




## Article

# Secondary Education Teacher Training and Emotional Intelligence: Ingredients for Attention to Diversity in an Inclusive School for All

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**Abstract:** This study, which is part of a broader research project, aims to investigate the impact of the initial training received by students in the Master's Degree in Secondary Education and Baccalaureate, Vocational Training, and Language Teaching (MDSE) on their future teaching development in the current educational and social framework. The main goal is to understand their concerns, attitudes, and level of acquired competencies and knowledge for their professional development as inclusive teachers. Additionally, the study aims to explore the relationship between their assessments and experiences with the perceived level of Emotional Intelligence (EI), given its importance as a facilitating element, which is teachable from formal education, in socio-educational inclusion processes and quality attention to diversity in classrooms. A total of 218 MDSE students (Mage = 31.5; SD = 6; males = 33%; females = 67%) participated in the study, coming from various Spanish universities, and having either completed their studies or being in the final stages after having completed the generic module and practices in secondary education centers. The information was collected through the "Teacher Training in Secondary Education: Key Elements for Teaching in an Inclusive School for All" (TTSE-IN) questionnaire, which included five validated and relevant instruments, of which three were used for the study's purpose (Questionnaire for Future Secondary Education Teachers about Perceptions of Diversity Attention, Scale of Feelings, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education, Revised SACIE-R and Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale WLEIS-S). The main results indicate that future teachers show a positive attitude towards diversity but have significant training gaps. Additionally, the EI variable, along with regular contact with people in situations of special vulnerability and experience in teaching people in situations of special vulnerability in non-formal contexts, has a positive effect on both teacher well-being and the facilitation of inclusive education processes and diversity attention.



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## 1. Introduction

"Ensuring inclusive, equitable and quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all" [1] is one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the current Agenda 2030, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [2]. In fact, inclusive education is recognized as a right for all students in the current Organic Law of Education LOMLOE [3], having previously been recognized in the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by Spain in 2008, with a special focus on the most vulnerable under parameters of diversity. Toward those who face the greatest barriers to presence, participation, and development in the socio-educational context, the space par excellence for learning and socialization, and toward those who, as Arnaiz [4] notes, are more likely to fail, to be left on the margins of the educational system,

and to have their rights not guaranteed; the enjoyment of this right by the citizens is a basic principle of education.

Teacher training is a fundamental element highlighted by UNESCO, among other organizations, in the 48th International Conference on Education “Inclusive Education: Pathway to the Future.” It is necessary to train teachers for the acquisition of a culture of inclusion that contributes to the integral and comprehensive development of all individuals and provides welcome and well-being to all students from a perspective of quality and equity, and in educational institutions in a continuous process of improvement [5].

Furthermore, within this teacher training, it is vital to achieve the development of an attitude, a system of values and beliefs that are the basis for social transformation. In fact, according to the Profile of Competencies of Inclusive Teaching (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, EASNIE), a result of the project “Teacher Training for Inclusion” [6,7], the attitudes of future teachers towards inclusive education and attention to diversity are key aspects. These factors will influence the level of adaptation and directly impact students’ academic performance [8]. This is highly correlated with the level of training of the teacher to teach in contexts where diversity is the norm [9].

Alongside attitudes, research also highlights the role of Emotional Intelligence (EI) as a facilitator of socio-educational inclusion processes [10], by promoting the need to learn to live together among different students [11–14]. EI is described as a way of interacting with the world that takes into account feelings and includes skills necessary for social adaptation, such as impulse control, self-awareness, motivation, and empathy, the latter being an important aspect of EI. This allows us to know how other people feel, what they are thinking, understand the intentions of others, predict their behaviors, and understand their emotions. Empathy, likewise, allows us to interact effectively with the social world [15]; in school, it is a key factor that “allows us to get to know each of our students, with or without disabilities, to discover the most appropriate way to teach and attend to their particular needs” [16].

As we can see, the construct of EI encompasses individual differences in the abilities to perceive, use, understand, and regulate one’s own emotions and those of others [17]. The importance of EI in the educational context is not only given by its nature and impact on the inclusive school climate, but also by the benefits it provides, supported by a growing number of studies [18]. Additionally, it has a potential as a key personal resource that helps improve teacher well-being and performance [19] on a day-to-day basis in the classroom.

Teachers with higher perceived levels of EI, especially for regulating their emotional states, develop greater resilience to face the challenge of diversity in their classrooms and the setbacks or situations that may arise in this complex yet exciting educational landscape [20]. In this way, teachers are able to use higher levels of creativity, grow and develop personally and professionally, leading to greater enthusiasm and tendency to collaborate with the educational community in their work as inclusive teachers in today’s school, where participation is key [21]. It has also been shown that teachers with high EI will motivate their students more due to their greater enthusiasm for their work, having a great influence on students’ academic performance, providing better effectiveness results, and maintaining collaborative leadership styles among colleagues, as evidenced in the university context as well [22]. The Master’s Degree in Secondary Education and Baccalaureate Teacher, Vocational Training, and Language Teaching (MDSE) is framed within this field. Conversely, low levels of EI will be related to a lower perception of competence to face the day-to-day in the classroom [20,23], causing a greater number of concerns and possibly negative attitudes towards achieving current maximums [24].

