Teachers' social representations of inclusive education: A systematic review of literature 2010-2020

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	The inclusive education approach refers to the promotion of educability, welcoming all students in the same space. In this context, the systematic review aims to analyze the social representations of teachers about inclusive education in the preschool and elementary classroom, between the years 2010-2020. The study was conducted through a search in the Web of Science (WoS), Scopus, and EBSCO databases. Inclusion criteria such as language, empirical studies, last 10 years, and exclusion criteria considering duplicate articles and gray literature were applied. In the first iteration, a total of 86 original articles were obtained and after applying the exclusion and inclusion criteria, a total sample of 18 articles met inclusion criteria. An exhaustive content analysis of the selected research was carried out through a thematic analysis. The studies were organized in chronological order for descriptive and interpretative analysis. Among the most relevant findings of the study, the categories of diversity in the classroom; teachers and inclusive school; teaching-learning and inclusion stand out. The findings make it possible to respond to the objective of the study, highlighting the change in the teachers' representations that allow a better understanding, valuation, and respect for the rights of all students, especially in early childhood. As for the conclusion, the adequate articulation between teachers' representations and practices are essential aspects to generate a social transformation and guarantee an inclusive classroom in contexts of high social and cultural diversity.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, inclusive education has received a boost in many education systems [1]–[3]. Based on the criticism of special education inspired by the segregation of students with disabilities, the scientific debate has expanded to converge toward the concept of inclusive education or education for all, promoted from the Salamanca Conference [4]. Inclusive education has emerged as a key issue both in research and in professional practice, as well as a pressing issue in the countries' educational policy agenda [5]–[7]. The foregoing, since education must be based on the principles of equity and inclusion, to establish the foundations for effective citizenship in society [8], [9]. The achievement of inclusion has been a fundamental political component in international agenda; however, various researchers [10]–[15] expressed the lack of knowledge about how to create truly inclusive classrooms, the persistence of segregating educational practices, and divergent opinions between teachers and parents regarding their suitability; an issue that coincides with what was reported by previous researchers [15], [16].

The literature reports that the general population, teachers in training and teachers in service, perceive inclusive education in very different ways [17]. This is due, among other things, to the fact that the different contexts specify an unequal understanding of the notion of educational inclusion, which implies a conceptual confusion, an issue that has implications for the research findings related to both attitudes toward inclusion, as well as the effectiveness of inclusive practices [16], [17]. In this line, making inclusive education a reality is making a polysemic concept a reality whose variation is sustained both from a political ideology and from socially constructed conceptions of inclusion, and by those who work in school settings [18], [19]. Moreover, several literatures stated that teachers' beliefs, will, understanding and attitudes about inclusive education are fundamental to achieving the effectiveness of inclusive practices in the classroom [20]–[22], being largely influenced by teachers' beliefs as a central component of their professional identity [23]. Consequently, teachers' attitudes toward inclusion vary according to resources, the needs of students, their skills and experience in the classroom [24]–[27].

Since its launch in 1994, the concept of inclusive education has evolved into a broader definition, in which the focus is on creating inclusive education for all students, weakening the focus on disability, and making it more similar to the education for all [28], [29]. The main attribute of inclusive education has been the guarantee of full participation of all students, especially those who are at risk of exclusion, that is, rescuing the principle of diversity to install it in the school from an approach that favors the inclusion of children from minority groups associated with ethnicity, gender, special educational needs (SEN), disability, culture, and others, in regular classrooms [16], [19], [30]–[32].

