

ara és demà

Debat sobre el futur
de l'educació a Catalunya

Report 1

The Pillars of the Education System

Lluís Font, President of the School Education Council of Catalonia
and Associate Professor of History of Contemporary Thought at Ramon
Llull University

Introduction

During the last hundred years, in Catalonia there have been three great boiling points in the education ecosystem. We can pinpoint the first during the times of the Mancomunitat and the Second Republic. Prat de la Riba, Campalans, Martorell, Galí, Ainaud, Vergés, the Blanquerna School, the Escola del Bosc and the Escola del Mar Schools, and the Council of the New Unified School are emblematic names of people and institutions from a period of profound renewal, under the inspiration of the new school pedagogical tendencies. Despite the apathy of Alfonso XIII's monarchy and the restraint of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, public and private initiatives converged in the determination to create new school facilities and to update teaching methodologies. Montessori, Decroly and Dewey exercised a strong influence and intellectual mastery over a generation of educators. During the Second Republic this movement boomed. The end of the Civil War nipped it in the bud.

In the 1960's a group of restless teachers and professors took advantage of cracks in the Franco regime to give classrooms an innovative and Catalan imprint. Some founded schools while others renovated already existing ones, both public and private, with the intention of offering families an alternative to the *florido pensil* schools prevailing at the time. Many of them gathered in the Associació Rosa Sensat. Mata, Benejam, Darder, Triadú, Codina, Cots, Rúbies, Costa i Llobera, Talitha, Thau and Sant Gregori are some of the people and institutions from that second moment of renovation. Furthermore, the Second Vatican Council meant the counterpoint to "National Catholicism" and opened the door to a religious school with social awareness and a sense of country. All combined it constitutes the link that connects the work of the Mancomunitat and the Barcelona School Board with the current situation. They lay the bases of an education ecosystem, in the midst of democracy, capable of pushing the Catalan language immersion starting in the 80's and welcoming an avalanche of newly arrived immigrants in the last decade. And with the conviction of reconstructing the country starting with schools, an expression with a clear *noucentism* spirit, to which students of that time can attest.

The third boiling point has no well-defined starting date. It is rather a continuum of the second. Once the two aforementioned great challenges were undertaken, in which the Catalan school has kept the country united and avoided social division —and thus the appearance of a local *LePenism*— the conviction prevails among the education community that there must be an *aggiornamento* in how to teach and how to learn. In parallel, constructivism has prepared the way for a methodological change, with the impact that the LOGSE has. On the other hand, the emergence of Internet and the breakthrough of the communication media, global economy and politics, postmodern culture and discoveries in the field of neuropsychology and linguistics, among other factors, have created a different environment to stage educational activity. Children and young people are the sons and daughters of their parents, followers of their teachers, but also reflect in their own way the influences and stimuli they receive and live with. Conscious of this reality, many teachers and professors have made an effort to respond in the classroom. Education renewal movements and various innovative center networks, promoted by the Administration or social projects, have done so as a partnership, with the understanding that it is a collective task that must be faced and whose most significant discoveries must be shared.

While immersed in this renovation dynamic, *Today is Tomorrow* arrives. Its objective is to bring about a clear, pluralistic reflection that offers us a direction, in a complex context with multiple variables in play. A debate on the future demands thinking in-depth about the pillars of education and the policies that make them a reality in a changing environment. The inclusive paradigm, equity, multilingualism and a systematic concept of teaching as well as learning now constitute the pillar of our education system. Thus, quality can be found reflected in the tripod represented by educational success, equal opportunities and the strength

of social ties. People are the main asset of Catalonia. Seven and a half million citizens, from a range of backgrounds and united by the willingness to build a better country day by day. To make that possible we must place a value on each and everyone's talent. Here lies the importance of education. During childhood and adolescence, but also throughout life. To be educated in order to exploit one's own capacities and shape a unique life project; to be educated in order to update one's professional skills and improve employability; to be educated in order to broaden horizons and cultivate one's interests. And to do so in the belief that education is the great treasure of an advanced society that values the well-being of people and promotes excellence, to serve collective progress.

Catalonia has a long tradition of social initiatives. Perhaps due to the fact of being a nation without a state, its *ethos* is far from Ortega y Gasset's concept of how to structure a country. From *ateneu* cultural institutions to the Clavé choirs, through entities of many types —business, cultural, excursionist, health, trade union and sports— all have contributed to coordinate Catalonia and preserve its collective identity. A whole range of ideologies has been represented in civil society. The education world is no exception. Alongside public schools, making up the Education Service of Catalonia, and with a spirit of service, various institutions have created private schools, many of which are state-supported. There are cooperatives for teachers and parents, religious associations and congregations, foundations of a social, cultural and philanthropic nature. A whole range of projects with their own identity that reflects the country's entrepreneur spirit. Their existence represents a collective wealth, in accord with the attitude of our country.

Equity

The education of a country proves more or less equitable according to the capacity to effectuate equal opportunities for all students regardless of the socio-economic and cultural circumstances that concur in each case. This is achieved when the education system is well designed, functions properly and takes into account the evolution of the environment so it can adapt without waiving its inalienable functions; ultimately, when it responds efficiently to the mission it has been entrusted with: to guarantee educational success for all children and young people. This success is the condition *sine qua non* to realize a personal life project, for each and everyone, and at the same time, with one's own talent, to contribute to the common good. And all that with the premise that citizens educated under criteria of equity will with time forge a society committed to collective well-being.

The principle of inclusion of our education system establishes a great stake in favor of equity. We are talking about both sides of the same coin. The universal, additional and intensive measures and supports to implement respond to the wish to make equal opportunities possible, independent of the myriad of existing socio-economic and cultural contexts. The evolution of inclusive education cultures toward a wider perspective, product of the thoughtful action of so many educators, demonstrates it. It results in the promotion of education that is personalized, attentive and respectful with the counterpoint of realities present in school centers, where inclusion is intended for everyone in society. A defining proposal: equality in diversity, neither inequality nor homogeneity. Rather than focusing on differences, this education paradigm emphasizes values and the style of teaching-learning that need to be promoted, which characterize an equitable society model. The struggle in favor of educational success lies precisely in deploying in-depth the principle cited. Early detection of educational needs is crucial to be successful in one's studies. Addressing and tackling them while they are still in the early stage favors the development of students' potential.