Finally, recognizing the importance of learning to live together, as required by current educational and social policy, it becomes pertinent to address the inclusion processes. In conjunction with this, the personal training of the educational community, specifically future teachers and their training context, is essential for the development of EI. This approach can not only foster the development of a solid and protective foundation in teachers for building inclusive education together, but also provide opportunities for the

comprehensive development of girls, boys, and adolescents. As Bisquerra [12] highlights, this development encompasses cognitive, social, and affective-emotional areas, promoting social transformation through education for life.

In light of the above, understanding the concerns, attitudes, and level of competencies acquired by MDSE students regarding diversity and inclusive education, as well as their development of EI, is essential. This knowledge serves as a necessary step to identify potential barriers and facilitators in moving towards a “we” where hidden voices [25] are not only heard but also welcomed, visible, and valued with equal opportunities.

The main goal of this study is to comprehend the participants’ concerns, attitudes, and acquired competencies and knowledge for their professional development as inclusive teachers. Additionally, the study seeks to explore the relationship between their assessments and experiences with the perceived level of EI, considering its importance as a facilitating element in socio-educational inclusion processes and quality attention to diversity in classrooms. This is particularly relevant as EI can be taught through formal education, further enhancing its role as a catalyst for inclusive practices. Finally, some proposals will be collected for the improvement of training for the development of the inclusive teacher; the one who presents positive attitudes towards diversity, questions reality to transform it, and seeks alternatives that overcome inequalities [26].

## 2. Materials and Methods

In this study, an empirical-descriptive, quantitative, and cross-sectional research approach is adopted, utilizing a questionnaire as the primary instrument for data collection. In addition, a correlational study has been carried out on the perceptions of MUPES students, related to their attitude, concerns, and training towards attention to diversity for their development as inclusive teachers, assessing the influence and interaction of different variables with special relevance of Emotional Intelligence.

The Bioethics Committee of the University of Burgos approved the research, (Reference UBU 032/2021), respecting all the requirements established in the Helsinki Declaration of 1975.

### 2.1. Participants

A total 72 male and 146 female MDSE students participated in the study from 44 Spanish universities, including 31 public and 13 private institutions. These students had either completed their studies in any of the specialties of MDSE in the academic year 2021–2022 or taken the Generic Module of the Master and completed their practices in secondary education centers in the current academic year 2022–2023, being the only requirement for their inclusion. The mean age of the total sample was 31.5 years ( $SD = 6$ ), 31.2 for women and 32.3 for men.

### 2.2. Instrument

To collect the information, a 99-item questionnaire called “Teacher training in secondary education: key elements for teaching in an inclusive school for all (TTSE-IN)” was prepared. This instrument includes 5 questionnaires validated with Spanish samples. In the specific case of the research presented in this article, part of a broader investigation, the following instruments included in the overall questionnaire were used.

To measure students’ attitudes towards diversity and inclusive education, the level of competencies, skills, and abilities acquired in MDSE, their concerns and feelings, two questionnaires were used, whose statements were rated on a four-point Likert scale, 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

Questionnaire for Future Secondary Education Teachers about Perceptions of Diversity Attention (QFSTPDA) [27]. This questionnaire gathers information through 43 Likert-type response items, with high reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha), regarding Factor 1, conditioners of the diversity attention process in the classroom ( $\alpha = 0.959$ ); Factor 2, curricular and organizational response to diversity in the classroom ( $\alpha = 0.915$ ); Factor 3, teacher training

towards diversity ( $\alpha = 0.870$ ); Factor 4, formative teaching practice in diversity attention ( $\alpha = 0.906$ ); and Factor 5, teacher perception towards students with specific educational support needs ( $\alpha = 0.916$ ).

Scale of Feelings, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education, Revised (SACIE-R) [28]. This questionnaire is designed for practicing and trainee teachers and consists of 12 items with four Likert-type response options measuring, perception of inclusive education and the concept of students who have a place in it, feelings towards people with disabilities, and concerns about having different students in the classroom. In the Spanish version [29], its reliability was acceptable for students, according to Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha = 0.67$ ), which is similar to the original version ( $\alpha = 0.74$ ).

On the other hand, to measure the perception of the level of EI, the following scale has been used in different studies, among others, with the population under study [30].

Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS-S) [31]. The instrument consists of 16 items with a 7-point Likert scale and assesses the perceived level of EI. Studies on its factorial structure have found four factors, 1. evaluation of one's own emotions or intrapersonal perception (4 items); 2. evaluation of others' emotions or interpersonal perception (4 items); 3. use of emotions or assimilation (4 items); and 4. regulation of emotions. The reported internal consistency of each of them is 0.87, 0.90, 0.84, and 0.83, respectively. Note that this instrument also allows the use of a total EI score. In the Spanish version [32], the internal consistency of the total score is 0.92, while its different subscales range from 0.69 (intrapersonal perception) to 0.79 (emotional regulation). To correct the data provided by this instrument, the normative tables for women and men proposed in the Spanish version of the Wong and Law EI Scale have been used, categorizing the results into six levels from "very high" to "very low". Once the levels have been determined by sex, the overall data from the sample have been used in the data matrix as long as there were no statistically significant differences in the sex variable when relating the EI level data to the results of the other instruments used.

