

Barriers to Learning and Participation: Case Study of a University Student with High-Functioning Autism

Barreras para el aprendizaje y la participación: Estudio de caso de un estudiante universitario con autismo de alto funcionamiento

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Abstract

This paper presents a case study of a university student diagnosed with high-functioning autism spectrum disorder (high-functioning ASD) to promote his inclusion in the classroom. The objective was to identify and analyze the barriers to learning and participation and propose strategies to support his integration. The participant was enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts in English Language Teaching (B.A. in ELT) at the Autonomous University of Chiapas. The focus was primarily on his social skills, as these were believed to influence his academic performance and interaction with others in the classroom. Providing him with the necessary support after identifying the barriers he faced in his environment was essential. This study followed a qualitative research paradigm, utilizing four research instruments: an interview, a checklist, the teacher's diary, and the student's diary. The main barriers identified were emotional challenges, such as anxiety and depression, which impacted the participant's ability to concentrate, participate in learning activities and engage with peers. Additionally, bullying and discrimination were significant barriers, contributing to a hostile environment that hindered learning and discouraged participation. Methodological barriers, including an inflexible curriculum and lack of individualized support, were also observed. It was concluded that addressing these barriers through tailored strategies, teacher training, and increasing awareness of inclusive practices is critical for fostering an inclusive educational environment. Furthermore, it is essential for universities to support high-functioning ASD students by providing academic accommodations and creating a safe and inclusive space for their academic and social development.

Keywords

BLP, High-functioning ASD, Inclusion, University students with exceptional needs.

Resumen

Se presenta un estudio de caso de un estudiante universitario diagnosticado con trastorno del espectro autista de alto funcionamiento (TEA de alto funcionamiento) para fomentar su inclusión en el aula. El objetivo del trabajo fue identificar y analizar las barreras para el aprendizaje y la participación, además de proponer estrategias para apoyar su integración. El participante pertenece a la Licenciatura en Enseñanza del Idioma Inglés (LEII) en la Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas, México. El estudio se centró principalmente en sus habilidades sociales, al considerarse que estas podían influir en su desempeño académico y su interacción con los demás en el aula. La investigación siguió un paradigma cualitativo y utilizó cuatro instrumentos de recolección de datos: entrevista, lista de verificación, diario del docente y diario del estudiante. Las principales barreras identificadas fueron desafíos emocionales, como la ansiedad y la depresión, que afectaban su capacidad de concentración, participación en las actividades de aprendizaje e interacción con sus compañeros. Además, el acoso y la discriminación constituyeron barreras significativas, al crear un ambiente hostil que obstaculizaba el aprendizaje y desalentaba la participación. También se observaron barreras metodológicas, como un currículo inflexible y la falta de apoyo individualizado. Se concluye que abordar estas barreras mediante estrategias personalizadas, capacitación docente y mayor sensibilización sobre prácticas inclusivas es fundamental para fomentar un entorno educativo inclusivo. Es esencial que las universidades respalden a los estudiantes con TEA de alto funcionamiento, ofreciendo adaptaciones académicas y creando un espacio seguro e inclusivo para su desarrollo académico y social.

Palabras clave

BLP, Estudiantes universitarios con necesidades excepcionales, Inclusión, TEA de alto funcionamiento.

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Introduction

The percentage of school and university students in México with functional diversity (or disabilities) who are English language learners (ELLs) has likely risen in recent years. English teachers are, therefore, required to be trained in inclusive classroom practices to foster welcoming and inclusive environments. Identifying students' needs and implementing strategies to reduce barriers to learning and participation are crucial steps in supporting all students, regardless of their specific needs.

One of the conditions affecting students with exceptional needs is Asperger's Syndrome (AS) "which is classified within the autism spectrum disorder (ASD). It is often referred to as High Functioning Autism (HFA), distinguished by severity levels that assess intellectual competence and verbal functioning" (González & Valdivieso, 2014, p. 12). Historically, high-functioning ASD was previously known as Asperger's (Serrano-Barajas, 2022) a term derived from the pediatrician Hans Asperger, who diagnosed four children exhibiting these characteristics. The term was introduced in 1981 by Lorna Wing, who proposed "the Triad of Wing", a triad of behaviors associated with the condition (Milán, 2017). In 1994 this term was accepted and registered in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV). However, the term Asperger's Syndrome has since been replaced by high-functioning autism spectrum disorder (ASD) for several reasons, including its controversial historical association with Hans Asperger as a Nazi-era pediatrician, as well as the recognition by DSM authors that Asperger's is part of the autism condition spectrum. While some people still use the term Asperger's, this research will exclusively refer to it as high-functioning ASD for clarity and consistency.

