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INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: MAPS, BORDERS AND PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

Educación inclusiva: mapas, fronteras y caminos hacia el éxito

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ABSTRACT

Over the last thirty years inclusive education has become a major concern globally. However, there remains considerable confusion in the field as to what is meant by the term. This paper seeks to throw light on what is involved by tracing the history of its evolution. Starting with a brief review of the international milestones that have shaped what is now often referred to as inclusion and equity in education, the paper provides an analysis of the progress that has been made, as well as the factors that have limited developments in the field. This analysis is presented in three sections. The first of these sections maps the development of the concept in a way that explains current disputes as to its purposes and how these might be achieved. The second section explores pathways that have proved to be valuable in bringing

about the transformations needed in order to achieve progress in developing more inclusive education settings. The third section provides an analysis of frontiers that are hindering the advancement of knowledge that encourages a transformation of the social imagination about schools and relationships within them. The article concludes with a roadmap for transforming schools into arenas for promoting citizen participation and democracy. It is argued that this requires a paradigm shift in the way that the idea of inclusive education is understood and addressed. This involves a move away from an individual gaze, where educational difficulties are explained in terms of the characteristics of children and their social backgrounds, towards a perspective where difficulties experienced by learners are defined in relation to the ways in which education is provided within particular contexts. In this way, the focus on inclusion provides a pathway for achieving excellence within education systems, promoting the humanization of the processes that occur therein.

Keywords: diversity; equity and inclusion; educational change; human rights; inclusive education; inclusive schools; pathways; resistance to change.

RESUMEN

En los últimos treinta años, la educación inclusiva se ha convertido en una preocupación importante a nivel mundial. Sin embargo, sigue habiendo una considerable confusión en el campo sobre lo que se entiende por este término. Este artículo busca arrojar luz sobre lo que implica trazando la historia de su evolución. Comenzando con una breve revisión de los hitos internacionales que han dado forma a lo que ahora se suele denominar inclusión y equidad en educación, el artículo ofrece un análisis de los avances logrados, así como de los factores que han limitado los avances en el campo. Este análisis se presenta en tres secciones. La primera traza el desarrollo del concepto, explicando las disputas actuales sobre sus propósitos y cómo podrían lograrse. La segunda sección explora caminos que han demostrado ser valiosos para generar las transformaciones necesarias para lograr avances en el desarrollo de entornos educativos más inclusivos. La tercera sección ofrece un análisis de las fronteras que obstaculizan el avance del conocimiento que fomenta una transformación de la representación social sobre las escuelas y las relaciones dentro de ellas. El artículo concluye con una hoja de ruta para transformar las escuelas en espacios para promover la participación ciudadana y la democracia. Se sostiene que esto requiere un cambio de paradigma en la forma de entender y abordar la idea de la educación inclusiva. Esto implica alejarse de una perspectiva individualista, en la que las dificultades educativas se explican en términos de las características del alumnado y sus antecedentes sociales, hacia una perspectiva en la que las dificultades que experimentan los estudiantes se definen en relación con las formas en que se desarrolla la educación en contextos particulares. De esta manera, el enfoque en la inclusión ofrece una vía para humanizar sistemas educativos excelentes.

Palabras clave: diversidad; equidad e inclusión; cambio educativo; derechos humanos; educación inclusiva; escuelas inclusivas; caminos; resistencia al cambio.

This paper focuses on one of the main global challenges facing education systems: that of finding ways of including all children and young people in schools. In economically poorer countries this is mainly about the millions of children who are not able to attend formal education (UNESCO, 2015, 2020, 2022). Meanwhile, in wealthier countries many young people leave school with no worthwhile qualifications, whilst others are placed in special provision away from mainstream education and some 'choose' to drop out since the lessons seem irrelevant (OECD, 2012; UNESCO, 2020, 2022).

Faced with these challenges, there is evidence of an increased interest internationally in the idea of making education more inclusive. However, the field remains confused as to the actions needed in order to move policy and practice forward. In this paper we trace the development of thinking to map out the challenges involved and suggest pathways for moving forward.