Finally, the TTSE-IN included an initial section to collect both sociodemographic data and data related to other variables, such as close and regular contact with vulnerable people under diversity parameters, motivation to pursue the MDSE, etc.

The questionnaire was prepared for online, anonymous, and voluntary completion and included a section for free contributions and comments. The questionnaire was made available online through the Google Forms platform. The survey was disseminated among Spanish universities by sending emails to the units responsible for MDSE and letters to students with a link to the questionnaire. Once the data were obtained, a matrix was created for its evaluation using the statistical program IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 25.

### 2.3. Statistical Analysis

In addition to the descriptive study of the obtained responses, the following procedures were used to analyze the data [33]. Firstly, a bivariate analysis was conducted using the Student's T-test to compare central tendencies in questionnaire responses when the comparison criterion consisted of two groups. This test was applied to the variables of sex (female vs. male), close and regular contact with people in situations of special vulnerability (yes vs. no), teaching experience with people in situations of special vulnerability in non-formal contexts (yes vs. no), and type of institution where the MDSE is studied (public vs. private).

Secondly, statistical analyses were carried out using ANOVA to compare central tendencies when the comparison criteria consisted of more than two groups, and post hoc DMS analyses were used to identify the nature of statistically significant differences between groups.

### 3. Results

A total of 218 MDSE students participated in the study, coming from various Spanish universities, and having either completed their studies or being in the final stages after having completed the generic module and practices in secondary education centers. As shown in Table 1, the majority of participants are evenly distributed between those who pursue the MDSE out of vocation (43.1%) and those who do so for the motivation of accessing stable employment (43.6%). Regarding university ownership, the sample is more extensive for public universities (58.7%) than for private universities (41.3%). Note that 34.4% of the sample maintains regular and close contact with people in situations of special vulnerability, and 29.9% have experience teaching vulnerable people in non-formal contexts. Table 1 provides a more detailed description of the general characteristics of the participants in the study.

**Table 1.** General characteristics of the sample.

Study Variables	N	%	
Age	25 years old or younger	56	25.7
	Between 26 and 30 years old	58	26.6
	31 years old or older	104	47.7
Gender	Female	146	67
	Male	72	33
	Vocation	94	43.1
Motivation to study the MDSE	Possibility of finding a stable job	95	43.6
	For not having a better option at the end of my career	9	4.1
	Influenced by teacher who has influenced me in my education	10	4.6
	Due to the influence of a family member who is or has been a teacher	10	4.6
Area of knowledge of higher studies of access to MDSE	Health sciences	7	3.2
	Science	32	14.7
	Engineering and Architecture	47	21.6
	Social and Legal Sciences	64	29.4
Close and regular contact with people in situations of special vulnerability	Arts and Humanities	68	31.2
	Yes	75	34.4
Experience in teaching people in situations of special vulnerability in non-formal contexts	No	143	65.6
	Yes	64	29.9
Institution where they have studies the MDSE	No	154	70.6
	Public	128	58.7
Ownership of the participating Universities	Private	90	41.3
	Public	31	70.5
	Private	13	29.5

Next, we present the results related to the perception of MDSE students regarding attention to diversity, as well as the level of acquired competences and knowledge for inclusive teaching. Additionally, this study will evaluate teachers' attitudes, feelings, and concerns regarding the challenge of diversity in classrooms. Moreover, it will demonstrate the relationship between these factors and the main grouping variables analyzed, particularly the perceived EI, in order to comprehend its impact on learning development in the MDSE and attitudes towards inclusive education and its development.

#### 3.1. Questionnaire for Future Secondary Education Teachers about Perceptions of Diversity Attention (QFSTPDA)

In Factor 1, Conditioning Elements of the Diversity Attention Process in the Classroom (see Table 2), future teachers show a high level of agreement on the basic pieces that make up a quality teaching and learning process in inclusive classrooms. The item analysis (see Table 3) highlights the level of agreement shown towards proposals related to the



participatory dimension of processes for the development of inclusive education, referring to the policies of relationship and collaboration in educational centers and between these and the educational community. The most significant items are shown.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics QFSTPDA factors.

QFSTPDA Factors	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
F1. Conditioning elements of the process of attention to diversity in the classroom	1.59	2.41	4.00	3.67	0.266
F2. Curricular and organizational response to diversity in the classroom	3.00	1.00	4.00	2.28	0.773
F3. Teacher training for diversity	3.00	1.00	4.00	2.31	0.727
F4. Formative teaching practice in the attention to diversity	2.80	1.20	4.00	2.33	0.530
F5. Teacher perception towards students with specific educational support needs in the school context	2.50	1.50	4.00	2.69	0.539

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics—Item selection Factor 1 QFSTPDA.