In this context, the pedagogical practices that teachers deploy in regular classrooms are conditioned by beliefs, values, models, and symbols that circulate in them and that social psychology calls social representations [33]. The analysis of these representations allows us to reflect on the pedagogical practice developed in schools, and, more specifically, in the classrooms, allowing the teachers involved in the process to question their practices and the possible effects of their pedagogical work in terms of students' learning [34], [35]. The relevance of the theory of social representations lies in the possibility of understanding what meanings teachers attribute to inclusion because social representations serve as guides to action, modeling and constituting the elements of the context in which they occur [36], [37]. In this context, a belief system associated with inclusive education and installed in the deficit, is conceptually confused, generates divergent opinions, segregating and excluding practices by teachers, an issue that entails a reductionist and limited perspective of inclusion, which does not adequately address classroom diversity [38]–[40]. Consequently, the purpose of the study is related to analyzing the social representations of teachers regarding inclusive education in the preschool and primary classroom. Pre-school and elementary school have been chosen, with the purpose of focusing studies on regular classroom teachers, who work with initial educational levels.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research corresponds to a systematic review of the literature, which is a secondary level analysis where information from primary research is collected to answer a purpose and the research questions [41], [42]. Systematic reviews promote the advancement of knowledge on a given topic and, at the same time, allow the theoretical basis of research to be built [43]. Systematic review is a precise procedure that facilitates replicability and gives validity to the findings obtained. The research was carried out between the months of September and November 2021, with the purpose of analyzing the social representations of teachers regarding inclusive education in the preschool and primary classroom, in scientific articles associated with education in Web databases, including Web of Science (WoS), Scopus and EBSCO. It was decided to start the entire process in "advanced search" to be able to circumscribe the object of study as best as possible.

To guide the research process, the methodology proposed by Naufal *et al*. [44] was followed, allowing the construction of the study objectives, the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the criteria of quality and methodological validity and the search sources. The search strategy consisted of formulating an equation of key concepts, and the Boolean operator "AND" that separated groups of concepts, which allowed obtaining the following product: "social representations" AND "inclusive education" AND "Teachers". Next, the equation was entered in the Scopus, WoS, and EBSCO databases, where various filters were applied to refine the results as seen in Table 1.

Of the set of documents found (N=86), 18 articles fulfilled the established inclusion criteria. The rest of the articles were excluded from the literature review as can be seen in Figure 1. After identifying the articles, duplicate texts (n=18) were eliminated by applying the exclusion criteria. Subsequently, the studies were chosen, first, by title and abstract, and later, from full text reading. In this way, 66 documents were eliminated; therefore, 18 articles were selected, that is, those referring specifically to social representations of teachers regarding the notion of educational inclusion, which included the inclusion criteria of the research. According to the search, we did not find a greater number of articles in the period from 2010 to 2020.

To create the categories or themes of analysis of the descriptive data, the guidelines from Guest, MacQueen, and Namey [45] were followed, whereby an inductive process is established through which an exhaustive analysis of the content of the selected investigations is carried out through a thematic analysis. In this way, initial codes were elaborated according to the semantic content-explicit-of the studies, which were subsequently grouped into categories. To guarantee the validity of the process of identifying topics and subsequent categories, the coding was carried out in parallel and independently by two researchers, until total agreement was reached in the coding, i.e., a phase of double detailed reading of the manuscripts, increasing the reliability, and validity of the search.