In Mexico, laws promoting inclusion have been enacted to provide greater protection for people with disabilities, particularly in terms of medical support. Government regulations now require all educational levels, including higher education, to offer students equitable opportunities for education and support. The National Program for the Development and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (CONADIS, 2014) aims to ensure the effective enforcement of the rights of persons with disabilities while fostering their integral development. This includes their inclusion in the labor market and social dynamics. Additionally, it involves promoting strategies—supported by media outlets and civil society organizations—that aim to transform the current exclusionary and discriminatory cultural practices into ones that embrace tolerance and diversity.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (2018), young adults with this disorder are more likely to develop stronger communication skills if they receive an early diagnosis combined with continuous psychological and psycho-pedagogical support throughout their lives, compared to those diagnosed later in adulthood. Unfortunately, this condition is sometimes misdiagnosed as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or goes entirely undiagnosed, which complicates their ability to interact with others and, therefore, hinders their integration into society.

In this regard, this study is based on qualitative research aimed at understanding the needs of students diagnosed with high-functioning ASD and identifying the barriers they face. The goal is to propose strategies to reduce these barriers and raise awareness within the university community to better support these students. It is important to review the teaching methods, attitudes, and activities that can be used in the classroom to foster inclusion so that students feel more comfortable within the university and can strengthen their overall skills. Nevertheless, are university professors adequately equipped for these changes in their classrooms? Are they prepared to teach students with disabilities? Do educational institutions have the necessary equipment, conditions, and facilities to fully include all students?

This work is based on part of the outcomes from the research project *Academic and Emotional Accompaniment of a University Language Student Facing Barriers to Learning and Participation in the Classroom in Chiapas, Mexico*, to earn the English Language Teaching Bachelor degree. It is important to note that there is an ongoing debate regarding the use of the terms "disability" and "functional diversity". However, following the perspective of the social model of disability and its variation, the functional diversity model, this study replaces the term "disability" with "functional diversity." This is because, according to the social model, the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities are seen as barriers imposed by society (Palacios & Románach, 2006 in Garay & Carhuancho, 2019).

As discussed above, many changes have been made in the laws protecting individuals against discrimination and fostering the inclusion of students with disabilities in educational institutions. This has led to an increasing number of students with functional diversity being accepted in primary and secondary education, as well as in higher education. Therefore, it is essential to plan and develop training programs for language teachers to improve their inclusive practices and address the specific needs of these students, providing them with the necessary support in the classroom. Inclusion requires collaboration from all members of society; above all, the school environment must offer ample opportunities to help students feel safe and build their self-confidence. All of this requires teachers and professors to make adjustments and accommodations that facilitate both their learning process and their social and communication skills. In other words, educators must work to reduce the barriers to learning and participation that students with functional diversity may face in their academic context.

The objective of the study was to identify the barriers to learning and participation faced by students with high-functioning ASD in the university setting to propose strategies and activities to promote the inclusion of students with grade 1 ASD (high functioning) by providing support during their university studies.

Theoretical framework

High-functioning autism (HFA) is a term used to describe individuals on the autism spectrum, or those diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), who have average or above-average intelligence and good verbal skills but still experience challenges related to social interaction, communication and behavior. Therefore, HFA is considered a subtype of ASD, characterized by relatively mild symptoms compared to other forms of autism (Special Olympics Arizona, 2024).

High-functioning ASD was officially recognized by the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) in 2013, after the term Asperger Syndrome was removed. According to the DSM-5, all individuals with autism are now diagnosed under the umbrella term autism spectrum disorder (ASD). From the medical perspective, high-functioning autism is considered a disability, whereas, from the social model, it is regarded as functional diversity.

Additionally, the organization People with Disability Australia (PWDA, 2010) asserts the following:

From the medical model, a person with a disability needs to be fixed or cured. From this point of view, disability is a tragedy and people with disability are to be pitied. The medical model of disability focuses entirely on what a person cannot do or be. The social model, in contrast, posits that "disability" results from the interaction between individuals living with impairments and an environment filled with physical, attitudinal, communication and social barriers. Consequently, this model implies that the physical, attitudinal, communication, and social environment must change to enable people with impairments to participate in society on an equal basis with others (para 3, 4).