Items	Mean	SD
It is the school's duty to cater for all pupils	3.89	0.333
Attention to diversity must play an important role in my future teaching practice	3.78	0.480
The attitude of the family influences the quality of education of pupils with students with specific educational support needs	3.75	0.495
I consider the work of the Guidance Department to be fundamental in responding to the educational needs of pupils	3.79	0.561
Attention to students with specific educational support needs is the responsibility of all teachers	3.76	0.541
In order to provide better attention to diversity, it is necessary to work collaboratively among all the professionals in the educational centre	3.87	0.391
A quality process of attention to diversity requires: Motivation or professional interest on the part of the teacher	3.85	0.407
A quality process of attention to diversity requires: Coordination among the teaching staff	3.88	0.365

In terms of the main grouping variables analyzed, statistically significant differences have been found between groups, showing greater agreement with the statements from female participants ( $t = 3.265$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ), those who have regular contact with people in special vulnerable situations ( $t = 2.397$ ;  $p = 0.017$ ), and those with a high overall level of EI ( $F = 2.293$ ;  $p = 0.047$ ). In the latter group, statistically significant differences appear between people with a high or very high level of EI versus those with a very low level ( $p = 0.023$  and  $p = 0.003$ , respectively), and between people with a very high level of EI versus those with a medium-high level ( $p = 0.022$ ).

In Factor 2, Curricular and Organizational Response to Diversity in the Classroom (Table 2), the results show negative evaluations overall, and in all aspects, regarding the level of training acquired in the MDSE to meet the educational needs of students in the classroom in the near future. The evaluations of the items shown in Table 4 stand out for their importance in the Universal Design for Learning of classroom programs and for the success and quality of teaching.

**Table 4.** Descriptive statistics—Item selection Factor 2 QFSTPDA.

Items	Mean	SD
I consider that my training on attention to diversity is adequate with respect to: Methodological strategies	2.29	0.882
I consider that my training on attention to diversity is adequate with respect to: Measures and programmes of attention to diversity	2.23	0.888
I consider my training on attention to diversity to be adequate in relation to: Selection and adaptation of objectives, competences and contents	2.22	0.884
I consider that my training in diversity is adequate in relation to: Selection, design and practice of activities and tasks	2.30	0.915
I consider that my training on attention to diversity is adequate with respect to: Assessment of the teaching and learning process	2.30	0.864

Statistically significant differences have been found in the variable of type of institution where the MDSE was studied, with individuals who studied at public universities showing a more negative evaluation of the training received ( $t = -3.972$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). There are also statistically significant differences in the variable of experience in teaching people in situations of special vulnerability in non-formal contexts ( $t = 2.009$ ;  $p = 0.046$ ), and in the group of individuals who maintain close and regular contact with people in situations of special vulnerability ( $t = 2.484$ ;  $p = 0.014$ ).

In Factor 3 Teacher training towards diversity (see Table 2), there are again statistically significant differences in the variable of type of MDSE institution, with students from public universities being evaluated as less well-equipped in the field of attention to diversity and special education ( $t = -3.040$ ;  $p = 0.003$ ).

Additionally, in this training, EI seems to have a relevant influence; the results show statistically significant differences in the variables total EI ( $F = 4.494$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), Emotional regulation ( $F = 2.571$ ,  $p = 0.028$ ), and Emotional assimilation ( $F = 2.780$ ,  $p = 0.019$ ), with a higher level in these variables being related to a higher score in this factor and, therefore, better teacher training towards diversity. As for the differences between EI levels, they occur between very high and high levels compared to very low level ( $p = 0.028$  and  $p = 0.004$ , respectively) and between people with high level compared to those with medium-low and medium-high level ( $p = 0.001$  in both cases).

The evaluations of the sample on certain basic items for adequate attention to diversity (Table 5), the identification of barriers to learning, and the design of inclusive educational processes stand out.

**Table 5.** Descriptive statistics—Item Selection Factor 3 QFSTPDA.

Items	Mean	SD
In the Master's degree I am studying, I have acquired sufficient knowledge about attention to diversity	1.92	0.925
After taking the generic module of the Master's Degree, I consider that I have adequate knowledge of: Characteristics of students with educational needs	2.11	0.951
After taking the generic module of the Master's Degree, I consider that I have adequate knowledge of: Legislation on attention to diversity	1.98	0.895
After taking the generic module of the Master's Degree, I consider that I have adequate knowledge of: Identification of educational needs in students.	2.19	0.883

The results in Factor 4 Training in Inclusive Teaching Practice (Table 6) show us how future teachers largely believe that the training they receive will not have a great impact on their future inclusive teaching practice.

**Table 6.** Descriptive statistics—Item Selection Factor 4 QFSTPDA.

Items	Mean	SD
A high-quality diversity attention process requires previous experience with students with educational needs.	3.17	0.750
From the education system, appropriate services and resources are provided to meet the needs of students	1.63	0.764

Statistically significant differences appear again between students enrolled in the MDSE program at public or private universities ( $t = -2.743$ ;  $p = 0.007$ ), with the latter presenting a more positive evaluation of the impact of the training on their future work.

