

## Analysis of the importance of supporting students with special educational needs: A review article

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**Abstract:** The objective of this study was to analyze the importance of supporting students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) by identifying and systematizing scientific evidence from the period 2022-2025. To conduct this analysis, a systematic literature review was carried out using the PRISMA approach, providing a methodological framework that included national and international policies, pedagogical approaches, and inclusive frameworks. This contributed to the validity and reliability of the findings, promoting the replicability of the results and ensuring the transparency of the selection processes. After applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, 24 relevant works were addressed, offering a comparative overview of inclusive strategies while considering regulatory provisions and emerging practices. Among the results, Universal Design for Learning, curricular adaptation, and collaborative work were highlighted as emerging practices. The research concludes by stating that the integrated application of these inclusive practices significantly enhances the participation of students with SEN.

**Keywords:** Curricular adaptation, Inclusion, Integration, SEN.

### 1. Introduction

In recent decades, education has transitioned towards increasingly inclusive models, recognizing that diversity is a value, not an obstacle. In this context, supporting students with special educational needs (SEN) has gained significant relevance, as it guarantees the right of all individuals to a quality, equitable, and accessible education, as enshrined in Sustainable Development Goal 4 of the Education 2030 Agenda and reinforced by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

According to UNESCO, inclusion should be aimed at identifying and eliminating barriers in teaching by adapting the curriculum, teaching methods, and the use of appropriate materials to meet students' needs. Furthermore, in Latin America, the Intergovernmental Network for the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs (RIINEE), supported by the UNESCO regional office for Latin America, emphasizes the urgency of transforming educational systems to address the so-called educational debt and injustice that particularly affects students with special educational needs. It is estimated that in Latin America and the Caribbean, there are over 19 million children and adolescents with some form of disability, which restricts their participation in educational activities.

In March 2024, 17 countries in the Americas committed to updating the information for the Regional Information System on Inclusive Education for Persons with Disabilities (SIRIED) to strengthen the monitoring of persons with disabilities, with Peru among them. This system, supported by the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI) for education and culture, and multilateral organizations such as UNESCO and the World Bank, is committed to collecting, harmonizing, and

analyzing information that will reveal the actual situation of people with disabilities in the region's educational systems.

One of the main problems faced by students with SEN is the factors of rejection and exclusion that frequently arise. Mustoip et al. [1] argue that the failure of inclusion is not due to the presence of disability itself, but to the lack of transformation in school organizations and in the teaching mindset towards difference. In many contexts, curricular adaptations are implemented superficially, without considering the principles of Universal Design for Learning, which limits student participation.

Within these aspects, one of the most relevant for supporting students with SEN is curricular adaptation, which is not a secondary option within the educational system but an ethical, pedagogical, and legal requirement to guarantee the right to equitable education. Even in the 21st century, rigid models that assume all students learn in the same way and at the same pace are still observed, excluding those who require differentiated approaches to achieve their full development.

Faced with this reality, governmental organizations must consider using indispensable instruments to ensure equitable educational justice. Their implementation will allow for the conditioning of content, methodologies, assessments, and didactic resources based on the reality and particular conditions of each student, promoting environments free of exclusion and respectful of diversity. These considerations are endorsed by UNESCO, which states that curricular adaptation is not merely a technical commitment but a social responsibility to address each individual's uniqueness in education.

Since early childhood, the purpose of education is to foster an equitable and harmonious formative process for students, without neglecting the educational conditions of any student. For this reason, planning structured processes enriches educational curricular systems, benefiting children with SEN. In this sense, the most solid support a child receives is being part of a didactic plan that creates a scenario where children can interact and develop their skills, abilities, and creative competencies under the teacher's supervision.

It is crucial that educational systems and all stakeholders (teachers, administrators, families, authorities, and the community) develop an understanding of the social, cultural, and functional diversity of each student, as these diverse manifestations represent a significant challenge for educational policies, which often underestimate their importance. This diversity should not be seen as a difficulty or an exception to the norm, but as an inherent richness of the human condition that directly challenges the principles upon which contemporary educational policies are built.

Individual differences, including aspects such as disability, and ethnic, social, or geographical origin, are concrete realities that affect access, participation, and educational achievement for millions of students in Latin America and worldwide. However, state policies often use homogeneous and standardized models that ignore or minimize students' special characteristics. Thus, the lack of attention to diversity translates into educational unease, as the system reproduces pre-existing inequalities instead of compensating for them.