1. A WINDING ROAD

A significant step on the journey to define inclusive education was the Warnock (1978) report in the United Kingdom, which was a groundbreaking move forward on the journey to create an education system that can reach out to all of children and young people. In a way that was not intended at that time, it also proved to be a catalyst for major international developments.

The most significant contribution of the Warnock report was the introduction of the concept 'special educational needs. This pointed towards a new perspective on educational difficulties, one that sees them as arising from an interaction between the characteristics of individual learners and the context in which they are educated. This was the beginnings of a paradigm shift that was subsequently to be taken forward internationally. However, efforts to move in this new direction have proved to be difficult, not least because of confusion regarding the term inclusive inclusion.

The 1990s saw considerable efforts in many countries to develop more inclusive forms of schooling. The United Nations' Education for All (EfA) strategy developed in the Jomtien Declaration (UNESCO, 1990) encouraged many such initiatives, focusing specifically on the need to reach out to excluded and marginalised groups of learners. This Declaration set out an overall vision: universalising formal education access to all children, youth and adults, and promoting equity. This is about being proactive in identifying the barriers some groups encounter in attempting to access educational opportunities. It also involves identifying the resources available at the national and community levels and bringing them to bear on overcoming those barriers.

Further impetus regarding inclusive education was encouraged by UNESCO's Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education

in 1994 (UNESCO, 1994). Arguably the most significant international document that has ever appeared in the field of special education, the Statement argues that regular schools with an inclusive orientation are: '…the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all.' Furthermore, it suggests, such schools can: '…provide an effective education for the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system.'

In the following decade, the last Human Rights instrument published to date would be developed: the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ONU, 2006), ratified by 191 countries. Despite being a milestone that goes beyond education, and that focuses on the group of people with disabilities, the Convention starts from this group to promulgate in its article 24 inclusive education as a fundamental human right, something that means an enormous advance in the consideration of the right to education (Calderón-Almendros & Echeita, 2022). The Convention transforms the conception of the right to education for all students without exception.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is very clear on this point: "the right to education is a right to inclusive education" (ONU, 2013). This reality would also be widely addressed and clarified in General Comment No. 4 on the right to inclusive education (ONU, 2016). All these places inclusive education as a basic priority in educational systems around the world, because it is no longer optional. This eliminates from the equation certain debates that insistently interrupt the necessary transformation of ordinary educational systems: "debating the benefits of inclusive education can be seen as much to debating the benefits of the abolition of slavery, or indeed of apartheid." (UNESCO, 2020, p. 5).

Then, in 2008, the 48th session of the IBE-UNESCO International Conference on Education held in 2008, with its theme *'Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future',* saw a further refining of the agenda. During this event, ministers and government officials from around the work, plus representatives of voluntary organizations, discussed the importance of broadening the concept of inclusion to focus on all children, under the assumption that every learner matters equally and has the right to receive effective educational opportunities (Opertti, Walker & Zhang, 2014).

Moving forward, the year 2016 was particularly important in relation to the future of the EFA movement and, indeed, the legacy of Salamanca. Commitments were made in the form of 17 Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by all United Nations Member States. Sustainable Development Goal 4 aims to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all' (UNESCO, 2015). This led to the publication of the Education 2030 Framework for Action, which emphasizes inclusion and equity as laying the foundations for quality education. It also stresses the need to address all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparities and inequalities in access, participation, and learning processes and outcomes. In this way, it is made clear that the international Education for All agenda really has to be about 'all'.

2. The role of perspectives

What emerges from our account of developments in thinking about inclusive education are three discrete perspectives. In this context, the perspectives we have defined are attempts to characterize alternative ways of looking at the phenomenon of educational difficulty, based on different sets of assumptions that lead to different explanations, different frames of reference and different kinds of questions to be addressed (Ainscow & Hart, 1992).