School dropping-out is a weak point: despite a 13% improvement in seven years the numbers show it at 18% in Catalonia. An emerging business culture, which tends to reward short term results, and a job market offer in certain sectors of productive activity —interested in hiring low skilled workers— have some of the responsibility in the matter. The education system must assume its own responsibility: it has not been able to keep entire groups of young people of this age within the education process. The groups of people between the ages of 18 and 24 who are not currently studying or have not taken any post-compulsory studies, many of whom are not working either, fill the ranks of the so-called *ni-ni*, an unfortunate term that stigmatizes a group of young people and does not help understand the latent social phenomenon.

The European Commission study *Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe* (2014) points out that the improvement of transition processes between educational stages is a key factor in reducing early school leaving. Thus, the existence of a multiplicity of post-compulsory training offers with quality and social prestige becomes an important equity factor, inasmuch as it responds to the diversity of students' interests and capacities. Among the variety of options, students have to find what will allow them to advance in building their own professional and life pathway. Educational guidance becomes key at this time.

In the current academic regulation, students who do not complete compulsory education lack the necessary requirement for access to the baccalaureate or middle level training cycles. Social and employment integration of this group must be the object of specific measures that, in the form of new training proposals, allow them to re-enter the education system or enter the job market with a suitable qualification. This function has traditionally been carried out through a sequence of training activities originating from Transition to Work Programs (PTT), followed by social safeguards programs (PGS) and those of Initial Professional Qualification (PQPI), and reaching the current Training and Placement Programs (PFI). These programs include academic counseling and job training in professional and procedural content as well as internships at work centers. They facilitate job placement in the professional qualification classifications as much as giving possible options to re-enter the education system. Students completing these programs choose mainly to continue professional training in middle level cycles while a limited number opt for job placement.

Moreover, stemming from the cooperation agreement between the Department of Education and the Catalonia Occupation Service (SOC), of 30 October 2015, the new opportunities program is regarded as another option to facilitate continuous training for young people from 14 to 21 years of age in a vulnerable situation. This experimental program represents a privileged occasion to design flexible educational pathways that make giving support to young people a priority. The objective is to increase the number of young people who continue to post-compulsory studies and thus foster job placement. From this pilot period, results will be obtained on the appropriate work methods in order to give special attention to these groups of young people.

The education centers of particular complexity, located in vulnerable socio-economic areas, require special attention. On the horizon of growing autonomy, the education center management teams exercise integrating pedagogical leadership, vital for the consolidation of unique education projects that respond to emerging education needs. This forms a transforming practice of reality, as challenges and projects are shared among the centers involved in the same context. Public administrations must also be present, as must local management in the sense of supporting and being aware of the needs that arise, and closely collaborating with them. Schools and secondary schools, beyond the measures and supports inherent to inclusive education, currently depend on greater staffing and additional personnel, have more financial resources available for day-to-day operations and have lower ratios. In addition, according to the posts

provision decree they can single out professional profiles, searching for specially qualified teachers while motivating students and boosting their strength. The bet on system equity calls for periodical revision of the variables that determine the degree of complexity of a center and adjust to the real needs, often changeable, and the budget allocations earmarked. Results of the basic competences exams, as well as educational inspection, self-evaluation of the teaching staff and the management team, and other specific indicators of equity must serve to prove the impact on the set of measures implemented in favor of equal opportunities, which has a privileged expression in the level of educational success attained.

One of the pillars of compensatory policies is the existence of grants and scholarships, which in compulsory education is handled through the families. Every school year there is one open call for all grants and scholarships simplifying application procedures. The families must be notified of the awarding of the grant or scholarship prior to the beginning of the school year. The different types currently available are: educational support for special needs students, educational material, transport, school lunches, school residence, scholarships, gifted students, stays outside the center during the school term, early morning childcare service and extracurricular activities. Annual funds must be enough to cover urgent needs and the offer of measures has to be adjustable according to proof shown in studies on how to deal with education system inequalities. The Administration is responsible for creating a global, balanced family support framework, which needs to take into account the funds granted by various public authorities. In terms of efficiency, the subsidies granted would need to be channeled through the organism or entity managing each service. In any case, it will be necessary to guarantee their tax-exemption. With a country perspective, school transport must be included in the general mobility planning in Catalonia and the current lunch grants should have a format to guarantee enough food throughout the year for those children and young people who need it. In order to achieve it, the implication of the Generalitat departments with welfare competences is desirable, and the funds earmarked for grants and scholarships must be a priority. On the other hand, the grants and scholarships for students of post-compulsory studies must have a similar treatment to that of a university.

It is important to mention school aid in the first cycle of early childhood education. Developed countries have adopted varying strategies thereon. In any event, in Catalonia it is necessary to guarantee enough places financed by public funds, according to the existing needs. City-run nursery schools throughout the area respond to this need. To promote their economic viability, the cost of each place should be split into equal shares among families, the city government and the Generalitat. Moreover, there must be grant funds available for those families who cannot afford their share, in part or in whole. On the other hand, the Department of Education is carrying out a pilot program so that rural schools can take in children from 1 to 3 years of age. Ordinance ENS/273/2015, of 25 August establishes an experimental plan for first cycle early childhood education in rural schools. This year there are 50 in operation. The objective is to ensure the right of families to get local schooling for their children. Town councils can request an application if they commit to implementing the schools.

When we speak about education, we are ultimately referring to an eco-system beyond the strictly school atmosphere in which each element involved is essential for maintaining the equilibrium of the whole. School, family, leisure activity entities, the Administration, all political, cultural and socio-economic institutions as well as the media must be aware of the responsibility they have in the field of education, and the complementary role they need to play in mutual cooperation. Rural schools are a good example. For many years they have enjoyed a remarkable role in the life of small towns and villages. Now they become the central axis of an eco-system. We could describe their evolution with the following image: From “the school of the three P’s – petita, de poble i public (In English “tiny, town and public”) is a school rooted in the area, that gives life to a town, that sometimes is the cornerstone and/or catalytic element of the town’s life, that brings together activities, people, and is a reason for encounters and learning” (Secretariat de

l'Escola Rural) for the educating town. Schools become the center of a grid, the main node of a network of institutions and people that, together, give life to the education of children in a specific environment. Alone or forming part of a rural school area (ZER), they unite educational agents in a shared proposal that exceeds the strictly school framework. By using digital technology they broaden the reach of the web: they turn the world into their eco-system. And all of this works towards educational success of the rural area children and brings equal opportunities to all the country.

