



## Article

# Society and Its Challenges: The Teacher's Perspective on Students at Risk

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**Abstract:** (1) This study focuses on exploring and characterising the beliefs of Spanish teachers in relation to their attitudes and professional practice concerning students who may be at risk at school. A generational perspective is adopted and the stages of pre-school, primary, and secondary education are considered in order to analyse these beliefs. (2) This is a descriptive study with a qualitative methodology. The information was collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 60 teachers belonging to publicly funded schools at pre-university levels. The data collected were subject to a thematic analysis and analysed with the qualitative data analysis tool ATLAS.ti (version 22). (3) The results show the diversity of student needs referred to by the teachers, positive relationships and attitudes towards them, and a favourable predisposition to the adaptation and adjustment of teaching practices. (4) The conclusions of the study highlight the importance of teachers' beliefs for the development of educational processes based on justice, democracy, and equity, and how these beliefs can be used to offer the most appropriate responses to the needs presented by the students.

**Keywords:** teaching beliefs; professional practice; diversity; students at risk



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## 1. Introduction

The society–education relationship has been a concern for more than a century. The response that education offers to socio-cultural and political demands is not exempt from a permanent tension between the processes of social reproduction and transformation—that is, between what is demanded socially and what is desired (justice, equity, or democracy) educationally.

Educational inclusion is a clear concern that permeates current pedagogical discourse, constituting a topic of great interest and necessity at both social and educational levels (Muntaner 2019). The response that schools, and particularly teachers, offer to student diversity is crucial to the recognition of the needs, abilities, and interests of each and every student. However, it is common for teachers around the world to highlight their lack of confidence in working with diverse or, as some call it, “at-risk” learners (Mayer et al. 2017; Ryan et al. 2022).

Current Spanish education legislation (Organic Law 3/2020, of 29 December, which amends Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education<sup>1</sup>) adopts a series of approaches (children's rights, gender equality, guarantees of success for all students, sustainable development, and digital change) that ultimately aim to reinforce the equity and inclusive capacity of the system based on comprehensive education. The aim is to make inclusive education an inalienable right for all people, especially for those who are most vulnerable. In this sense, the contribution of teachers in the classroom is paramount to enable educational processes in environments of justice, democracy, and equity, which allow their students—future citizens—to develop fully. However, teachers' performance is often linked to their own beliefs and perceptions of the profession.

This study explores the perceptions of teachers from different generations and different educational stages about their own teaching practices and tries to characterise the beliefs

they have about how they should deal with the diversity of students in their educational practice, especially with those who are more vulnerable. We are interested in ascertaining what teachers think about their teaching practice and its impact on these pupils in order to determine, based on the literature, whether these educational practices are in line with the demands of society and current educational regulations. To this end, we pose three interrelated research questions:

- What beliefs do teachers from different generations of pre-university stages have about diversity and the needs of their students?
- What characterises the relationships and attitudes of these teachers towards these pupils?
- How do these beliefs and attitudes contribute to the adaptation or adjustment of teaching to student diversity?

### *1.1. Teachers' Thinking and Educational Action*

The link between teachers' thinking and educational action has been a subject of interest and study for a long time. As early as 1988, Pérez and Gimeno (1988) proposed teachers' thinking as a fundamental variable for understanding the nature of the teaching–learning processes carried out in the classroom context due to its conditioning character—to a large extent—towards the way teachers act. Likewise, Carr (1996) posited education as a consciously intentional activity that can only be understood in relation to the framework of thoughts in whose terms its practitioners make sense of their profession and what they are trying to achieve (p. 66).

This same thesis is supported by authors such as Trigwell et al. (1999) and Samuelowicz and Bain (2001), who state, in general terms, that the way a teacher acts is a consequence of his or her thoughts, theories, judgements, and decisions. The development of this area of research has, according to Jiménez Llanos (2005, p. 212), “moved from seeing teachers as rational decision-makers to seeing them as constructivists”. Thus, the teacher is conceived as a “critical intellectual” (Contreras 1985; Donnay and Romainville 1996) and ethicist (Freire 2013) who reflects on the limits (educational, social, and political) in which their work is immersed, which enables them to analyse and question the institutional structures in which they work.

These studies on teachers' thinking make sense when the beliefs of teachers are related to the rest of the agents and socio-educational factors, as well as the limits and tensions, of this profession (Contreras 1985; Hativa et al. 1999). In this sense, in order to understand teachers' thinking and action, it is not enough to analyse their pre-active and interactive thinking (Clark and Peterson 1986); moreover, it is also necessary to take into account the ideological network of beliefs that determine the way in which teachers make sense of their practice and their professional role (Devine et al. 2013; Methlaglab 2022; Lopes and Santos 2013; Guerra and Wubbena 2017; OECD 2009; Pajares 1992) and the beliefs they hold about students (Jordan 2018; Sabarwal et al. 2022).

### *1.2. Teachers' Beliefs about their Profession and about Students*

Research on teachers' beliefs is crucial for analysing and reflecting on education and its actors (mainly teachers and students) through the prism of the pursuit of justice, ethics, democracy, and social equity (Sabarwal et al. 2022; OECD 2009). In this regard, the literature suggests that teachers' beliefs have a more significant influence on their educational practice and decision-making process than the formal knowledge (academic training) that they can apply to their daily practice. Furthermore, authors such as Phipps and Borg (2009) progress this notion a step further and argue that teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning are influenced by their own experiences as learners and act as filters for decision making, lesson planning, or defining what to teach and how to teach it.

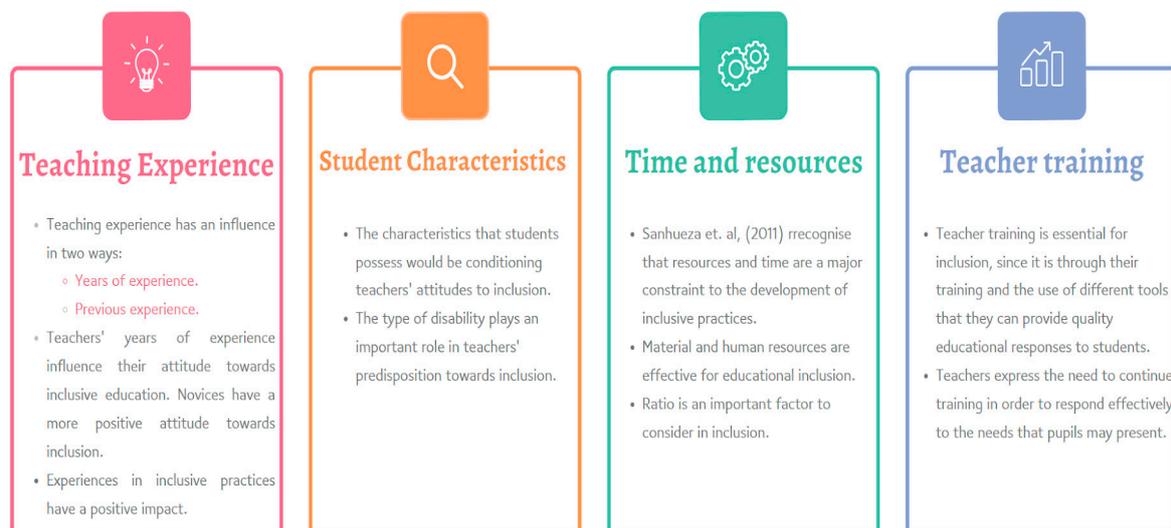
Thus, teachers' beliefs not only play a key role in teachers' classroom practices and professional development but also influence teachers' behaviours towards their students and the needs that students may raise (Kane et al. 2002; Kagan 1992; Pajares 1992; Lin et al. 2014). Bearing in

mind that teachers oversee the teaching–learning processes and are, in turn, responsible for change in education, there is a need for them to carry out an in-depth review of both their practices and beliefs regarding education and their students. For example, one factor of interest in teachers' thinking that can be a determining factor in a teacher's educational practice is their beliefs with respect to students' diversity and their needs.