In alignment with the social model, universities must actively promote inclusive practices within their communities to raise awareness about the importance of inclusive education. Furthermore, in a pedagogical context, Sánchez-Teruel & Robles-Bello (2013) emphasize that:

The main foundation of inclusive education is not only respect for the right to be different as an effective principle but also an explicitly valuation of diversity in the classroom. It assumes a school model in which teachers, students and parents participate and develop a sense of community among all participants, whether or not they have diverse abilities or belong to a different culture, race or religion. (p.26)

The sense of community mentioned by Sanchez-Teruel and Robles-Bello encompasses the values, actions, participation and collaboration of all members of the university community, including professors, administrative staff, authorities and students. In this regard, dismantling barriers that hinder the development of students with functional diversity it is crucial.

Barriers to learning and participation (BLP) have been analyzed from various perspectives, resulting in different categorizations by various authors. One significant contributor to this analysis is Puigdellívol who proposes four categories (2009, in Covarrubias, 2019, p. 143) summarized in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Categorization of barriers to learning and participation (BLP) in different areas

Barrier	Description
Attitudinal	Highlights the tendency to assume that students with disabilities are the responsibility of specialists, not regular teachers, based on the belief that teachers lack the knowledge to educate these students.
Methodological	Focuses on the belief that students must work similar learning levels, making individualized instruction challenging. These barriers include methodologies, materials, syllabuses and activities that fail to meet the needs of all students.
Organizational	Refers to how students are grouped, the potential for community intervention in school support, analyzing teachers' work organization and ensuring continuity across educational levels to support students.
Social	Emphasizes the role of families, especially those with limited academic backgrounds. Prejudices, economic factors, lack of awareness about inclusive practices and social exclusion are part of these barriers.

Source: Own elaboration based on Puigdel·l·ivol (2009, in Covarrubias, 2019, p. 143)

Methodology

This study follows a qualitative paradigm, exploring the barriers to learning and participation (BLP) encountered by a student in the Bachelor's Degree in English Language Teaching (ELT) program at the Autonomous University of Chiapas (UNACH). The research design is a case study, focusing on a single situation within a specific population to gain an in-depth understanding.

Participant

The participant in this case study was a student in the Bachelor's Degree in the ELT program at UNACH. He was diagnosed with high-functioning ASD years ago by specialists and voluntarily shared his diagnosis with the researchers and his tutor, granting authorization to proceed with the research. He agreed to participate in the study because he wanted to be better understood and learn more about his condition. Since he has always enjoyed learning and teaching English, he has not found the program particularly challenging. Additionally, he asserts that, in general, most professors and classmates are unaware of his functional diversity, although he feels he is perceived as different from others. It is important to point out that high-functioning autism is not a visible condition, but there are specific features that may guide teachers and professors to recognize it. However, focus should not be on categorizing or labeling students but rather on identifying strategies to support them in the English as a Second Language (ESL)/English as a Foreign Language classroom (EFL).

Instruments

The methodology incorporates various instruments suited to this type of research, based on the empirical activity of the researcher (Pérez-Serrano, 1994). To achieve the study's objectives—identifying barriers to learning and participation and proposing strategies to support students with high-functioning ASD—a variety of data collection instruments were employed: academic accompaniment sessions, a semi-structured interview, a checklist to observe specific aspects of the student's BLP, a teacher's diary and a participant's diary. The study lasted approximately six months covering almost two semesters of the program. Sessions were scheduled after the participant's classes or during his free time, depending on his availability.

The instruments used in this study were not piloted in the specific context prior to their application. This decision was made because the unique nature of the case required tailoring the instruments directly to the participant's context and needs, allowing for flexibility and responsiveness throughout the research process.

Semi-Structured Interview

The first instrument we applied was the semi-structured interview with the student. The interview included questions related to his relationship with his professors and classmates, whether his actions or words had been misinterpreted and his emotions and feelings during his time at university.

Researcher and Participant Diaries

Diaries were kept by both the researchers and the participant. Martínez (2007) highlights that diaries serve as tools for organizing daily activities and observations, allowing them to be refined and modified as needed.