The Educational Plans, implemented in Catalonia during the last ten years and spread throughout the area, embody the concept of education as an eco-system. Their objective lies in educational success and equity, together creating a shared educational *ethos* among the various institutions in a particular setting. This is their unique characteristic. The document *Els plans educatius d'entorn*, published by the Department of Education in 2014, says in that respect: "The key strategic element is to achieve continuity and coherence among the actions by the various educational agents operating in an area, whether they belong to formal education or non-formal or informal education. Community interaction of all education, social, economic, cultural, artistic, sports or leisure agents is necessary to head in the same direction between school dynamics and extra-school activities." In order to make this connection effective, "there must be an organized network and a commitment by all area agents. Education centers must open up to the area and the social environment has to be more aware of the educational actions of the various social agents. It is a new way of understanding the education process, beyond that of education centers... There must be a new organizational culture, the culture of online learning, a culture that has the web in its core definition and understands community learning as a methodology to respond to education challenges." For the future, in addition to increasing public financing for education plans, it would be appropriate to reflect deeply on what is involved and how to promote online education work for 21st century education. Experiences with well-founded theory and a long history, such as educating cities and learning communities, have become a benchmark worth considering.

Adult education centers, 221 in Catalonia in the 2015-2016 school year, represent a fundamental yet often little-known education option in the system. A very extensive offer of courses helps more than 68,000 people develop personal and professional skills. Among these students, there are some who have not had the opportunity to receive a formal basic education; others have only completed primary school or have been unsuccessful in compulsory education, and finally a third group that needs to improve some concrete skills for job placement. In the knowledge society we live in, complex and ever-changing, a flexible continuous education accessible for all becomes a great asset. We can speak of equity because it offers pathways for personal development for all, regardless of the starting point or income. A special mention is deserved for the almost 4,000 students in penitentiary facilities. Some 40% of the prison population is studying at primary school level since they do not have that diploma and 39% have no diploma accrediting secondary school graduation. The adult education center thus becomes a key element in preparing social and work reinsertion, as it contributes to their re-education and rehabilitation process.

The prevailing timetables of Catalan society are currently up for debate. There is a broad consensus promoting reform. The aim is to make them more rational, modelled on those in many European countries. Education should not be left out of this process. Likewise, we must take into account that social engineering experiments often bring about undesirable collateral damage. Changing very established practices by decree implies a risk. Past experiences have attested to it. The transformation of citizens' habits and ways of life must be dealt with gradually and with an overall view. Companies, businesses, schools and families must go forward together along this path. A path that intends to improve people's quality of life. According to specialists in the matter, it is vital to study the distribution of school subjects throughout the day for each academic level, compatible with their difficulty and the theoretical or practical nature, the placement of break periods and lunch times as well as the start and finish of classes. To this effect, families

need to adequately scale after-school activities so as not to overload or finish very late the daily schedule of children and young people. The education community must ensure that all students have the chance to participate, regardless of their personal, social economic or family circumstances.

In Catalonia, the majority of secondary schools do a full working day. After a few years' deployment of the measure, there would have to be an analysis of the impact that it has on students' attaining basic competences and evaluate how this schedule allows for the adjustment of eating habits and rest periods to young people's needs and biorhythms.

The advisability of giving homework or not is stirring up public and media controversy. There are several things that must be taken into consideration. We will highlight three. The first is the grade level the student is studying. It is important to gauge well the load and work pace possible and desirable for every age. Physical and mental health requires maintaining a balance among the various dimensions of human existence. Play, family life and enough sleep, for example, cannot be underestimated. Learning difficulties comprise the second. Extra reinforcement, coordinated with inclusive measures and support as well as for a determinate period of time, all these can be useful in some cases. The nature of homework that needs to be done, the third element, is especially significant. A task strictly connected with school work may make sense. Especially if we take into consideration that some methodologies question the classic division of what is done at school and at home (project-based learning, flipped class). In any case, the education project would have to define the approach the school center follows in this aspect; the school board could be the framework where it would be defined, taking into account the different variables intervening.

We should ask ourselves, however, if all students have the appropriate home conditions to do homework as it is meant to be done. In this sense, we must recognize the role of open centers, with non-profit organizations in charge, facilities integrated into the primary care social services for children and young people at risk. They carry out an educational and preventive task in leisure time, from the social education aspect, aimed at strengthening personal development. It would be a good to raise the idea of a closer collaboration between the education system and social services in order to gain efficiency when compensating for socio-educational weaknesses and strengthening the full development of these vulnerable children and young people.

Finally, an equity education observatory must be created, as a place for research and debate, with the aim of identifying system deficiencies and make proposals for promoting equal opportunities. The advisory board will include national and international experts in the matter. This observatory will establish agreements with leading university research groups to make solid analyses that could justify future policies to deploy in this important area of the education system. Together with entities and administrations it will drive or finance research in the field of equity. The first initiative will consist of creating a study group on student distribution balance during school registration, which will bring together authorities from the Department of Education and local administrations with experts in the field. They will take into special account the successful international experiences in the struggle against ghettoization of certain education centers. Likewise, it will define the variables that must be considered to periodically measure success in the equal opportunities of our education system.

Inclusion

The education system in Catalonia must be of an inclusive nature if we wish to build inclusive knowledge societies, as proposed by a recent UNESCO document *Rethinking Education*. According to the Education Law of Catalonia, the philosophy expressed in the statement “Education for All”, a school for all promotes social cohesion. In effect, quality and equity are built upon this principle that inspires education policies. Collective well-being is in its debt, inasmuch as inclusive education is a stake in favor of equal opportunities, making it possible to overcome barriers associated with personal circumstances. It also makes for a great asset: creating a teaching-learning environment that develops each person’s potential to the maximum. Catalonia is a country without many natural resources so it basically relies on the talent of its people to face the future. Precisely here lies the importance of a comprehensive education model, one that raises and places value on the personal wealth of all: it recognizes and values diversity, focuses on students’ strengths and creates rich, flexible and adaptable learning contexts.

