into 27 classes, 9 from early childhood education and 18 from primary education. The average ratio per class was 25–27 students per teacher. Since 2014, the school has been continuously involved in teacher training and innovation activities. It has a management team made up of a director, a head of studies, and a secretary whose leadership encourages these activities.

The five participants for the interview were selected purposefully [46] to appoint information-rich contributors [47]. First, all the participants had participated in all the actions of the project in the previous three years. Second, we required that at least one representative be present from each school sector: early childhood education, primary education, and management team. Finally, all the participants had extensive experience, ranging between 14 and 25 years. The age of the participants was also representative of the entire teaching staff of the school: there was one teacher between 30 and 40 years old, three

teachers between 40 and 50, and one teacher between 50 and 60 years old. All of them were women (at that time, four male teachers were available online at the school).

2.3. Research Methods

A qualitative methodology was found to be most suitable. A descriptive phenomenological approach was used [48–52] where the experience lived by teachers was of interest, which was extracted through an interview. The researcher focuses on the description of the experiences of the participants, detailed in their field diary using the ethnographic technique, achieving a critical reflective analysis of the significant experience [53].

A total of five face-to-face interviews were done at the end of the school year 2018. The interviews were semi-structured with a detailed protocol of questions. Regarding the questionnaire, its questions are open, corresponding to a study with a qualitative methodological approach. A detailed analysis was developed, identifying categories of meaning in the statements of the participants' experiences, known as the structure of the experience [50,52], as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. Categories and subcategories.

Categories	Subcategories
Changes in teaching practices through cooperative learning	Classroom routine
	Ways of evaluating
	Planning teaching and learning
Changes in the organizational model of the school	Coordination structures
	Teacher's roles
	Formal meetings and collaboration between teachers
	Family participation
Facilitators and barriers in school change processes	Cooperative learning implementation challenge
	Cooperative learning Implementation facilitators

The analysis was carried out based on the interviewees' responses and an observation that distinguishes in the responses the perceptions of the teachers from their experience. Applying phenomenological techniques, as indicated by [54], the researcher synthesized the analysis by generating a consistent statement on subjective experiences. The language used should never be changed due to the attention given to description in this type of phenomenology. Attention is more focused on a "context of discovery" [48].

To achieve this, next to each open question indicator, a context distinction was made, discovering the significant perception and relevance of the answers given by the teachers; when iterating the perceptions of the interviewee, their own language and ideas are preserved—there is no interpretation by the researcher, thus providing the context of discovery of their contributions in the questionnaire. According to the descriptive phenomenological methodology for the interpretation of the results, a co-construction of the data was carried out between the researcher and the participant using the following structure of experience [49,55]: reading the description given by the participants and identifying the significance of their significant experience, of the entire set of ideas contributed. The "units of meaning" are then distinguished and categorized from the perspective that is being investigated, structuring the relevant experiences. Next, the data that can provide the meaning or solution to the problem under study are detected. The researcher synthesizes all the critical analyses and argues in such a way as to give consistency to the meaningful experience, which can account for how to solve the problem.

Fieldnotes of the observations of the different classes, made by the main researcher of the study, were also used to triangulate the data and corroborate evidence for validating the study's accuracy [56]. A total of 16 teachers were observed during their lessons in three different years (2015–2017). Semi-structured interview questions were used to reveal perceived changes in teaching practices and the school's organizational model.

The objective of the study was to know teachers' perception of the changes that have occurred in their teaching practice and the school organization after they participated in a training and support project on cooperative learning. The main research questions were: What changes are perceived in teaching practices? What changes are perceived in the school organization that facilitate the implementation of cooperative learning? What difficulties were encountered during the implementation of the cooperative learning in the classrooms? What aspects of the project could be improved to obtain better results?

2.4. Research Ethics

All participants voluntarily chose to participate in the research. They also gave express consent for the recording of the interviews and the collection of notes from the researcher in the classroom observations. The anonymity of the participants was maintained at all times.

