

DIVERSITY AND RESEARCH IN SPANISH UNIVERSITIES. WEAKNESSES, STRENGTHS, AND GOOD PRACTICES FOR INCLUSIVE RESEARCH

Carmen-María Hernández-Lloret

Department of Education, University of Córdoba
C. San Alberto Magno, s/n, Poniente Sur, 14071 Córdoba, Spain
E-mail address: m32hellc@uco.es
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4565-5417>

José-Luis Álvarez-Castillo

Department of Education, University of Córdoba
C. San Alberto Magno, s/n, Poniente Sur, 14071 Córdoba, Spain
E-mail address: jlalvarez@uco.es
ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7493-4664>

Luis Espino-Díaz

Department of Education, University of Córdoba
C. San Alberto Magno, s/n, Poniente Sur, 14071 Córdoba, Spain
E-mail address: luis.espino@uco.es
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9929-6889>

Hugo González-González

Department of Education, University of Córdoba
C. San Alberto Magno, s/n, Poniente Sur, 14071 Córdoba, Spain
E-mail address: hugo.gonzalez@uco.es
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7537-1514>

Gemma Fernández-Caminero

Department of Education, University of Córdoba
C. San Alberto Magno, s/n, Poniente Sur, 14071 Córdoba, Spain
E-mail address: gemma.fernandez@uco.es
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2241-9104>

ABSTRACT

Aim. Diversity and inclusion are part of the third mission of higher education institutions. One of the dimensions that must be considered in the process of institutionalising inclusion is research. Inclusive research allows for critical research and reflection on certain fundamental issues on the road to democratic citizenship, making a positive impact on people's lives while contributing to social change and transformation. However, the literature has evidenced barriers in the institutionalisation effort, such as those posed by the market conception. In this context, the study presented here analyses the involvement of higher education research with diversity, as well as its weaknesses and strengths, and finally contributes to the identification of proposals for improvement and good practices for inclusive research.

Methods. This work was based on assumptions of the interpretative paradigm, using virtual, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with Spanish researchers from different universities –most of them leading national projects on inclusion.

Results. The results show that research on diversity is beginning to be incorporated as an essential modality in university agendas. In parallel, it is thought that academic capitalism and competitiveness have pierced conceptions of research quality, and in doing so, diversity and inclusion principles are called into question.

Conclusions. Currently, the strengths of inclusion research in higher education are not as robust as the weaknesses. Proposals are made for the improvement of inclusive and democratic research, and four principles are set out to promote the institutionalisation of research on inclusion in universities.

Keywords: higher education, diversity, good practice, inclusive research, Spain

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive research allows for critical research and reflection on certain fundamental issues on the road to democratic citizenship, making a positive impact on people's lives while contributing to social change and transformation (Nind, 2014; Walmsley et al., 2018). In addition, this research adds value in terms of quality, considering access to information and its analysis, as well as the potential of its results, and in relation to the people involved or around whom research plans and projects are guided and designed (Walmsley et al., 2018). In this inclusive endeavour, universities have an important role as part of their social responsibility, specifically through their third mission or social mission. The activities associated with this mission that shape a committed or civic university (García-Gutiérrez & Corrales, 2021) (e.g., responsible innovation, dissemination, development) must be integrated with those aimed at fulfilling the first two missions of university institutions, related to teaching and research (Pinheiro et al., 2015; Vorley & Nelles, 2008). Thus, for example, the second strategic plan (2025-

2027) of the 9th European Union Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (Horizon Europe, 2021-2027) links research to challenges such as inclusiveness and cultural heritage (European Commission, 2024).

In line with these initial ideas, this article explores the following research questions, which will be addressed by means of an interpretative approach: how is the current status of research on diversity and inclusion viewed in Spanish universities? What are the weaknesses and strengths, according to key informants, of the Spanish research system on diversity and inclusion? And what possible improvements or best practices can be identified for more inclusive research? Most of our informants were researchers from Spanish universities who are leading state R&D/Innovation projects on diversity and inclusion in higher education. In any case, all of them have been involved with or participated in such projects.

The theoretical framework, methodological approach, interview-based results, and most salient conclusions are presented below in the following sections.

Institutionalisation of Diversity within Universities

Higher education has been undergoing significant changes in terms of openness and access to different groups or personal identities (Rivera-Sanin, 2016). Even so, today there are individuals or social groups who, because of certain personal or historical-social and cultural circumstances or characteristics, are barely heard even though their “voices” demand the right to participate in society or in certain institutions and decry the need to break certain patterns of behaviour or attitudes that are contrary to the principles of equality. Hence, the social challenge of responding to diversity is among the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of its Agenda 2030 (Márquez & Melero, 2023). In this regard, the European Commission (n.d.) is in favour of meeting the challenge of diversity in the field of higher education: “Higher education must play its part in tackling Europe’s social and democratic challenges. This means ensuring that higher education is inclusive and that its institutions are well connected to their communities” (para. 5). The trend towards inclusion has intensified in European higher education during the last years (BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension, 2024; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2022).

Thus, the social role of universities comes to the fore, as emblematic higher education institutions in this mission of social responsibility (Evans et al., 2019; Santos-Rego, 2020). However, global social challenges and problems or demands that have to do with the third mission of universities can also be interpreted from an economic position that opposes civic-social interpretation (Álvarez-Castillo et al., 2021), but which is consistent with a type of enterprising university interested in economic development through the commercialisation of knowledge in favour of neoliberal market policies (García-Gutiérrez & Corrales, 2021). In this probably hegemonic type of model,

institutions tackle diversity in a rhetorical way by building what James M. Thomas (2020) has called “diversity regimes”, that are not associated with a truly transformative paradigm (García-Cano Torrico et al., 2024). On the other hand, according to María-Jesús Martínez-Usarralde et al. (2024), “the wellbeing of students, the mutual enrichment for teachers and the promotion of University Social Responsibility are all caught between the lack of training to tackle diversity and the lack of awareness and perception of increased workload among teachers” (p. 295).

Therefore, and with a view to globalising how to tackle with diversity and inclusion in higher education institutions, and thus its impact on all areas of society, its institutionalisation is valued, understood as a process through which diversity occupies a space between policies, practices, and institutional culture, thus guiding the actions of those who live within it.