Human beings have a potential and some limitations, each in their own proportion, and experience circumstances and some concrete socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. This merely describes the starting point. Beyond genetic or social determinisms, clearly antagonistically opposed, it seems evident that their interaction impacts the others in all aspects of our personal growth. In good part, we are made up of the relationships we establish throughout life, which mold us in spirit, especially those relationships during our school years with our teachers. Our teachers with a capital T, as the poet says, make it possible for children and young people to unfold their capacities to the maximum extent. Attending to diversity constitutes a key factor in education success, together with personalized learning. Inclusion has transformed the educational process. This paradigm pushes teaching staff to establish complicity in the education community environment that strengthen the families and other social agents’ commitment, in order to help students grow in freedom and forge a genuine life project, their own.

A document produced in 2014 by the School Education Council of Catalonia is relevant: “Personalized education builds learning on the basis of the diversity of students’ cognitive, emotional and artistic capacities and their own particular learning process —in the various areas where they live and are schooled—, with the aim of achieving key competences and knowledge, fully developing their potential and becoming able to exercise actively their citizenship. This perspective represents an evolution in the most traditional curricular and organizational approaches.” And it goes on to say. “Personalized learning can be understood as a system strategy to improve the achievement of competences and attaining the skills a knowledge society demands. Being successful at personalizing requires getting students to take the lead role in their own learning process and become aware of the progressive development of their identity. Moreover, it involves simultaneously increasing academic-educational performance and work satisfaction, and making more effective participation in school life through engagement in decision-making in learning.”

In this sense, the text underscores that personalization is a key strategy in fostering lifelong learning, and “an integral part of the shared struggle and effort towards school and educational success since at the same time various learning agents take action that must be coherent and cooperate with the educational center.” It concludes the reflection by analyzing what this principle represents and what pedagogical impact it has: “The concept of personalization is slowly incorporated into the pedagogical repertoire as a tool for successfully attending to the students’ diversity, which is considered a value to encourage. It requires overcoming prejudices about diversity and introducing flexibility — a striking example is working with different age groups in a rural school. Since students are not confined to having cognitive and social shortcomings, personalization represents an overcoming of the classic concept of attending to diversity,

which has clear implications in terms of restructuring education relationships. Advancing in personalization also contributes towards the education system by promoting integration, a sense of belonging and a committed involvement in society by young people.

Inclusion leads to personalization and this, to guidance; they form a virtuous circle in which the whole is more than the sum of its parts. According to the text *Documents per a l'organització i la gestió dels centres. Orientació educativa i acció tutorial a l'ESO*, published by the Department of Education in 2015: "Personalized support of the students' schooling and learning process must be considered the pillar of education. In line with this approach, centers must implement organizational strategies within the educational project to make guidance a basic tool for attending to students' diversity and uniqueness. Hence, guiding a schooling process requires planning and coordination of all the actions that make up an education center, the reason for which school guidance and coaching is the responsibility of all teaching staff." It goes on to say: "The school management team, in its organizational and pedagogical function, has to lead the work of planning, coordination and evaluation of education guidance and coaching actions. The teachers specialized in educational guidance must give dynamism, advise the guidance task and function with the school management team and the teaching staff." Ultimately, "Achieving successful support for a student and a class group has something to do with classroom strategies (atmosphere, management, dynamics) and learning (methodologies, didactics, evaluation) that the teachers and the center design in response to the singularity of levels, learning styles and pace of each person." It must be said that coordination between stages is vital in guaranteeing continuity and coherence throughout the education process.

The triple base of inclusion, personalization and guidance require a skill mastery in acknowledgement of the importance of this educational premise. It is not just another psycho-pedagogical fashion. It basically invokes an anthropological view: a concept of human nature that does not see diversity as a problem but rather recognizes the uniqueness of individuals as a starting point from which educational action can be developed. This is the result of an evolution in the understanding of what it means to become a person and what the dynamics are to make us grow. Initial education has to ensure sensitivity and empathy of university students and at the same time consolidate the skills necessary to be successful in this field for those candidates to work as future teachers and professors. Continuing education, for its part, must lend support to the practicing teachers' reflective action so that it responds, in its scope of action, to the new challenges that the inclusive paradigm raises. In addition to interdisciplinary theoretical training, we must promote the capacity of systematically and sharply observing students in order to detect their educational needs. There must also be a development of those abilities required to address and deal with these needs while they are still emerging. On the other hand, the willingness to respond to the educational needs of all students make desirable the presence in education centers of professionals of other disciplines, such as social educators or therapists.

In alignment with the inclusive education focus, the educational nature of evaluation must be emphasized. Not to do so would be contradictory. The time dedicated to it must serve to boost the students in the personal growth process. With the combination of various tools, some qualitative and some quantitative, and the ensuing shared analysis between teacher and student on the question, strengthens the educational nature of evaluation.

In accordance with this spirit, the text *De l'escola inclusiva al sistema inclusiu. Una escola per a tothom, un projecte per a cadascú*, published by the Department of Education in 2015, sets the bases for the inclusive model in Catalonia. It states: "Education support for all students must diffuse through the culture of the center and take into account a transversal perspective, one that is rooted in a curriculum for all and an education center project that plans methodological and organizational strategies guaranteeing all

students participation and learning... and a longitudinal perspective that foresees the education system from beginning to end and guarantees coherence between stages, from early childhood to post-compulsory education, so as to make it possible to achieve quality of life and valuable personal results.” From this premise it follows that “centers must plan measures and education supports for students’ progress and needs in order to give each and every one the intensity of support needed to improve their competence level.