Checklist for Barriers to Learning and Participation (BLP)

The third instrument was a checklist for identifying Barriers to Learning and Participation (BLP). Cardona and Restrepo (2016) state that a checklist is a methodological tool composed of a series of causes, behaviors and other factors that guide the development of projects, events and evaluate activities in detail.

Academic Accompaniment Sessions

Finally, academic accompaniment sessions were held to foster confidence and trust between the researchers and the participant. These sessions provided opportunities for open discussions with the student participant and were crucial for writing reflections in the diaries.

Results and discussion

After applying and analyzing the data obtained through the research instruments, significant findings have emerged that support the study's rationale and enable to suggest proposals to support him during his university studies.

Interview

One of the most important questions was how the student felt when starting university. The student expressed that he felt nervous and overwhelmed due to the pandemic, which caused him anxiety and insecurity. This situation likely affected his performance at the beginning, although he later felt better. This relates to what Wing (Milán, 2017) describes as cognitive inflexibility: the difficulty of adapting to situations to which a person is not accustomed or to a sudden change when a routine is already established. Individuals with high-functioning ASD tend to follow certain routines, and the transition from virtual to in-person classes proved challenging for the participant due to the cognitive inflexibility that characterizes him.

When asked whether his classmates or teachers ever misinterpreted his actions, he responded:

Yes, all the time...my way of acting is not so...normal sometimes, I consider myself a little weird sometimes.

This response reflects Wing's communication development theory (Milán, 2017): The student admits that sometimes he feels a little strange, which may be due to the fact that sometimes he does not know how to communicate his feelings, which leads his classmates and professors to misinterpret what he says or does. The characteristics of a person diagnosed with high-functioning ASD also coincide with the theoretical part of this research, with the Triad of Lorna Wing (Milán, 2017), who identified three main areas of development that are affected by this disorder in people. These three areas of development are: communication, socialization, and flexibility and anticipation.

Regarding the question about how much he enjoyed working with his classmates in groups, the student answered:

Very little, I don't like working in teams; I prefer to do my tasks on my own.

His refusal to work with others is closely related to his difficulty in socializing, reinforcing the idea that socialization is a significant barrier for him. He prefers to work alone in order to avoid contact with his peers.

Additionally, he was asked about situations in college that made him feel uncomfortable in class to identify barriers:

Maybe having teasing students...with some bullying, something like that.

He has suffered from bullying during his career, which can be demotivating and hinder his inclusion in the academic environment.

Diaries

Another result is that academic support is a suggested strategy to promote inclusion since it has had a very positive impact on him, as the participant mentioned in his diary entries that he enjoys receiving academic support as an autistic student. Academic support is especially provided by his tutor and sometimes by other faculty members in the university every time he needs help. In some cases, the support given is also emotional. This can be explained because he feels he has a safer space to express his ideas, whether related to school, his social life, or his emotional state.

Checklists of Barriers to Learning and Participation

Regarding the results of the checklist, the data and categories were mainly used to identify the Barriers to Learning and Participation (BLP) that may be present in the student with ASD and may affect his academic performance and relationships with classmates and professors. Identifying these barriers is crucial in order to propose strategies and activities to help the student strengthen these skills.

According to this section of the checklist which covers attitudinal barriers, an identified barrier was the negative attitude of classmates towards the student. It was observed that the student has suffered harassment by his peers and has been teased. As mentioned before, this prevents the participant student from developing both academically and personally, as it creates insecurities. The suggested strategy is to talk with the groups of the faculty to sensitize students about such behavior and prevent it from happening. Additionally, sensitization efforts should encompass the entire university community and extend beyond it, aiming to promote a more inclusive environment at all levels.

The identified barriers based on Puigdellivol (2009) are shown in **Table 2**. The most significant attitudinal barriers are related to the negative attitudes of the classmates, as there were no mentions of negative attitudes from the teachers. However, addressing the negative attitude of some peers is needed and preventing bullying is crucial as it severely impacts the mental and physical health of victims.

