

## NUEVOS PARADIGMAS DE ATENCIÓN EDUCATIVA A LA DIVERSIDAD. CONSIDERACIONES

### NEW PARADIGMS ON EDUCATIONAL ATTENTION TO DIVERSITY. CONSIDERATIONS

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#### RESUMEN

Los actuales desarrollos legislativos en el marco de la atención educativa a la diversidad del alumnado, han puesto de relieve la necesidad de adaptar los modelos educativos actuales a las demandas de la escuela inclusiva y a las recientes investigaciones en el ámbito de la discapacidad. Estos nuevos modelos, ponen el foco en la mejora de la calidad de vida del alumnado, ofreciendo una educación adaptada y personalizada a las características individuales de este, dotando de calidad al proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje y permitiendo la correcta adecuación de la enseñanza al alumnado, con el fin último de desarrollar su máximo potencial.

El presente trabajo se presenta como una revisión del modelo de atención educativa que engloba las últimas investigaciones en materia de diversidad educativa. Partiendo de los principios de atención a la diversidad de la escuela inclusiva y del modelo de calidad de vida desarrollado por Schalock y Verdugo, se presenta una nueva concepción de la discapacidad en el área educativo, donde el alumnado adquiere el protagonismo de su proceso de aprendizaje, totalmente ajustado a su realidad personal, familiar y social, dando así respuesta a las demandas de la sociedad actual y a las demandas del alumnado en materia de inclusión dentro del grupo de iguales y de participación dentro del entorno educativo y de la sociedad en la que se desarrolla.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** educación inclusiva; atención a la diversidad; modelo de calidad de vida; escuela inclusiva; atención educativa; inclusión.

#### ABSTRACT

The current legislative development in the context of educational attention to the diversity of the students, have highlighted the need to adapt the current educational models to the demands of the inclusive school and recent research in the field of disability. These new models put the focus on improving the quality of life of the students, offering an adapted and personalized education to the individual characteristics of this, providing quality to the teaching and learning process and allowing the correct adaptation of teaching to students, with the ultimate aim of developing their maximum potential. The present review is presented as a review of the educational care model that includes the latest research in the field of educational diversity. Based on the principles of attention to the diversity of the inclusive school



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and the quality of life model developed by Schalock and Verdugo, a new conception of disability is presented in the educational area, where students acquire the prominence of their learning process, totally adjusted to their personal, family and social reality, thus responding to the demands of the current society and the demands of the students in the matter of inclusion within the group of equals and participation within the educational environment and the society in which it is developed.

**KEYWORDS:** inclusive education; attention to diversity; quality of live model; inclusive school; educational attention; inclusion.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Verdugo (2009) indicates that attention to students with disabilities has evolved in recent years in line with social demands and the guidelines established in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. This progressive evolution has led to the creation of a model that addresses diversity, or a "Special Education system," which provides specialized personal, material, and infrastructural resources to provide the most appropriate educational response for students who, due to personal or social conditions, require specific educational interventions.

Educational advancements in the field of disability support have highlighted the need to change the educational approach that these students receive in classrooms. Authors like Schalock and Verdugo propose that such attention should be based on the individual's development, focusing on their interests and motivations, promoting the improvement of their quality of life, which will consequently lead to the enhancement of their personal, social, and educational conditions.

Within the realm of diversity in the classroom, we encounter a wide range of students with special educational needs, as indicated by the Organic Law 2/2006 of May 3rd, on Education, modified by the Organic Law 8/2013 of December 9th, for the improvement of educational quality (hereinafter LOE-LOMCE). This legislative framework categorizes students based on their needs and establishes different structural resources that ensure their educational development. However, the distribution of students in regular educational centers and special educational centers marks the starting point for the paradigm shift in the perception of disability proposed by recent educational research.

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## 2. STATE OF THE QUESTION

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization defines special education as an enriched form of education that enhances the lives of individuals with disabilities by enriching modern pedagogical methods and materials to address certain types of impairments (UNESCO, 1977, cited in Espinosa, Reyes, and Rodríguez, 2015).

Based on this conception of special education, before discussing inclusive education, it is important to distinguish between the concepts of integration and inclusion. Integration is understood as the full integration of all individuals into society to achieve its completeness. In the educational context, integration has been an attempt to fit students into the demands of the educational system. Therefore, the conceptualization of inclusion has been conceived as a process of "increasing students' participation in curricula, cultures, and school communities and reducing their exclusion from them" (Ainscow, 1999).