In this sense, there are a number of dimensions or areas to consider within a process of institutionalisation (Buenestado-Fernandez et al., 2019; New England Resource Center for Higher Education, 2016), including research. One study that set out to identify inclusive policies and practices in Spanish universities confirmed the significant association between research and institutional declarations, but this proved to be the area of inclusive practice with the lowest level of implementation (Álvarez-Castillo et al., 2021), which raises questions about the difficulties researchers face in initiating and consolidating lines of inclusive research.

Diversity in the Regulations Governing Research in Spain

Currently, within Spain’s national legislative system, the main documents governing research in university institutions at state level (Law 14/2011, of 1 June, on Science, Technology and Innovation; the Spanish Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy 2021-2027 [*Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación*, 2021]; and the State Plan for Scientific and Technical Research and Innovation [*Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades*, 2024]) subtly include the term diversity. However, the concept of (social) inclusion is sometimes incorporated, mainly alongside disability, on the one hand, when it refers in general terms to facilitating access to persons with disabilities and linked to the development of the principles of universal digital accessibility; and alongside gender, on the other hand. In addition, among the general objectives of Law 14/2011, of 1 June, on Science, Technology and Innovation, one of them is included in relation to inclusion and disability: Encourage innovation and applied research in the development of environments, products, services, and provisions that guarantee the principles of inclusion, universal accessibility, design for all, and independent living in favour of persons with disabilities or in situations of dependence or vulnerability (article 2, para. o).

In addition, the content of the three above-mentioned pieces of legislation gives relevance to gender in pursuing the promotion of equality and its cross-cutting dimen-

sion in research, that is, the incorporation of a gender perspective, closing the gender gap in science and engineering, as well as overcoming imbalances in women's access and promotion both throughout their research careers and in evaluation commissions, committees and bodies for the management and governance of the State Plan and the funding associated with it (*Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades*, 2024). Furthermore, it indicates the need to avoid discrimination in access to funding on the grounds of gender, age, or any other personal or social situation as set out in the Law on Science, Technology, and Innovation (specifically, birth, race, and religion are incorporated). Given the necessary importance attached to gender in research, the thirteenth additional provision of this Law introduces certain matters for the implementation of the gender perspective as a cross-cutting element of innovation and research (*Presidencia del Gobierno de España*, 2011).

The State Plan for Scientific and Technical Research and Innovation 2024-2027 and the Spanish Strategy for Science and Technology and Innovation 2021-2027 include several programmes or modalities that promote the development of research projects from which other sub-programmes and initiatives emerge around a series of themes and strategic lines that correspond to clusters in the Horizon Europe programme. These include “Culture, Creativity, and Inclusive Society” and “Security for Society”, which pertain to diversity issues to some extent when they refer to multiculturalism, gender equality and protection for vulnerable groups. Likewise, axis number 14 of the Spanish Strategy for Science and Technology and Innovation refers to the promotion of open and inclusive science and innovation.

Inclusive and Interdisciplinary Research as Good Democratic Practice

As reviewed here, the regulatory framework governing research associates the treatment of diversity with democratic principles, followed by the progressive implementation of good democratic research practices in institutions. The concept of good practice is developed in the following way by Tiina Mäkelä and Hannu Puuponen (2017) in the context of the European project Acces4all, that supports the increase in the participation of under-represented groups in higher education:

Practice refers to performing habitually or customarily a specific technique, method, process, activity, policy or strategy. To be a good practice, a practice has to serve the desired purpose better than an average practice. Good practice differs from the best practices in the sense that it is a common practice that works, something that is actually practised, while the best practice is something that surpasses all others in excellence but may not yet be very commonly practiced (p. 41).

Likewise, Joan Jordi Muntaner Guasp et al. (2016) discuss the difficulty of giving a canonical definition of good practice but refer to the term as “something that works

and has achieved the expected results” (p. 8). In addition, these authors specify certain traits that characterise and delimit good practices: innovative, effective, sustainable, and replicable. However, when we refer to research, the definition of good practice is more complex, given the diversity of paradigms (Yadav, 2022).

Despite the difficulty of characterising quality research, when the focus is inclusive, the work of generating knowledge appears as good democratic practice that addresses diversity considering principles of equity and social justice (Murillo & Duk, 2018; Verhage et al., 2024). This type of research is based on an ethical and moral culture (Groot et al., 2023), and oriented towards social transformation (Murillo & Duk, 2018), assuming a respectful and collaborative methodology between researchers and the people who are the focus of the research (Vlot-van Anrooij et al., 2022).

Furthermore, it is committed to an interdisciplinary perspective in its reflections on diversity and the processes for its investigation because of its greater potential to bring benefits to society (Álvarez-Bornstein & Montesi, 2020). This “inclusive” and interdisciplinary research is deemed to be desirable, but for it to be realised on a practical level, this type of inquiry must be consistent with the conceptions of the actors. The qualitative study reported below focuses precisely on clarifying the discourse of researchers about investigations into diversity (conceptions, strengths and weaknesses, and proposals for improvement).

METHOD

The study was carried out on the basis of two sequenced methodological phases:

- *In the first phase*, in order to identify state research projects (R&D/Innovation) aimed at diversity and inclusion in higher education, as well as key informants linked to them, an ex post facto and cross-sectional design was developed, based on the registration and analysis of documents retrieved from the web portal of the Ministry of Science and Innovation and the Ministry of Universities in Spain (R&D/Innovation projects granted under the “Research Challenges” modality for the period 2015-2019).
- *In the second phase*, in order to ascertain conceptions about research in Spanish universities and its involvement with diversity, as well as its possible strengths and weaknesses, and proposals for improvement, a descriptive-exploratory design was adopted within the interpretative, cross-cutting paradigm based on interviews.

Participants

In total, five key informants in relation to diversity and inclusion research (three women and two men) from the university sector participated. They were selected by means of theoretical or intentional sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), as a result

of the endeavour to identify a fundamental theme. Specifically, following a review of the R&D/Innovation research projects approved and financed under the “Research Challenges” modality during 2015-2019, based on keywords (sought in their titles: “diversity”, “inclusion” and “higher education” [or university]), a total of four projects (three at university level, and one open to vocational training) were identified. Furthermore, since no project was identified in some of the calls with the agreed search characteristics, the granting of projects in the “Knowledge Generation” modality was reviewed, and one more project was identified. However, of the principal researchers who had led such projects, only three agreed to be interviewed.