It seems reasonable to consider that the teaching practice will be determined by the needs of learners, which may arise from a variety of situations, e.g., social, cultural, economic, and family diversity-related, or from different motivations, interests, and even individual abilities. However, although current pedagogical discourse shows a strong commitment to promoting attention to diversity and inclusion—in the sense of recognising that each student has diverse and different needs and, in turn, capacities to learn (Alcalá del Olmo and Leiva Olivencia 2021)—certain barriers are sometimes encountered, such as teachers' beliefs, which can hinder progress towards a more inclusive school. In fact, as González (2008) points out, “the main barrier—also the most insurmountable—to making schools diversity-friendly organisations lies in the ideas, norms, beliefs and attitudes in force in the school, the operating patterns and practices of the agents involved” (p. 84).

Gairín (1990) identified four models of attitudes that teachers can manifest towards their students: attachment towards students who offer adequate performance and behaviour in the classroom; concern towards students who demonstrate lower performance; indifference towards students who are inactive in the classroom; and the rejection of students who demonstrate lower performance and whose behaviour is not adequate in the classroom (Carrillo 2017).

If this information is inferred from a diverse student body, it leads us to ask the following questions: under what model of attitude towards students do teachers act? How does the teaching practice adjust to the diversity of the student body? Authors such as Cardona Cardona Moltó (2006), cited in Granada Azcárraga et al. (2013) suggest that teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of all their students may be conditioned by a series of factors, as shown in the following figure (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Factors influencing inclusive classroom practice. Taken from Granada Azcárraga et al. (2013). Note: Sanhueza et al. (2012).

Taking the information presented in the figure above as a reference, and according to its authors, there are four factors that can determine a teacher's attitude towards student diversity. The first factor refers to teaching experience, understood as the years of experience (the years as an active teacher) and previous experiences (experiences that the teacher has had), which can be a crucial point for the success or failure of inclusive practices. On the other hand, the characteristics of the students can play a fundamental role in the

development of inclusion in the classroom. In addition, time and resources are essential for the planning, development, and implementation of inclusive practices. Finally, teachers' education and training are basic aspects in the correct functioning of the classroom and inclusion in it, as teachers can, through their training, offer an effective response to the needs of students.

Similarly, Mula et al. (2002) pointed out that teachers' attitudes towards student diversity can be influenced by a variety of factors such as responsibility, performance, training and resources, the classroom climate, social relationships, emotional development, and beliefs.

On the other hand, the adjustment of teaching practices to the diversity of students poses new pedagogical demands, which are different from the traditional ones, based on particular or additional forms of support/preparation (Rowan et al. 2021). Some authors (Morillo and Quijano 2016) point out the need to respond to diversity based on methods and tools that facilitate an educational process based on dissimilarity, assuming that not all students learn at the same speed or possess the same capacities, and that they possess different abilities and different intelligences. In this sense, there is great relevance in the transition from a homogenising approach, in which the same material is offered and planned for everyone, to an approach that considers and values the differences and needs of each student as something enriching for individuals and societies (UNESCO 2007).

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Objectives

The aim of this study is to explore the teaching beliefs of different generations and different educational stages in relation to students' diversity, their attitudes, and their impact on their educational practice, especially with respect to those who are more vulnerable, in order to determine, based on the literature, whether these educational practices are in line with the demands of society and current educational regulations. To this end, three specific objectives have been set out:

- To ascertain the beliefs of teachers from different generations of pre-university stages regarding diversity and the needs of their students;
- To characterise teachers' relationships and attitudes towards these types of pupils, according to their educational stage and professional background;
- To assess how these beliefs and attitudes regarding learners contribute to the adaptation or adjustment of teaching.

### 2.2. Methods

This study is part of a larger project<sup>2</sup> that adopts a mixed methodology, combining qualitative and quantitative components (Johnson et al. 2007). Specifically, it consists of a multi-phase design comprising two sequential studies: the first focuses on the generational diversity of teachers and the second on intergenerational collaboration for professional development and learning. Both studies incorporate a qualitative sub-study followed by a quantitative sub-study, as this is a key category in the context of this type of methodology (Creswell 2015), and it provides assurance of integration (Fetters et al. 2013). The project incorporates focus groups and semi-structured, in-depth interviews as data collection techniques (Patton 2015; Stewart and Shamdasani 2015).

The qualitative sub-study of the first exploratory study and the information collected through interviews have been used for the elaboration of the article presented here, which is consistent with the exploratory and emergent nature of the study and the theoretical perspective employed (Creswell and Plano Clark 2018).

### 2.3. Sample

In order to select the participants for the qualitative sub-study chosen for this article, purposive and convenience sampling methods were carried out, using the technique known as "snowball sampling" (Emmel 2013). This technique is carried out when potential

participants are difficult to find (e.g., retired teachers). In this type of sampling, research participants recruit other participants for a test or study. Here, researchers use their own judgement to choose participants, unlike simple random sampling where the chances of any one member being chosen are the same. The inclusion criteria used for the selection of participants were as follows:

- (a) Pre-university teachers—Second cycle of Pre-primary Education (PPE), Primary Education (PE), and Secondary Education (SE), which includes Compulsory secondary education and Vocational Education and Training.
- (b) Teachers in publicly funded schools.
- (c) New teachers (NT), veteran teachers (VT), and retired teachers (RT). New teachers were considered to be born after 1990 and possess no more than 6 years of experience in educational centres. Veteran teachers had to be over 50 years of age and have more than 10 years of experience in educational centres. Retired teachers, on the other hand, had to obey the cases of forced or voluntary retirement, excluding those who retired due to incapacity. For the selection of teachers, we have opted for those who are active in teaching centres (novices and veterans). On the other hand, retired teachers have been included as an opportunity to show that occupational and professional identities have continuity, advocating for the differences that may exist between teachers of different ages, at different stages, and with different experiences throughout their professional careers (Nieto Cano and Portela Pruaño 2021).

It was also considered a priority to collect a sample that covered the entirety of Spain as broadly as possible. In order to meet these criteria and to ensure a balance between employment stages (NT, VT, and RT) and educational stages (PPE, PE, and SE), 20 teachers per employment stage and 15 teachers per educational stage were finally selected, yielding a final sample of 60 teachers from the whole of Spain.

#### 2.4. Data Collection

As mentioned above, data collection for this study was carried out through semi-structured, in-depth interviews. This procedure is particularly suitable for gaining broad and, at the same time, detailed access to human and social phenomena from the perceptions and beliefs that each person has of such phenomena (Patton 2015); it also allows for access to their emotional experiences by incorporating characteristics such as their flexibility to adjust to the interlocutor or to establish a more personal relationship (Hargreaves 2005).

The interviews were administered according to the protocol and guide developed by the research team, which was initially piloted, and then improved and applied across the board. These interviews were recorded (prior authorisation was obtained) and transcribed verbatim and in full by the members of the research team. It should be noted that the interviews were conducted by videoconference, mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

The interview guide for the first sub-study included four main questions or central questions that were supported by specific questions. In the case of the data analysed for this article, the central questions were: What is your perspective of the teaching profession and teaching; why do you have this perspective; how have you come to see teaching as a profession; and with whom do you share and/or have you shared your perspective of the teaching profession? For the present study, special attention was paid to specific questions, which were intended to deepen the teachers' perspectives of their profession, their professional practice, and their students and their relationships with them.