Table 1. Elements of the search strategy and selection process

| Filters			Criteria	
Scopus	Web of Science	EBSCO	Inclusion	Exclusion
Text content: TITLE-ABS-KEY	Field Labels: TS	Field names, abstract	Articles: qualitative, quantitative and mixed approaches	Duplicate studies
Subject Area: Social Sciences	Citation Indexes: SSCI	Full text available	Reports of the last 10 years 2010-2020	Gray literature, such as dissertations, presentations or proceedings
Document type: article	Document type: article	Publication type: magazine article	Published in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese	Articles that refer to the use of technology, values, interculturality, higher education
			RS and EI concepts in the title or abstract	Items targeting secondary or higher education
			Research that contributes to the theoretical body of inclusive education and teachers	
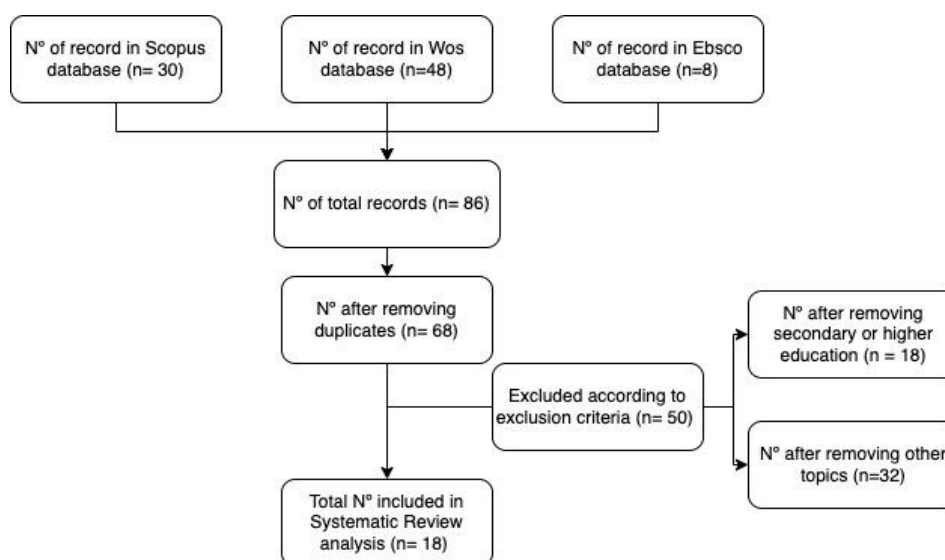
Figure 1. Information flow diagram through the different phases of the systematic review [46]

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The social representations of teachers on the notion of educational inclusion were determined after analyzing the articles under study, identifying three categories: i) Diversity in the classroom; ii) Teachers and inclusive school; and iii) Teaching-learning and inclusion. After the literature review and through a process of synthesis of the information, the results are presented indicating the article, the method, the description of the study and the most relevant findings. Table 2 presents the list of articles that make up the sample of this study.