2.5. Context of the Intervention and Implementation

This project began with the school's management team (the director) engaging the IMECA Group (specialist in cooperative learning training) for a training course on cooperative learning in 2014. At that time, a training course began, composed of 20 h on the basics of CL and the steps for its implementation. It is based on the idea that when teachers are provided with training and experiences with inclusive practices, they adjust their teaching practice, the general strategies they use, and the climate they establish in their classrooms [21].

During the initial process of the project, training activities were carried out in which all members of the teaching team participated, including the management team. In total, around 40 teachers participated in the training, and in different ways, they have participated in all the actions presented in this study.

2.5.1. Training and Support for Cooperative Teaching Practices

The role of the university for the training and support in this project was specified in the initial and continuous training of teachers for the transformation of teaching practices in the implementation of the methodology in the classrooms, feedback of what was observed, constituting jointly proposals for improvement and support for the teaching staff and management team throughout the entire process, offering different opportunities for participation, training, and dissemination to the different teachers and the dissemination of action success. The initial training given at the educational center was as follows:

Training course: in June 2014, a training course was held with all the school teachers on cooperative learning initiation. The contents of this training were:

- Introduction and review of the fundamental aspects for the start-up.
- Conditions for cooperative learning.
- The group: creation and phases in its configuration.
- Areas of intervention for implementation.
- Group cohesion and teamwork as a resource.
- Techniques for dialogue.
- Techniques for solving problems.
- Offering and giving help.
- Attention to diversity.
- Cooperative work as content.
- Teaching teamwork.
- Steps for the internal organization of the teams.

- The evaluation.
- Methods and techniques to promote learning.

It is important to note that the course's focus was cooperative learning as a way for each and every student to participate and progress in their academic and social learning, taking into account their characteristics and valuing their differences as a resource.

Training seminar and preparation for observation: in September 2014, a three-hour training session was held with the entire faculty. The contents were:

- Fundamental elements for the implementation of cooperative learning.
- Design of cooperative activities using techniques.
- Self-evaluation of the activities designed using an observation questionnaire of the fundamental elements of cooperative learning.

Throughout the three years of the project, different training seminars lasting between two and four hours were carried out:

- Follow-up seminars and doubts about the implementation of cooperative learning.
- Seminar on cooperative evaluation strategies.
- Seminar on inclusive strategies to respond to the diversity of students through cooperation and support among equals.

Once the training is finished, the teachers begin to implement the cooperative learning methodology in their classrooms. At that stage, it became clear that there was a need for support for the implementation, given the situation in many cases of insecurity as to whether what is being done is adequate, if the actions carried out in the classroom are cooperative, if the objectives that were being pursued are being achieved, etc. At that time, the management team asked the team that had accompanied the training for the possibility of holding an extra continuous training seminar. They were presented with the possibility of doing an accompaniment in the classroom through which feedback can be given to teachers who want to participate in this action and contribute to overcoming the barriers that have been detected in the implementation of the transformation of the teaching practices. The teachers and the management team accepted this possibility and this support in the classroom began.

2.5.2. Teacher Support from the Practical Transformation in the Classroom

The accompaniment in the classroom consisted of observing at least one session of each volunteer teacher, taking notes through the following dimensions, which also constitute what we have understood as a cooperative practice based on inclusive models [18,57]: heterogeneous groupings, which point out the various social associations that students establish with their peers and teachers; equal opportunities for success in academic and social activities, which describe how equal opportunities are established in the classroom context; positive interdependence, which visualize the conditions of how the forms of success in cooperative learning tasks are expressed; cooperative skills, which identify the skills developed by students for the development of cooperative learning; and active interactions between students to carry out activities, which describe how students handle teamwork.

The dimensions describing cooperative learning practice allow for guiding the researcher in the focus of the participant observation that they carry out in the classroom, which is shared with the teacher and, together, they can co-construct the meanings of the findings of the results, since reflective practice allows developing knowledge in didactics [53].