Methodological barriers included the institution's rigidity of the curriculum, which often forces teachers to move quickly through topics at a pace that the student cannot adapt to. It is recommended to encourage teachers to adopt different strategies to make their classes more flexible, such as connecting topics to help students establish links between them or using diverse materials to cater to various types of intelligence in the classroom. Another identified barrier was a lack of motivation from some teachers, which, according to the student, makes him feel unmotivated. He favors teachers with a good attitude, humor, and who are not limited only to the topics found in the curriculum. Regarding organizational barriers, the student expressed discomfort with some teachers, particularly with those who are very strict. Therefore, it is recommended to foster positive attitudes in teachers/professors and create a more harmonious classroom environment, which can reduce affective filters and facilitate the learning process. Lastly social barriers, including prejudice, discrimination, and lack of empathy, can be addressed through workshops and activities that raise awareness about inclusion and promote values such as empathy, understanding, and respect.

Table 2. Identified barriers in the attitudinal, methodological, organizational, and social categories

Barrier category	Action/behavior	Suggested strategy for the barrier identified
Attitudinal	Negative attitude from the professor toward the student.	Not mentioned.
	Negative attitude from classmates toward the student.	Conduct talks/workshops to raise awareness about the negative impact of bullying. Organize small group activities to foster empathy and inclusion within the classroom. Plan activities and dynamics to get to know each other.
	Bullying or rejection by peers.	Implement the same strategies mentioned above, focus on promoting group integration and discourage exclusionary behaviors.
Methodological	Inflexible and rigid curriculum that does not meet the student's learning needs.	Adjustment or change of the curriculum according to the context and the characteristics of all students. Incorporate activities that accommodate various learning styles.
	Lack of resources to facilitate curriculum access.	Not mentioned.
	Failure to motivate the student	Encourage teachers/professors to recognize the importance of motivating their students by using diverse materials and resources.
Organizational	The student's needs are not considered in lesson planning	Not mentioned.
	No all students are included in school activities	Not mentioned.
	Inequality in students' participation	Enhance the organization of classroom activities to create a fair and balanced environment. Utilize ludic activities to promote everyone's participation to foster a positive and fair environment where students feel safe and happy.
Social	Discrimination	Not mentioned.
	Prejudice	Organize transversal activities to enhance empathy and raise awareness about their impact in others. feelings with their behavior. Promote values in the class through the subjects that are taught. Talks to sensitize students against prejudices.
	Ignorance	Conduct workshops focused on diversity and inclusion, particularly tailored to future language teachers to prepare them for diverse classroom settings.
	Lack of empathy	Develop workshops and activities that build empathy, understanding and respect.

Source: Own elaboration based on Puigdemívol (2009, in Covarrubias, 2019, p. 143) categories

Due to these barriers the student diagnosed with high-functioning ASD at the university has faced emotional challenges and mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression. All of this can affect his ability to concentrate, participate in learning activities, and interact with others (Sepúlveda, 2024). Since the student has been bullied, his self-esteem could have been affected, and his social relationships as well (Gonzalez & Valdivieso, 2014, p. 8). Bullying or school harassment is a form of aggressive behavior—whether verbal or physical—directed at an individual. It is well known that this aggression is most commonly observed in school environments and is often attributed to the lack of attention and misinformation regarding the profound and long-term harm it can inflict on victims. The consequences of this behavior can include depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, poor academic performance and even suicidal thoughts (Strang *et al.*, 2013). Such behavior not only negatively impacts victims' lives but also takes away their dignity and sense of worth; that is why professors need to be trained to develop inclusive practices and enhance a positive and respectful environment in the classroom. Additionally, a lack of support and resources remains a persistent barrier.

Limited access to support services, individualized education plans, special education resources, or accommodations can obstruct learning and hinder participation of students with high-functioning ASD, or those with specific learning needs and abilities. Systemic barriers, such as institutional policies, practices, and biases within education systems, also contribute to unequal educational opportunities and inclusion (López-Melero, 2011, p. 42). To address these issues, higher education institutions and stakeholders need to identify and actively work to reduce these barriers by promoting equitable access, developing flexible syllabi, coping with the variety of learning styles, fostering inclusive learning environments, and supporting the full participation and success of all students. Based on the work conducted, and addressing the objective of this study, the strategies and activities designed to encourage the inclusion of students with high-functioning ASD to support them during their university studies can be categorized into the following four key areas:

1. Addressing the Identified BLP
2. Designing Training Programs for the University/Faculty Community
3. Implementing an Asset-Based Approach
4. Establishing Support Networks Through Institutional Linkages

Each of these key areas is discussed in detail below.