The first perspective seeks to explain educational difficulties in terms of the *characteristics of individual students.* This remains a dominant perspective in the field, where the nature of educational difficulties is explained in terms of particular disabilities, social background and/or psychological attributes. The frame of reference created by this perspective is the individual learner, and responses are chosen that seek to change or support the student in order to facilitate participation in the process of schooling. Traditionally responses informed by this perspective have taken the form of removal of the student from the mainstream curriculum for specialist help. However, responses have developed which allow help to be provided in the context of the regular classroom.

The second perspective explains educational difficulties in terms of *a mismatch between the characteristics of particular students and the arrangements made for them*. Here support may be directed towards helping the student to meet the demands and expectations of the system. Or it may be directed towards making modifications in order to extend the range of students that can be accommodated. In many respects current 'booming' responses (e.g. differentiated instruction and the proliferation of support teachers) are informed by this perspective. Furthermore, it is a stance that is seen as arising as a result of dissatisfaction with the first perspective, which is seen as being a deficit model.

The frame of reference in this interactive perspective once again focuses attention on individual students but this time is concerned with the ways they interact with particular contexts and experiences. Responses chosen in the light of this perspective include curriculum adaptations, alternative materials for students, or extra support in the classroom. Sometimes, these responses are seen as being of benefit to learners other than those designated as having special needs.

The third perspective explains educational difficulties in terms of *curriculum limitations,* using the term curriculum in a broad sense to include all the planned and, indeed, unplanned experiences offered to students. Within this perspective there is a concern with what can be learnt from the difficulties experienced by some learners about the limitations of provision currently made for all students. The assumption is that changes introduced for the benefit of those experiencing difficulties can improve learning for all children.

Those adopting this perspective are critical of the limitations of an individual frame of reference. They argue that a wider frame is needed, focusing on curriculum,

organization and practice as currently provided for all students. The task involves continually seeking ways of improving overall conditions for learning, with difficulties acting as indicators of how improvements might be achieved. Those who adopt this perspective are likely to favour approaches that encourage enquiry as a means of achieving improvement, for example, various forms of collaborative or participatory action research.

It is important to recognize at this stage in our argument that whilst the adoption of a particular perspective tends to encourage the choice of certain types of organizational approaches, the responses may be informed by different assumptions. So, for example, support teaching (i.e. the provision of additional staff who work alongside regular teachers within the mainstream classroom in order to support the participation of vulnerable students), which is widely used in many countries, might be used by teachers favouring any of the three perspectives. In this case, those adopting a characteristics perspective would see support teaching as a means of providing an individual student with extra teaching, albeit in the context or framework of regular classroom activities; those who take an interactive view, on the other hand, would see support teaching as a way of making modifications to existing arrangements in order to accommodate certain students experiencing learning difficulties; whereas the curriculum limitations perspective would encourage the idea that additional adults could facilitate the review and development of existing arrangements in the light of a scrutiny of the difficulties experienced by certain students.

3. Inclusion as a principle and as a right

As we have explained, within international policy documents, inclusive education is increasingly seen as a principle that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners. This presumes that the aim of is to eliminate social exclusion that is a consequence of attitudes and responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender and ability. As such, it starts from the idea that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just society. Hence, the emphasis on equity, which implies a concern with fairness. UNESCO Guidance (2017) sums this up as follows: *'Every learner matters and matters equally'*.

Thinking regarding ways of helping schools to become more inclusive has been much influenced as a result of the development of the 'Index for Inclusion' (Booth & Ainscow, 2000). Designed originally for use within the policy context of England at the turn of the century by a team of activists, the *Index* is a set of school review materials that has been refined as a result of over ten years of collaborative action research in many countries (see Slee, 2004) for articles about some of these developments). As a result, it is now available in more than 40 languages and is widely used internationally.

The *Index* encourages schools to draw on the resources of staff, students, parents/carers and community representatives in order to address barriers to the participation and learning of students that exist within their existing 'cultures, policies and practices'. In connecting inclusion with the detail of policy and practice, the Index encourages those who use it to build up their own view of inclusion, related to their experience and values, as they work out what policies and practices, they wish to promote or discourage. Such an approach is based on the idea that inclusion is essentially about attempts to embody particular values within specific contexts. In other words, it is 'school improvement with attitude' (Ainscow et al, 2006).