Additionally, the Regional Network for Inclusive Education emphasizes that a high percentage of children with different types of disabilities are still unable to attend or receive any form of education. They may remain in healthcare or social assistance settings, while others are sent to special schools where they are deprived of growing up in environments that reflect the natural diversity of society. In response, the 2024 Fortaleza Declaration marks an important milestone in the global pursuit of educational equity and financing, approved by over 652 participants, including more than 50 ministers from around the world.

In Peru, the Ombudsman's Office has indicated that more than 65% of educational institutions are not prepared to receive students with disabilities, both in terms of infrastructure and pedagogical resources. This highlights that the challenge is not only pedagogical but also structural, demanding a comprehensive rethinking of educational, curricular, and teacher training approaches. This information is particularly relevant given the limitations identified by CONADIS, which reports that there are over half a million students with SEN nationwide. For these students, it is stated that only 13% of

educational institutions on the coast have adequate accessibility conditions, while in the sierra and jungle regions, this figure does not exceed 5%.

Furthermore, according to the Support and Advisory Service for Special Educational Needs, only 24% of educational institutions in Lima have adequate support for students with SEN. The situation is worse in the rest of the country: in rural areas, only 11.3% of schools provide some form of assistance, while in urban areas, the figure reaches 23%. These statistics reveal the challenge facing the Peruvian educational system regarding inclusive education.

From a feasibility standpoint, implementation may seem difficult or even impossible, but it can also teach many valuable lessons. According to Shutaleva et al. [2], there are examples of successful experiences in Southeast and South Asia from which relevant lessons can be drawn and potentially replicated in Latin America. These cases confirm that inclusion is possible when there are political priorities and budgets for it. This argument also aligns with findings from the European experience, with the German model being cited as the best of its kind.

These successful cases in supporting students with SEN are aided by the early detection of characteristics such as autism, moderate, and/or mild retardation. Thony [3] warns that without early childhood interventions, children start the school system at a disadvantage, leading to an over-reliance on formal diagnoses like ADHD. Ward et al. [4] note that teachers are in a privileged position to observe warning signs during daily activities. This advocates for addressing difficulties in the early years to mitigate their evolution into more complex and costly issues.

Therefore, the objective of this review article is to analyze the importance of supporting students with special educational needs (SEN) by focusing on the identification and systematization of current scientific evidence published between 2022 and 2025. To achieve this goal, an exhaustive search of scientific articles was conducted in high-impact academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Articles available in English and Spanish, with open access and relevance to the field of inclusive education, were selected.

## 2. Methodology

This article adopted a systematic review approach to analyze the current state of support for students with special educational needs, considering policies, practices, and guidelines at the international, Latin American, and Peruvian levels. To ensure transparency and rigor, the PRISMA methodology was employed to structure and document the steps followed in searching, selecting, and analyzing the scientific literature.

After narrowing the study topic into more specific scientific fields, search criteria were defined. The keywords used were: "educational attention," "special educational needs," "school inclusion," "inclusive education," "curricular adaptations," and "specialized pedagogical support," with the latter used due to its interchangeable use. These keywords were linked with the appropriate Boolean operators (AND, OR) to retrieve information. The search was conducted in scientific databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Dialnet, as well as the Google Scholar search engine.

The inclusion criteria for studies were: (a) the scientific publication is open access, (b) the studies focus on the educational approach for students with SEN in school contexts, (c) the research presents empirical results, theoretical reviews, or systematic reviews, and (d) documents were issued within the specified timeframe. Exclusion criteria included duplicates, publications before 2022, studies focusing on disability or SEN for non-educational purposes, and documents without the full text publicly available or with a non-explicit or unverifiable methodology.

The application of the PRISMA framework involved four stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. In the identification phase, 312 records were retrieved. After removing 48 duplicates, the titles and abstracts of 264 articles were screened, with 242 selected for full-text review. After a thorough analysis, 24 documents that met all established criteria were finally included. The results of this systematic review have allowed for the construction of a comprehensive and comparative overview of educational support strategies for students with SEN. This study is a key contribution to

the academic and professional debate on the most effective inclusion models, considering both regulatory provisions and emerging pedagogical practices in different sociocultural contexts.

### 3. Results

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) regarding key actions for supporting students with SEN, various authors state that one of the main flexible strategy approaches is the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Timuş et al. [5], in their review of UDL, highlight that this approach reinforces the inclusion of students with disabilities by promoting flexible pedagogical systems that recognize diversity as the norm. Similarly, Jardinez and Natividad [6] indicate that UDL surpasses the differentiated instruction approach by fostering planning that anticipates student variability. Indeed, the principles of UDL (representation, expression, and engagement) have been shown to be more effective in diversifying didactic options.