In Factor 5 Teacher Perception Towards Students with Specific Educational Support Needs in the School Context (Table 2), the data show relatively positive attitudes towards these students. The item with the highest agreement among future teachers is “Working with students with specific educational support needs is an added workload for teachers” ( $M = 3.22$ ;  $SD = 0.788$ ); in this factor, a higher score indicates a more negative attitude to-wards diversity in the classroom.

### 3.2. Feelings, Attitudes and Concerns about Inclusive Education Scale, Revised (SACIE-R)

In Factor 1 Attitudes (Table 7), the sample shows a positive attitude towards inclusive education, agreeing with the inclusion of students with special educational needs. Among the analyzed grouping variables, statistically significant differences appear between groups in the sex variable, with a better attitude in the female group ( $t = 2.915$ ;  $p = 0.004$ ) (Table 8). Regarding the relationship of this factor with EI, statistically significant differences appear between groups in the levels of total EI ( $F = 2.429$ ;  $p = 0.036$ ) (Table 9), and especially in the area of emotional regulation ( $F = 3.134$ ;  $p = 0.009$ ) (Table 10). According to the post hoc DMS test, those who have medium-high, high, and very high levels of EI have a better attitude compared to those with a medium-low level (significance  $p = 0.030$ ,  $p = 0.003$ , and  $p = 0.041$ , respectively), and those with a high level of emotional regulation compared to those with a very low ( $p = 0.013$ ) or low level ( $p = 0.002$ ).

**Table 7.** Descriptive statistics SACIE-R Factors.

SACIE-R Factors	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
F1. Attitudes	2.80	1.20	4.00	3.15	0.611
F2. Feelings	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.40	0.558
F3. Concerns	2.75	1.25	4.00	2.91	0.684

**Table 8.** Gender differences SACIE-R Factors.

SACIE-R factors	Gender	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
F1. Attitudes	Female	146	3.24	0.582	2.915	0.004
	Male	72	2.98	0.636		

Regarding Factor 2, Feelings towards people with disabilities, future teachers (Table 6) show appropriate feelings. The level of Interpersonal Intelligence appears as a relevant variable, closely related to empathy, presenting statistically significant differences between groups ( $F = 3.505$ ;  $p = 0.005$ ) (Table 11) and associating higher levels with more positive feelings and, therefore, lower scores in this factor; significant differences between people who have a low level of Interpersonal Intelligence compared to those who have a medium-high ( $p = 0.002$ ), high ( $p = 0.001$ ), and very high (0.034) level, according to the post hoc DMS test.



**Table 9.** Differences between SACIE-R Factors and Emotional Intelligence using ANOVA.

SACIE-R Factors	Level of EI	N	Mean	SD	F	p
F1. Attitudes	Very low	5	2.76	0.536	2.429	0.036
	Low	15	3.09	0.500		
	Medium-low	46	2.93	0.554		
	Medium-high	46	3.20	0.629		
	High	80	3.26	0.614		
	Very high	26	3.23	0.647		
F3. Concerns	Total	218	3.15	0.611	3.813	0.003
	Very low	5	3.25	0.467		
	Low	15	3.31	0.530		
	Medium-low	46	3.08	0.529		
	Medium-high	46	2.97	0.614		
	High	80	2.69	0.735		
	Very high	26	2.88	0.800		
Total	218	2.91	0.684			

**Table 10.** Differences between SACIE-R Factors and Emotional Regulation using ANOVA.

SACIE-R Factors	Emotional Regulation	N	Mean	SD	F	p
F1. Attitudes	Very low	3	2.46	0.305	3.134	0.009
	Low	28	2.92	0.651		
	Medium-low	40	3.17	0.435		
	Medium-high	63	3.08	0.663		
	High	57	3.34	0.586		
	Very high	27	3.23	0.615		
F3. Concerns	Total	218	3.15	0.611	2.413	0.037
	Very low	3	3.41	0.803		
	Low	28	3.18	0.546		
	Medium-low	40	3.03	0.544		
	Medium-high	63	2.88	0.661		
	High	57	2.74	0.779		
	Very high	27	2.81	0.735		
Total	218	2.91	0.684			

**Table 11.** Differences between SACIE-R Factors and Interpersonal Intelligence using ANOVA.

SACIE-R Factors	Interpersonal Intelligence	N	Mean	SD	F	p
F2. Feelings	Very low	3	1.22	0.192	3.505	0.005
	Low	19	1.77	0.598		
	Medium-Low	37	1.59	0.572		
	Medium-High	60	1.33	0.506		
	High	77	1.29	0.482		
	Very High	22	1.40	0.734		
F3. Concerns	Total	218	1.40	0.558	3.265	0.007
	Very low	7	3.25	0.500		
	Low	34	3.18	0.497		
	Medium-Low	31	2.99	0.687		
	Medium-High	57	2.96	0.622		
	High	53	2.66	0.697		
	Very High	36	2.82	0.819		
Total	218	2.91	0.684			