### 2.1. Inclusion in the Legislative Realm

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), through the conclusions of the World Education Forum 2015, as outlined in the publication "Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All", emphasizes that inclusion and educational equity are the main focus of their transformative actions, aiming to address exclusion, marginalization, disparities, and inequalities in access, participation, and learning outcomes.

The Spanish Constitution, dated October 31, 1978, recognizes in Article 27 the right to education, under the principle of the full development of the human personality in accordance with democratic principles of coexistence and fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as the guarantee of universal access to education through a general education program with the effective participation of all relevant social sectors.

In terms of current educational legislation, the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 indicates that every educational system must ensure inclusive education and training for people with disabilities (and extendable to the entire school-age population or those in educational situations), taking as guiding and reference framework the International Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

At the national level, the Organic Law 2/2006 of May 3rd, on Education, in its preliminary title, embraces the reflections of UNESCO and the basic principles of the European Strategy. Through the principles of the educational system, it establishes that the Spanish education system must guarantee the quality of education for all students, equity, equal rights and opportunities, non-discrimination, educational inclusion, flexibility, personalization, educational and vocational guidance, among others (Order EDU/849/2010).

This education must be guided by the principles of normalization and inclusion, ensuring non-discrimination and effective equality in access and continued participation in the educational system. It must pay special attention to the inequalities that may arise from any type of disability. Therefore, educational authorities must provide the necessary resources to support students with specific educational support needs, including specialized professionals, precise means and materials, and allow for organizational flexibility in educational institutions. This flexibility refers to the appropriate school organization, the development of necessary adaptations and curriculum diversification to facilitate the acquisition and consolidation of corresponding learning (Gómez Jiménez, 2018).

As mentioned earlier, the LOE-LOMCE establishes different categories or groups of students based on their conditions: students with special educational needs, students with high intellectual abilities, students with late integration into the Spanish educational system, students with specific learning difficulties, and students with personal conditions that result in educational disadvantage or a school history of marginalization.

This educational support, under the approach of inclusive education (as explained in international reference frameworks and bibliographic research), must be developed by the Autonomous Communities, in accordance with the transfer of competencies in education. From there, guided by the principles of equal opportunities and universal access, normalization, school inclusion, social integration, flexibility, interculturality, and cooperation, there are various regional normative developments to address diversity within the national context, always following the guidelines of the current national legislation.

Currently in Spain, there are 17 autonomous communities and 2 autonomous cities, which are responsible for regulating the regional conditions for attending to student diversity through different legislative and regulatory developments. These developments can be categorized into three categories: Framework Plans for Addressing Diversity, Models of Inclusive Schools, and Regional Normative Developments.

Following the guidelines set out in the Framework Plan for Addressing Diversity in Castilla y León, the autonomous plans for educational support (or diversity support) are a set of regionally scoped measures with an internal structure and established improvement objectives resulting from an analysis of the reality. The aim is to enhance the educational response in each autonomous community. These plans are directed at members of the educational community as agents of the established measures, with the ultimate focus being on the students as the direct recipients of these measures. Additionally, they facilitate the harmonization and coordination of the measures implemented at different educational levels.

Currently, in Spain, there are different autonomous communities that have established Framework Plans for Addressing Diversity, such as the "Strategic Plan for Addressing Diversity within the Framework of an Inclusive School 2012/2016" in the Basque Country. This framework plan includes key lines of action, such as establishing egalitarian educational policies (providing a place for all types of students in mainstream

schools through equitable distribution and management of resources), specialized teacher training in addressing educational needs, and the creation and implementation of unique educational projects that provide ordinary educational responses to students' learning demands and involve all members of the educational community in creating genuine inclusion within schools.

On the other hand, regional normative developments also propose models of inclusive schools to cater to students, emphasizing training, ethics, the defense of equity and social justice, the reduction of failure and exclusion, and the improvement of the educational quality for all students in collaboration with families and the educational environment, through active participation. An example of these legislative models of inclusive schools is found in the Decree 150/2017, dated October 17, on educational support for students within the framework of an inclusive education system of the Department of Education of the Government of Catalonia.

As the final categorization of regional legislative developments, and as a result of the transfer of competencies in education to the Autonomous Communities, which involves adapting national educational policies to regional contexts, there is a variety of regional decrees and resolutions that establish measures for addressing diversity. In the specific case of Castilla-La Mancha, the Decree 85/2018, dated November 20, which regulates educational inclusion of students in the autonomous community of Castilla-La Mancha, classifies measures for student support into five types: measures developed by the Ministry, school-level educational inclusion measures, classroom-level measures, individualized measures for educational inclusion, and extraordinary measures for educational inclusion.