After observing each class session, an individual meeting was held with each teacher, and the analysis of what was observed was returned; there was an exchange of ideas and analysis of what was observed, and from there, concrete proposals for improvement were established. Those sessions were organized based on the understanding that change is more sustained when teachers are given time to explore ideas and integrate them into their practice [58].

After two months of conducting these observation and feedback sessions with all the participating teachers, two seminars on implementation doubts were also held, in which all the teachers who wanted to participate voluntarily raised their doubts, which were resolved jointly. These seminars lasted two hours each. A few months later, the management team asked the team for a specific seminar on cooperative evaluation. A seminar was held in which the following questions were addressed:

- Student self-evaluation: techniques and tools.
- Co-evaluation among students: techniques and tools.

The first school year ended with these actions and with a general evaluation of the project with all the participants. In that session, the achievements and goals that remained to be achieved were evaluated. From that session, several proposals emerged for the following school year, which were later specified with the management team:

- Update seminar in October at the beginning of the course.
- Creation of an accompaniment and support team in the classrooms to monitor the implementation of the cooperative learning.
- Establish the agreements of this collaboration in the classroom.

The second academic year started normally and the agreed actions were carried out. In the second year, the project was working normally and a cooperative teaching and learning dynamic had begun throughout the school, with different levels of commitment from the teaching staff, but with minimal levels in all classrooms. In this course, the management team understood that organizational changes were needed to accompany and support the teaching staff's methodological actions. The organizational changes were configured as one of the great achievements of this project since they show how the school's organization is essential to promote changes and make them sustainable over time [21,59,60].

3. Results

Based on the open questions asked in the interview, an analysis was carried out based on the iteration of the responses of the interviewees, and an observation that distinguishes in the answers the perceptions of the teachers from their experience. Analyses of the interview data and field notes of the principal investigator's observations are presented from the categories.

3.1. Changes in Teaching Practices through Cooperative Learning

The results show changes in teaching practices through the implementation of cooperative learning in the classroom as a teaching and learning strategy. The analysis of the teachers' answers is shown in Table 2, as well as evidence of these changes that is collected in the researcher's diary and other external observers.

Table 2. Changes perceived by teachers: Answers in the interview.

Subcategories	Answers
Classroom routine	<i>Students interact.</i>
	<i>Development of cooperative learning activities.</i>
	<i>More attention to diversity.</i>
Ways of evaluating	<i>I have incorporated self-assessment and peer-assessment activities.</i>
	<i>It focuses on the process considering the student and the group.</i>
	<i>Use of rubrics and checklists.</i>
Planning teaching and learning	<i>Cooperative activities, use of roles, application of multiple intelligences. Work in pairs. Self-reflection and peer evaluation.</i>
	<i>Social competencies and interpersonal relationships are favored. Likewise, individual responsibility and intrapersonal skills are promoted.</i>
	<i>That the activities involve work in pairs and teams.</i>
	<i>Increase in cooperative activities.</i>
	<i>Cooperative work methodology, work in pairs and teams.</i>

In relation to the changes in the methodology, the teachers show the application of teamwork and work in pairs; in this way, the students feel supported. This also has implications of more participation of all students and for the students to show more interest in the others.

The students are sitting in pairs, the teacher asks a question in which there are several options and tells them that they have to agree on the answer and later they have to answer which option they have chosen as a couple (Research diary, Early Years class, 2015).

The teacher tells them that when the classmates finish presenting, she is going to ask each one of them things they have told, in this way she maintains everyone's interest in listening to what the others are saying (Research diary, level 4, 2015).

Concerning the evaluation method, the use of rubrics and team self-evaluation strategies are present in most of the observed classes:

At the end of class they reflect on what they have done in class and write it down in the group agenda (Research diary, Primary level 4, 2016).