Thus, “the measures for education support are actions organized by the centers aimed at reducing barriers in the educational environment that can block all students’ progress, avoid learning disabilities and ensure a better adjustment between students’ abilities and this learning environment. The supports are personal, material and technological resources and the background and community aid that centers to ensure that the planned measures are effective and functional. The supports should promote autonomy to allow students access to the curriculum, they should flexibly adapt to their needs and strengths as well as those of the environment, and must enable the possibility of reducing or withdrawing the intensity of support as a priority aim.”

The document distinguishes three levels of complementary actions. The first refers to “universal measures and supports [that] are addressed to all students... They are included in the education project of the center and in their organizational and operational rules, and must be defined in the Welcoming Plan for students and teachers, in the “Tutorial Action” Plan and classroom programs. Included in this section are the measures and supports regarding general aspects of attention to diversity that impact all students or the center’s organization of resources, since agreements and actions resulting from them are especially relevant for students’ education success and the most vulnerable groups... Universal measures and supports must allow for flexibility of the learning environment, provide students with strategies to minimize environmental barriers and to guarantee co-existence and commitment on behalf of all the education community.”

The second is made up of “additional measures and supports that allow the adjustment of the education response in a flexible, preventive and temporary way, targeting education intervention in those aspects of the learning process that can jeopardize some students’ personal and educational progress. These measures must be linked with general measures and supports planned at the center, seeking maximum participation in education situations at the center and in the classroom. The center determines additional measures and supports based on a student needs analysis carried out by the guidance counselor and the teaching staff... The specification of these measures and supports must be contained in the center’s documents, class planning and, if needed, in individualized plans...All teachers at the center have the responsibility of providing additional measures and supports that students may need. This intervention can be guided by special education teachers, hearing and language specialists, therapeutic pedagogy teachers, educational guidance teachers as well as welcome classroom counselors.”

Finally, “intensive measures and supports are specific to students with special education needs, are adapted to their unique situation and allow an extensive adjustment to the educational response, at regular intervals and, usually, without a time limit. The application of any measure or resource must seek the utmost participation of the student in educational situations both in the center and the classroom, and must be linked to general and additional measures and supports planned at the center... The intensive measures and supports are proposed after a psycho-pedagogical evaluation that substantiates the expert ruling for schooling or the report recognizing the special educational needs prepared by the psycho-pedagogical assessment and guidance (EAP), in conjunction with the teaching staff at the center, the parents or legal guardians as well as the student, and if necessary, other specialists.”

A diachronic look is crucial: “An inclusive education system must anticipate the whole of the students’ itinerary throughout the education system, from early childhood education to their transition to adulthood, with the aim of charting long-term itineraries and guaranteeing coherence in educational action between stages. The processes of guidance that guarantee support to families and students through the transition of any education stage are essential... These guidance processes will keep in mind the students’ abilities, capacities and interests and will be developed within the education, health care and socio-occupational networks of the area and will at all times rely on the participation of parents or legal guardians as well as the students themselves.” All of this involves the early detection of students’ specific education needs, which must receive personalized attention for their uniqueness. The continuous and educational nature of evaluation facilitates the center with the first indications of development and learning difficulties.

Multilingualism

The history of our country has been reflected in the fluctuations the use of Catalan has experienced in public and education settings. People’s loyalty to their language explains its survival, despite lacking for centuries the state structures to protect it. More than thirty years of autonomous government have served to forge a broad consensus on the linguistic immersion model and other methodologies intended to guarantee the learning of Catalan by children and young people who do not usually use it. Here and now the co-existence of Catalan and Spanish is enriching and puts two extensive literary traditions within the reach of all. The central importance and social prestige of Catalan have compensated for its scarce presence in the legal system, in quite a few private media and in other areas of daily life. Thus, the Principality of Catalonia co-exists in harmony with another co-official minoritized language, with ten million speakers, and another co-official language spoken by hundreds of millions of people worldwide, a language full of vitality, which is also the mother tongue of many citizens of our country. The case of the Aran Valley, Occitan (called “aranès” in Catalan) takes on the role that Catalan has in the rest of the country: the language of social cohesion and working language of the education system.

Taking note of the geographical proximity with France and the upward trend its culture enjoyed during the Francoism of the elite, the “language of the hexagon” has been very present in society; currently English is the language that dominates a good part of communication and business. In the last few years other languages from around the world have appeared, spoken by various communities of newcomers who left their own country in search of new opportunities. The study of other languages at school has set good foundations, those of a population that already practices language diversity on the street. Catalonia is and has been a land of hospitality. We have managed to understand everyone and make ourselves understood. We value this open attitude, capable of linguistic versatility, at the service of citizens of a nation that has the determination to exist. A country of contrasts, as Orwell describes so well in his *Homage to Catalonia*, where complexity contributes to the riches of plurality.

In open and culturally diverse societies, multilingualism constitutes a solid asset of the education system. As posed in Catalonia, it develops the students’ linguistic competences and, at the same time, opens their minds to the plurality of existing languages and cultures in the world. A diversity that makes itself present in our classrooms and is growing as a result of globalization. Open-mindedness enriches people and prepares them for fruitful dialogue, and is capital in fostering respect for one another. With the understanding that “Catalonia is a country with a culture and a language that shape its own identity” (preamble of the Law of Education of Catalonia, LE) and which shape education action, schools and secondary schools must know how to recognize the cultural tradition of students, and at the same time encourage everyone to recognize their own pertinent uniqueness. Paraphrasing Charles Taylor, the

recognition of others and of oneself constitutes the basic premise for an authentic answer to a transcendental life question: *who am I?*

Thus, in the framework of dialogue and mutual acceptance, the process of linking newcomers with the identity we have in common in Catalonia proves to be integrating and becomes the cohesion factor among very diverse people. Because “only from knowledge of what is one's own is it possible to open up to other realities and recognize their uniqueness” (Preamble of the LE). All of this must join with the cultivation of citizen values, which are a commitment for peaceful co-existence in culturally diverse countries, in which individual freedom and the preservation of the particular characteristics of a community become fundamental values.