This normative development establishes a hierarchy of measures (previously mentioned) that address the full diversity of students, involving the entire educational community and adapting to students' modes and rhythms of learning. Additionally, it establishes specific measures to adapt the teaching process and schooling to the educational and learning needs of students. These measures range from significant curricular adaptations to exemptions from subjects for students with severe difficulties in comprehension, hearing, vision, mobility, or personal circumstances, always guided by the principles of inclusion, normalization, and non-discrimination.

These measures are always accompanied by the necessary psycho-pedagogical evaluation, enrollment report, and personal report of the students, which reflect their barriers and learning potential. The ultimate goal is to adapt the education provided to students, enabling them to reach their full potential in equal opportunities and conditions as the rest of the students.

## **2.2. Inclusive Education**

Once the concept of inclusion has been established, through differentiation of concepts and normative contextualization, we can consider inclusive education as a process in which schools must provide educational solutions for each and every student, within a common framework that offers special support to those who require individual consideration in order to remain enrolled in a mainstream school (Artiles, Marchena, & Santana, 2016). Students should be regarded as active participants in the educational community, with the capacity to participate and be valued.

Dyson (2001) presents four interrelated varieties of inclusion: inclusion as the right of all children to be accepted in schools based on the principle of equal opportunities, inclusion as an educational system that takes into account the diversity of characteristics and needs of all students, inclusion as an active participation process of students within the educational setting, and inclusion as a form of collaborative social participation.

In this regard, Barton (2009) argues that inclusive education is a means to achieve the goal of establishing an inclusive society. This inclusion must promote the participation of all individuals in society, aiming to diminish and eliminate all processes that lead to exclusion. Ainscow (1999) states that issues such as social justice, equity, human rights, and non-discrimination are key elements to address in the field of inclusion, working towards eliminating all forms of discrimination.

Various studies related to inclusive education and the support of students with special educational needs (Verdugo & Rodríguez, 2008; Verdugo, 2009; del Valle Díaz et al., 2018) highlight a paradigm shift in the perception of disability, understanding these students within their context, identifying environmental variables, and providing individualized support to solve problems and promote a change that favors educational inclusion.

Under this paradigm of inclusion in the school environment, Verdugo (2009) asserts that inclusive schools must progress in the direction of improving the quality of life for each student, regardless of their academic performance. Guirao and Arnaiz (2014) add nuance to these words and define that schools should be characterized by permeability, flexibility, and creativity, with the aim of generating responses to the challenges and problems faced by students.

Echoing Barton's words (2009), students should be at the core of education, participating and actively engaging in school life through the increase of activities and programs that enhance their quality of life. Therefore, freedom of choice and opportunities are important aspects in the educational process towards adult life. To achieve this goal, schools must involve families and the community in the teaching process, fostering the social change that inclusive education promotes.

Currently, according to the "Statistics of Non-University Education. Students with Special Educational Support Needs (2016-2017 academic year)" compiled by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, a total of 35,886 students are enrolled in Special Education in Spain.

Felipe, Garóz, and Díaz (2014) suggest that the placement of these students in special education centers or classrooms should occur when their educational needs cannot be met in mainstream environments, even with appropriate materials and support. The data indicates that an increasing number of students with special educational needs are being enrolled in regular school settings.

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**3. THE QUALITY OF LIFE MODEL AS AN EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION MODEL**