#### 2.5. Data Analysis

For the analysis of the data, we used reflective thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2021) and constant comparative analysis, which also has a reflective character (Tracy 2020). This approach emphasises the reflexivity or importance of the researcher's interpretation of the data (Terry and Hayfield 2021). Unlike other approaches (which even aim to produce an objective distance), this approach is based on the researcher's interpretation of the data

guided by his or her theoretical orientation and the research questions he or she is trying to answer with it. This analysis was developed based on the model proposed by [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#), through the following phases:

- (a) *Initial familiarisation analysis*. The research team conducts a critical and interrogative reading of the transcripts, making incidental notes on issues useful for coding.
- (b) *Topicbook generation*. For this purpose, “data-driven analysis” has been combined and balanced with “theory-driven analysis” ([Braun and Clarke 2006](#), p. 58), with attention being paid not only to topics identifiable as recurrent but also to those identifiable as important (for understanding).
- (c) *Establishment of themes of interest*. The process of generating or constructing themes continues with the identification of significant shared features derived from the grouping of topics (clusters) around potential central organising concepts, with their corresponding associated ideas or sub-themes.
- (d) *Review of themes*. The various themes that emerge are reviewed via checking their quality by comparing, firstly, the themes with differentiated parts of the data already coded, and secondly, by comparing this review with the totality of the data. In this way, the introduction of substantial changes—or lack thereof—to the set of themes can be ascertained.
- (e) *Topic designations*. The names and definitions associated with illustrative quotations are established for each of the topics, thus helping to clarify them.

Finally, the tool used for the qualitative analysis of the data was the ATLAS.ti V22 software ([Friese 2019](#); [Soratto et al. 2020](#)). In order to legitimise the quality and rigour of the study carried out and the results obtained, the principle of veracity and the criteria associated with it were selected: *Credibility* is understood as “the confidence that can be placed in the veracity of the research results (. . .). Specifically, it refers to whether the research results offer a correct interpretation of the original views of the participant”. ([Korstjens and Moser 2018](#), p. 121). In addition, credibility is the equivalent of internal validity in quantitative research; on the other hand, *Transferability* concerns the aspect of applicability—in accordance with [Korstjens and Moser \(2018\)](#), “it refers to the degree to which research results can be transferred to other contexts or settings with other respondents” (p. 121). *Reliability* can be defined as follows: “in qualitative research, reliability relates to the stability of findings across time, contexts and research instruments” ([O’Connor and Joffe 2020](#), p. 4); on the other hand, authors such as [Cypress \(2017\)](#) define reliability as consistency and care in data collection, which is also reflected in the analysis and conclusions. [Hernández Sampieri et al. \(2014\)](#) describe reliability as a measurement instrument that refers to the fact that the result of the application of the instrument does not vary over time; that is, if the instrument is applied at a given time to the same individual or groups and reapplied after some time, it should produce the same results. *Confirmability* ([Korstjens and Moser 2018](#)) refers to the degree to which research results can be confirmed by other researchers. This criterion is employed to establish that the data and interpretations of the results are objectively derived from the participants’ data ([Berkovich and Grinshtain 2021](#); [Yadav 2022](#)), as these criteria are commonly used to establish the quality of this type of research ([Lincoln and Guba 1985](#); [Yadav 2022](#)).

## 2.6. Ethics

The research project, and therefore the entire study, has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Murcia (approval identification code: 2087/2018), which in turn approved the information sheet for participants and the form for providing informed consent to participate in the study.

## 3. Results

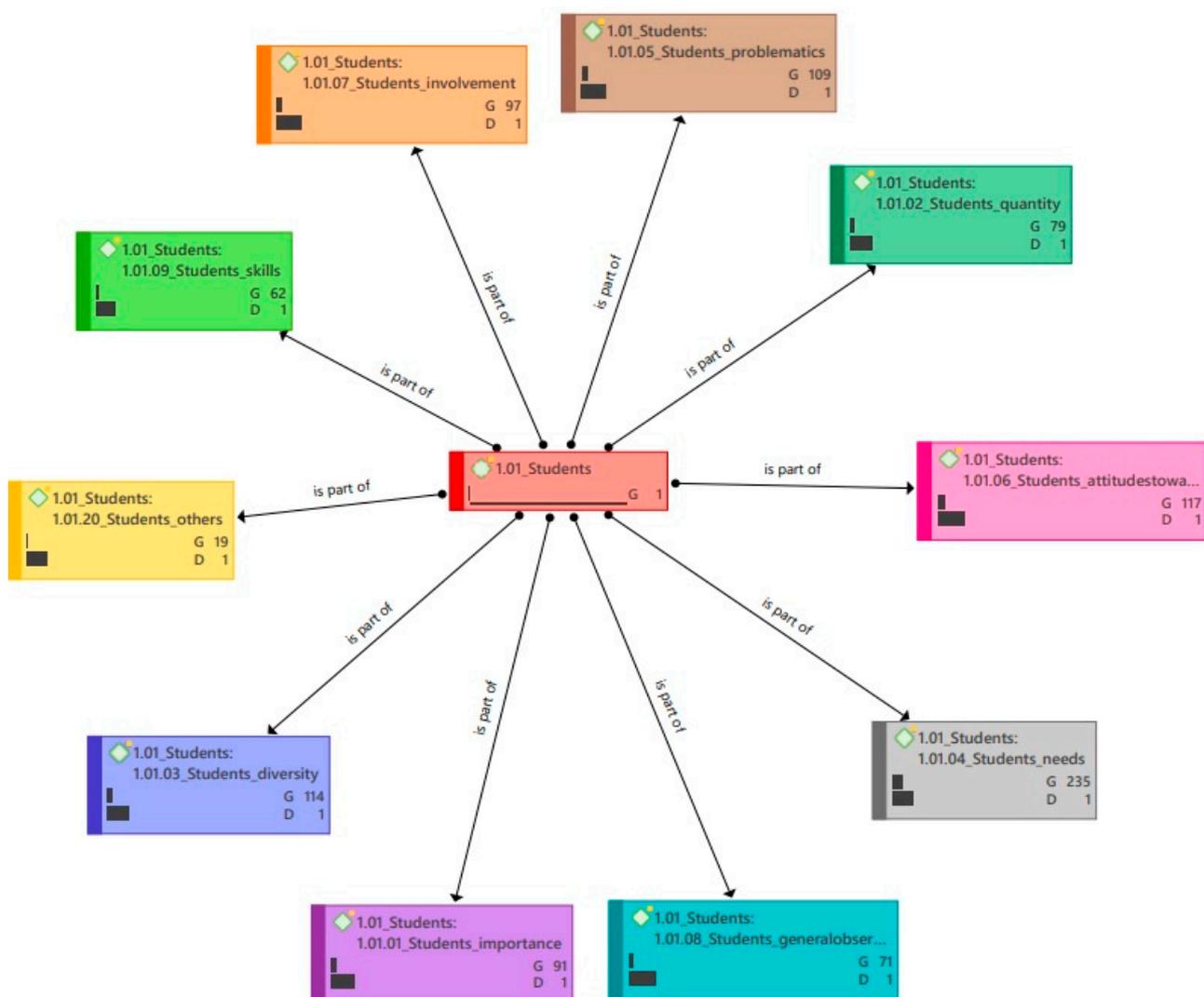
The results included herein present the patterns identified in the data and particular quotes relevant to their understanding. An attempt has been made to systematically and rigorously deepen the analysis of the data, transcending the surface of the data, generating

reliable and valid results (Soratto et al. 2020), and highlighting the qualitative data that emerge from the quantitative figures (Hwang 2008).

### 3.1. Conceptions and Beliefs That Teachers from Different Generations of Pre-University Stages Have about Diversity and the Needs of Their Students

The information collected from teachers that we will use to respond to this first objective is derived from their broader discussion, which refers to how they perceive the teaching profession in general. In the analysis of this discourse, topics were detected (deductively and inductively) related to their perceptions of pupils, which are the ones included in this first analysis.

Below is the complete semantic network of topics that were identified related to teachers' perceptions of the student body (Figure 2).