In many education centers this cultural diversity is apparent. The students and their families demonstrate it with their spirit. We must show respect for the ways they act, as long as nobody violates the rights and freedom of others. The secular dialogue of advanced societies does not oblige keeping private the beliefs that one professes or the symbolism with which it is expressed. Schools and secondary schools are the agora of dialogue, the place for common ground exalting that which unites rather than separates. There is a backdrop of humanism common to great currents of thought and cultural traditions, upon which the most profound part of humans is based. One of the missions of education is precisely to socialize core values among new generations, connecting *ethos*, which confers a distinctive character to the country, in accordance with the circumstances occurring in each time period. The principles of justice and freedom, rooted in the best democratic tradition, are part of the essential components; another is learning to live together in different environments without losing your own identity. Moreover, since knowledge brings people closer together, academic programs are progressively integrating diversity of viewpoints and cultural backgrounds that nowadays come together in our classrooms.

L'escola catalana, un marc per al plurilingüisme is a document prepared by the Sub-directorate General of Language and Multilingualism, which defines the Department of Education policy in such a relevant area as this, and to which we will refer throughout this presentation. It gathers the fruit of many years of reflection and contains several working documents written recently by specialists in the field. It draws up a new paradigm for the treatment of languages in education: “New competence needs... have their theoretical base in three relevant facts that have made apparent the urgent need to renovate education systems around the world. On one side, the contributions of neurosciences, that from investigative research and reflective teaching activity have consolidated interactive and integrated methodologies of quality and incorporated the principles of social constructivism and connectivism as teaching and learning strategies coordinated and adapted to learning needs of new generations. On the other side, the generalization of ITC in an increasingly more globalized world facilitates new ways to access information, communicate and build knowledge and enable contextualized responses, since the dynamic management of knowledge in situations of real learning and in diversified projects make possible the students' participation in the approach and solution to solving real problems. And finally, the changes in the job market, which show new trends in valuing life skills and demand maximum flexibility in the education of children and young people who will have to live and cope with a complex, dynamic and unforeseeable cultural environment. The growing demand for relationship skills and creative autonomy for managing one's own life entails an integral education of students and a greater self-demandingness in the mastery of personal resources for lifelong learning.”

The general objectives for the future are clearly formulated: “Consolidate Catalan as a language of regular use at education centers and related with the education community, as a vehicle for learning and dynamizing an integral treatment for languages. Guarantee the equivalent dominance of the two co-official languages upon completing compulsory secondary education. Increase the knowledge and use of

different foreign languages as instruments of communication, life-long learning and for professional training and education. To strengthen and spread the language of origin of the newcoming student, as personal and collective wealth. These objectives are joined by priority work lines entailing the consolidation of the linguistic system, for the mindsets as well as the conceptualization, and incorporating in a planned way the other languages of the school. Also to promote communication approaches in all languages, to use them functionally, and to apply immersion strategies —where Catalan is not the predominant language— for Content and Language Integrated Learning in foreign languages (CLIL) and Integrated Treatment of Languages (ITL), in order to increase language exposure time, thus, learning and developing the students' multilingual competence. It also works to increase knowledge of the main foreign languages and expand the learning options of new languages, with the incorporation of the mother tongue of foreign students and, finally, encourages the implication and commitment with the education community while fostering the use of the languages.

To improve students' language and communication competences, it is important to structure all actions to be carried out in education centers and, through the language project, consolidate the communication and language field with a strategic vision that integrates work in the language areas, the reflection on how foreign language contents are taught, actions in association with foreign centers, student mobility and teacher training on learning scenarios that have a real explicit progression of contents throughout all education stages, with proposals for monitoring, evaluating and improving as well as facilitating real learning contexts. Management of languages at the center is specified in the language project and is subject to pedagogical, curricular and organizational criteria and efficiency. All of this in accordance to a set of factors: the socio-linguistic context of each center and setting; the students' language background and individual needs; the teachers' language competences and planning for their professional and language development; the results of internal and external evaluations and the preventive measures deriving from them, and finally, the multilingual inclusive education model of the education system of Catalonia.

The development of multilingualism at education centers bypasses more traditional pedagogical models. As put forward in the same text: "Unlike other approaches based on knowledge or skills, this is a competence that promotes students' capacity to put into practice acquired knowledge, aptitudes and personality traits in an integrated way that enables them to resolve various diverse situations and use them in different contexts and situations and, especially, the development of strategies for life-long learning." The Content and Language Integrated Learning strategies —Catalan language immersion and CLIL— promote and favor the application of these principles. They pursue the following general objectives: "To teach and learn languages in an integrated and competence way. For language specialists to work cooperatively, to focus on common elements and maximize efforts; for language and non-language subject specialists to learn languages in real learning contexts; and for students to acquire inter-linguistic and intercultural transfer skills".

In education, quality has a clear linguistic component, which facilitates the student's personal and social development. In fact, school success is strictly related with achieving basic linguistic skills. The experience of many educators shows that, without mastering them, the learning of various curricular subjects is deficient. If one does not understand the wording of a text or a question, one will hardly be successful in areas of scientific, technological or social knowledge.

In Catalonia, in addition to English, the curricular foreign languages taught are French, German and Italian. Nonetheless, we cannot forget the immense linguistic and cultural wealth contributed to us by the latest wave of immigration. It would therefore be advisable to promote It would be desirable to teach other global languages, such as Chinese and Arabic, for instance, which already form part of the linguistic repertoire

of a good part of our students. And push strategies to recognize and appreciate the other languages present at our school centers, as well as the cultures associated with them, in order to protect them and guarantee their continuity. And, above all, because this promotes understanding among people.

A multilingual population becomes a great asset for a country. To reach this objective, actions must be undertaken that facilitate the knowledge and learning of these languages and cultures beyond school and high school. Making them more present in the communication media —with original versions and subtitles, for instance, or through children and adolescent-age foreign language programs—, increasing the accessibility of resources available —reading books, magazines or educational material— or undertaking awareness campaigns: all of these could be measures contributing to improving their use.