The *Index* approach also involves an emphasis on collaborative inquiry, involving coordinated and sustained efforts around the idea that changing outcomes for all students is unlikely to be achieved unless there are changes in the behaviours of adults. Consequently, the starting point for inclusive school development, it is argued, is with teachers: in effect, enlarging their capacity to imagine what might be achieved, and increasing their sense of accountability for bringing this about. This may also involve tackling taken-for-granted assumptions, most often relating to expectations about certain groups of students, their capabilities, behaviour and patterns of attendance. At the same time, such efforts have to be linked to what is happening in other schools and in the wider community.

Experience in many countries (see examples in Ainscow, 2024) suggests that it is helpful to use a definition of inclusive education that involves the following elements:

Inclusion is a process. That is to say, inclusion has to be seen as a never-ending search to find better ways of responding to diversity. It is about learning how to live with difference, and, learning how to learn from difference. In this way differences come to be seen more positively as a stimulus for fostering learning, amongst children and adults.

Inclusion is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers. Here barriers may take different forms, some of which are to do with existing policies, the way schools are organized, relationships and the forms of teaching provided. Consequently, it is necessary to collect, collate and evaluate evidence about these factors in order to plan for improvements in policy and practice. This involves using evidence of various kinds to stimulate creativity and problem-solving.

Inclusion is about the presence, participation and achievement of all students. Here 'presence' is concerned with where every child is educated, and how reliably and punctually they attend to school; 'participation' relates to the quality of their experiences whilst they are there and, therefore, must incorporate the views of the learners themselves; and 'achievement' is about the outcomes of learning across the curriculum, not merely test or examination results.

Inclusion involves a particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalisation, exclusion or underachievement. This indicates the

moral responsibility to ensure that those groups that are statistically most at risk are carefully monitored, and that, where necessary, steps are taken to ensure their presence, participation and achievement within the education system. At the same time, it is necessary to be vigilant in watching out for learners who may be overlooked.

A well-orchestrated debate about these elements can lead to a wider understanding of the principle of inclusion. Furthermore, such a debate, though by its nature slow and, possibly, never ending, can have leverage in respect to fostering the conditions within which schools can feel encouraged to move in a more inclusive direction. These debates must involve all stakeholders within communities, including families, political and religious leaders, and the media. They should also involve those within national and local district education offices.

The conception of inclusive education as a process, as well as the importance of considering it as a backbone principle of policies and practices, is in line with the idea that it is a *fundamental human right* that is widely recognized and legally established. In other words, reality requires the conjugation of a legal imperative that preserves one of the fundamental rights of childhood, with the complexity of making advanced mental schemes that limit our ability to conceive and relate to each other in a different way inside the ordinary school. This contradiction finds its answer in the genuine educational sense of the issue: legislative prescriptions do not have to be questioned, but assumed, but the agenda of inclusive education can only advance through systematic debate that questions the *status quo*.

In this public debate, the recognition of education as a human right is a powerful lever, but it is insufficient as an argument for the cultural battle. Rather, there is a need to adopt a radical perspective, where schools are seen as places for the reconstruction of culture and relationships, which must take into account those populations that have historically been ignored. In other words, such debates should broaden collective imaginations, which go to the core of our educational thinking and must be informed by inclusion. This is how inclusion manifests itself and combines itself simultaneously in relation to two concepts: as a principle and as a right.

4. Policy development

A framework that can be used to facilitate policy development is provided by the UNESCO Guide for Ensuring Inclusion and Equity in Education. Published in 2017, this guide is intended to support countries in embedding inclusion and equity in educational policy. The ultimate objective is to create system-wide change for overcoming barriers to quality educational access, participation, learning processes and outcomes, and to ensure that all learners are valued and engaged equally.

The Guide argues that developing policies that are inclusive and equitable requires the recognition that students' difficulties arise from aspects of the education

system itself, including: the ways in which they are organized currently, the forms of teaching that are provided, the learning environment, and the ways in which students' progress is supported and evaluated.