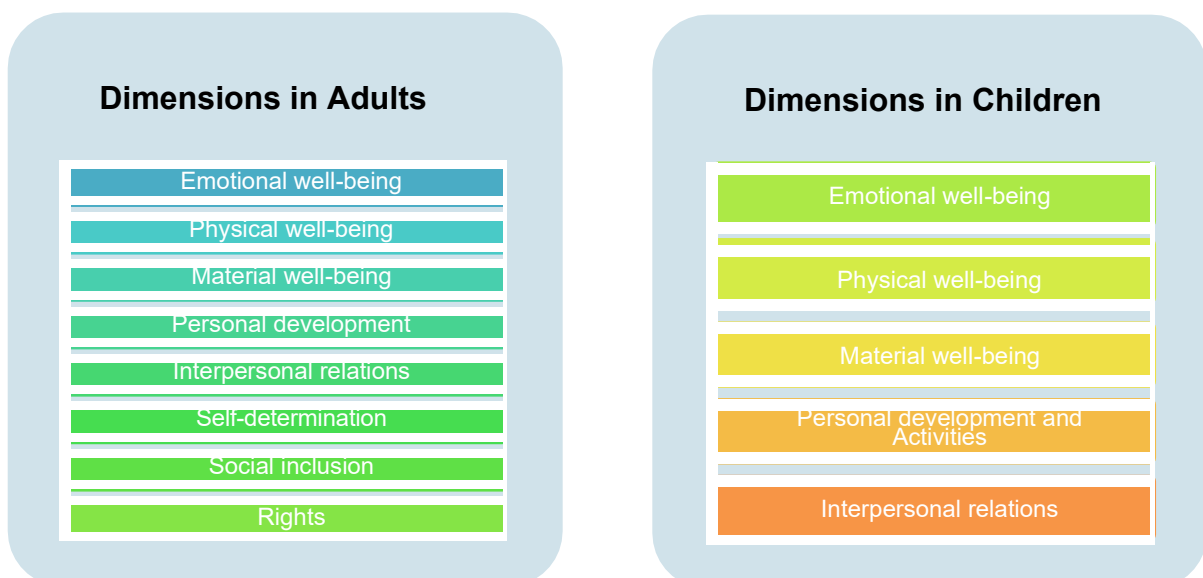
Taking into account the aforementioned principles of inclusive education that do not discriminate against students based on their personal characteristics, Verdugo and Rodríguez (2008) refer to the quality of life model as a program that emphasizes the individual and helps plan activities and support based on the person, thus promoting real social and educational inclusion. This model consists of key dimensions influenced by personal and environmental characteristics and is evaluated using culturally sensitive indicators (Schalock & Verdugo, 2007).

As a reference for transforming educational environments and addressing students' needs (Verdugo, 2009), this model highlights that each child has a unique reality and, through an assessment of their personal conditions and characteristics, specific programming should be implemented based on their needs.

This assessment should be guided by student participation and collaboration, giving them a voice and decision-making power, involving them in the evaluation process, and facilitating the discovery of their own needs, as advocated by the principles of inclusive education (Ainscow, 1999). The Quality of Life model, in addition to identifying needs and defining individualized support programs, facilitates the planning of personal supports to achieve the intended goals.

Verdugo and Rodríguez (2008) propose the unification of instruments and tools based on the purpose of evaluation. The Childhood Quality of Life Assessment Questionnaire (CVI-CVIP), developed by Sabeh, Verdugo, Prieto, and Contini (2009) for primary education, provides a holistic and multidimensional approach that guides personalized educational support programs and interventions to improve the quality of life in childhood. This questionnaire, following the principles of the Quality of Life model, simplifies the eight dimensions proposed for adulthood into five dimensions for childhood and adolescence.

**Table 1.** Own development based on CVI-CVIP



Continuing the application of the quality of life model in the educational context, these dimensions (building on what has been previously stated) lead to a reevaluation of professional practices. According to the model's guidelines, these practices should consider the community environment in which students interact, employ good educational practices that allow functional skill training and the use of natural and individualized supports, with the goal of ensuring equal opportunities, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency (all in the medium to long term). The transformation of the educational environment to address the diversity of students becomes necessary, starting from the structural organization of teaching teams to the innovation in educational practices, guided by a clear inclusive approach that embraces and responds to the principles of inclusive schooling (Alejandro *Contento et al.*, 2018). Therefore, it is essential to create activities beyond the curriculum, focused on the holistic development of individuals and their personal and social needs.

There are different models and innovative research approaches to address diversity in the classroom. From restructuring non-formal learning in recreational spaces proposed by Artiles, Marchena, and Santana (2016), where these adaptations lead to increased participation capacity for all students, to models of teaching and learning self-determination (Mumbardó-Adam *et al.*, 2017), which propose three levels of support and intervention to address students' characteristics and educational needs while fostering their educational participation and achievement of personal goals.

#### **4. EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION THROUGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

Having reviewed the state of inclusive education, we can conclude that models of support for people with disabilities focus on improving users' personal and social conditions since their ultimate goal is to enhance their quality of life based on their interests and personal motivations, while minimizing limitations through the empowerment of their abilities and the provision of individualized support to achieve these vital objectives.

Rodríguez and Cruz (2015) propose curriculum planning as a strategy that enables the maximum development of students' capabilities and learning. Therefore, it is necessary to master the sources of knowledge regarding educational legislation to ensure effective programming that reflects the choice of an appropriate methodology and yields positive personal outcomes for students (del Valle *et al.*, 2018).