In addition, using the “snowball” data collection technique (Naderifar, et al., 2017), two other key researchers in the area of diversity and inclusion in higher education were accessed even though they were not principal researchers.

Below we summarise the main socio-professional characteristics related to gender, age, affiliated institution, years of service at university, professional category, and whether or not they were principal investigators (see Table 1). Participants are teaching and research staff with an average career of 25.4 years within their university, and a senior professional category.

Table 1

Socio-professional characteristics of the researchers involved in the study and identification of the interviews

Interview identifica- tion code	Gender	Age	University	Years of service	Profes- sional category	Research area	PI R&D/ Innovation Project (Challenges/ Generation)
P1	F	50	Universidad de Burgos	20	AP	Diversity management and affective-sexual and emotional education	Yes. Challenges
P2	M	58	Universidad de Valencia	32/33	FP	Physical and sports activity with vulnerable groups	Yes. Knowledge generation
P3	F	45	Universidad de Sevilla	19	FP	Higher educa- tion, inclusive education, and disability	Yes. Challenges

Interview identifica- tion code	Gender	Age	University	Years of service	Profes- sional category	Research area	PI R&D/ Innovation Project (Challenges/ Generation)
P4	M	60	Universidad de Vallad- olid	25	AP	Education: education for peace, in human rights, democratic education, his- torical education from the first third of the twentieth century and the second republic, pedagogical renewal	No
P5	F	63	Universitat de les Illes Balears (UIB)	30	AP	Inclusive schooling and diversity	No

Note. Gender: F = Female; M = Male. Professional category: FP = Full Professor; AP = Associate Professor.

Source. Own research.

Procedures

We first contacted the informants by e-mail in the two phases of the selection process described above. The five participants who eventually agreed to take part were interviewed for about an hour, after signing the informed consent for the research. Therefore, a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix A) was used to access in-depth information on diversity and inclusion and the incorporation of these concepts into research, weaknesses and strengths, and proposals for improvement or good practice towards inclusive research. Some examples of questions were “What do you understand by research?”, “What does it mean for you to research diversity and inclusion in higher education?”, “What do you think are the main ‘weaknesses’ of research on diversity and inclusion in higher education?”, “What would be the ‘strengths’?”. At the end of each interview, participants were invited to add additional comments, suggestions, or answers to questions that they thought should have been asked in relation to the subject being studied. The interviews were conducted online through the “Zoom” videoconferencing platform. The audio was recorded (with prior authorisation) and transcribed verbatim.

Below is a schematic representation of the procedure used to obtain information in the study (Figure 1).

dence-based activity to analyse reality, seek answers and possible solutions or proposals to improve problems (social, theoretical, academic) or uncertain circumstances, or to respond to new questions, challenges, or social demands. In this regard, some point out that the social relevance of research around these global challenges or demands is given by the interests of the international market and a largely utilitarian and immediate nature in the face of social concerns that are most relevant in the long term (Colina, 2007).

Well, research answers the questions that society raises and the challenges that society has posed according to demands and many other variables. In this case, unfortunately, those of international markets. Europe wants you to research square wheels, and you have to research square wheels. Now we have the pandemic, because if you think about it, (...) everything is related to the pandemic. (P1)

According to Carlos Tünnermann Bernheim (2006), the relevance of research has to do with the essence of universities and the desirable image of them. Research in higher education is aimed at responding to the needs and main challenges of society, in such a way that as new historical challenges arise, universities and the research carried out in them are adapted to face them (Geiger, 2020).

Thus, in the interests of choosing to meet new research interests and social needs, one of the study's informants talks about undertaking "inclusive research", which is still rare at the terminological or conceptual level (Nind, 2014), and to which the other informants also allude in the course of the interviews.

For the other... That is why there is so much talk now about inclusive research, which would be very respectful of that and above all making sure what is offered can contribute to change, because otherwise we lose our way. We have already lost it and we have to recover it, if we ever had it. I'm not entirely certain we ever had it. (P5)

From this inclusive point of view, and according to the discourse of these informants, research must be transformative (Kenny et al., 2023; Murillo & Duk, 2018; Nind & Lewthwaite, 2018) and critical (Echeíta et al., 2014; Kubota, 2022), based on a responsible, sustainable, and committed ideological and ethical culture (on a personal and social level), in which different social actors are integrated and involved (Iáñez-Domínguez et al., 2021). Furthermore, on the question research topics, decisions are essential that may affect, on the one hand, the choice of the topic and, on the other hand, the research methodologies adopted. According to the type of decision, and along the lines of Kenneth Howe and Michele S. Moses (1999) and F. Javier Murillo and Cunthia Duk (2018), the informants expressed on several occasions, and even as one of the main weaknesses of diversity research, in conjunction with a structural problem of the university as an institution, that the issues addressed are those which are relevant in terms of funding or which may have a high media and academic impact or high publication rate, and therefore such decisions do not fall to the participants

themselves who carry out the study, also contributing to the generation of relationships based on competitiveness:

In general, I am tired, in general, of researching, of the... the whole university system, the structural problem there is, that we have lost our way with research in terms of impact, hours and hours and hours doing a project, presenting it, so that later, a year and a half later, certain journals tell you no. (P1)

“Because we do not cover, we are, we have built a research industry and a scientific industry around articles that no one will read, research that is not actually useful” (P1). “(...) the system of working in the university already makes you to conduct research that is competitive and forces you to get vaccinated against the virus... not of cooperation but of competitiveness” (P4).

In the first statement above, moreover, the female researcher expresses her tiredness. The literature has also analysed the issue of the impact of workload on inclusion in university, showing how groups that have historically been abolished in terms of power (e.g., women) may find themselves subjected to work overload that they perceive as unfair and inequitable (Misra et al., 2021). In fact, in work environments other than universities, it has also been shown how women can be more cognitively committed and involved for longer and with more effort in tasks that are not directly valued in promotion processes (e.g., Nelson et al., 2023).

