

Response to Reviewer 3 Comments

Point 1: The authors note at the outset of their paper that many studies have been conducted into teacher's attitudes to the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs (lines 85-86). But they provide little indication as to what their investigation will add to this topic. At best it will be a replication of previous findings from one region in Spain but this endeavour is deeply flawed for the following reasons. Also the authors suggest that the purpose is "to identify the barriers that hinder inclusive education" (line 119) but I saw little evidence that this was achieved.

Response 1: We have reformulated some parts of the paper to facilitate understanding of the content and the interpretation of the purpose and the analyses developed.

Point 2: The quantitative aspect of the study uses a rating scale that has been developed by the authors and piloted with an unknown number of respondents (line 164). However no details are provided of the psychometric properties of the scale nor was any confirmatory factor analysis undertaken with the much larger sample recruited to the present study. In particular, test-retest statistics are not reported nor is the percentage of variance reported for the three factors and the item loadings. No comparisons of the findings from this study can be made or imputed with previous research when very different measures are used.

Response 2: The instrument was broader and was validated in a larger study, with a larger number of participants in the sample. We have only tested one of its dimensions: inclusive culture. We include all this information in the text.

Point 3: In any event the authors report in unnecessary detail, item level statistics broken down by the chosen independent variables (Figures 1-3 and Tables 4-10). This is unnecessary because as their factor analyses suggests, many of the item ratings are correlated with one another. Rather summary scores on each factor would suffice to explore possible relationships. It is well known that item ratings tend to be more unreliable than summary scores.

Response 3: Our aim does not in relation with the confirmatory factor analysis. We introduce this data to clarify the info related with our specific goals and show the robustness of the instrument.

Point 4: The authors also ignore the inter-relationships among the independent variables although they do allude to the issue in the discussion (line 542-544). To control for this, it is important that multi-variate statistics such as Multiple Regression are used but they failed to do this. Had they used this approach, the paper would be considerably reduced in length and readers would get a greater appreciation of the variables of influence on teachers' attitudes. Even so, the sample size is a limiting factor (n=311) and given the number of independent variables and sub-categories within them, their present sample is possibly under-powered. The authors would be well advised to obtain

the advice of an experienced statistician when designing studies like these and more especially when it comes to analysing the data.

Response 4: Our objective is not to validate the evaluation instrument (already done by the University of Almeria research team) nor to find the relationships between independent variables but to compare the results of two independent groups (in the case of gender, educational stage, teacher involvement, school ownership) or of three or more independent groups (in the case of age, teaching experience, experience with students with SEN, or the number of inhabitants of the town where the school is located).

Point 5: The authors present little evidence as to the representativeness of the sample of teachers they obtained. For example what are the teacher characteristics across the chosen schools – the total number; broken down by types of schools, gender etc. and how do these compare with the volunteer sample they obtained. It is likely that their sample is biased in unknown ways. Moreover they acknowledge that the chosen region may have different school types compared to other Spanish regions (lines 560 ff).

Response 5: We have included more information about the characteristic of the sample and the criteria used for their selection.

Point 6: The authors report data obtained from a focus group of six ‘experts’ who seem to be involved in special education provision and are not therefore reflective of the bulk of respondents to the questionnaire. If this truly was a mixed methods design, the focus group participants would have been ‘representative’ of those participating in the questionnaire phase. So the barriers they report are not necessarily those of mainstream teachers for example.

Response 6: We have added more info about the profile of the experts . They comes from the sample that fill in the questionnaire and not all of them are directly involved in special education provision.