Finally, in Factor 3 Concerns about having different students in the classroom (Table 6), future teachers show greater concern in those items related to teacher training to face the challenge of diversity in the classroom, such as “I consider it difficult to provide adequate

attention to all students in a classroom" ( $M = 3.43$ ;  $SD = 0.732$ ) and "I am concerned about not having the necessary knowledge and skills to teach students with disabilities" ( $M = 3.30$ ;  $SD = 0.867$ ). The variables of experience in training in non-formal contexts for people in special vulnerability situations ( $t = -2.080$ ;  $p = 0.039$ ), motivation to study MDSE ( $F = 2.958$ ;  $p = 0.021$ ), and Total EI ( $F = 3.813$ ;  $p = 0.003$ ) (Table 9), and regarding the areas of Emotional Regulation ( $F = 2.413$ ;  $p = 0.037$ ) (Table 10) and Intrapersonal Intelligence ( $F = 3.265$ ;  $p = 0.007$ ) (Table 11), appear to modulate and directly influence the level of concerns, showing statistically significant differences between groups; not having previous experience and studying MDSE for "not having a better way out of my studies" or "for the possibility of having a stable job" compared to studying it for "vocation" ( $p = 0.035$  and  $p = 0.002$ , respectively) seem to be variables related to greater concerns and, therefore, less adjustment or well-being in future teachers, with those who study out of vocation presenting a lower level of concerns and, therefore, lower scores in this factor.

Regarding the differences between groups according to the post hoc DMS test, in EI there are statistically significant differences between people with a low level of Total EI compared to those with a high level ( $p = 0.001$ ) and between those who have a medium-low and high level ( $p = 0.002$ ), with a higher score in this factor and higher levels of concern among people with low and medium-low levels of EI. Regarding Emotional Regulation, differences between groups are significant between low and high ( $p = 0.004$ ) and very high ( $p = 0.041$ ) levels.

### 3.3. Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS-S)

In this test, which evaluates the perceived level of EI, the results (Table 12) show a medium-high total EI level (level 4 out of 6) in both men ( $M = 4.01$ ;  $SD = 1.216$ ) and women ( $M = 4.27$ ;  $SD = 1.229$ ), with Emotional Assimilation (use of emotions) being the element in which the sample as a whole presents a medium-low level ( $M = 3.84$ ;  $SD = 1.265$ ). This level is also presented by the men who participated in this study in the Emotional Regulation dimension ( $M = 3.92$ ;  $SD = 1.219$ ). Despite women scoring higher in Total EI, the differences between groups are not significant.

**Table 12.** Descriptive statistics WLEIS-S Scale—Level of Emotional Intelligence.

	Total Mean	Female Mean	Male Mean
Interpersonal perception	4.17	4.25	4.01
Intrapersonal perception	4.02	4.03	4.00
Emotional assimilation	3.84	3.92	3.67
Emotional regulation	4.03	4.08	3.92
Total Emotional Intelligence	4.19	4.27	4.01

## 4. Discussion

The primary aims of this study were to understand the participants' concerns, attitudes, and acquired competencies and knowledge for their professional development as inclusive teachers, as well as to explore the relationship between their assessments and experiences with the perceived level of EI. This is particularly relevant given EI's importance as a facilitating element in socio-educational inclusion processes and quality attention to diversity in classrooms, which can be taught through formal education, enhancing its role as a catalyst for inclusive practices.

In general, the sample demonstrates a positive attitude towards attention to diversity, recognizing the right to inclusive education for all students in secondary education. Participants place special importance on collaborative work among teachers and with the community, reflecting one of the values of the inclusive teacher profile [7], the participation of the educational community from the perspective of equity ecology [34,35]. This approach, which has a greater impact on student learning [36], is related to organizational

measures in the school, such as Learning Communities [37] and Shared Teaching [38,39], among other models, which have a great impact on teacher development and student success in inclusive classrooms.

These data on the attitudes of future teachers are important regarding positive attitudes, as they play a key role in the success of inclusive education for students with educational needs [40]. In addition, within the analysis of the model for the development of the inclusive teacher profile of EASNIE [7,41], it is pointed out that despite the relevance of knowledge and skills, attitudes are transcendent. If there are no attitudes, there is no inclusion. However, the sample also reveals data showing the perception of an added workload or burden for novice teachers. This indicates the need to improve their training and perception of self-efficacy. If not positive, and despite showing a positive attitude as a basis, daily work can generate a change in this attitude due to frustration or weariness in what the sample perceives as an “extra” in their work. Therefore, as Moliner and Moliner [42] point out, perhaps we are facing a positive attitude at a conceptual level, but not a mobilizing attitude that, from a critical vision of the socio-educational reality and with great motivation, leads to the search for different ways for everyone to “be able to”. In addition, this motivation factor is something about which the sample has no doubt, showing, for the most part, agreement on its necessity to develop inclusive processes. Perhaps motivation and partly positive attitudes towards attention to diversity can be the driving force for their professional development as inclusive teachers [43].