However, these informants value and deal primarily with the topic of diversity and inclusion in their research, as this is an activity in which they are involved (intrinsic motivation) and are supported by offices, services, or units that are sensitive to diversity within or outside the university, and in relation to which they believe they should strive beyond this capitalist or neo-liberal policy focused on principles of productivity and academic excellence. Among them, there are those who mainly research at the school level and those who do so exclusively in higher education.

Furthermore, according to the research methodology used in the process of collecting information, interpretative methods are highlighted over other more objective and rationalist ones (Murillo & Duk, 2018; Subban et al., 2022). However, some of the study's informants emphasise that both methodologies (qualitative and quantitative) are complementary to each other, providing different and enriching information, and allowing the subject matter studied to be addressed from a broader analytical perspective. In this sense, research on inclusive education continues to opt for a multitude of approaches and methods (Echeíta et al., 2014; Subban et al., 2022).

Research (State Plans and Project Participation)

In order to evaluate research on diversity and inclusion in higher education, questions were asked throughout the interview to find out more about this issue and its vis-

ibility through, in particular, calls for state R&D/Innovation projects, or other projects promoted by the university itself. Information is also collected on the development of collaborative research projects between public and private institutions.

Informants include those who have participated in state projects in the “Research Challenges” mode, either as principal researchers or as team members, to address the Six Challenge on Inclusive Societies, and state that these calls meet criteria of parity, in terms of gender and disability, as well as the degree of interdisciplinarity in the configuration of research teams, and that these criteria are taken into account during the evaluation process for subsequent funding. This information on the gender and disability parity of the research team coincides with the policy review set out in the literature review section. Almost unanimously, however, the informants said that the development of projects aimed at tackling the social challenge of inclusion is not encouraged in these calls. One informant, however, thinks that they are, according to her experience as an Education Manager at the State Research Agency (AEI), and states that it is done both through the “Research Challenges” and the “Knowledge Generation” modalities, with the former assuming a greater social and economic impact.

With regard to the issuing of calls for specific research projects on diversity in the informants’ respective university institutions, very few proposals are published and, according to one informant, they are even mediated and promoted by specific people for whom the granting of the project is assured. Furthermore, some state that their university does not issue calls of this kind or any other, but is interested in any topic being investigated, perhaps for reasons of funding, without adopting a clear policy that prioritises diversity. Therefore, and according to José Manuel Pingarrón and Francisco García Pascual (2021), in order for universities to respond efficiently to the new paradigms, logics, and social and academic needs or challenges, it is deemed essential to design an institutional regulatory framework developed through academic, social, and political consensus that brings greater stability and structural support to more inclusive research. Furthermore, as part of this institutional regulation, research conducted through public-private partnerships could be incorporated, as encouraged by Spanish strategic policies. Along these lines, some consider it important to ensure the transfer of knowledge to society.

Well yes, it would be interesting, of course (...) because... I understand that if there is commitment on the part of some... social entity or the world outside the university, I think there will be more possibilities to... reach society in the broad sense, right? The community, that is why I think it is important, but I believe that structures do not favour it, eh, that is another issue, I don’t believe ... that connection is not so easy, in general, eh, I’m not saying it only because of the issue of diversity and... but yes, it would be interesting. (P2)

On the other hand, some point out that serving private interests is given in exchange for something charitable or in terms of welfare, or marketing.

Well, public-private collaboration is very good, but, in reality, it involves, as has been the case, a colonisation of the university so that it serves private interests in exchange for something charitable or in terms of welfare (...). Or marketing, it is given to people who do the research because then... (P4)

It depends on the type of private... because I don't know. It is not that I... (...) I am not afraid of the private-public issue, but of the intentions that may be behind it and the use made, etc., because we should analyse it thoroughly because of all that is unseen (...). If it is not covered by the government... the public sector, well, the private sector, but with restrictions, and exploring depth what there is and what is private, and which private organisation is there, or what you are getting into, if they're meddling in your research, what demands they will make if they are not explicit, etc. In short, not at any, at any price. (P5)

Strengths of Research on Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education

Based on the interviews carried out, the following strengths are highlighted for research around diversity and inclusion at university:

- Large body of professionals and researchers in all areas, as well as very competitive research teams with the desire to research;
- Attracting major talent abroad;
- In the field of education, greater sensitivity to diversity research is detected;
- Increasing awareness of diversity (for example, greater sensitivity around research into diversity in higher education), as an integrated dimension of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) (United Nations, 2015);
- The thematic area of diversity is part of the 9th European Union Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (Horizon Europe, 2021-2027);
- Compensation for possible shortfalls by the university itself, as happens in the case of non-funding of regional or state research;
- Increased presence of women developing their careers in research;
- Increased presence of research groups that guide their studies around diversity in higher education and do so in many different ways;
- Research on diversity and inclusion is incorporated into the university agenda (however, from a leadership point of view, María García-Cano Torrico et al. (2021, 2024) underline the impact of adopting different conceptual approaches to diversity in the bid for inclusion of a particular agenda);
- Research is seen as an opportunity that opens our minds and allows us to better understand the world around us;
- Use of different research methodologies that provide well-analysed evidence.

Weaknesses of Research on Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education

The main limitation that emerges from the information collected in the interviews is academic capitalism and competitiveness, associated with the assessment of impact indices attributed to researchers and publication sources, to which all areas of knowledge are subjected equally, as well as the requirements for publishing in Open Access. These issues are seen as contrary to moral and ethical principles, particularly in the area of diversity and inclusion. Greater consideration for the transfer and social impact of research results is seen as advisable, ensuring research findings are returned to those participating in the investigation (Murillo & Hidalgo, 2017). This implies the need to change research policies, which should be more oriented towards social transformation, and this presupposes effective community participation (Fairey et al., 2024).