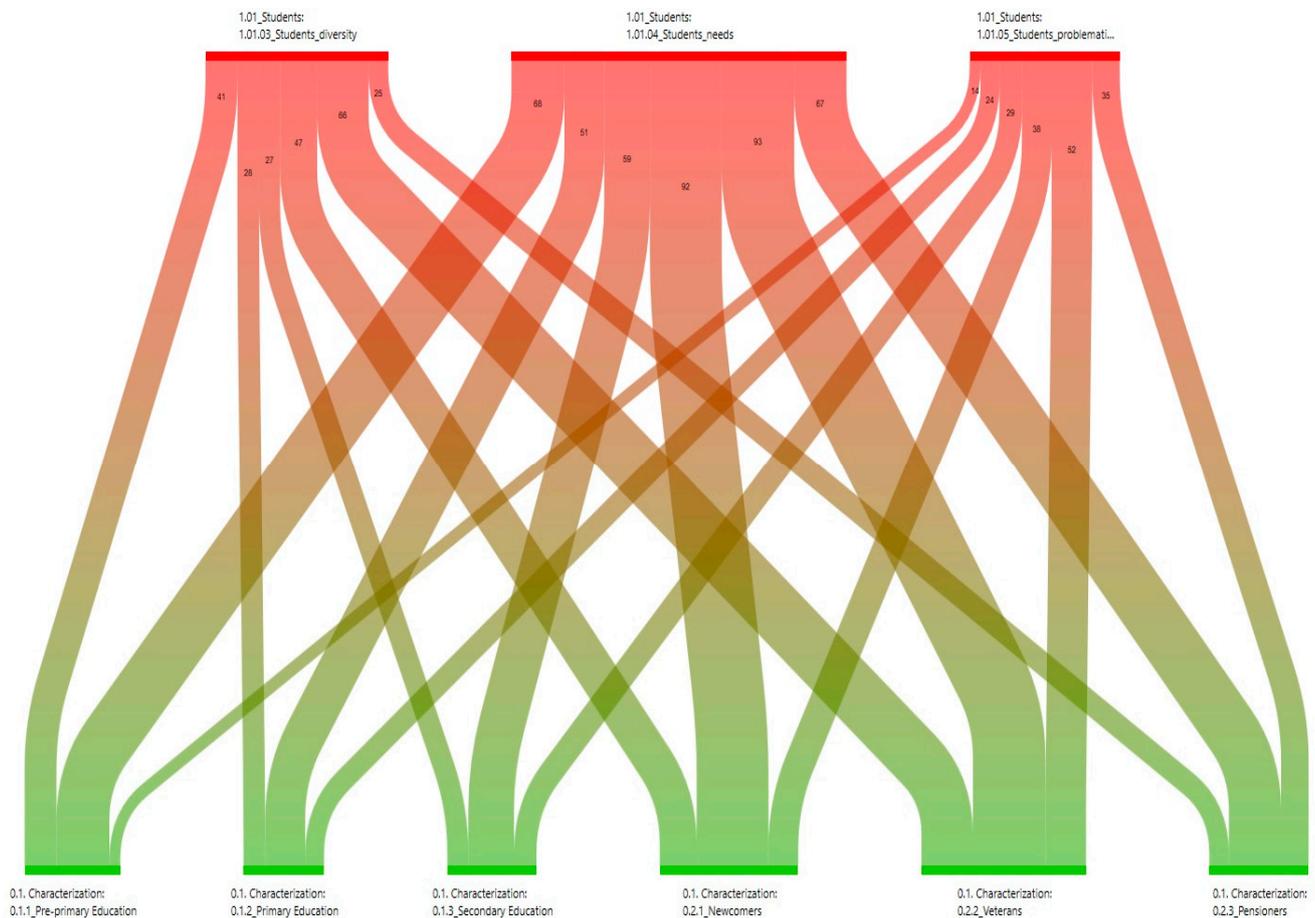


**Figure 2.** Semantic network on topics associated with the central organising concept “student body”. Note: Extracted from ATLAS.ti software.

In the analysis of the corpus of interviews with teachers, a large number of quotations were detected that correspond to a main agent of the educational process: the students. These quotes were categorised into eight different topics (Figure 2). For the analysis employed in this article, the topics related to “diversity”, “needs”, and “problematic” were used, as they characterise the situation of the students studied in this article. The topic “diversity” received 114 citations, the topic “needs” had 235 citations, and the topic

“problematic” had 109 citations. These eight selected topics are derived from themes such as changes in the teaching profession, the changing student body and its diversity, and the necessary adjustments in teaching.

These results can also be analysed by applying the coefficient of the co-occurrence of topics (Figure 3), where, in addition to obtaining the frequency of these topics, the relationship between these topics and the groups of documents (i.e., the documents grouped according to the demographic data of the participants, namely, early childhood teachers, primary school teachers, secondary school teachers, new teachers, veteran teachers, and retired teachers) is provided. Although no significant co-occurrence coefficients can be detected (no coefficient is greater than 0.04), it can be seen graphically in Figure 3—as mentioned above—that the topic referring to “needs” is the one most frequently used by all the participants, regardless of the educational stage to which they belong and their professional career (new, veteran, or retired teachers). However, it can also be seen (in the upper part of the figure) that the frequency with which teachers mention these topics varies depending on the educational stage and the generation to which they belong. In order to explore this aspect further, the prevalence of topics according to this characterisation of the participants is analysed below.



**Figure 3.** Sankey diagram of the relationship between categories and groups of documents. Note: Extracted from ATLAS.ti software. Topic–document relationship table.

Table 1 shows the relationships between the three categories selected for analysis (“diversity”, “needs” and “problematic”) and the groups of documents referring to teachers in the three educational stages for which information was collected (PPE, PE, and SE). Specifically, the frequency with which each topic has been applied to each of the groups of documents is shown.

**Table 1.** Topic–document relationship table.

		Groups of Documents			Totals
		Pre-Primary Education	Primary Education	Secondary Education	
		Frequency			
Topics	1.01.03_Students_diversity	19.5%	25.7%	54.9%	100%
	1.01.04_Students_needs	19.9%	24.7%	55.4%	100%
	1.01.05_Students_problemativity	9.5%	17.1%	73.3%	100%
	Totals	17.4%	23.2%	59.5%	100%

Note: Table extracted from ATLAS.ti Software.

There are differences in the prevalence of topics between teachers at the different stages, showing that secondary education teachers refer most frequently to problem students (73.3%). Teachers at this level of education most frequently refer to the needs of students (55.41%) and their diversity (54.9%), as opposed to teachers at other educational levels, who mention these topics to a lesser extent.

Table 2 analyses the relationships between the three categories selected for the analysis and the groups of documents referring to the teachers according to their professional career (NT, VT, and RT).

**Table 2.** Topic–document relationship table.

		Groups of Documents			Totals
		Newcomers (NT)	Veterans (VT)	Pensioners (RT)	
		Frequency			
Topics	1.01.03_Students_diversity	35.4%	44.3%	20.4%	100%
	1.01.04_Students_needs	34.2%	36.8%	29.0%	100%
	1.01.05_Students_problemativity	28.6%	42.9%	28.6%	100%
	Totals	33.2%	40.1%	26.7%	100%

Note: Table extracted from ATLAS.ti Software.

If a comparison is made that considers the different stages in the teachers' professional careers, the veteran teachers most frequently mention the topics referring to students (36.8% mention the needs of their students, 42.9% the problems of their students, and 44.3% the diversity of the student body). The lowest percentages are found among retired teachers, who mention these students to a lesser extent.

To complete this information, it is necessary to scrutinise the discourse (themes) that each of the groups (PPE, PE, and SE, and NT, VT, and RT) provided about these topics in order to investigate and understand how they concretely perceive the diversity, needs, and problems of their students (objective 1). However, it should be noted that the co-occurrence analysis carried out between the selected topics ("diversity", "needs", and "problematic") shows that these topics co-occur with each other (Table 3), i.e., a coefficient of 0.13 is reached for the topics "needs" and "diversity", which indicates that both topics appear simultaneously in a large number of quotations. The same is true for the topics "problematic" and "needs", which reach a co-occurrence coefficient of 0.07.