Table 2. Articles found in the systematic review

No	Article	Research method	Study description	Study findings
1	[47]	Qualitative: Observation and interview	Study on the perceptions of teachers about disability, students with disabilities and inclusive education on the island.	Some of the teachers' representations can be analyzed through the lens of different models of disability: the medical model, the social model, and a religious-moral model. Inclusive education is perceived as a method to create institutions that take care of their needs.
2	[48]	Quantitative: Open questionnaire	This study seeks to identify the social representations of the inclusive school from the point of view of Slovak educational agents.	The significant factors associated with representations of the inclusive school would be: i) the tradition of integration; ii) the institutional processes of guaranteeing the quality of education; iii) the priority in the declaration of the pro-inclusive; iv) community coexistence; and v) the needs of a modern society.
3	[49]	Qualitative: Interview	This article attempts to conceptualize the interconnection of the paradigms of inclusive education and intercultural education by introducing the combined paradigm of "sustainable inclusive and intercultural education".	Based on the findings of this study, at the school and classroom level, teachers stated that they must perform complex roles to meet the demands of an ever-changing "diverse" learning environment. They highlighted the development of collaborative school cultures and the implementation of inclusive and intercultural teaching and learning methodologies.
4	[50]	Quantitative: Questionnaire	This article seeks to access the social representations of teachers of ordinary classes and inclusive classes and compare these two groups.	In terms of research findings, it is concluded that the teachers of the two types of class have built social representations of students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) that include a professional dimension.
5	[51]	Mixed: Questionnaire and interview	This article describes the representations of head teachers about the inclusion of migrant students in schools in the region of La Araucanía, Chile.	School leaders assume school inclusion from a technical approach and develop practices focused mainly on complying with the regulations of the Inclusion Law, over the implementation of practices aimed at promoting teacher professional development and student learning.
6	[52]	Documentary research	The article presents indicators related to the realities and the implementation of inclusive education and the detection of successful experiences of inclusion for this population.	The approach that promotes the adoption of the term "functional diversity", as a substitute for "disability", is a trend at the international level as it is proposed as a current of language and thought that contributes to the transformation of unfavorable social representations that until now, they have been transmitted in relation to the object of study.
7	[53]	Qualitative: Documentary analysis, observation, questionnaire, and interview.	The article shows the social representations of the school inclusion that some teachers have built at the level of primary education of the Mexican educational system.	Inclusive teachers represent inclusion with the attention they provide in the classroom to indigenous people, children with different abilities, or with sexual indetermination, to subjects with some difference. The representation that teachers have about what is the inclusion of school diversity guides their practices.
8	[54]	Quantitative: Questionnaire	The article examined the idea that teachers' SRs about students are influenced by their previous experience with AS.	Work experience in AS and/or private experience make up the SR of the teachers of these students in relation to teachers without experience. In addition, teachers with previous experience had more elements of SR related to the environment and learning factors.
9	[55]	Qualitative: Interview	The article presents research on the understanding of inclusion by Canadian elementary and secondary teachers.	The results reveal teachers' relative inattention to resourcing issues, but considerable emphasis on representation issues. The research reveals a push "beyond the binary" to consider teachers' practices as inclusive or exclusive.
10	[56]	Mixed: Interview, Questionnaire	The article aims to reveal the discourses of teachers on differences and inclusion, treating them as visible social phenomena in school.	The analysis shares the idea that there is a lack of understanding on the part of teachers regarding difference and diversity and, perhaps for this reason, the practice of teachers is a space of multiple resistances and demands. Social inclusion, thought of in its broadest sense as a culture of growth, is posed as a great challenge for education.
11	[57]	Mixed: Semi-structured interview. Focus group.	The article analyzes the representations and discourse of teachers in training about the inclusion of game elements in education.	The results showed an optimal reception of gamification as a useful training strategy in the different educational stages and that can be validly used to include gender as a category of analysis in the teaching of social sciences.
12	[58]	Qualitative: Questionnaire of open questions.	The article investigates the social representations of high school teachers in public schools in Brasilia about the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities.	It is concluded that the social representations of teachers are objectified in the legitimate but difficult binomial and the teacher, who feels unprepared. The results indicate that the information from the training course is valued in social representation, however, it acquires meaning not only based on cognitive elements, but also on affective ones.
13	[59]	Mixed: Interview questionnaire	The study examined the dimensions of students' self-concept and their social position in their classroom network.	The dominant academic view, which feeds the anxiety of teachers and parents regarding inclusion, attributes to the child with SEN a negative image of himself, so that he not only compares unfavorably with his peers of typical performance, but also experiences social marginalization.

Table 2. Articles found in the systematic review (*continued*)

No	Article	Research method	Study description	Study findings
14	[60]	Systematic review	The purpose of this article is to conduct a systematic review of the research on professional development (PD) for inclusive education.	Most of the PD research for inclusive education used a unitary approach to difference and exclusion and that teacher learning for inclusive education is under-theorized. Examining frontier practices is recommended to examine teachers' learning for inclusive education.
15	[61]	Mixed: Interview questionnaire	Its objective was to understand how teachers have positioned themselves in the face of educational inclusion.	The results indicate the recognition by teachers that science teaching already has indicators of inclusion.
16	[62]	Qualitative: Questionnaire	This study determines the social representations of kindergarten educators regarding the inclusion of children with SEN in regular schools.	Social representation is, in general, favorable to the inclusion process, although there is still discrimination against children with SEN, due to the lack of information, education and training in the matter.
17	[63]	Qualitative: Meta synthesis	This article is a meta-synthesis review regarding social representations in the initial and continuous training of teachers.	This meta-synthesis reveals that most of the future or young teachers have fixed representations of the special needs of the students. Professional integration and enrollment in an inclusive educational community can help these representations evolve.
18	[64]	Qualitative: Interviews	This article examines the concept of inclusive education to understand the different languages of inclusion and the ways in which they are articulated across national and institutional contexts.	The findings show how, despite the contrasts in the approaches to inclusive education, the experiences of inclusion/exclusion of children presented strong points of convergence between the countries. Their experiences depended less on school approaches to inclusion than on children's ability to understand "contextual cues," teachers' implicit expectations, and school values.