In addition, other weaknesses mentioned include the following:

- Loss of great professionals and researchers due to the conditions of a career in research and its leadership;
- Lack of reflection on practice, an issue that authors such as Gerardo Echeíta Sarronanandia and Mel Ainscow (2011) highlight as part of an active process of open and critical investigation towards more inclusive research. This issue is related to the need for developing strong theoretical frameworks in the area of inclusive education (Nilholm, 2021);
- Lack of funding, although some do not agree entirely with this, stating that projects that are not entirely eligible for funding are still being financed on the basis of irrelevant issues and questions that have already been answered;
- Lack of support for internationalisation (for example, lack of support in the design of websites for research groups and projects that make work visible outside of the institution itself);
- Lack of support resources in the leadership of research projects, as university faculty have a triple role as teacher, researcher, and manager. This is noted by some participants with different leadership positions in the study by Josefa Rodríguez Pulido and María Victoria Aguiar Perera (2015) when they allude to the lack of legal advice in the procedures to be followed, perhaps due to a diffuse institutional organisation and a lack of training. The barriers identified in leadership would be even more present in the case of women (Mezia-Mejia et al., 2023). On the other hand, in research leadership, women can develop tasks related to collaborative work, openness to the community or caring that are not clearly identified as part of their role as leaders (Wagner & Acker, 2024);
- Lack of support and priority that diversity receives as a relevant research topic;
- Limited relevance of the dissemination and discussion of research, as well as the absence of dialogue forums or meeting spaces, which contributes to a lack of knowledge about other researchers (from other universities) working on similar topics (these forums are also evaluated by Pinheiro et al., 2015). How to address the challenges posed by the need for dissemination of research results is a relevant concern for researchers because

the improvement of the lives of vulnerable populations is at stake (Parent-Johnson & Duncan, 2024);

- Excess of sociocultural networks in which a lot of time is spent updating personal academic curricula;
- The quantitative methodological approach to research ignores the voices of vulnerable individuals or groups compared a more qualitative or interpretative type of research. In this sense, qualitative research incorporates participation and practical orientation to a greater extent (Jones et al., 2021);
- Lack of opportunities to research and access the university or few calls for research projects on diversity promoted by the university;
- Lack of attention to the needs of smaller universities or institutions, whose research groups have to collaborate with those of other universities to be better valued by the system;
- Tendency to value impact publications in English more positively in terms of quality;
- A tendency to focus research about diversity at university on students, ignoring other groups (for example, administration staff).

Proposals for Improvement or Good Practice for Inclusive and Democratic Research

In particular, following analysis of the interviews, and considering the weaknesses mentioned above, the following proposals were identified on the basis of the information gathered:

- Reflection or introspection about the research practice itself.
- The evaluation of policies and the design of research policies that promote and guide practice towards social transformation (e.g., the principles advocated by the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment [DORA: <https://sfedora.org/read>], which chooses to place emphasis on the quality of research and not on the supposed quality of the publication sources, become more relevant; see also the guiding principles of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment: <https://coara.eu/coalition/guiding-principles/>).
- Diversity training for university chancellors, who should reflect this issue in their action plans.
- Improvement of financial resources, as well as human resources (i.e., “new blood” or young people with a lot of enthusiasm and innovative ideas –one of the informants’ notes).
- The use of research methodologies that have a social impact and an impact on the current system governing universities.
- The design of proposals for academic research awards (undergraduate and master’s dissertations, and PhD theses) that stimulate both direct and indirect research around diversity.
- The improvement of channels for the dissemination and circulation of diversity research through the creation of networks or forums.
- Support for leadership of research projects.

- Proposals for research projects on diversity and inclusion in higher education that take other members of the education community, in addition to students, as study participants.
- In addition, during the interviews, after presenting informants with improvement proposals in addition to those already discussed above, they prioritise interdisciplinary collaboration, networking once again, leadership in diversity and inclusion, and the inclusion of diversity as a cross-cutting variable in any research.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Through this study, we have been able to ascertain the conceptions that experienced researchers in Spanish universities have about research and its involvement with diversity and inclusion, accessing this knowledge through a critical analysis of its strengths and weaknesses.

The main strength emphasised is that this type of research is starting to be incorporated into the university agenda and is seen as a useful mode that brings us closer to society and to the people who live in it. As a counterpoint, it is thought that academic capitalism and competitiveness (for example, in terms of demands for publication in high-impact journals or in open access journals with article processing charges) have strongarmed their way into conceptions of research quality, disagreeing with the emphasis in quantitative productivity – publication as the ultimate goal of research – that generates widespread discontent (Batterham, 2004) and does not respond to moral and ethical principles. A thematic area of research with such an ethical nature as inclusive education would have to have a practical orientation from the very moment of its design (Felder, 2021).

As the main implication of the study, a series of improvement proposals and good practices were identified that could be implemented under a series of principles to promote the institutionalisation of research on diversity and inclusion in higher education. In particular, four principles are set out:

Democratic or distributed leadership that is conscientious of research on inclusive diversity in search of social impact *vs.* globalised meritocratic impact.

- Clear research policies actively oriented towards social transformation and the configuration of a responsible university that is ethically committed to its third mission.
- Competencies for inclusive research (for example, training on how to include or address diversity as a cross-cutting variable in the definition and development of contents and procedures for any research from a democratic and critical position).
- Evaluation of the quality of research on inclusive diversity leadership (for example, consideration of interdisciplinary participation in research projects and publications on diversity and inclusion in accreditation processes of researchers in areas other than those in the social and legal sciences, or humanities).

Finally, this study presents certain limitations, which we should point out, related to the final number of participants. However, the information derived from the interviews enabled saturation point to be reached or, according to Daniel Bertaux (1993), the point from which the empirical work of the research can be completed, since nothing new appears, in this case, in terms of knowledge of the weaknesses and strengths of research on diversity and inclusion at university (see also Mwita, 2022). In future research, it would be interesting, on the one hand, to identify and analyse institutional research policies of universities in Europe and other parts of the world, as well as the degree of their involvement in diversity and, on the other hand, to ascertain the discourse of key informants about their theoretical positions and research methodologies in the field of diversity in higher education. Although we know that multiple theoretical and methodological approaches are being applied to this type of research (Echeíta et al., 2014; Subban et al., 2022), we still lack a comprehensive view of theories and methods that are most impacting vulnerable participants and, therefore, democratic societies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Authors would like to thank for the grant support from the Spain's Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities (project number EDU2017-82862-R). C. M. Hernández-Lloret would like to express her gratitude for PhD Scholarship awarded by the Spain's Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities (grant number FPU2017/02463), where she took her thesis.