Addressing the Identified BLP

Since a lack of support and resources is a recurring barrier, insufficient access to support services highlights the need for designing or adapting individualized education plans and special education resources. These measures may enhance learning and motivate participation among students with high-functioning ASD or those with specific learning needs or abilities. Additionally, limitations in the teaching methods and curricula can be addressed by implementing eclectic teaching approaches, avoiding rigid curricular structures and focusing on learning styles of students, interests, and abilities. These strategies aim to boost students' self-esteem, skills, and active participation.

Designing Training Programs for the University/Faculty Community

Comprehensive training programs should be developed for all members of the university/faculty community, including teaching staff, administrative personnel, students, and institutional authorities. A thorough diagnosis should inform these programs of the institution's specific needs and involve experts in inclusion and pedagogy to foster a more inclusive environment.

Implementing an Asset-Based Approach

An asset-based approach emphasizes the strengths and assets of the learner as the foundation for addressing the needs and areas of development. By identifying and building on students' existing strengths, educators can create better-targeted and more effective educational plans. This approach ensures that the focus remains on empowering students through their inherent capabilities.

Establishing Support Networks Through Institutional Linkages

Collaboration with specialized institutions in the fields of inclusion and exceptional needs, as well as partnerships with other faculties within the university, can provide valuable resources and support for students with high-functioning ASD. The Unidad de Orientación al Público (UOP), Chiapas Autism Association, Centro Azul, Centro Municipal de Terapia y Rehabilitación Infantil, among others, are local institutions which can provide support to families with autistic children.

Student Characteristics and Their Alignment with Research

Regarding the student's characteristics, findings align with the proposals of various authors and the DSM-5 criteria. Initially, it was observed that he has faced challenges in communicating with others. He projects shyness and provides short, concrete answers when interacting, responding with precise words without elaborating further. These communicative difficulties, associated with his ASD diagnosis can hinder his ability to engage effectively with classmates and professors, highlighting the need for guidance in this area. His social interactions are also limited, a fact consistent with the theories studied through this research, as the National Institute of Mental Health (2022) states: "Autism spectrum disorders are a group of neurological and developmental disorders that affect the way people interact with others, communicate, learn and behave". These social challenges can negatively impact not only his relationships but also his academic performance. Addressing these difficulties through targeted strategies and interventions is essential for fostering both his academic success and his overall well-being.

Conclusions

The barriers faced by the student diagnosed with high-functioning ASD at the university are attitudinal, social, and methodological. The identified barriers include social exclusion, lack of adequate academic support, and bullying, which directly impact participation and academic performance.

The proposed strategies to foster the inclusion of these students include pedagogical adjustments, such as adopting more flexible teaching approaches and methodologies, and awareness programs for teachers, administrative staff, and peers. Additionally, the creation of support networks both within the university and with external specialized institutions could strengthen the support provided to students with high-functioning ASD. It is essential to work on developing more inclusive teaching practices in the ESL/EFL classroom, as well as promoting the creation of policies within the institution that are based on the national laws and norms.

This study highlights the need for institutional transformation to ensure that students with high-functioning ASD can thrive academically and socially in an inclusive university environment: the inclusion of students with high-functioning ASD requires a comprehensive approach that not only involves curricular adjustments but also a shift in attitudes within the educational community. As mentioned before, this support and changes to reduce or avoid the learning and participation barriers should include professors' training in inclusive practices in the classroom, starting from changing their perceptions and fostering their empathy.

ESL/EFL Teachers and university professors who teach students with exceptional needs usually deal with more challenging situations in the classroom; but, if they learn how to make accommodations and adjustments, and work collaboratively with specialists, families, authorities and other faculty members; they could make a difference in the students' life. We believe that as teachers or university professors, it is vital to be open to learning, but above all, not to label students because of a diagnosis of a condition, but to search for strategies that help them according to their needs and taking into consideration their abilities and all their assets. To conclude, this quotation from the politician and activist Jesse Jackson: "Inclusion is not a matter of political correctness. It is the key to growth."

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest that could influence the objectivity, integrity, or interpretation of the results presented in this article.

Use of artificial intelligence (AI)

During the preparation of this manuscript, ChatGPT, an AI language model developed by OpenAI, was used for the purpose of checking grammar. The manuscript was reviewed and edited by the authors after using this tool, and they take full responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

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