In music class they also use self-evaluation rubrics, it seems that students are used to using them. (Research diary, level 6, 2015).

Students perform co-evaluation. Some teams give feedback on the exposures to the other teams, indicate what they have done especially well and in what things they can improve (Research diary, level 2, 2015).

In addition to planning, teaching, and learning activities, there was a focus on multiple intelligences.

The science teacher has begun to design activities from the multiple intelligences approach, the students carry out different projects that are developed from the different intelligences. The teacher tells me that it complements very well with cooperative teams (Research diary, level 5, 2015).

In the interview, the teachers state that they have applied methodological changes with attention to diversity, such as presenting activities with different levels of difficulty, applying teamwork and pairs to achieve integration, and strengthening students' safety. When asked if they have observed changes in the classroom coexistence model, they expressed: *We have achieved greater respect for differences. Acceptance by the rest of the students (Interview Teacher 1).*

Likewise, in the classroom, they observed that greater cooperation and collaboration between students overcoming the competition, social behaviors of mutual respect, help, and dialogue prevail. They also point out changes in the way their students work. They have become more autonomous, can reach agreements, and take responsibility for their roles. Teachers recognize that they listen more to students since they have started cooperative learning and have become more flexible, giving greater autonomy to the student. With the implementation of cooperative learning, students have become more autonomous.

The teacher tells me while I make the observation that there is a change for the better, that the students are self-managing more than when she used to say everything (Research diary, Early Years, 2015).

They overcome the attitude of competitiveness through collaboration and support among their peers. Teachers feel that students have become more empathetic and collaborative among their peers. Collaboration and peer support is part of the work that teachers do.

The teacher has developed a positive interdependence strategy for students to help each other. He publicly congratulates them when they help each other and credits the couple for success when one of the two members of the couple gives a correct answer (Research diary, Level 1, 2017).

She tries again to help each other and say things to each other, being very explicit and encouraging (Research Diary, Early Years, 2015).

Teachers express that now they listen more to others, they have become guides for others, and use cooperative language. Using a coherent language with teaching and learning methodology used is central for cooperation.

There is a team doing a presentation in front of the whole class. When the first child speaks he says “my team and I have done this work”, they put aside the “I” to talk about the “we” (Research diary, level 2, 2015).

Language is a central aspect when working on CL. Teachers not only see that in their students but in their own children:

The teacher tells me that her sons, who are students of this school, come home explaining things they do in class, and show that they have internalized the language (team, roles, classmates, helping, collaborating, etc.) (Research diary, Early Years, 2015).

3.2. Changes in the Organizational Model of the School

Table 3 shows the interviewees’ responses to the questions related to the category organizational change of the school. The analysis makes it possible to understand the evaluations done by teachers of the project [52].

Table 3. Teacher’s answers related to organizational changes of the school.

Subcategories	Number of Participant: Answers
Coordination structures	1,3: No. 2: Fortunately, I share the coordination of my areas with someone very similar to me with whom the work has been a lot. 4: Meetings have been added to share what we do in class regarding cooperative learning. 5: It has changed considerably, as we have seen the need to share and coordinate on a daily basis our experience in applying the activities and dynamics.
Teacher’s roles	1: Yes. 2,4: The position of coordinator or head of cooperative has been created. 3: Giving the leadership of learning to students. 4: We are getting used to teamwork. In our stage I think we do very well because we are able to dialogue and reach agreements.
Formal meetings and collaboration between teachers	1,4: Yes, cooperative clusters are developed. 2: The inclusion of cooperative dynamics. 3,5: More cooperation and search for affinities with the other teachers.
Family participation	1,4: No changes. 2: They have been much more involved. 3: Families are delighted. 5: Families participate in workshops and other activities. 2,5: An improvement in our teaching work, in the relationship with families, and that children learn much better and more motivated.