Regarding training for inclusive teaching and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) [44], the sample does not feel prepared. The lowest ratings have focused on day-to-day issues in the classroom, such as selecting and personalizing objectives, competencies, and content; how to develop learning situations, adapt teaching materials, and assess students, among others; and the development of measures and programs for addressing diversity. They do not feel competent in developing methodological strategies, showing a lack of knowledge about the concept of diversity, student characteristics, identifying barriers to learning, etc. Overall, the sample does not feel a positive impact from the MDSE training in this area, showing a negative view of the quality of the training received in line with other studies [45,46].

These results are also related to those already raised by authors, such as Boix [45], which reveal how the future secondary teacher has little knowledge about diversity in the classroom and the factors related to its success, such as methodological competencies. Developing inclusive practices through methodology is the weak point for future teachers in this and other studies [47]. Therefore, it is a priority to provide responses to these barriers through initial and continuous training.

Additionally, it is worth noting that, despite the attitude and feelings presented by the sample towards the most vulnerable students in the education system, the concerns of future teachers regarding diversity embodied in the classroom are high. As mentioned before, these concerns are related to the feeling of general lack of preparation both to teach students with disabilities and to provide adequate attention to all students in a classroom. We must take these data into account, as Yada et al. [48,49] point out that positive and appropriate feelings are usually not enough to determine a firm attitude towards the implementation of inclusive policies, especially when they are accompanied by concerns that tend to affect the ability to teach and manage problem behaviors in the classroom. It is important to reach a point where, through initial training, future teachers present a lower level of concerns, by training them in those elements that they demand and that have been identified in this and other studies. This will help them to have a more positive attitude, a higher degree of self-efficacy, as well as a greater intention to develop inclusive practices [50].

We cannot ignore that, in this study, 80% of those surveyed believe that prior experience with students with educational needs is required to carry out a quality process of attention to diversity, perhaps making this aspect a priority to consider in the development of competencies and the design of practices for future secondary school teachers. As nu-

merous studies suggest [51], it is essential not only to understand the needs of the teaching staff but also to train them through a practicum period that offers competence in the actual context in which they will work. Additionally, it is crucial to consider important aspects, such as the selection of practicum centers, prioritizing those that implement innovative and inclusive didactic, organizational, and guidance experiences, to prevent socializing future teachers in traditional teaching methods that are distant from contemporary schools and their objectives [52].

Lastly, what differentiates people in the sample who feel more prepared for inclusive teaching and who have a more favorable attitude towards diversity attention in the classroom? Additionally, what role does EI play?

Among the variables that have the most impact on the results, we find the following.

The regular and close contact with people in situations of special vulnerability. This contact with disability is one of the most important variables found in other studies [53]; due to its influence on attitudes and perception about inclusion. However, we must not forget Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory [54], which indicated that not all contact favors attitude change, but that the nature of the contact between two groups determines the social acceptance or rejection of the vulnerable group. Additionally, since attitudes are gradually learned through experience, it may be relevant for future teachers to not only increase their contact with diverse people and different types of educational needs but also to be trained practically to generate positive experiences regarding diversity attention.

It is also worth noting that the variable of having experience in non-formal teaching for individuals in situations of special vulnerability positively impacts the training for developing curricular and organizational responses in inclusive school settings. Additionally, this experience influences the perception of effectiveness and satisfaction with the training received in the MDSE for teacher preparation towards diversity. Additionally, the group that had previous experience in the sample group showed the lowest level of concerns, with this variable emerging as a protective factor for teacher well-being.

Regarding the EI variable, the results show that its total score, as well as within the dimensions of Intrapersonal Perception and Emotional Regulation, is directly related to a lower number of concerns about having diverse students in the classroom. It is noteworthy how the dimension of EI most related to empathy, Interpersonal Perception, is directly related to more positive feelings towards individuals with educational needs of any type and disability. Likewise, emotional regulation appears to be crucial in the sample when presenting a more positive attitude towards inclusive education and attention to diversity. Perhaps these data are linked to what indicates a better attitude in the women's group of the sample, since it is in this dimension of emotional regulation where men present a lower level of competence.

In the sample, considering EI as a total score has a positive impact on the dimensions of knowledge and ability to develop inclusive methodologies, instruction, and evaluation, as well as participation in community and collaborative work. Furthermore, it aligns more closely with the elements that influence the quality process of attention to diversity in the classroom and the perception of teacher training towards diversity. The last dimension mentioned is noteworthy, as the positive impact is not limited to the total EI score, but the relationship is also significant within the dimensions of emotional regulation and emotional assimilation. It seems that, as already mentioned in the introduction of this article, EI is a key factor that "allows us to get to know each of our students, with or without disabilities, to discover the most appropriate way to teach and attend to their particular needs" [16].