For this reason, some quotations are presented below that exemplify the teachers' discourse on these topics as a whole, thus allowing us to determine the beliefs of these teachers regarding diversity and the needs of students.

It can be noted that teachers, in general, refer to the diversity of pupils to refer to the variety of their characteristics, interests, cultures, etc.:

Well, and the truth is that my results, well, their results—I’m satisfied with the students I’ve had; in general, I’ve had all kinds. Some have made a career, others haven’t. (60:40)

What I would highlight, mainly, right now in the classrooms that I know, well, where I work, are the differences in culture. (70:36)

Because what you have in front of you, each time—they are totally different from each other, and each year is different from the previous one. (20:86)

As can be seen from these quotations, the concept of diversity has a broad meaning for teachers. On the one hand, diversity is referred to in terms of the learning outcomes, interests, and motivations of students, while on the other hand, diversity is identified with culture or cultural identity (a reductionist view).

**Table 3.** Table of concurrency between topics.

	1.01.03_ Students_Diversity		1.01.04_ Students_Needs		1.01.05_ Students_Problematics	
	Count	Coefficient	Count	Coefficient	Count	Coefficient
1.01.03_Students_diversity	0	0.00	39	0.13	11	0.05
1.01.04_Students_needs	39	0.13	0	0.00	23	0.07
1.01.05_Students_problematics	11	0.05	23	0.07	0	0.00

Note: Table extracted from ATLAS.ti Software.

When teachers characterised their students as problematic, they pointed out characteristics or traits of their students such as immaturity, behavioural problems, character, etc. Below is a quote from a PPE and novice teacher, a quote from a PD and veteran teacher, and finally a quote from an SE and veteran teacher, which all serve to exemplify this idea:

It is also true that in terms of behaviour, I am seeing now in young children, children with a character, a temperament...therefore, they are children who have very little... zero frustration in that sense that they scold you, tell you anything, and do not take you as a reference. (9:6)

They come very sheltered, very protected, and every day more and more, with “buah, buah” it is already solved. (14:10)

You have students who are a bit more disruptive, that makes it more complicated, but it is a part of the student body, the centre where they are from, the family, how they are, but that too; of course, if you have a group of students who are more lively, it can be more difficult to teach the class. (1:12)

Teachers mostly referred to their students in terms of needs, which are understood not only as special educational needs, but also as needs related to other aspects, namely, age; their social, cultural, and/or personal situations; interests; abilities; and so on.

Pupils with greater difficulties, with greater handicaps when it comes to accessing resources, with difficulties, with special educational needs, with emotional and social family difficulties—all these types of variables. (38:29)

PPE teachers stated the language (linking the concept of need with the concept of cultural diversity) or educational needs the students may have (57 quotes from PPE teachers regarding “needs”):

Last year, I was in a school where the majority of the students, ninety percent of them, were immigrant students, students who don’t understand Spanish; of course when I finished my degree, you are not aware of that, no. (9:22)

We are talking about a centre with 99, if not 100%, immigration, in which language is a handicap, that is, it is a handicap that they do not speak Spanish at home, in which there are also many educational needs, ASD, Down’s Syndrome, the

ordinary classroom and a teacher with twenty-five or twenty-six students with children with needs and so on. (17:29)

PD teachers (45 quotations) mainly mentioned the needs of their students in relation to their age, their abilities, or the deficiencies with which they enter the stage:

Nowadays, I don't think that it is very difficult for them to focus their attention, and I think that this has to do with the misuse and overuse of new technologies and all the social contact apps and so on. I think that they spend too many hours in front of a screen, and that later, when it comes to relating to others, it is difficult for them. (4:1)

Because children in the first and second year of primary school need to have very clear guidelines—they need habits. (71:47)

I am with young pupils, I am with children in the second year of primary school; then, they begin to have autonomy in certain things, they are responsible to a certain extent, but every day I get the feeling that they are becoming more childish, they are less autonomous, they need more support from the teacher, or maybe I am getting older and I am beginning to have less patience, I don't know. (14:6)

Nowadays, I think that every year that goes by, and the colleagues who have been there longer say it: society is changing, and the pupils are also changing. Nowadays, they are students who need much more stimuli to pay attention, we need to be innovating at school, once again, because we are seeing that traditional methods have been left behind, and nowadays it is very difficult for them to work. (57:6)

The SE teachers, for their part, mention the needs of their students (135), associating them mostly with difficulties or problematic situations arising from adolescence:

You have to deal with many different types of students, many different people and there are people with whom you have to be very patient because they have many deficits, many gaps, or many difficulties. (46:50)

The adolescents to whom it does offer answers, that is, those who are part of the system, also have the same burdens, both in terms of mental health and frustration, as well as associated problems, which are the same thing: problems of stress, anxiety, cases of eating disorders. Although they are part of the system, the system creates these problems, and if it doesn't create them, it accentuates them. So, I think there is a big problem here that I don't really know how it can be tackled, but it worries me. (45:6)

But what I saw, I used to tell them a lot was that they were very naughty pupils, very naughty...they were very good people, but they were, they were very quacks, these pupils who like to be in the street, who like [...] one day they have no rules, full adolescence; there is a very strong adolescence and of course, practically without rules and that is the most outstanding thing about it. (44:3)

In relation to professional development, novice teachers (82 quotes) emphasise that the needs of today's students are different from those of students in the past. Being born into the information society means that teachers must provide possibilities and strategies with which students will develop skills associated with the ability to learn:

I would summarise it in learning to learn, in being able to learn things, to learn themselves, that they are the protagonists of their learning, that they have, at the click of a button, at the click of a button, they have all the information. So—as I said—what they demand is that we provide them with these tools, how they can learn by themselves, they being the protagonists of their own learning. (13:26)

It's a completely different generation or ahead or whatever we want to call it with different needs and we have to be there, if they have changed, we have changed—I think we have to change. (17:27)

But well, I think that the approach is not the right one because, I don't know, they ask me to teach them syntax, I am going to teach them some syntax, but my question is why does this boy or girl need this, if what I need is for him or her to have an opinion, to know how to speak, to know how to get around, to know what a contract is, to know about laws. (42:101)

In these quotes, we can appreciate the willingness of new teachers to accompany students in order to meet their needs arising from the social moment, but also needs arising from the age or generational stage in which the pupils find themselves:

I believe that it is much more important to be in a complicated stage of adolescence and I believe that the accompaniment has to be global, as far as we can go. (42:2)

But mostly more tools for their adult and professional life, which is what I think they need at that moment. (42:87)

What I have always tried to do is to prepare them for life, because when they leave high school, they are practically on their own, they are not going to have a teacher behind them. (44:54)

It is worth noting that these teachers also consider that the age of the teacher can help students with certain problems or needs concerning asking for help from novice teachers because of their generational proximity (greater empathy):

Even people who are very studious or so on, or who seem to think that everything is fine, because they have these things and so, I think that maybe that's why, because we have been told about it, because maybe they dare to tell us about it, because we receive more in our generation. (42:135)

Nowadays, I don't know if it is because many teachers are starting to retire, more new teachers are coming in, or because of the boom in technology, I don't know, but there has been a change that can be seen in the closeness we have with the students, we listen to them a bit too, what we were talking about the other day. We listen to them, practically, as if they were our children. Apart from giving them classes, we listen to them, we give them advice, we are psychologists, sometimes a bit of a doctor, a bit of everything. (63:4)

In the same vein, veteran teachers (86 quotes) conceived that the way to understand and address the needs of students is through support:

These kids need a little guidance, a little light. (25:12)

Of course, when they come to you with stories, some quarrel... "Let's see, what quarrel? What happened? What happened?" "It's not that..." "Let's see, what happened?" "I don't know what, I don't know how much" "Hey, can't you see that you've all messed up, why do you have to say such things?" Once you're done, you continue the lessons. Of course, I'm what they said about me: "He's the weird one, but you listen to us" I say: "Not everybody listens to you" "Everybody listens to us, but you listen to us" And I said "Well, I know that with these students you have to work with them, you have to listen to them". (12:43)