3.3. Facilitators and Barriers in School Change Processes

When changes are faced, uncertainties appear, and the teachers state that before implementing the model, they experienced insecurities and difficulty in adapting to the implementation of cooperative learning. Evaluation is an issue that has not yet been resolved, which is a necessary aspect. To improve and work to develop better learning situations in the classroom, teachers must be able to establish an inclusive school. The insecurity caused by the change of a new model posed a great difficulty, and the evaluation processes were and continue to be a challenge to which teachers affirm that it is necessary to improve and to facilitate changes, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Challenges and facilitators perceived by teachers. Example of interview's answers.

Challenges	Facilitators
<i>Unsafety</i> <i>Not knowing if you are doing the right thing</i> <i>The evaluation</i>	<i>Use of rubrics in the evaluation process.Capacity development.</i> <i>Keep training and integrating new things.</i> <i>Evaluation</i>
<i>"Go against the current practices"</i> <i>The adaptation</i>	<i>Structuring learning situations, class times, and activities in a more flexible way so that not necessarily "we all do the same thing and at the same time".</i> <i>I want to continue knowing and applying cooperative dynamics.</i>

When asked about the changes that they would implement to improve the functioning of the school educational project, teachers focused on commitment and participation of families.

Incorporation of cooperative dynamics also in general meetings of fathers/mothers (Interview, teacher 2).

Commitment of all, greater involvement of teachers, responsibility and commitment of teachers (Interview teacher 3).

They have to spend many hours programming at home but fortunately the parents are collaborating a lot (Research diary, Level 1, 2015).

The change project has in many moments been a stress for teachers. The demands of the teacher's daily work have been increased in many moments by the project.

The teacher tells me that they are very stressed and saturated by all the programs and methodologies they are implementing (Research diary, Level 1, 2015).

Teachers affirm that it is necessary to insist on the application of the CL model and that it is relevant to continue with training in cooperative learning to maintain teamwork with a common goal. Teachers have the feeling that they have improved a lot in their teaching practices:

The teacher says that despite all the stress he is learning a lot this year (Research diary, Level 1, 2015)

Teachers understand that maintaining a dynamic that allows them to be committed to a common goal is necessary, and they understand that training is a good way to maintain that bond. In that sense, this would have a lot to do with the characteristics of professional learning networks [21,40]. Teachers indicate that the feeling part of the project has helped them stay interested. Coordinating figures are also welcome.

4. Discussion

The cooperative learning reports suggest renewal in the institution. In addition, it generates a new educational structure where they work at ease and students gain motivation. In [61], the authors express that "Cooperation is also a principle that can guarantee a more creative and sounder teaching process, provided the teacher and the student are involved in the construction of knowledge" (p.114).

Cooperative learning seeks to achieve an inclusive, quality education. In the words of [18], "inclusive and transformative education has to take into account concepts such as equity, social justice, and equal opportunities; training teachers in methodologies that promote these types of values is a good approach to transform education toward more inclusive models that reflect the social model" (p. 287). There is an improvement in students' skills related to inclusive culture when learning through CL. Teachers express that the skills developed by students are empathy and cooperation among equals, listening more to others, using cooperative language, and working cooperatively.

The school implements a series of organizational measures that will make changes possible and sustainable. In the words of [62], “redesign workplaces and (re) educate schools to redistribute roles and structures that make the school not only a place of learning but also a context where teachers become passionate about their work” (p. 13). When teachers feel committed to a common project, a sense of community develops that has been shown to favor inclusive practices [63].

The values of respect, empathy, and acceptance have been developed. As expressed by [64], it is necessary to prioritize strategies that strengthen teaching and stimulate learning in students (p. 153), giving priority to the attention of individual differences [65].

On the basis that inclusive education includes a line of action that refers to the improvement of educational practices, as established by [15]: “improvement with an inclusive approach occurs when adults and students link their actions to inclusive values and jointly develop educational practices that converge towards those values” (p. 17). As said in [34], it is also an excellent strategy to include all students, regardless of their special educational needs; cooperative learning encourages students to accept the differences of others and improves both the quality and quantity of their relationships. For this, teacher training is an essential element. According to other research, it is understood that training in inclusive pedagogy greatly favors change projects in schools [66].