The current educational model emphasizes the acquisition of key competencies as an essential condition for achieving individuals' full personal, social, and professional development (Orden ECD/65/2015). The competency-based approach to education necessitates school-level changes in teaching organization and methodology to ensure that students reach their full potential. There is a close relationship between objectives and competencies, establishing that the acquisition and consolidation of these competencies will promote students' transition into adulthood and lifelong learning. This relationship also leads to the creation of specific measures to assess students with learning needs in terms of their competency mastery, guided by principles of non-discrimination, accessibility, and universal design for learning.

The link between key competencies, content, and evaluation criteria (specified through learning standards) facilitates this assessment.



Further exploring Orden EDU/849/2010, which regulates the organization of education for students with special educational needs and guidance services, it specifies that special education centers and units (Articles 26 and 27) provide education aimed at fostering personal autonomy, social and occupational integration, and improving students' quality of life. Within the pedagogical autonomy of schools, they can develop a curriculum proposal by adapting the official curriculum to meet the diverse educational needs of students while ensuring coverage of their needs and fostering their autonomy.

Rodríguez (2010) states that integrating competencies into the educational system involves shifting the focus of education towards students and their learning possibilities, aiming to maximize their capabilities and learning. This assertion, in line with the principles of inclusive schooling, leads us to reinterpret the key competencies defined in the educational legislation (LOE-LOMCE) and adapt them to the inclusive context specified in the Quality of Life model by Schalock and Verdugo (2007).

This reinterpretation provides us with a new vision for guiding the learning that students with special educational needs should acquire within formal education. It facilitates assigning new meanings and adapting the assessable learning standards based on this interpretation (Gómez Jiménez, 2018). To do so, we have taken the principles of inclusive schooling and the arguments presented by Schalock and Verdugo (among other authors) as a basis for classifying the key competencies within the quality of life model.

**Table 2.** Own development based on Gómez Jiménez, 2018.

Emotional well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language proficiency</li> <li>• Learn to learn</li> </ul>
Physical well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology</li> </ul>
Material well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn to learn</li> <li>• Digital competence</li> </ul>
Personal Development and Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linguistic communication</li> <li>• Learn to learn</li> <li>• Sense of initiative and entrepreneurial spirit</li> <li>• Awareness and cultural expressions</li> </ul>
Interpersonal relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social and civic competences</li> <li>• Awareness and cultural expressions</li> </ul>

This proposal for classifying competencies within the dimensions of quality of life in children may vary depending on the interpretation made of Order ECD/65/2015. Through this, we can verify that the approaches of inclusive schooling and the new paradigms of educational attention to students with special educational needs have a place within the school. It is only necessary to change the teaching approach of current educational legislation.

This indicates to the teacher the minimum and necessary mechanisms to follow and use in their professional activity but allows for a wide margin of action regarding the methodology to be used and the evaluation of students. Based on the study of inclusive schooling and the presented models of quality of life, it is only necessary to change the professional focus of education to make it accessible and inclusive.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

After this analysis, we can deduce that the current Spanish educational system is based on the acquisition of competencies by students, prioritizing quantity of instruction rather than its quality. Additionally, the attention given to the diversity of students with special educational needs is governed by the same rules and principles as the rest of the students, with only measures of non-discrimination and accessibility being established instead of maximizing the development of the students.

Throughout this exposition of the current state of scientific literature and the study of current educational regulations, we have reached the conclusion that the application of new models and principles of inclusive schooling is possible within the existing educational framework. Based on the various articles and normative developments (both at the national and regional level) presented, we have found that student evaluation should be guided by a competency-based approach and its relation to the content, criteria, and assessable learning standards.

These normative developments allow us to interpret competency descriptions, adapting them to the principles and paradigms of addressing diversity, as well as creating a synthesis of assessable learning standards in relation to the dimensions of the quality of life model to which they contribute. This adaptation (based on what is stated in Royal Decree 126/2014) provides us with a comprehensive view of how curricular elements favor and enhance the quality of life for students with and without educational support needs.

As a final reflection, the relationship between educational legislation and research on addressing diversity shows a disconnect (or difficulty in establishing joint actions) between schools and society. Education is a vital stage in personal development, and therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to and implement new methodologies that improve the quality of life for students, under the protection of national and regional regulations. Hence, to facilitate personal development in educational stages, a collaborative dialogue is needed among institutions, society, families, educational institutions, and the competent educational administration, with the aim of establishing a common line of work.

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