So, if there are pupils with difficulties, to have a person next to you who could give you a hand. (14:5)

The plan to help and to be there, at the side of the pupil, to achieve the best possible, that is to get the best out of him as a person and as an individual in terms of his qualities. (66:24)

For their part, with respect to students' needs, retired teachers (65 quotes) have very similar beliefs to teachers of other generations, although they refer more frequently to

the special educational needs of students. This perspective of curricular and pedagogical adjustment to students predominates among them, highlighting the lack of training and resources to respond to these specific needs:

We are forgetting that there are children at any educational stage who have a series of problems that the teacher who comes to help us, the PT, or the Hearing and Language teacher, what happens? That they go with those children outside the classroom, those children have to be in the classroom, in any case it is that teacher who has to be in the classroom to see how they act with their classmates, how they work. (15:12)

We were faced with integration with—in many aspects—zero training, and I had already been with some with partial integration, that is to say that a child would come for a few hours in some subject. But I had never had a fully integrated pupil, and that year I had a three year old girl with cerebral palsy and there, well, without knowing anything, I said I accepted her, I couldn't even think of saying no. No, I had no idea how I was going to do it. No, I had no idea how I was going to deal with it. (37:22)

In this respect, they offer a perspective on educational inclusion with respect to how to cater to students who have some kind of educational need:

I don't see inclusion in the way that many teachers also see it, that inclusion means including children who, for example, do very well in other centres that are specific for them, because no matter how much we want them to, they cannot be in the classroom; there are children who are already thirteen or fourteen years old who bite you, who put a rubber band in their nose and you can't attend to them, who punch you—these children have certain characteristics that make it very difficult for them to be in the classroom, but on the other hand there is a Down syndrome, there is an autistic child, there are other types of children who are in the centres and who should be in the classroom and not out of the classroom. (15:13)

### 3.2. *The Relationships and Attitudes of Teachers towards This Type of Pupils, Depending on the Educational Stage and Their Professional Career*

The previous analyses have allowed us to contemplate teachers' beliefs regarding diversity and the needs of their students. Now, the aim is to ascertain the relationships and attitudes of these teachers towards this type of student.

For this purpose, a co-occurrence analysis was carried out between the topics characterising these students (“diversity”, “needs”, and “problematic”) and the topics “relationships with students” and “attitudes towards students”. The intention of this analysis was to identify whether the topics co-occurred with each other, i.e., whether they were related. As can be seen in Table 4, some of the relationships between these topics showed co-occurrences with a coefficient of more than 0.05. Thus, it was possible to determine that the topics related to the beliefs that teachers have about the diversity, needs, and problems of students show co-occurrence with the attitudes that teachers have towards these students and their relationships with the students.

**Table 4.** Table of concurrency between topics.

	1.01.03_ Students_Diversity		1.01.04_ Students_Needs		1.01.05_ Students_Problematics	
	Count	Coefficient	Count	Coefficient	Count	Coefficient
1.02.05_Teacher_ Attitudes towards students	11	0.04	28	0.07	23	0.08
1.06.15_ Task. Relations with pupils	3	0.01	12	0.03	13	0.05

Note: Table extracted from ATLAS.ti Software.

When analysing the interviews (themes) further, the quotations grouping the topics “needs” and “attitudes towards students” show the positive feelings of teachers towards these students, regardless of the educational stage (PPE: 4 quotations; PE: 3 quotations; SE: 22 quotations) and of the teaching generation to which they belong (NT: 12 quotations; VT: 14 quotations; RT: 1 quotation). In general, the teachers mention their willingness to provide the students with help, to understand their problems, or to provide them with tools and strategies, as derived from this positive attitude they show. To exemplify these results, quotes from an early childhood teacher are shown:

You are faced with a classroom; you have twenty-five children who don't speak Spanish and you have to work with them. What I'm telling you—you don't have material resources, maybe you can't cope with it, or human resources to help you, so these are the things that maybe, yes, it has changed my vision, that every classroom, every school is a world, you know, I had a more homogeneous vision of what education was, and you realise that a classroom..., each group is a world, there are different levels of learning in the students, you realise that although they are all obviously the same age, each one has a different learning style, which is totally respectable, obviously, because that's what we are there for, to help them in that process. (9:39)

Additionally, the following quote from a PD teacher shows this positive attitude towards these students:

Teachers take good care of their pupils, in the sense that they welcome them, if someone has doubts, they help them with these doubts, I think that this is maintained, it is maintained, there are no teachers who say: “Well, to the platoon of the clumsy”. When I used to go to the Salesians there was “El pelotón de los torpes”. There is no such thing, there is a desire to integrate, for example, the role, which I haven't talked about much, but the reception of immigrants who come—the *nouvinguts*—is very important and we suffered a lot and now it is lived as a very normal thing, I think that the people who are here now, one thing they have done very well is to work very well with those who come from outside, perhaps because there is already a protocol and there is a base. (11:75)

Similarly, the attitude of four SE teachers:

You put yourself a bit in the shoes of those kids, you don't really know how to help them. (43:93)

I understand that the teacher, in the end, is a person who ends up spending a lot of time with the students, probably, in what are the most important stages of their lives; and in this sense, I also understand that the teacher becomes, by mere interaction with the student, a kind of educator in life, not only of knowledge but also of other kinds of skills: managing emotions, knowing oneself, accepting problems, solving them. . . ( . . . ) the teacher is aware of this connection with the student and I think he/she should have enough skills to be able to carry out this part of his/her teaching well too. . . ) the teacher is aware of this connection with the learner and I think he/she should have enough skills to be able to carry out this part of his/her teaching well too. (68:3)

For me, the way to judge a student is not by their results, because a person can get better or worse marks, because it also depends on their circumstances. For me, the important thing is that when they finish they are at least good people. . . (44:52)

Nowadays, I don't know if it is also because many teachers are starting to retire, more new teachers are coming in, or because of the boom in technology, I don't know, but there has been a change that can be seen in the closeness we have with the students, we listen to them a little bit too, what we were talking about the other day. We listen to them, practically, as if they were our children. Apart from

giving them classes, we listen to them, we give them advice, we are psychologists, sometimes a bit of a doctor, a bit of everything. (63:4)

On the contrary, the attitudes towards pupils characterised as “problematic” are not so positive. Again, irrespective of the educational stage (PPE: 2 quotes; PE: 4 quotes; SE: 19 quotes) and the teaching generation to which they belong (NT: 5 quotes; VT: 11 quotes; RT: 6 quotes), teachers show a more circumspect attitude towards these pupils in general due to the difficulties they encounter in managing a classroom with pupils exhibiting these characteristics:

In fact, the following year, when I wasn't there, a colleague who took that group, well, what happened to me happened a bit, she didn't know how to manage them and kept asking for help from the management team. In the end, she asked for so much help that she lost the students and the management team; the head of studies said “Look girl, you are the teacher, if I have to teach your class, give me your salary because if I have to teach your class, I deserve your salary. You have to teach the class, you have to do it, so do what you want to do. (12:52)

They have to leave some classes, which are the ones closest to the door and they always try to get you to leave early, you tell them, well, you have to wait a minute, nothing happens, and they always try to cheat to try to be in class as little as possible; many absences, especially many disobedience problems. (44:43)

As is evident from these selected quotes, teachers report difficulties in carrying out their work with students who are disruptive, rebellious, do not accept classroom rules, have difficulty following classroom routines, etc.