Even more important is translating this recognition into concrete reforms, seeing individual differences not as problems to be fixed, but as opportunities for democratizing and enriching learning. In this way, differences can act as a catalyst for innovation that can benefit all learners, whatever their personal characteristics and home circumstances.

The UNESCO Guide explains that integrating the principles of equity and inclusion into education policy involves:

- Valuing the presence, participation and achievement of all learners, regardless of their contexts and personal characteristics.
- Recognizing the benefits of student diversity, and how to live with, and learn from, difference.
- Collecting, collating and evaluating evidence on children's barriers to education access, to participation and to achievement, with particular attention to learners who may be most at risk of underachievement, marginalization or exclusion.
- Building a common understanding that more inclusive and equitable education systems have the potential to promote gender equality, reduce inequalities, develop teacher and system capabilities, and encourage supportive learning environments. These various efforts will, in turn, contribute to overall improvements in educational quality.
- Engaging key education and community stakeholders to foster the conditions for inclusive learning, and to foster a broader understanding of the principles of inclusion and equity.
- Implementing changes effectively and monitoring them for impact, recognizing that building inclusion and equity in education is an on-going process, rather than a one-time effort.

Bringing the principles of equity and inclusion into education policy also requires engaging other sectors, such as health, social welfare and child protection services, to ensure a common administrative and legislative framework for inclusive and equitable education.

5. A PARADIGM SHIFT

The changes in thinking that have occurred through international developments over the last three decades involve a paradigm shift. That is to say, they imply a fundamental change in the way the idea of inclusive education is understood and

addressed. This involves a move away from an 'individual gaze', where educational difficulties are explained in terms of characteristics of students, towards a perspective where difficulties experienced by learners are defined in relation to tasks and activities, and classroom conditions.

The idea of paradigm shifts was brought into use by the physicist and philosopher Thomas Kuhn (1970). Even though he restricted the use of the term to the natural sciences, the concept has been used in numerous social contexts to describe a profound change in a fundamental model or perception of events. As explained by Burrell and Morgan (1979), paradigms represent different views of social realities. However, a problem that has been identified is that, unlike in the hard sciences, where new paradigms replace previous ways of thinking, within the social world, earlier and new paradigms may well continue to operate at the same time (Skrtic 1991). This perhaps explains why competing definitions of inclusive education lead to misunderstandings and, sometimes, disputes in the field.

At the same time, it is necessary to take into account that this paradigm shift poses a challenge to the power relations that organize what happens in schools, but also those that are built between schools, and that impact beyond them. This involves not only social relations, but also the forms of relationship with knowledge, the valuation of the knowledge of ordinary people, the production relations of science and even labor and economic relations. This is a social, political and cultural project of great magnitude and depth, which needs to question the relations of educational systems with the market ideology, that is, the subordination of the education of our young generations to it through the development of entrepreneurship, competitiveness, meritocracy (Apple, 2004, 2005; Masschelein & Simons, 2005) and neoliberal ableism (Goodley, 2014). Inclusive education is a matter of social justice, which disrupts the capitalist forms of relationship that are introduced in schools (Apple, 2015; De Beco, 2018), and which value students only according to their productivity, even under the name of inclusive education (Waitoller, 2020).

Thus, it is not strange to see how resistance to these changes continually arises, which imply the privatization of schools and its impact on the economic inequalities of students, the maintenance and reinforcement of segregation within them for reasons of social class, ethnicity, ability, between others, the bureaucratization and proletarianization of teaching work, which hinders their role as cultural workers and critical intellectuals (Giroux, 1988), etc. The resurgence of forces against inclusive education seems paradigmatic, although they claim to act paradoxically in the name of inclusion. They intend to return to the logic of special education, assuming that there are defective students, who must be categorized and segregated to obtain resources that international research has repeatedly shown to be fruitless (Cologon 2019, 2020; Hehir et al., 2016; Jackson, 2008). This is what Tomlinson (2012) calls the rise of the SEN industry. Eliminating special education implies the dismantling of an entire system of social policies, subsidies and companies, but also

of dependencies, sources of employment, teacher training programs, and ways of thinking, feeling and acting that chronicize the subordination of some populations with respect to others.