It is undoubtable, through this and other investigations, that there is a need to promote the personal and professional development of teachers [7], to have professionals with a high degree of EI, as highlighted by Palomera et al. [55], emphasizing the importance of the development of emotional competencies in the initial training of future teachers. Furthermore, the need to improve EI has been evidenced both through different impactful publications, such as EI in Educational Environments; Scientific Evidence [56], related to the study sample, as well as through recent programs for its promotion, such as the "Growing

Program” for the development of EI competencies in novice secondary teachers within initial training [57].

In addition, Salvador C. [58] states that through different studies, the possible relationship between EI and self-efficacy levels has been highlighted, taking EI as a predictive basis for this variable. It is deduced that EI will serve to generate higher self-efficacy since a person with high EI manages and evaluates their emotions appropriately, experiencing greater confidence and control over their actions, and, therefore, better self-efficacy beliefs [59].

A final aspect to highlight, which requires a more extensive analysis with a more representative sample, is the variable of studying MDSE in a public or private university. Regarding the evaluation of the training received for the inclusive curricular and organizational response, for attention to diversity, and on the impact, they foresee of the training received on their development as inclusive teachers, those students who have studied MDSE in a private university present a greater perception of adjustment, validity, and usefulness of the training received. Significant differences also appear in this latter group regarding greater agreement on the importance of the participation of the educational community and collaborative work for the development of quality inclusive education and attention to diversity in classrooms.

As for the limitations found in the development of this study, we understand that, as in any self-report questionnaire, social desirability is a factor that we must take into account for the interpretation of the data since it can compromise their reliability. In this aspect, we consider it positive to continue the research by expanding the sample and incorporating open-ended questions or issues that help to exemplify the future teachers’ visions to obtain more valuable results for the realization of useful and more adjusted proposals.

## 5. Conclusions

As a first conclusion in this study, we can determine that positive attitudes and feelings towards inclusive education, attention to diversity, and students with disabilities are not sufficient. The concerns expressed by future teachers, the perceived low impact of the training received for their professional development as inclusive educators, and shortcomings in knowledge about diversity are barriers to overcome for them to feel capable of facing the change of inclusion in the classroom and staying motivated and resilient on the path already started. Nonetheless, the sample demonstrates an interest in learning about diversity in all its dimensions, as well as a participatory and collaborative perspective on education as a process.

Furthermore, acquiring knowledge of and coexisting with vulnerable individuals under diversity parameters is also crucial for eliminating stereotypes, recognizing them in the context of fostering positive classroom interactions, and implementing UDL through a design in which all students matter and are treated equally [60].

This study has also shown its effectiveness in developing more positive attitudes, reducing level of concern, improving training in diversity, and promoting the development of inclusive methodologies and practices in the classroom, all of which serve as protective factors for teacher well-being.

Thirdly, EI serves as a critical element in developing a high-quality process for attending to diversity in classrooms, which would facilitate a heightened sense of security by promoting positive connections with others, and oneself, emotional regulation, and prevention of negative emotional states and concerns prevalent in many teachers’ daily lives. Therefore, we deem it essential to formally introduce EI into the curriculum of the MDSE.

As a final conclusion, we believe it is relevant to empower those future teachers who attend the Master’s program out of vocation, as a lever for the transformation and continuous development of education, and to expand research on the analysis of teaching processes in both public and private universities in order to adjust and enrich the training processes with the most impactful educational approaches, policies, and practices for the training of future teachers in our country.



Regarding the limitations found in the development of this study, we understand that, as with any self-report questionnaire, social desirability is a factor that we must take into account for the interpretation of the data, as it can compromise their reliability. In this regard, we consider it positive to continue the research by expanding the sample and incorporating open-ended questions or issues that help to exemplify the future teachers' views to obtain more valuable results for the development of useful and more accurate proposals. The sample size is also a limitation, so the intention is to increase it to serve a better and greater understanding of the studied reality, for which it is necessary to raise awareness and involve the MDSE students in the importance of their participation for the improvement of the education system.

As practical implications of this research, the conclusions allow for decision-making in the implementation of future proposals in the MDSE, such as (1) promoting periodic systems of communication and assessment of training needs, jointly taking into account the assessment of the needs of active teachers for the updating and continuous improvement of initial training; (2) assessing the inclusion of training needs for attention to diversity in the identified areas, both in this and other studies, for the approach to the teaching and learning process in the training structure of the MDSE; (3) encouraging the regulated introduction of EI in the training of the MDSE as a necessary complement to the technical training of future teachers; (4) taking into account in the Practicum the selection of schools, considering the criteria recommended by research in this area, for the advancement of the principles of inclusion and educational innovation; (5) facilitating the contact of future teachers with the most vulnerable students under diversity parameters through collaborative participation and development of Service-Learning Projects (SLP) within the subjects of the MDSE, and previously in the degrees, which promote the opportunity to live small community experiences both focused on training and on the transmission of knowledge as social agents of change. The University Network Association for Service-Learning—ApS (U) is a great opportunity for this purpose due to its experience, great value, and representativeness in the university space; and (6) making visible the work of teachers and their short-, medium-, and long-term impact on individuals and on the transformation and improvement of society through studies and campaigns aimed at this goal.

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