From the analysis of the data, the researchers can infer three dimensions or categories, namely: i) Diversity in the classroom; ii) Teachers and inclusive school; and iii) Teaching-learning and inclusion, which emerge from the theoretical and methodological frameworks of the studies analyzed in this systematic review. The data was analyzed using the inductive logic of theoretical categorization, which is based on categorization as the main data analytical tool, aimed at theorizing through operations that lead to theoretical construction [65], [66], as can be seen Table 3.

Table 3. Categories and authors

Categories	Authors
Diversity in the classroom (disability/migrants/intellectual deficiency/SEN/gender/others)	[47], [51]–[53], [58], [59], [62]
Teachers and inclusive school	[48], [50], [55], [56], [61], [63], [64]
Teaching-learning and Inclusion	[49], [50], [54], [57], [60]

3.1. Category diversity in the classroom

In the analysis of the articles, it is stated that inclusive education gains momentum from the Salamanca declaration [4], specifying that the guiding principle of this framework is that schools must welcome all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and linguistic conditions. These should include disabled and gifted children, street children and working children, children from remote or nomadic backgrounds, children belonging to linguistic, ethnic, or cultural minorities, and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized groups [51]–[53], [58]. However, despite all the dissemination of the media and government agencies on the implementation of public policies and practices based on the proposal of inclusive actions, in most schools, it is still possible to observe the exclusion of difference and discrimination against diversity [62]. In this process, people with disabilities, migrants, male and female with special educational needs or intellectual disabilities study in ordinary classrooms, without significant changes in the school structure.

In this category, inclusion is a change of attitude regarding difference, which implies a break with the existing discriminatory paradigms and the reformulation of the educational system for all students, regardless of their physical, intellectual, or social condition [52]. Inclusion in this sense is a force that makes society fairer and, therefore, brings benefits not only to students with disabilities, migrants, students with intellectual disabilities, or with SEN, but also to other boys and girls, providing the latter with the discovery of acts of sympathy and cooperation, making them more understanding and caring people [47]. In this line, inclusive education aims to eliminate social exclusion that arises as a consequence of attitudes and responses to diversity of race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender, and achievement, as well as ability [28]. In short, the category shows that the most important reason for inclusive education is the social value of equality and the understanding that, despite differences, we all have the same rights and opportunities.

3.2. Teacher category and inclusive school

The second category that emerges from the analysis of the reviewed articles refers to the understanding that teachers in training and in practice have regarding inclusive education. From the perspective of the inclusive school, a challenge to consider is teacher training [55] because many practicing professionals have not had contact with academic and practical content regarding school inclusion in the course of their initial training. However, it is necessary for teachers to continue their training in the subject, an action that is characterized by being a practice that leads them to reflect on their way of acting and puts them in the condition of apprentices in the process of change for school inclusion [63].

In line with the explanation, to offer a quality education, the school needs to train its teachers, prepare, organize, and finally adapt. Since it is in the school space where children and adolescents coexist with other subjects, establish new relationships and ties, and find partners with similar characteristics and different from theirs. Consequently, the teacher has a fundamental role in this process, as a mediator of these relationships, as well as one of the protagonists, to the extent that he or she will also interact and relate to these students in everyday life [56].

The success of school inclusion depends in part on the level of knowledge of teachers about this subject. Teachers must have adequate knowledge of cognitive, behavioral, and social characteristics to design appropriate learning experiences and teaching strategies to address student diversity in regular classrooms [64]. In this sense, the teacher's understanding of the individual characteristics of the students and the appropriate teaching strategies are decisive in making the notion of inclusion a reality in their classrooms.