Timuş, et al. [5] also emphasize the value of UDL as a user-friendly and flexible methodology in response to the needs of students with special characteristics, stating that this approach highlights diversity as a structural part of the educational system. In this context, Moleko and Maphalala [7] analyzed students' perception of virtual spaces, concluding that these resources increase autonomy and diversify academic formats, making them more inclusive and humanized tools. Roski et al. [8] proposed indicators to measure UDL compliance in subjects taught by teachers both in-person and virtually, allowing for periodic and systematic evaluation of how design principles are applied to ensure real accessibility to academic content. Furthermore, Bray et al. [9] stated that teachers better valued the features of educational materials with the use of technological tools due to the variety of media and greater effectiveness in supporting students with special educational abilities.

**Table 1.**  
Articles on Universal Design for Learning.

	<b>Universal Design for Learning</b>		
	<b>Author</b>	<b>Year of Publication</b>	<b>Country</b>
1	Timuş et al. [5]	2023	United States
2	Jardinez and Natividad [6]	2024	India
3	Moleko and Maphalala [7]	2025	South Africa
4	Haegele et al. [10]	2023	United States
5	Roski et al. [8]	2024	Germany
6	Bray et al. [9]	2023	Ireland

Individualized curricular adaptation stands out as a relevant topic for the inclusion of students with SEN. This involves necessary adjustments made by organizations related to students' formative processes, policy issuance, and content versatility for the benefit of learners. For Estefan et al. [11], curricular adaptations play a decisive role by enabling students with different disabilities to access the general curriculum through structurally adjusted content. Likewise, Eden et al. [12] emphasize that individual adaptations, planned from an initial assessment, increase students' motivation and academic performance.

Along these lines, Srivastava [13] demonstrated through a mixed-methods study that specialized Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), under the condition of parental involvement and continuous supervised activities, improve the educational performance of children with special characteristics. Imran et al. [14] also observe that it is the right of all students with SEN to be part of the educational curriculum, promoting an integration methodology that allows for improved academic performance and social functionality. Researchers opine that one of the most successful models is Universal Design for Learning, whose curricular logic is based on contextualized adaptability, providing an effective framework to meet multiple demands for action and representation.

The incorporation of technological tools significantly improves the adaptability of curricular methodological content for students with special characteristics. The use of augmented reality tools

provides interactive environments where learners can develop cognitive and social skills, increasing their motivation and self-esteem. Furthermore, Peterson-Ahmad et al. [15] in their research on adaptive interaction technology, note that digital interaction through adjustable models facilitates the experience for children with cognitive, sensory, or autism spectrum disabilities.

**Table 2.**

Articles on Individualized Curricular Adaptation.

<b>Individualized curriculum adaptation</b>			
	<b>Author</b>	<b>Year of publication</b>	<b>Country</b>
1	Estefan et al. [11]	2023	United States
2	Ede, et al. [12]	2023	China
3	Srivastava [13]	2024	India
4	Imran et al. [14]	2024	Saudi Arabia
5	Kapetanaki et al. [16]	2022	Greece
6	Peterson-Ahmad et al. [15]	2023	United States

Specialized collaborative work is essential in educational inclusion. Students with SEN benefit significantly when multiple professionals, general and special education teachers, therapists, psychologists, and families work in an integrated manner, reinforcing not only their academic development but also their emotional and social well-being. According to Dillon et al. [17], this refers to the professional interdependence where each team member depends on others to achieve common educational outcomes. This activity is also directly related to collective activities, such as the joint design of the curriculum, which enriches the educational intervention.

Within the characteristics of collaborative work, role flexibility has been established as an indispensable condition for achieving genuine inclusion. Moving away from traditional models where each professional acts in isolation within strict competency limits, this approach proposes a more organic and collaborative dynamic, where roles can be temporarily redefined according to student and educational context needs. Role flexibility is particularly relevant when innovative technologies, such as social platforms, are introduced into educational interventions, as these require both technical knowledge and pedagogical skills, promoting a redistribution of responsibilities.

In the context of collaborative work, technological support and the use of emerging technologies are enabling the dynamics of interdisciplinary teams addressing the needs of students with special characteristics. Novikova and Mekhrishvili [18] state that intelligent algorithms in adaptive technologies offer suggestions for teachers to change how they deliver their lessons. Validated by data processing and trend identification in behaviors, this ability empowers professionals to bet on solutions.