6. Some borders facing inclusive education

This paradigm shift requires the detection of some borders in thought, as well as in the construction of pedagogical science. It is not only a matter of detecting and removing the barriers that hinder inclusion in schools, but it is necessary to reconsider the way in which we do research in the field, as well as the way in which this production of knowledge materializes in teacher training processes. We are talking about showing and transforming hierarchical relationships that order everyday life; what is natural to us and causes a generalization of rationality (Derrida, 2005). It is about deconstructing some borders that delimit and constrain a good part of the policies, cultures and practices in our schools. In what follows we address some of the borders that seem to us to be most significant.

6.1. *The border between biology and culture*

More than four decades ago, Bruner (1991) stated that "culture is constitutive of the mind" (pp. 47-48), and that biological limitations are challenges to cultural intervention. However, the social representation of the ineducability of some people still prevails in many schools and universities: it is thought that they cannot learn for various reasons, and it is something that impacts above all on some groups, and later it is subjectivized as something personal. Low expectations constitute a large part of the problem, because it is this belief - and the stigmas that sustain it - that hinder the teaching-learning process, reinforcing a self-fulfilling prophecy (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1980). This stigma becomes constitutive of categories such as disability, social class, migrant status, etc. In this process of back and forth between biology and culture, the reality that often sustains school failure and exclusion is constructed.

All this shows the need to build a pedagogy that addresses the biology-culture interrelation, since the body and culture constitute each other. This pedagogy challenges current limits, denaturalizing inequalities, and allows students to free themselves from them (Calderón-Almendros, 2014; Calderón-Almendros & Ruiz-Román, 2015). It is about deconstructing the social conception of intelligence, disability, social class and other social categorizations, thus reconfiguring the body (and the mind), its limits and possibilities.

6.2. *The border of intelligence*

Intelligence is not monolithic, nor univocal, nor individual. The work of psychologists with significant scientific legitimacy, such as Bruner (1988, 1991,

1997), Vigostky (1964, 1979), Cole (1996), Goleman (1996), Gardner (1993), argue this, which has no counterpart in the school curriculum. These conceptions of intelligence, which recognize its social (and therefore not deterministic or genetic) and multiple character (since it diversifies intelligence into different intelligences), have a democratizing effect on the social construction that is derived from them. On the one hand, because they place the problem in the social and cultural environment, which distributes responsibilities and enables change. On the other hand, by paying more attention to the complexity of the human being, greater diversity is made possible. Institutionally devalued intelligences allow those who are poorly placed in the usual hierarchy produced by tests and school grades, based fundamentally on linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence, to stand out. All of this offers effective tools for daily resistance, supports open attitudes and allows value to be given to devalued intelligences, repositioning their social position and that of others.

On the other hand, this complex representation of the multidimensional nature of the human being calls into question the category of normality, transferring the socially situated limits of the intelligence of the person to the outside of it: the limits are, from this perspective, in the social environment and in time.

6.3. *The border of normality*

Inclusive education delves into the questioning of categorization in schools, which divide society, which define people by their capacities and conditions, which ultimately delimit, oppress and exclude them. Graham & Slee (2008) address the problem of labels to theorize about inclusion/exclusion in education, showing how they create "illusory interiorities" by naturalizing normal ways of being. This naturalization erases particular forms of existence and creates an unquestionable space that maintains power relations sustained by the logic of normality (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995): by categorizing in schools and between schools, we work to maintain power imbalances and inequity (Graham & Slee, 2008; Popkewitz & Lindblad, 2000). School segregation, special education, special educational needs, and curricular adaptations are ways of excluding from what are considered to be normal. It is evident that they constitute a clear deep border not only physical, but cognitive, cultural, social and emotional. The division of the school, as well as the division within schools, eliminates the conflict that could improve them and, therefore, the ability to think about fundamental issues, such as normality, individualism and productivity. All of this requires an intersectional view, which connects the different forms of social and educational oppression, and an interdisciplinary view, which implies transcending the limits of the disciplines and areas of knowledge that divide the faculties of education.