Based on the above, we found the following changes in the organizational model, which we consider to have been some of the great facilitators of the project, allowing it to become sustainable over time.

4.1. Institutional Organizational Documents

The management team decided to modify its educational project to include the cooperative learning teaching and learning methodology as the priority methodology in the educational center. Therefore, any teacher who came to the new center had to commit to it. To do this, they established a series of minimum actions that all teachers at the center had to implement (groups, techniques, etc.).

This new educational project was approved and is still in force today and is shared by the entire educational community.

In the third year of the project, Cooperative Learning based programming was carried out for the entire school. The acceptance of the project according to all the community-generated reactions was expressed by the teachers, emphasizing the participation of families. These changes imply a more positive attitude from both the students’ families and the teachers; since a supportive environment is generated, social relations are favored within the school. The commitment and responsibility of all, taking into account that when the teachers are involved in the different actions, the commitment to the project is greater. The importance of a community to change is essential; understanding new methods of participation for all in the schools is a good approach to implement changes in schools [45,67].

As is concluded in other studies [40], this type of project offers theoretical knowledge combined with the experience of cooperative learning during a workshop, providing examples and a moment to reflect on teaching practices.

4.2. Coordination between Teachers

Coordination sessions and exchange of good practices began among the teaching staff of the center. In these sessions, information was exchanged and successful cooperative practices were presented among teachers.

4.3. Collaboration between Teachers

The teachers designed what they called “cooperative clusters”. This action consisted of creating cooperative teams with the center’s teaching staff and working with them on the different team-building actions. In this way, group cohesion among the teachers was improved and improved the development of what had to be done in the classroom.

Likewise, the clusters were formed with the team structure. The importance of collaboration between teachers is in line with the study in [50], which concludes that the collaboration of teachers enriches their practice, increases the diversity of support proposals, increases the sense of responsibility for the learning of all students, and has a positive effect on teacher training.

4.4. Reception of the New Teaching Staff

The new teachers began to be welcomed into the cooperative clusters. In addition, informative training documents were designed for teachers new to CL. Teachers who were implementing the cooperative learning methodology in their classrooms were accompanied in diagnosing problems, searching for solutions, reflection, and self-evaluation processes, and encouragement to try new ways of teaching and learning, etc. The teachers themselves demanded a much more active and reflective participation from us in their own educational practice. As a result, in this phase, the researchers' role was a much more dynamic accompaniment to the teacher in the classroom (participant observation).

Access to the classrooms was allowed with great caution, and the teachers themselves were left to establish the level of involvement/participation in each class.

In this accompaniment, the official Master's degree in psychopedagogy trainees came into play from the second year. Using volunteer students who decided to carry out their internships at the school, and within the actions of the project, work teams were created that accompanied the teachers who requested it, with the following functions:

- Accompaniment in the classroom regarding the supervision of the teams' work.
- Design and creation of materials for cooperative work.
- Collection of data on the dimensions of analysis of the implementation of CL in the classroom and feedback to teachers on them.
- Guidance on how to expand, improve or redefine cooperative work in the classroom based on the observations made.

These teams had regular meetings to resolve doubts and to jointly decide what actions to carry out with the teaching staff and respond to their requests and doubts. The teams were made up of a project coordinator, internship students, and project collaborators (former students of the Master's who had participated in the previous year as internship students).

One of the great learnings of this project is the importance for teachers of accompaniment in the classroom to implement the methodology that has been introduced at a theoretical level through the different training actions.

Schools should seek to establish new models to integrate students in all areas of knowledge without making any distinction, creating spaces for integration and collaboration among the entire educational community [51].