If we speak about students of foreign origin, the first of the challenges we face lies in embracing and responding to the emotional aspects caused by migratory processes, to facilitate incorporation into the new school environment and the welcoming society. Families must also be involved in this process. All of this to make it possible to successfully continue schooling. The document explains: “All education centers must make provisions for a personalized welcome of the newly arrived students and, in particular the linguistic attention to enable these students to begin or continue their learning process in the two official languages, and in Aranese, should that be the case. In the education center project and the documents that develop and specify it, there must be included what specific attention the newcomers students should receive so that as soon as possible they are actively incorporated into the normal dynamics of the center.” In order to accomplish this: “It is up to each center to make provisions for the specific measures allocated to assure a favorable welcome to newcomer students, among which there is, as of middle cycle, the welcoming classroom resource . The elaboration and application of an individualized plan for newcomers students allows adaptation of the curriculum to the immediate learning needs. The evaluation of newcomers students’ learning processes must be carried out with relation to the individualized plan objectives and the curricular adaptations made.”

It would be advisable to remember that for decades the presence of foreign origin students has been habitual in education systems of the greater part of Western countries but for Catalonia it is a relatively new situation. In addition, taking into account present day society dynamics, provisions must be made so that linguistic and cultural diversity will continue to be present at education centers therefore strategies must be designed to attend it, beyond the initial welcoming, so that education success can be guaranteed for all students while, at the same time, making the most of the wealth this diversity represents for our society. In response to this situation, the Department of Education makes available to schools and high schools the elements for reflection, methodological orientations, assessment and training related with linguistic and social support to students of foreign origin who need them to follow the curriculum once they are fully incorporated into the standard classroom. The aim of these actions is to provide resources that enable education centers to facilitate the foreign students’ continuous progress in the knowledge of the language used in learning instruction so that language limitations will not be a barrier to access all curricular content areas.

Finally, there should be explicit mention made of the teaching done at the official language schools which allow continuing the language instruction begun in the regular education system stages as well as starting up with new language learning. The Decree 4/2009, of 13 January, which establishes the education structure and curriculum for special education taught at official language schools, defines the purpose of language teaching at these centers, dedicated to “promoting multilingualism in Catalan society, prioritizing the citizens’ needs in adulthood, with regards to language knowledge acquisition and mastery as well as the certification of their skills levels in the use of these languages”.

Family

Family plays a preeminent role in education. Parents have the primary responsibility for their young children and adolescents. The experiences gained and relationships established then become a determining factor in a person's life. It is often stated that our character shows the imprint left on us by our childhood, with the corresponding lights and shadows. In the best conditions, the family is axis that connects a complex of institutions and people involved in the education of future adults. In effect, schools and high schools, leisure and educational organizations, social and cultural institutions, all are the nodules of a network that interlinks them with a connecting node made up of family, which can promote the coherence of the whole, the complementarity of perspectives, to serve the shared objective: create a stimulating learning environment that unveils children's talent. Ultimately, educational success depends in great measure on the quality of the links established within the framework of the ecosystem where humanity is immersed. When for various reasons the family cannot play its role, the other elements of the grid must intensify their involvement to compensate. Social welfare and work/family balance policies have a lot to do in this area, as well as the emerging process of timetable reform.

The cooperation of individuals and institutions to accomplish this common objective is a constant challenge. It is not easy to accomplish it within the context of a mentality historically not prone to teamwork. Likewise, a world that is technologically hyper-connected, complex, sophisticated and in permanent change demands the collaboration of all to push forward projects of a certain magnitude, such as educating people. Some years ago, Castells spoke of the appearance of a new sociability, fruit of the intensive use of ITC, which transforms traditional social ties to enable maintaining relationships and uniting efforts at a distance. In any case, the signs of the times are taking us towards online work. In the field of education, there is a critical need to know how to do it. Educational programs and rural schools are examples that must be taken into account; many schools and high schools have truly acted as a crossroads of a group of educational and social services that intertwine to respond to the needs of students in a vulnerable situation. The adults of families have often played this role without realizing it, inasmuch as they reconnect children's after-school activities and reinforcement with a school dynamic, interacting with the teaching staff. Currently, parents have to be very aware that education is a shared responsibility in which various agents play a significant and complementary role.

As we have seen, the education center and families must be enmeshed. Their relationship has a synergic nature: they boost each other as they converge. With good interaction, they add a multiplying factor to the sum. Both institutions are essential in the life of any child or adolescent. Parents and teachers must be aware of the advisability of aligning themselves in the same direction, each one from their own respective responsibility. They must form a nurturing bond among them that allows schools and high schools to explain what they do and why they do it, and bring to families their own vision of the education project in which their children are protagonists. With respect, without interferences or unfounded misgivings, they must mutually recognize one another. Fluidity and coherence in the dialogue among adults as well as success when mentoring students at school and accompanying them in maturity at home will bear fruit. The sum of the parts should generate an atmosphere of trust in which nobody questions anybody's authority, but rather just the opposite: it strengthens it. Families and students, teachers and other professionals must close ranks around the center's individualized educational project, supported by all stakeholders. With the understanding that the purpose of all of this is to educate "Persons". The problem lies with families who are unable to exercise their corresponding role due to very different situations. In these cases the role of educators becomes even more relevant, especially when prescribing measures and supports of an inclusive nature available at the center and which students need.

Families' participation with the school and specifically with the school council merits special attention. Even though laws have tried to laminate it, it makes sense on its own and must be vindicated. How is it possible to not be co-responsible for the institution whose main mission is the education of our children, making it possible for them to learn? And even more so when it seems obvious that education is a shared job. New formulas must be found to promote areas of participation, above all through the "AMPA" parents' organizations. At some centers this poses a challenge. Likewise, we should recall that a democratic spirit and involvement in collective affairs are values that are acquired, in large part, by exercising them. In advanced countries, school is a privileged space for forging citizens committed to the commonwealth, and we are not only referring to students.

Some schools and high schools take advantage of the interest expressed in teaching-learning to involve parents in complementary training activities, in accordance with teaching staff, thereby creating an atmosphere of complicity in the education community. Especially important are the experiences promoted by some parent organization federations to encourage parents to use their knowledge and expertise to push initiatives in line with school and high school activities. Above all if the result makes everyone aware of the importance of being a part of education. Furthermore, sharing these projects online gives ideas and spurs creativity.