However, we also find some teachers who take it as a challenge:

But I know of friends who have gone to public schools and they say: “You are the last one to arrive, you will get first because it is the most difficult class and has the most problematic children... You will get sixth because there is a group that nobody knows what to do with” The one who arrives new, with less experience gets the most difficult group, on the other hand, in my school and in many schools that had a pedagogical project we said: “Which is the most problematic class, first? Well, here we are going to put the teacher who is the best in the whole school to solve it” and for me this is a way of approaching education, no, it is to say: “the last one to arrive gets the group that nobody wants”. (11:40)

Finally, with regard to teachers' relationships with the most problematic students, teachers mention (PPE: 1 quotes; PE: 0 quotes; SE: 12 quotes; NT: 0 quotes; VT: 10 quotes; RT: 3 quotes) the frustration of not getting along with them:

For me, the most frustrating experiences have been more than negative, they have been frustrating: classes in which... groups of students that I have not been able to... that is, that I have not been able to connect with, that I have not been able to motivate, to evolve with them, very passive groups. I remember one group above all as being very emotionally damaged. (67:30)

They also mention the need to act with authority towards these pupils:

I have seen this type of teaching staff, and in this type of teachers, most of the time I would say, they were, well, hard on the pupils, not given to contemplation of personal circumstances, not given to discipline, to say nothing of discipline. People who never had discipline problems because they made it very clear on the first day who they were going to deal with, that is also the case. (37:102)

They are going to confront you, adolescence is the time of “No”, “Why do I have to do this? Well, I don't do it... Well, because you have to do... Well, I don't do it”. The norm is “Well, no”, that's the time. (22:64)

### 3.3. How Beliefs and Attitudes about Learners Contribute to Adaptation or adjustment of Teaching

Finally, a co-occurrence analysis was carried out to determine whether there is a relationship between the topics “diversity”, “needs”, and “problematic” and the topics regarding the teacher’s performance in the teaching and learning process. Specifically, we were interested in determining which topics allow for the determination of whether or not teaching is adapted to the situation of these students. Of the numerous topics used to classify the discussion related to their tasks (a total of 30 topics), the topics “diversity”, “needs”, and “problematic” showed co-occurrences (with a coefficient greater than 0.05) with the topics shown in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Table of concurrence between topics.

	1.01.03_ Students_Diversity		1.01.04_ Students_Needs		1.01.05_ Students_Problematics	
	Count	Coefficient	Count	Coefficient	Count	Coefficient
1.06.02_Task. Help	4	0.02	14	0.05	4	0.02
1.06.07_Task. Alternative education	6	0.02	24	0.05	4	0.01
1.06.10_Task. Difficulty	7	0.02	23	0.06	6	0.02
1.06.14_Task. Adapted for students	13	0.06	23	0.07	0	0.00

Note: Table extracted from ATLAS.ti Software.

Once the co-occurrence coefficients are known, the discourse of the teachers in relation to these topics can be analysed with the aim of determining what kind of adaptations and/or adjustments teachers make to their educational practice according to their students’ and their own needs.

In general, teachers—irrespective of the stage of education (PPE: 1 quote; PE: 1 quotes; SE: 12 quotes) and the teaching generation they belong to (NT: 5 quotes; VT: 8 quotes; RT: 1 quote)—see teaching in terms of helping to adapt to students’ needs. The following quotations provide some examples:

There are students who, with some help, there are students who get there and that’s just that we often try to, like, lower the level so that they pass, because we know that with, with time, that with time they will be able to achieve the objectives of the stage. (43:62)

The day I was free, instead of giving literature, what we did was reading, because they are kids who need to read, they need to understand things, they don’t have any habits and so we did a whole hour of reading, so they could read a book. (44:38)

Teachers also refer to alternative teaching in a positive way, regardless of the stage and generation to which they belong (PPE: 10 quotes; PE: 6 quotes; SE: 7 quotes; NT: 6 quotes; VT: 6 quotes; RT: 12 quotes). They see it as an effective way of reaching all pupils, stressing that meeting the needs of their pupils entails performing tasks and having experiences that are different from the traditional ones, e.g., tasks that attract their attention, that engage them in the teaching and learning process, and that allow their needs to be met:

Well, what I did at the time, which they called me, well, delusional, idyllic, a thousand stories, well, that’s what is being maintained—at the moment. Well, I’ve been telling students for a few years now “let’s see, we can teach many subjects, but what I really have to prepare you for is the day of... The working world, and in the working world you are not going to memorise anything, with practice you are going to memorise it, but from the beginning you are not going to memorise anything, I prefer you to understand the VAT manual than memorise all the VAT, all the products that carry VAT, which is the end of the line “Do you have any doubts?” Well, I’m going to teach them to look for that information, to

interpret it, because often the text that appears is complicated, well, we are going to interpret it, and that is to apply it, so, a little bit of working by competencies, which is now becoming more popular, well, that's what I have been doing before this implementation, a little bit of minimising and maximising the time we have dedicated to them. (12:32)

Escape Room. I don't know English, the Escape Room, so all these things are great for the pupils, you get them hooked straight away and then from there the subjects have to be globalised, everyone has to try to work together, teamwork, collaboration, cooperation is very important. (15:16)

What I see is that there are a lot of children who lack a lot of play and play with each other. I see it a lot. What's more, one of my position teachers said that one of the things she had seen in confinement and that she had reflected on it a lot and had thought about it a lot in her teaching career, is the subject of books. She says: "I will never pick up a book again", "I told parents 'I am going to play with your son or daughter, I am going to teach them, but I am going to play with them. No books, no things. Everything through play'. I really liked this because I can see how easy it is, it's true, to put a card on it and that everything is well reflected in that card, what we are working on; But it is true that we also need to try to balance this, that there is physical work—because they are little jobs that they then take home and that parents like to see and that they also feel proud of the work they have done—but it is also very important that the children express themselves and play and that you can evaluate this without having a card in the middle, just listen to them and see what they do: to observe; which is one of the very important objectives in education: to observe the children, to watch them. (52:50)

In relation to the difficulties in developing teaching adapted to their students, all the teachers expressed the problems or difficulties involved in teaching those students grouped under "diversity", "needs", and "problematic" (PPE: 6 quotes; PE: 4 quotes; SE: 13 quotes; NT: 9 quotes; VT: 8 quotes; RT: 6 quotes). However, in some cases, these difficulties are perceived as a challenge that teachers must face in order to enrich themselves and learn:

The regular classroom and a teacher with twenty-five or twenty-six students with children with needs and so on, it is very complicated to deal with that on a daily basis, to meet the objectives and to achieve everything. (17:30)

The method we use is very distant from the children, but to reach them as they want is very difficult, because they want I don't know... something very, I see it as very futuristic. (25:32)

But, I had never had a fully integrated pupil, and that year I had a three year old girl with cerebral palsy and there, well, without knowing anything, I said I accepted her, I couldn't even think of saying no. No, I had no idea how I was going to deal with it. No, I had no idea how I was going to deal with it. (37:22)

Well, in the end I think that where I have learned the most, what has marked me the most, are the most complicated centres, so to speak, where there are students who have a very difficult social context, and that is where you really... where you really enrich yourself and learn, because in each class you find yourself, maybe they are smaller classes, but each case is so different and so particular, and has such complicated situations, that that is where you really have to get involved and get involved with these children. (57:22)

Finally, in relation to the adaptation of the teaching task to these students, very few quotes specifically mention the way in which the teacher adapts or could adapt a given task to their students (PPE: 6 quotes; PE: 6 quotes; SE: 11 quotes; NT: 5 quotes; VT: 11 quotes; RT: 7 quotes). Only the teachers' perceptions of the need for it to be adapted is detected, without detailing—in their discourse—what such adjustments entail and how

to make them. However, it is clear that in the teachers' thinking there is a need to adjust teaching to the students, while being aware of the limitations and needs of certain students (needs linked to their personal, cognitive, and even emotional spheres). The quotations that provide more detail on this matter are provided below:

Another thing I would like to change is that I think they have a very heavy workload, because they have a lot of subjects and in all the subjects they are given assignments, so the workload is very high, so they have no rest and that also hinders learning because there is no time to assimilate the concepts. (46:63)

We all want the best for the students. There are times when, last year, there were some colleagues who thought about their own interests rather than those of the students, and we were always the same small group that said, right, that we want to do better for the children than we have done so far. So, yes, we always looked a little bit at the well-being of the pupils. (63:32)

That those who arrive with certain disabilities or problems can achieve a reasonable average of knowledge, of knowledge and strategies, of functioning, of abilities and skills that are transportable to life—that will be of use to them. (65:16)

I have made stories, then, of the needs that I see in the children, that is, I see that there are needs. 71:51)

So, I think that children, too, are sometimes in need of you paying a lot of attention to them and solving many of their doubts. (71:53)

#### 4. Discussion

When teachers were asked about the teaching profession, specifically what it refers to or what influences it, they mentioned their students and specifically the diversity of students who coexist in a classroom, the needs they present, and the characterisation of some of them as problematic (especially at the secondary education stage). This is an initial “snapshot” of the representation that teachers at all pre-university levels of education perceive in relation to their students.