REFERENCES

- Álvarez-Bornstein, B., & Montesi, M. (2020). Investigación interdisciplinaria e impacto social [Interdisciplinary research and social impact]. *Análisis de medios sociales. Información, cultura y sociedad*, 42, 127–144. <https://doi.org/10.34096/ics.i42.7107>
- Álvarez-Castillo, J. L., Hernández-Lloret, C. M., González-González, H., Espino-Díaz, L., & Fernández-Caminero, G. (2021). Exploring the status of diversity in policies and practices of Spanish universities. An asymmetric dual model. *Heliyon*, 7(3), Article e06450. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e06450>
- Batterham, R. (2004). Measuring excellence: A chief scientist perspective. In National Academies Forum (Ed.), *Measuring excellence in research and research training* (pp. 3–8). The Academy of Science.
- Bertaux, D. (1993). De la perspectiva de la historia de vida a la transformación de la práctica sociológica [From the perspective of life history to the transformation of sociological practice]. In J. Marinas y C. Santamaria (Ed.), *La historia oral: Métodos y experiencias [Oral history: Methods and experiences]* (pp. 19-34). Debate.
- BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension. (2024). *Principles, Guidelines and Indicators of the Social Dimension of Higher Education*. Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG), Working Group on Social Dimension 2021-2024. https://ehea.info/Immagini/BFUG_Board_BE_VA_87_WG_SD_4_4_1_Principles_Guidelines_Indicators.pdf

- Buenestado-Fernández, M., Álvarez-Castillo, J. L., González-González, H., & Espino-Díaz, L. (2019). Evaluating the institutionalisation of diversity outreach in top universities worldwide. *PLoS One*, *14*(7), Article e0219525. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0219525>
- Colina, L. (2007). La investigación en la educación superior y su aplicabilidad social [Research in higher education and its social applicability]. *Laurus. Revista de educación*, *13*(25), 330–353. <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/761/76111479016.pdf>
- Echeíta, G., Muñoz, Y., Sandoval, M., & Simón, C. (2014). Reflexionando en voz alta sobre el sentido y algunos saberes proporcionados por la investigación en el ámbito de la educación inclusiva [Reflecting aloud on the meaning and some knowledge provided by research in the field of inclusive education]. *Revista Latinoamericana de Educación Inclusiva*, *8*(2), 25–48. <http://www.rinace.net/rlei/numeros/vol8-num2/art1.pdf>
- Echeíta Sarronanandia, G., & Ainscow, M. (2011). La educación inclusiva como derecho: Marco de referencia y pautas de acción para el desarrollo de una revolución pendiente [Inclusive education as a right: framework and guidelines for action for the development of a pending revolution]. *Tejuelo*, *12*, 26–46. <https://tejuelo.unex.es/index.php/tejuelo/article/view/2497>
- European Commission. (n.d.). *Inclusive and connected higher education*. <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/inclusive-and-connected-higher-education>
- European Commission. (2024). *Horizon Europe strategic plan 2025-2027*. Publications Office of the European Union. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/092911>
- European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice. (2022). *Towards equity and inclusion in higher education in Europe. Eurydice report*. Publications Office of the European Union. <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/publications/towards-equity-and-inclusion-higher-education-europe>
- Evans, C., Rees, G., Taylor, C., & Wright, C. (2019). ‘Widening Access’ to higher education: the reproduction of university hierarchies through policy enactment. *Journal of Education Policy*, *34*(1), 101–116. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2017.1390165>
- Fairey, T., Firchow, P., & Dixon, P. (2024). Images and indicators: mixing participatory methods to build inclusive rigour. *Action Research*, *22*(2), 135-154. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14767503221137851>
- Felder, F. (2021). *The ethics of inclusive education: Presenting a new theoretical framework*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003221326>
- García-Cano Torrico, M., Jiménez-Millán, A., & Hinojosa-Pareja, E. F. (2021). We’re new to this. Diversity agendas in public Spanish universities according to their leaders. *The Social Science Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03623319.2020.1859818>
- García-Cano Torrico, M., Jiménez-Millán, A., & Hinojosa-Pareja, E.F. (2024). Talking for the sake of talking? Imagining inclusive universities in Spain through their leaders. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2024.2335377>
- García-Gutiérrez, J., & Corrales, C. (2021). Las políticas supranacionales de educación superior ante la «tercera misión» de la Universidad: El caso del aprendizaje-servicio [Supranational higher education policies in the face of the university’s “third mission”: The case of service-learning]. *Revista Española de Educación Comparada*, *37*, 256–280. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5944/reec.37.2021.27535>
- Geiger, R.L. (2020). Building knowledge: The research mission in American universities, 1890–2018. In L. Engwall (Ed.), *Missions of universities. Higher education dynamics* (Vol. 55, pp. 81-93). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41834-2_6
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory. Strategies for qualitative research*. Aldine Publishing.
- Groot, B., Hendriks, A., Bendien, E., Woelders, S., de Kock, L., & Abma, T. (2023). In search of epistemic justice. Dialogical reflection of researchers on situated ethics in studies with people living with language and/or cognitive impairment. *Journal of Aging Studies*, *66*, Article 101154. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2023.101154>
- Howe, K., & Moses, M. S. (1999). Ethics in educational research. *Review of Research in Education*, *24*(1), 21–59. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X024001021>
- Iáñez-Domínguez, A., Díaz-Jiménez, R., & Rodríguez-Izquierdo, R. M. (2021). Perception of social actors about diversity policies in Spanish universities. *Convergencia. Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, *28*, Article e16662. <https://doi.org/10.29101/crcs.v28i0.16662>