The literature reports that there are several variables assigned to teachers' opinions regarding inclusion, since the shortcomings in initial training and professional experience in the school, added to the lack of support from principals, the absence of teamwork, the high number of students and the prescriptions of the national curriculum, are factors that would conspire with the teacher's didactic deployment in the face of the phenomenon of inclusion, which currently considers aspects such as gender, ethnicity, migration, SEN, disability, among others [48], [50], [55], [56], [61], [63], [64]. Given their important role as agents of change within the classroom, teachers' favorable conceptions of inclusion can help others form affirmative positions toward inclusive education. On the other hand, education is likely to be unsuccessful when teachers do not have positive attitudes toward inclusion in school.

3.3. Teaching-learning and inclusion category

The articles reviewed and analyzed show how teachers face the challenge of inclusive education in their daily work, highlighting their essential role in making inclusion and learning a reality. The literature reports that inclusion requires the teacher to reinforce their pedagogical skills such as observation, reflection, planning based on the uniqueness of their student, evaluation of their work, and reformulation of their planning whenever necessary [60]. In this way, the responsibility of the teacher is intensified, who, given the diversity of modes and rhythms of learning present in the classroom, must be prepared to discover, choose, and dispose of varied resources and strategies, providing favorable conditions for individual learning and group of students [50]. Consequently, it is essential that teaching and learning occur interactively, that the teacher assumes the attitude of a learner in his classes, enriching his or her experience through a reciprocal relationship with the students.

The studies present obvious difficulties in terms of school inclusion, such as the lack of accessibility in schools, the lack of materials, the methodological adequacy of teaching, the difficulties in terms of the parameters in the evaluation of these students, improvement courses for teachers, and creation of new structures in the teaching-learning process, so that inclusion actually occurs, highlighting the relevance of carrying out joint work and raising awareness in society through actions to improve the quality of teaching-learning [49], [50], [54], [57], [60]. The findings in this study show that it is necessary to plan with the teachers' actions that allow the inclusion of students with disabilities, migrants, those who have intellectual disabilities, or SEN, in such a way as to encourage creativity and determination as essential allies in the process of teaching-learning of these students, making adaptations of the study materials to favor learning, these actions being essential to make inclusive education a reality.

4.   CONCLUSION

Social representations are highly important in the teaching-learning process because they are common sense theories that are built collectively and end up influencing social practices. The approach of social representations through the relationship between the experience of social and academic life implies obtaining a social representation from knowledge and that interferes in the training processes of teachers and students at a personal and professional level. Therefore, in the context of the inclusive school, the theory of social representations is presented as a psychosocial process that results mainly from the combination of historical, cultural, and cognitive factors, which, in an integrated way, contribute to the construction of

concepts and images, facts, processes and behaviors of individuals and groups. In this regard, the categories that emerge from the analysis of the articles refer, in the first place, to how teachers represent diversity in the classroom in terms of disability, migrants, intellectual disability, SEN, gender. In this line, the research findings show that educators affirm that they must perform complex functions to meet the demands of a diverse and constantly changing learning environment.

The second category that emerges from the data accounts for the notion of inclusion that teachers have. In this sense, the attitude of teachers toward increasingly diverse school contexts will be decisive when it comes to operationalizing the perspective of inclusive education, since the representation that teachers have about what school inclusion is will guide their teaching practices in the classroom, and, consequently, could generate processes of educational and pedagogical inclusion or exclusion. The third category refers to the perspective of teaching-learning and inclusion by teachers. In this line, the investigative findings report the need for pedagogical training of teachers to attend to the learning of each boy and girl in the regular classroom. On the other hand, it is mentioned that professional integration and the formation of an inclusive educational community can help teachers' representations and their practices evolve toward learning models based on educational inclusion. This study could represent the possibility of deepening the development of inclusive education from the teachers' perspective. As for the limitations of this article, the suggestion is to incorporate other languages and increase the databases or perhaps a greater number of journals in the field of education. It is proposed for future studies to conduct longitudinal research in the field of inclusive education.

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