The document *Escola i Família. Junts x l'educació*, drawn up by the Department of Education, explains that education centers must have a welcoming plan for families. It states: "[This] must create an organizational structure that poses welcoming as a gradual and well-sequenced process in time, and is not limited to a first contact or initial encounter. Within this process, the education commitment letter is a key document that allows families to formalize their co-responsibility and involvement with the education center." It goes on to say: "[Welcoming] is a good time to become aware of the family's circumstances and share expectations, needs and responsibilities on both parts as well as to initiate the first commitments, which can be included in the education commitment letter. This approach is especially relevant in the case of newcomer families or those at risk of social exclusion. Building bridges of personal as well as cultural confluence and shared insights between family and school can give students the framework necessary to develop high expectations for educational success. The aforementioned education commitment letter is a tool that should foster cooperation between families and education centers in educational activities. Thus, precisely: "Each center has to work out the education commitment letter in accordance with the principles, objectives, criteria and values of their education project... With the aim of being a more effective tool in the individualized follow up of students, it is advisable to add other additional specific contents to the common contents in order to monitor every student." The abovementioned text also talks about the training that can be offered families, proposals designed by the education center in collaboration with the AMPA parents' organization. It cites innovative examples which are added to traditional lectures and courses, such as sessions "to debate or share education strategies applied to the family environment and to share experiences with other families living in similar circumstances - sharing feelings, situations, resources, activities and reflections" or "coffee chat sessions, attended mainly by families but that can also be open to other professionals who, in a relaxed atmosphere, can share ideas, processes, reflections or criteria."

Epilogue: A Digital Environment

As the School Education Council of Catalonia stresses in the document *L'impacte i la contribució de les tecnologies digitals en l'educació* (2013): "Digital technologies have been an inseparable part of the school landscape for years. Education centers around the world are making efforts to incorporate digital technologies into teaching-learning activities. Governments and education administrations are the

promotors and managers of these processes, powered by recommendations from international organizations and supported by a large number of research projects, studies and proposals. Catalonia has been a pioneer in this field and for more than a quarter of a century has carried out numerous initiatives that have contributed towards jointly generating a high level of expertise and knowledge.” After a period of institutional actions, innovative initiatives of many educators and involvement of businesses to develop and implement increasingly affordable digital technologies for education, the digitalization process is being intensified in various areas of the education system, a fact that opens up new perspectives and opportunities but also questions the extent and models for digitalization that must be adopted to make the most of digital technologies in education. In order to tackle these challenges raised for society in general and for education in particular as well as the irreversible expansion of digital technologies in all fields, there must be careful consideration given to what we have learned so far; we must propose plausible scenarios for the future and arrive at a consensus on the scope of digitalization and its application at education centers so that these commitments can be translated into new long-term actions.

As pointed out by Jordi Vivancos, responsible for the LKT (Learning and Knowledge Technology) Section of the Department of Education: “Careful consideration must be based on evidence and informed judgement. In this sense, academic research on the impact and educational uses of digital technologies has a long tradition in Catalonia. The number of doctoral theses, research groups and participation in European projects stands out in this area. This track record has been further consolidated in various processes and actions among which is highlighted the creation of the International Education and Technology Forum (FIET), founded in 2014, which counts on the participation of several Catalan universities. Another noteworthy fact is the Interdepartmental Project for Educators’ Digital Competency (PICDD), launched by the Generalitat at the end of 2014 and in which all Catalan universities are involved in order to define the digital training model for teaching staff.” He adds: “An element that shows the dynamism of this field is the creation in 2013 of the mSchools Program, an action driven by the Mobile World Capital Barcelona Foundation, with the patronage of the GSMA Association of Mobile Technology Business sector, along with strong involvement of the education administration. The mSchools program is contributing towards encouraging the adoption of mobile technologies to promote advanced digital competences, from an interdisciplinary STEM viewpoint and also fostering entrepreneurship.”

Despite these realities, educational use of digital technologies per se is still relatively limited and could be improved, in Catalonia as well as internationally. In our neighboring countries, academic use of technology is low since only one out of every 25 fifteen- year old students uses a computer for more than one hour weekly during school time. However more than half of these students use technologies daily to do their homework, so home is the focus for an important part of digital technology use for educational purposes. On the other hand, more than three quarters of educators almost regularly use a computer for class preparation or for administrative tasks (CEC, 2013). Research results on the digital impact on education show us, nevertheless, that despite the substantial efforts made to incorporate digital technologies into education, they still have not reached the full potential of transforming and improving teaching and learning processes, something promised by these very technologies.

Vivancos states: “Digital technologies are producing changes in society’s expectations and demands of the education system. These changes will become predictably more important in the coming years, when the generation that has grown up immersed in digital technologies begins to enroll their own children in school. The concept of *digital technology* in education includes a broad range of devices (computers, tablets, interactive screens, robots, 3D printers) that give access and use of curricular services and resources in digital format. All in continuous evolution and diversification. Successful emerging digital technologies are adopted ever more quickly. Landline or traditional home telephone service needed a century to become commonplace, Internet has done so in two decades and smartphones have needed

fewer than five years . The education system must adapt in order to coexist with this reality, where change is the only constant in society. The extent and quality of digital technology implementation at education centers is strongly linked to the views held by the very same school management teams. Accordingly, the leadership role of school management teams has shown to be a success factor for achieving technology implementation results with a high degree of coherence of the curricular and methodological innovation objectives that requires full development of basic competences.”

This expert concludes that: “It is not the aim of this document to define this broad range of emerging digital technologies that are beginning to have presence in education, according to what appears in various international prospective studies. It will be necessary to rigorously anticipate education transformation demands connected to the evolution of technology. As an example of one of the trends these prospective studies have highlighted for education in the coming years is *Big Data* exploitation applications, that is, decision making aided by technologies which processes huge volumes of data on the people, operations and resources that make up the education system. This approach is called *data driven education*. Technologies that handle huge volumes of personal data are not risk-free and its application should be closely regulated yet, utilized with absolute guarantees, they make up the base for personalized learning, at the same time facilitating more informed decision making for all education system stakeholders and levels. To provide full privacy guarantees for these technologies, the elements from *Privacy by Design* (design based on privacy) must be incorporated as basic criteria in the design of applications based on *Big Data* (2016 Kennisnet)”.