- Jones, S.R., Torres, V., & Arminio, J. (2021). *Negotiating the complexities of qualitative research in higher education: Essential elements and issues* (3rd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003090694>
- Kenny, N., Doyle, A., & Horgan, F. (2023). Transformative inclusion: differentiating qualitative research methods to support participation for individuals with complex communication or cognitive profiles. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221146992>
- Kubota, R. (2022). Linking research to transforming the real world: Critical language studies for the next 20 years. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 20(1), 4–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15427587.2022.2159826>
- Mäkelä, T., & Puupponen, H. (2017). Good practices for improving access, retention and success in Higher Education. In F. Dovigo and L. Casanova (Eds.), *Good practices for equity and inclusion in Higher Education* (pp. 40-55). University of Bergamo. <https://aisberg.unibg.it/handle/10446/80642>
- Márquez, C., & Melero, N. (2023). Advancing towards inclusion: recommendations from faculty members of Spanish universities. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 27(4), 556–570. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1858977>
- Martínez-Usarralde, M.J., Lloret-Catalá, C., García-Cano, M. & Jiménez-Millán, A. (2024). Imagining inclusion in the university setting: Plural discourse among Spanish university lecturers. *Culture and Education*, 36(1), 286-311. <https://doi.org/10.1177/11356405241235080>
- Meza-Mejía M. C., Villarreal-García, M. A., & Ortega-Barba C. F. (2023). Women and leadership in higher education: A systematic review. *Social Sciences*, 12(10), Article 555. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12100555>
- Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación (2021). *Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy 2021-2027*. https://www.ciencia.gob.es/dam/jcr:1f4e85ac-9e50-49b4-a978-6c15a5195c88/EECTI-2021-2027_en.pdf
- Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades (2024). *Plan Estatal de Investigación Científica, Técnica y de Innovación 2024-2027* [State Plan for Scientific, Technical and Innovation Research 2024-2027]. <https://www.ciencia.gob.es/InfoGeneralPortal/documento/6e566243-bcb5-45d8-ab77-5cfe533060f2>
- Misra, J., Kuvaeva, A., O'meara, K., Culpepper, D. K., & Jaeger, A. (2021). Gendered and racialised perceptions of faculty workloads. *Gender & Society*, 35(3), 358-394. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08912432211001387>
- Muntaner Guasp, J. J., Roselló Ramón, M. R., & De la Iglesia Mayol, B. (2016). Buenas prácticas en educación inclusiva [Good practices in inclusive education]. *Educatio Siglo XXI*, 34(1), 31–50. <https://doi.org/10.6018/j/252521>
- Murillo, F. J., & Duk, C. (2018). Una investigación inclusiva para una educación inclusiva [Inclusive research for inclusive education]. *Revista Latinoamericana de Educación Inclusiva*, 12(2), 11–13. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0718-73782018000200011>
- Murillo, F. J., & Hidalgo, N. (2017). Hacia una investigación educativa socialmente comprometida [Towards socially engaged educational research]. *Revista Iberoamericana de Evaluación Educativa*, 10(2), 5–8. <https://revistas.uam.es/riee/article/view/8609>
- Mwita, K. (2022). Factors influencing data saturation in qualitative studies. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, 11(4), 414–420. <https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v11i4.1776>
- Naderifar, M., Goli, H., & Ghaljaie, F. (2017). Snowball sampling: A purposeful method of sampling in qualitative research. *Strides in Development of Medical Education*, 14(3), Article e67670. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5812/sdme.67670>
- Nelson, L. K., Brewer, A., Mueller, A. S., O'Connor, D. M., Dayal, A., & Arora, V. M. (2023). Taking the time: The implications of workplace assessment for organisational gender inequality. *American Sociological Review*, 88(4), 627-655. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00031224231184264>
- New England Resource Center for Higher Education, NERCHE (2016). *Self-assessment rubric for the institutionalisation of diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education*. https://www.wpi.edu/sites/default/files/Project_Inclusion_NERCHE_Rubric-Self-Assessment-2016.pdf
- Nilholm, C. (2021). Research about inclusive education in 2020 – How can we improve our theories in order to change practice? *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 36(3), 358–370. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2020.1754547>
- Nind, M. (2014). Inclusive research and inclusive education: Why connecting them makes sense for teachers' and learners' democratic development of education. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 44(4), 525–540. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2014.936825>

- Nind, M., & Lewthwaite, S. (2018). Methods that teach: Developing pedagogic research methods, developing pedagogy. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 41(4), 398–410. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2018.1427057>
- Parent-Johnson, W. S., & Duncan, A. W. (2024). Inclusive dissemination: Inclusive research dissemination with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *Inclusion*, 12(1), 75–82. <https://doi.org/10.1352/2326-6988-12.1.75>
- Pingarrón, J. M., & García Pascual, F. (2021, 28 julio). *El futuro de la educación superior en España* [The future of higher education in Spain]. <https://www.nuevarevista.net/el-futuro-de-la-educacion-superior-en-espana/>
- Pinheiro, R., Langa, P. V., & Pausits, A. (2015) One and two equals three? The third mission of higher education institutions. *European Journal of Higher Education*, 5(3), 233–249. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2015.1044552>
- Presidencia del Gobierno de España. (2011, June). *Ley de la Ciencia, la Tecnología y la Innovación* [Law on Science, Technology and Innovation] (N° 14/2011). <https://www.boe.es/eli/es/l/2011/06/01/14/con>
- Rivera-Sanin, M. L. (2016). Interseccionalidad e inclusión en la educación superior: Consideraciones sobre la Universidad Nacional de Colombia [Intersectionality and inclusion in higher education: Considerations on the National University of Colombia]. *Pedagogía y saberes*, 44, 105–118. <http://www.scielo.org.co/pdf/pys/n44/n44a10.pdf>
- Rodríguez Pulido, J., & Aguiar Perera, M. V. (2015). Fortalezas y debilidades de la gestión universitaria desde la visión de los gestores [Strengths and weaknesses of university management from the perspective of managers]. *Revista Iberoamericana de Educación*, 67(2), 67–82. <https://doi.org/10.35362/rie672227>
- Santos-Rego, M. A. (Ed.) (2020). *La transferencia de conocimiento en educación. Un desafío estratégico* [Knowledge transfer in education. A strategic challenge]. Narcea.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (2002). *Bases de la investigación cualitativa. Técnicas y procedimientos para desarrollar la teoría fundamentada* [Foundations of qualitative research. Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory] (E. Zimmerman, Trans.). Editorial Universidad de Antioquia. (Original work published 1998)
- Subban, P., Woodcoc, S., Sharma, U., & May, F. (2022). Student experiences of inclusive education in secondary schools: A systematic review of the literature. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 119, Article 103853. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2022.103853>
- Thomas, J. M. (2020). *Diversity regimes: Why talk is not enough to fix racial inequality at universities*. Rutgers University Press.
- Tünnermann Bernheim, C. (2006). *Pertinencia y calidad de la educación superior [Relevance and quality of higher education]*. Universidad Rafael Landívar (Guatemala). <https://desarrollopedagogico.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/documento-tunermann-2-2011.pdf>
- United Nations (2015, October 21). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015*. <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/70/1>
- Verhage, M., Lindenberg, J., Bussemaker, M., & Abma, T. A. (2024). The promises of inclusive research methodologies: Relational design and praxis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069241230407>
- Vlot-van Anrooij, K., Frankena, T. K., van der Cruijssen, A., Jansen, H., Naaldenberg, J., & Bevelander, K. E. (2022). Shared decision making in inclusive research: Reflections from an inclusive research team. *Learning Disabilities*, 50(4), 554–563. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bld.12450>
- Vorley, T., & J. Nelles. (2008). (Re) Conceptualising the Academy: Institutional Development of and beyond the Third Mission. *Higher Education Management and Policy*, 20(3), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1787/hemp-v20-art25-en>
- Wagner, A., & Acker, S. (2024). Women’s research leadership in the academy. In R. Johnstone and B. Momani (Eds.), *Glass ceilings and ivory towers: Gender inequality in the Canadian academy* (91–108). UBC Press.
- Walmsley, J., Strnadová, I., & Johnson, K. (2018). The added value of inclusive research. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 31, 751–759. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jar.12431>
- Yadav, D. (2022). Criteria for good qualitative research: A comprehensive review. *Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 31, 679–689. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-021-00619-0>