In this sense, inclusive education is a process of social creativity in which new interpretations of the school are constructed that question and highlight the

social representations and beliefs on which education professionals and society in general are based. They question the hegemonic division between normal and abnormal, center and periphery. In this process, borders are diluted, because those who have been separated can recognize each other as equals without denying their differences. Inclusive education, then, becomes a pedagogy of differences (Calderón-Almendros, et al., 2016; Skliar, 2007, 2019), a continuous return to find strange everyday reality.

This implies, among other things, that schools review the meaning of school counselling (Calderón-Almendros, Moreno-Parra & Vila-Merino, 2024), transforming in this process the vital, social and cultural itineraries of the students. In other words, the process questions the habit, what is unthinkable in schools: the categorizations that are at the very core of the school institution's project. By questioning normality as a reference system, exclusionary machinery is dismantled. Education can be looked at again from a justice perspective, showing that the school system was never neutral. And in this process, new personal and social cartographies can be built, constituting a new context that enables more humane ways of existing, relating and educating for everyone. All of this has great organizational, political and practical implications for the construction of inclusive educational systems, which require breaking out of the vicious circle of categorizations, as has been done in the last educational reform in Portugal (OECD, 2022).

6.4. *The border between the individual and the social*

Inclusive education asks how we promote the transformation of all those implicit ideas, languages, cultures and practices by paying attention to the well-being of the people who take part in an educational context. This allows us to see beyond what we saw before, largely because teachers begin to reconceptualize the action of the school beyond the unbridled productivism that dominates it, and that leads to meaninglessness, saturation, the perception that there is no time, and the neglect of the desires and pleasure of educating and learning at school.

Developing systematic processes of dialogue and listening like those we have been accompanying for years (Ainscow et al., 2024; Calderón-Almendros et al., 2020) generates learning communities and professional communities of practice. Through collaborative and participatory action research processes, communities develop personal, relational and structural transformations, thereby reformulating identities, precisely because all these levels are put into relation. Identity is constituted as a privileged space of struggle that avoids the simplistic dichotomy between the social and the individual that we have been questioning, and therefore of great importance for the construction of inclusive educational systems, since it transcends one of the great borders that limit the project.

Schools can be understood as places of democratic reconstruction (Apple, 1999), while professionals experience them as communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), in

which practices take shape in processes of reification and participation. Teachers, in their daily lives, negotiate meanings through social action and the conversations that take place in schools. By stimulating systematic processes of conversation between center and periphery, between power and counterpower, consolidated practices are continually revised when new voices are heard, generating new negotiations of meanings. All of this impacts on practices, but also on the subjective constructions of teachers and students. Objectifications, for example, in reference to what is commonly called "Special Educational Needs", are a limit on the thinking and action of teachers, but also a ceiling for the students who are objectified in them. And only through the expansion of participation, the borders begin to move: the barriers are not in the children and their biology, but in the thoughts of teachers and professional culture. For example, the learning possibilities of these students are expanded by displacing what was previously objectified by the institution. And everything happens with the mediation of emotions. It is, then, about transforming the implicit personal and professional backpack (Pérez-Gómez, 2020; Pérez-Gómez & Soto-Gómez, 2022), that which has been called practical knowledge, which must go through reason, contrast and experimentation.

In this task, the transformation of the deepest implicit theories, which depend on previous experiences in life, and which intensely influence teaching activity (Zeichner & Gore, 1990), must take place. They require complex actions that are directed at different levels, like layers of an onion (Korthagen, 2017) and that delve into the very identity of the teacher and his mission. This logic of layered deconstruction is solidly answered through the cyclical processes of Action Research, which through participation go deeper into critical analyses of reality and expand the capacity for action on it. At the same time, the conceptions, emotions and practices of the rest of the community are transformed, continually reconstructing vital, social and educational itineraries.