It is interesting to note the prevalence of the term “needs” in the teachers' discourse. The teachers referred to needs from a broad perspective, stating that they are associated with the cultural, linguistic, and social and/or personal diversity of the students. These needs associated with student diversity denote a concern and a challenge for Spanish teachers, in the same way as they do for teachers around the world, according to research by [Rowan et al. \(2021\)](#) and [Ryan et al. \(2022\)](#).

In general, it can be noted that teachers are aware of the diversity of students and the needs they present. Specifically, it is secondary education teachers who refer to students' needs and diversity most frequently, followed by primary education and pre-school teachers.

Regarding PPE and PE teachers, they mainly mention the needs of pupils at these stages in relation to their developmental stage and the specific educational support needs they may have. However, they detect numerous educational needs arising not only from personal conditions but also from social and cultural conditioning factors, which, therefore, affect their role as teachers and, ultimately, their educational practice ([Faura-Martínez et al. 2022](#)). In almost all the interviews, the teachers' mentioned the fact that the changes in students' needs are derived from the most recent social changes (information society, speed of change, ICT, etc.); however, especially in pre-school and primary education, there is a general concern on the part of teachers about the addiction that technologies are generating in children at increasingly younger ages, and the risk that this entails for the execution of basic processes at school, such as attention and concentration. This concern is also expressed by various authors in numerous studies ([Banderas 2017](#); [Bender et al. 2018](#); [Carr 2010](#); [Madigan et al. 2020](#)).

On the other hand, infant education teachers, for their part, made special mention of the linguistic deficiencies derived from the students' culture of origin. In this regard,

it should be noted that the Spanish education system develops language immersion programmes for immigrant students from other cultures at the primary and secondary education stages, but they are not established for infant education (except in two autonomous communities) as it is a non-compulsory stage (Rodríguez-Izquierdo 2018). This situation may explain why PPE teachers point out the complexity of addressing this type of need at this stage (Mateos et al. 2019).

The secondary education teachers, for their part, frequently allude to the needs of adolescents derived from the generational stage they are undergoing (the physical changes, emotional changes, intellectual changes, etc., that are characteristic of the stage), but, in particular, they make special mention of the students they (the teachers) refer to as “problematic”. One explanation can be found in various studies that have shown that this is the stage in which students present more antisocial behaviour derived from entering adolescence (Manzano-Sánchez 2021; Nasaescu et al. 2020). Moreover, it is at this stage when, through various educational programmes, numerous and different pedagogical measures are developed to address this diversity in order to prevent failure and early school dropouts, which tends to be more evident in the secondary education stage than in primary education, posing a greater risk for these students (González 2021).

The teachers in this study have, therefore, perceived that the work of the SE teacher can become more complex when working with these students. In this sense, a more cautious attitude is perceived on the part of teachers towards these students, which stems from the difficulties in attending to these students and managing the classroom, as well as the frustration of not being able to get along with said students. In these teachers, a pattern of attitude is identified, which can range from concern for those students who demonstrate lower levels of performance but do show interest and have a positive attitude, to the rejection of students who demonstrate lower levels of performance and whose behaviour in the classroom is not appropriate (Gairín 1990), and, finally, to students who the teachers characterise as “problematic”. Consequently, retired teachers express the relevance of teachers’ acting with authority in their relations with these students. However, new and veteran teachers agree that it is essential to support these students.

Leaving aside the group of “problem” students, the attitudes expressed by teachers in relation to students with needs in general (due to social, cultural, economic, and family diversity, or due to different motivations, interests, and individual abilities) are positive, showing a clear concern for them. Therefore, we could situate these teachers in an attitude model based on concern for their students (Gairín 1990). This is reflected, in turn, in the perception that teachers have of their educational practice, given that, in general, they perceive that it must be adapted and adjusted to the needs of their students, although they do not specifically detail how to do so. Only some teachers emphasised that the teaching practice should help students, specifying that alternative tasks—which are different from the traditional ones—can facilitate engagement in the teaching and learning process.

## 5. Conclusions

In short, it can be concluded that these teachers incorporate pupils’ diversity into their discourse, understanding it as a circumstance inherent to human beings and mentioning the needs of all pupils, from special educational needs to the needs derived from the socio-educational and even evolutionary situation in which the pupils find themselves. In addition, in general, positive attitudes towards these students and good relations with them have been shown. However, more “cautious” attitudes are revealed towards those students with problematic behaviours who are in secondary education; although it is understood that this may affect teacher–student relationships, teachers do not see this as a limitation in their relationship with these students, but emphasise, on the contrary, the need to accompany them and consequently avoid the risk situations faced by students in a situation of vulnerability. From their discourse, we can perceive the beliefs and attitudes that are favourable to generating changes and improving, mainly, teaching–learning dynamics. All of this research allows us to confirm that teachers have assumed (in their beliefs)

the need to make the necessary adjustments to respond to the needs and realities of all students. In this sense, teachers have a solid and clear map of beliefs about students and the demands of inclusive education developed in a context of justice, democracy, and socio-educational equity. In this respect, and given that it is clear that inclusive education has been internalised in the teaching culture and in the reality of the classrooms of the Spanish education system, it is necessary to continue advancing along this path. The challenge to be met entails a real commitment to individualised teaching based on freedom, interest, motivation, and respect for each student (as unique individuals).

However, this belief map becomes blurred (more imprecise) when describing the concrete measures of adjustment to meet these social demands of inclusive education. In fact, most of the contributions collected from teachers shifted the focus of attention outside the educational context; that is, the causes they described would be personal, familial, social, etc. This leaves the school (and the teachers themselves) devoid of any responsibility and, therefore, of the capacity to act in order to provide an adequate response.

This study has enabled us to generate a first approximation of teachers' beliefs about the current educational reality of schools and their students and, consequently, about their teaching practice. Once it is clear that inclusive education has been internalised in the teaching culture and in the reality of the Spanish education system's classrooms, it is necessary to continue on this path. The challenge to be met entails a real commitment to individualised teaching based on freedom, interest, motivation, and respect for each student (as unique individuals). We must consider the shortcomings and particularities of students, offering them new ways to learn according to the pace and needs of each individual, for which we can find a great ally in ICT (Cuetos Revuelta et al. 2020). Thus, a future line of research can be assessed.

Thus, there is a need to continue to work on the transfer of this discourse (of justice and equity) to daily classroom practice, thereby providing teachers—on the part of the educational administration—with the necessary space, time, and resources to respond to this reality.

Finally, it is also necessary to highlight the need to promote studies that consider the voice of teachers as the most effective way to improve and innovate in the classroom, assuming that the true pedagogical transformation of education systems must take place in a twinned encounter between science (theory) and teaching practice. Only in this way (from a personal conviction) will it be possible to respond to the current demands of society and to the most imminent risks on the near horizon.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Organic Law 3/2020, of 29 December, which amends Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education. BOE no. 340, 30 December 2020, 122868-122953.
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