The processes of methodological and organizational change are not without difficulties, and in many moments, there are ups and downs. The teachers state that it has been difficult for them to change their ways of attending classes, but cooperative learning has given them the impetus to develop new activities, and they feel motivated by observing the results of their students' participation in their classes.

It is necessary to have an adjusted schedule for the implementation of the different actions so that teachers are not overwhelmed. Likewise, it is important to have an equitable distribution of responsibilities so that different coordination figures support the cooperative learning implementation process. Creating support networks among teachers is also constituted as an element that favors the processes of change since teachers feel supported and can overcome the moments of loneliness and difficulty that these processes may imply.

The teachers highlight the creation of the role of the cooperative coordinator or manager as relevant and express the importance of organizing cooperative clusters in the school. In previous studies, the work of the teacher in their role as developer of cooperative learning is reinforced.

“Team members should apply a sufficient amount of knowledge and skills to the work. A final criterion includes the use of task performance strategies that are appropriate to the work and the organisational setting. Moreover, not only do individual team members have to use adequate competences, but an effective team also has the responsibility to use the expertise of all team members to realise the possible student outcomes” [42] (p. 33)

In this way, the construction of the CL project at school is strengthened, and students benefit from being placed in an autonomous, flexible learning context that stimulates their critical thinking skills, positive interdependence, empathy, respect for individual differences, and generates a collaborative community that educates for life, strengthening the capacities of students to integrate into a diverse world [43,44,65]. The university is configured as a strengthening agent in forming collaborative communities in schools, as evidenced in this study.

The support of the university can be seen both as a “critical friend” and as fellow travelers. This involves recognizing the existing knowledge in schools, in what [43] defines as “mobilizing the internal capacity for change”, overcoming the idea that someone from outside must come to teach them, instead implementing the idea that someone from outside can accompany them to recognize which practices are successful and to be able to design their own improvement projects based on their needs and strengths.

4.5. Limitations of the Study

This study is limited because the voice of the students has not been taken into account. Understanding the perspective of the students would be interesting, as we would know how they experienced the changing processes and would complete the perception that their teachers and the researcher have. In the future, having discussion groups with students would help improve knowledge about the implications of cooperative learning for the development of inclusive practices and values, both in teachers and in students.

5. Conclusions

There is evidence to affirm that, in the school, after these years embarking on the different projects, the basis for a professional teaching–learning community has been created. This statement is motivated by the analysis we made based on the characteristics established by [49], which are as follows:

- There is a clear vision and shared values focused on learning in the educational center.
- There are regular actions to exchange good practices.
- There is a growing collective responsibility for student learning (still in process, but already with clear signs that it is, at least among groups of teachers).
- Professional interdependence is understood as the joint search for a solution to the problems that arise.
- Reflective inquiry processes have been carried out regularly, in this case not among all teachers, but among groups of teachers [68].
- There has been an organizational transformation that has enhanced the ability to support change, as explained above.
- In general terms, there is an atmosphere of mutual trust, of seeking consensus, and joint resolution of conflicts.

The teachers and management team moved towards greater autonomy and empowerment under a growing dynamic of inclusive leadership, which has proven to be very effective, and one of the elements that have contributed to the change being sustainable over time.

Accompaniment by university to schools in their change processes towards more inclusive models is configured as a facilitator of change. We understood this support as specific training at the beginning and during the process, support and motivation during the process, providing spaces to share successes, feedback on the aspects that work especially well, and feedback on those that need to be improved. A model has been

presented in which different members of the university community, from Master's degree students in psychopedagogy to university professors of Education, accompany the school.

Creating and supporting professional teacher learning communities, understood as support and development networks for educational communities, is a task that must be assumed from a broad approach of inclusive leadership. Four years after the beginning of the first training activity, we find that the school shows clear evidence of a culture that is progressing towards being inclusive, fundamentally marked by a collective concern for the best ways to respond to the needs of all its students, a shared responsibility for students' academic and social outcomes and increasingly inclusive leadership.

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