6.5. *The border between school and society*

People who occupy subordinate positions have the real capacity to elaborate arguments and new narratives that question the hegemonic discourses that organize schools and maintain unjust orders: supposedly scientific discourses, professional and legal discourses, political discourses. All these discourses constitute the legitimate framework of thought and action within the school, which establishes the limits of what can be imagined, questioned and done. The educational proposal, then, is to work together with ordinary people—particularly with those who are disadvantaged within these school frameworks—so that they construct their own word, as Freire (1972) would suggest, and that this becomes consistent in order to gain authority and become action. This cannot happen with the emergence of an individual word, but with the construction of new collective narratives that can resist, question and

challenge the hegemony of the discourses that usually dominate their lives. Only in this way the schools' regimes of truth can be transformed, because they are taking into account historically ignored and oppressed realities.

In different Spanish-speaking countries we have been working over the last few years to promote inclusive education beyond schools, making it easier for the communities themselves to build the meaning of inclusion in school. Based on the analysis of the most oppressed groups, it is common for collective narratives to emerge from pain, which rehumanizes the project by generating a mobilizing emotional cartography: the transition from the individual to the collective allows solitary pain to become recognition, and anger to become love by becoming a social project that seeks social and educational justice. We are thus talking about the construction of a social movement that connects the pain of students, teachers and families in a school that is far from their desires, languages and needs. This social movement needs to recover the genuine languages of ordinary people, which are often abandoned in the face of the overwhelming socializing power of educational systems. It is therefore a question of recovering the very meanings of what it means to educate people, with the intention of constructing new collective meanings. This requires generating spaces for the construction of collective narratives, with conversations between a large number of people who analyse the situation of the educational system to assume their role in its transformation. We have addressed some of these processes in Calderón-Almendros et al. (2020), Calderón-Almendros & Rascón-Gómez (2022) and Vila-Merino et al. (2024). At the moment, the development carried out in Spain through the Social Movement "Wanting it is creating it",[1] the ION Movement in Paraguay[2] or the 4D Lab in Uruguay[3] are noteworthy.

7. Inclusive education: between reality and dreams

Educational activity is based on memory of the past (Esteve, 2010). We have accumulated a culture that we cannot and should not forget. However, education is a task of projection that does not allow us to remain in the past. Because what in the past meant progress, in the present can imply determinism that makes us lose hope and makes us believe that nothing can change. Heidegger (2001) described the temporal structure of being in the world as follows: from what we have become, we project our future being. Education must respond to this reality to accompany what McIntyre (1987) calls life as a search. Life is narration and openness, and education is located between our realities and our dreams. Because everything can always be

[1] See https://creemoseducacioninclusiva.com/

[2] See https://www.instagram.com/ioncongreso/

[3] See https://4dlab.uy/

improved: the person, society, the world. Education is a phenomenon that favors the freedom of people, that can promote social justice, that equalizes opportunities. For this reason, it needs to incorporate dreams, because without them it loses a good part of its nature and denies the projection that it intends to build.

Inclusive education is probably the greatest challenge facing educational systems around the world today, because we have been able to dream of a school that values human differences. A challenge that, for a large part of the educational community, means the risk of breaking away from the habit, from the organization of the curriculum that supports the current order of things in schools. This implies the recognition that school communities must investigate their own contexts to adapt their teaching-learning processes, which means a shift in the way we conceive research, the relationship between theory and practice of teaching, but also the relations of production of pedagogical science. To do this, tools are needed that make education professionals feel that they are not jumping into the void, with flexible tools that help develop their own research processes,[4] as well as a citizen movement that supports the effort to make these transformations.

The processes developed to make schools inclusive through the participation of the entire community constitute a decisive advance in this direction. They dismantle what is taken for granted in education. It uninstalls the objectifications that have placed certain people and groups on the margins. It continually restarts the learning processes of the entire educational community. And with learning, it immerses itself in change and differences.

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[4] Some examples of tools designed in action research processes with school communities and used to advance schools can be found in the UNESCO Resource Box "Reaching All Students" (https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383824_spa), the "Reaching the Hard to Reach" Guides (https://reachingthehardtoreach.eu/) and the "Quererla es Crearla Guides (https://creemoseducacioninclusiva.com/creamos/guias/).

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