**Table 3.**

Articles on Specialized Collaborative Work.

<b>Specialized collaborative work</b>			
	<b>Author</b>	<b>Year of publication</b>	<b>Country</b>
1	Dixon et al. [19]	2021	United States
2	Bricker et al. [20]	2022	United States
3	Turan et al. [21]	2022	Turkey
4	Haleem et al. [22]	2022	India
5	Waleed and Dhakir [23]	2024	Saudi Arabia
6	Waleed and Dhakir [23]	2024	United States
7	Novikova and Mekhrishvili [18]	2025	Russia

**The Importance of Teacher Training.** It is fundamental to recognize the importance of teacher training focused on inclusion. Without adequate training, even the best legal frameworks or advanced technologies lose effectiveness. Therefore, preparing teachers to address diversity is the cornerstone of a truly equitable education. Bar and Kiimhi [24] highlighted the urgent need to reform university curricula by integrating theory, practice, and the principles of Universal Design for Learning to prepare

teachers for heterogeneous classrooms. Similarly, Gal et al. [25] analyzed teachers' attitudes after receiving specialization workshops and observed that, while there was sympathy for inclusion, doubts persisted about their own preparation and institutional resources. Ates [26] emphasized that inclusion is not merely about the physical integration of students with SEN into mainstream classrooms but about profoundly transforming school culture, policies, and practices, which requires transformative teacher training.

A mapping of continuing education programs in the Asia-Pacific region showed a high level of need for mentorship and specific support for in-service teachers Graves et al. [27]. Boulware et al. [28] demonstrated a relationship between low initial training and more vulnerable feelings of efficacy, particularly regarding student engagement strategies. They also found that current non-inclusive programs do not expand the identification of needs or the mobilization of specialists, illustrating how public-school teachers struggle to implement effective support.

**Table 4.**

Importance of Teacher Training.

<b>Importance of teacher training</b>			
	<b>Author</b>	<b>Year of publication</b>	<b>Country</b>
1	Bar and Kiimhi [24]	2025	Israel
2	Gal et al. [25]	2025	Israel
3	Graves et al. [27]	2022	United States
4	Boulware et al. [28]	2022	United States
5	Ates [26]	2021	United States

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusions

Under these conditions, Universal Design for Learning emerges as the key pedagogical intervention that helps all categories of students, upholding the principles of equity and adaptation in education. The relevance of this approach lies in the fact that UDL not only explores human diversity but also promotes its active participation as a resource for creating meaningful educational experiences. Instead of viewing individual differences as obstacles, UDL uses them as a foundation for building more inclusive and effective learning environments. According to current research, including systematic reviews from 2023 to 2025, when combined with other approaches like the Flipped Classroom, UDL can significantly improve material comprehension and retention, with statistics showing a 20% to 30% increase in educational performance in one program.

Individualized curricular adaptation, on the other hand, is an essential component for achieving education for students with SEN. Through this tool, content and methodology are adjusted based on the particularities of each student, ensuring fair and equitable access to formal education. The reviewed literature, comprising works from the United States, India, China, Greece, and Saudi Arabia, offers valuable contributions. When teaching approaches like UDL are meaningfully included in the curricular structure and complemented with active learning techniques, performance outcomes become optimal. Motivation, autonomy, and student participation are guaranteed. Consequently, education through interactive digital environments and adaptive technological platforms substantially improves teaching for students with sensory, cognitive, and autism spectrum disabilities.

In this sense, collaborative work is presented from a new perspective as a key tool to support students with different special characteristics. Collaboration is built through the articulation of different specialties and professionals acting within the school environment. Generally, teachers, specialists, and families form the most appropriate educational response team. These teams may include therapists and psychologists, among others, who organize to offer more personalized and effective support adapted to each particular situation.

In summary, teacher training focused on inclusion is one of the most pressing challenges and necessary changes in contemporary education. The creative use of new designs to provide future teachers with a new set of theoretical and practical tools to face classroom diversity will not only



consolidate teaching but also humanize it. However, despite the aforementioned advances, considerable gaps remain in initial and continuing training programs, especially regarding the technical, emotional, and pedagogical support that in-service teachers require. Continued training, raising subjective self-efficacy, and committing to a new school culture are challenges that have not yet been overcome. Teacher training for inclusion is not just about technology; it is an ethical commitment to a school of justice, understanding, and accessibility for all.

### Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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