APPENDIX A

Semi-structured interview protocol

1. Identification data

- University:
- Name and surname:
- Age:
- Years of service at the university:
- Department / Area of Knowledge:
- Faculty:
- Call for R+D+i projects coordinated (last 5 years, 2015/2019) and project title:
- Date of the interview:
- Location of the interview:
- Researcher interviewing:
- Duration of the interview:
- Observations during the interview:

2. Interview Corpus

2.1. Conceptions of diversity and inclusion

- First of all, do you think that social diversity should be reflected in some way in our universities?
- Now, I would like to know what you mean by ‘diversity’.
- According to you, what traits are inherently included in the term diversity? What would diversity not be for you?
- What specific service(s) (units, centres within the university, delegation of the Rectorate in a responsible figure...) do you know to respond to the diversity in the university of which you are a part?
- After defining the concept of diversity, how would you understand inclusion? Are you committed to addressing diversity in an inclusive way? Do you approach your research according to the conceptions you have about these realities?

2.2. Conceptions of research and its implication in the area of diversity and inclusion

- What do you understand by research?
- What are your main lines of research? Do you belong to research networks endorsed by your university in which research is implicitly or explicitly carried out on the principle of inclusion? Would it be among your future plans to continue along these lines?
- What does it mean for you to research diversity and inclusion in higher education? (e.g. commitment and social responsibility...).
- Have you participated in calls for research projects in which diversity is explicitly alluded to?

- Do you consider the development of research projects of this type important? (Yes/No) Why?
- Have you participated as a principal researcher in any national R+D+i project apart from the one mentioned at the beginning? On how many occasions? And as a member of the research or work team? How many of these research projects revolved around diversity or inclusion in the field of higher education? Did the call for R+D+i projects that you coordinated say anything about the characteristics of the research group? (e.g. diversity among its members, gender parity...).
- Could you briefly summarise what was or is the main objective of your project?
- Does your university bet on and encourage research projects on diversity and inclusion? Are their wishes included in any institutional document? (e.g. strategic plan, diversity plan, equity plan, research regulations...). In other words, is there any political support to diversity?
- The ‘State Plan for Scientific and Technical Research and Innovation (2017/2020)’ consists of four programmes and sub-programmes, such as ‘Promotion of talent and employability in R+D+I’, ‘Generation of knowledge and Scientific and Technological Strengthening of the R+D+i System’, ‘Business Leadership in R+D+i’ and ‘Programme Oriented to the Challenges of Society’. With regard to this last programme, do you know if diversity and inclusion are challenges in today’s society? Do you have any aspects about this issue? If NO, do you think that they should be included as a means of promoting this issue in state research projects?
- Do you know of any entity (public or private) that designs and supports research projects around this reality (for example: La Caixa Social Observatory, BBVA Foundation, Universia Foundation...)? Have you ever obtained funding from two sources for the same project on diversity and inclusion in higher education? Do you consider it important to carry out projects of this type in public-private collaboration?

3. SWOT on research in the area of diversity and inclusion in higher education

- What do you think are the main ‘**weaknesses**’ of research in your institution? And at the state level? What would be the ‘**strengths**’?
- Now, what do you think are the main ‘**weaknesses**’ of research on diversity and inclusion in higher education in your institution? And at the state level? What would be the ‘**strengths**’?

4. Proposals for action

Do you know or have concrete proposals for action in the area of research around diversity and inclusion in higher education? What do you think of the following actions/initiatives?

- Leadership in diversity and inclusion research.
- Take into account the diversity in access to competitive calls for research projects (First principle of the State Program for the Promotion of Talent and its Employability in R+D+I, “Avoid discrimination, in access to aid, for reasons of age, gender/sex or any other personal

situation in the terms set out in the Science Law, Technology and Innovation, as well as in current regulations” (p.49).

- Improved funding levels.
- Promotion of training in research on AD and inclusion.
- Promotion of international research. Internationalisation.
- Promotion of collaboration networks, and dissemination and transfer agents.
- Interdisciplinary collaboration of research groups.
- Consolidation of research infrastructures, creation of ‘research ecosystems’ (Science Parks, enabling digital tools...).
- Inclusion of diversity as a relevant variable of a cross-cutting nature in the definition and development of the contents of all research.
- Professional certification and accreditation of those who carry out research on diversity and inclusion.
- After all that has been said, what more action or initiative could you add? Would you like to highlight any other aspect?

Finally, to end the interview, is there any question, experience, reflection that you want to add that you have not been asked before?