Gilda María García Sotelo y Renata Demichelis Ávila[1]

A MODEL FOR GLOBAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Abstract

The model of education for children with disabilities has gradually been transformed, passing through various paradigms as a result of changing perspectives on disabilities. The *segregated model* in which special education was prioritised was initially dominant. After this, there was a move towards the *integrative model*, "admitting" pupils with disabilities into a pre-existing system, so long as they could "become normal". Most recently, *the inclusive model* aims to provide education for everyone without discrimination, under equal conditions, making schools into meeting spaces for diversity, and particularly into media for empowering children and adolescents with disabilities. Justified by questions of equality and social justice, the inclusive education model is transformative and is the only model to guarantee schools for global citizenship.

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**UN MODELO PARA LA EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL Y TRANSFORMADORA,
INCLUYENTE DE LA INFANCIA CON DISCAPACIDAD**
**A MODEL FOR GLOBAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION
INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

INTRODUCTION

The right to an education is a universal right recognised under international human rights law, which mandates its application to all people from childhood, including children with disabilities. While international rules have been approved that have proposed structural changes in favour of education, it is unfortunately impossible to legislate for **attitudes**, which are the basic obstacle to the equitable treatment to which children with disabilities and others from vulnerable groups are entitled.

If, from an earlier age, we had the opportunity to grow up valuing and respecting diversity in everyday school life, we would not find it strange in our adult lives to encounter people with disabilities in the work and social spheres. Nonetheless, we deny these children the right to a fair education with equal opportunities, thus violating their right to an education and we contribute to keeping our societies, in some countries more than others, dominated by ignorance, prejudice, the social gap, the exclusion of vulnerable groups and a lack of tolerance and openness, caused by this violation of their right to an education in diversity.

The right to education of children with disabilities has been established through various sources and by fighting major battles. Based on these advances, some of them regulatory, the strength and momentum of social movements calling for the human rights of people with disabilities has been found. In 2006 the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was adopted and its Article 24 recognises inclusive education as the only education that can guarantee equality and equal opportunities to all children. Accordingly, it might be said that in the regulatory sphere, based on this convention, there was a watershed at an international level seeking to cement inclusive education. The questions that immediately arise are: How can inclusive education be implemented in the classroom? How can this sort of education be realised in practice? Will it really be possible to speak of it? What obstacles impede its implementation? What connection is there between inclusive education, specifically regarding children with disabilities, and transformative education? Is it a way of creating global citizens?

THE THREE EDUCATIONAL MODELS

When we speak of the right to an education of people with disabilities, even now there is confusion between the concepts and impact of "*special education*", "*integrative education*" and "*inclusive education*". To understand better these concepts of education, they should be put in context in light of the different paradigms of disability that have developed in various historical and social settings, giving rise to the "*exclusion*",

The INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL for GLOBAL and DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION RESEARCH
REVISTA INTERNACIONAL sobre INVESTIGACIÓN en EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL y para el DESARROLLO

**UN MODELO PARA LA EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL Y TRANSFORMADORA,
INCLUYENTE DE LA INFANCIA CON DISCAPACIDAD
A MODEL FOR GLOBAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION
INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

"*medical-rehabilitation*", "*social*" (or "*diversity*"[2]), and "*human rights*" models.[3] Each of these models of disability has had one or more corresponding types of educational approach to the rights of people with disabilities.

The special education model and its characteristics

The segregated model of education appeared first, dominated by "*special education*". In this model the pupils' illnesses, impairments or "personal limitations" are seen as the causes of their problems, and in themselves they prevent the child with a disability from adapting to th traditional model of education.

The medical diagnosis is overvalued, and is the start and end point for all of their learning, with the pupils being classified and labelled according to their disability. Specialised educational professionals are given responsibility for the education of people with disabilities, who are educated on special programmes.

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[2] Palacios, A., & Romañach, J., (2006), p. 99-179. In recent years the term "differently able" has been used instead of "disabled", following the criterion of the Independent Living Movement. [In Spanish,] Javier Romañach coined the term "functional diversity" in 2005. On similar lines, Palacios and Romañach propose the diversity model, that involves the meaningful move from the axis of *the ability* of the human being to the axis of *dignity*.

[3] To consider the treatment models that have existed over time for people with disabilities in more depth, see the work of Palacios, A. (2008), p. 37-101.

In order to contextualise briefly the models of education for people with disabilities that are the subject of this article, some features of the different models of disability will be identified to give a better understanding of the subject, as the concept of disability has changed over time. The "*exclusion*" model is one in which it is assumed that the causes of the disability have a religious basis and in which people with disabilities were seen as unnecessary for various reasons. This model can be subdivided into two sub-models. The first is the "*eugenic*" model that can be chronologically situated in classical antiquity. In this period, disability was seen as a burden. Children with disabilities were subjected to infanticide, just one example of a common practice against children with disabilities. Secondly, the "*marginalisation*" model appeared that can be located in the Middle Ages. Children with disabilities were marginalised, often leading to death as a consequence of the lack of interest in caring for them. In the "*medical-rehabilitation*" model, which Palacios calls "*rehabilitation*", the causes of the disability are not seen as religious in nature but rather scientific (deriving from people's individual limitations). People with disabilities were no longer seen as useless or unnecessary, but only insofar as they were *rehabilitated*. The "*social model*" considers that the causes of disability are not religious, or scientific, but that they are largely social. It recognises that people with disabilities can contribute to society to the same extent as people who do not have disabilities, respecting and valuing their differences. Drawing on the CRPD, the "*human rights model*" appeared, recognising that, in order to ensure the enforceability of their rights, people with disabilities have legal capacity with the same conditions as anyone else in all aspects of their lives, including education. This development of models has not been linear; there have been advances, intersections and sometimes setbacks, and they still coexist to some extent at present.

**UN MODELO PARA LA EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL Y TRANSFORMADORA,
INCLUYENTE DE LA INFANCIA CON DISCAPACIDAD
A MODEL FOR GLOBAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION
INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

Arguments against special education

According to the human rights model, "*Special education*" is unjustified for several reasons, among the most important, because it does not allow for the education of people with disabilities under fair conditions and with equal opportunities, but instead segregates, isolates and classifies them. The label of "*special*" contributes to discrimination and to maintaining existing prejudices. In schools, the responsibility of the teams in ordinary centres is limited as responsibility is delegated to the *specialists* and the *special education centres*. The segregation of *special pupils* is reinforced, maintaining rigid and inflexible educational systems. The preoccupation for maintaining "homogeneous" groups is consolidated. Disability discrimination does not occur because of people's biological inequalities but because of unequal relationships between people, with ideas about people with disabilities becoming so unequal that they can even be seen as "barely human".

Furthermore, special education is not justified because, as Valle and Connor note, it is a model that responds to an "educational myth" that appears because people are classified according to their "abilities"; in other words, when educational needs are decided in accordance with medical and scientific classifications, two types of pupil are created — "able" ones and "unable" or "disabled" ones — something which would, logically, require different types of education delivered by different types of teachers, working in parallel educational systems[4].

By excluding, segregating and labelling, this type of education does not in any way contribute to the training of global citizens, and much less does it motivate pupils or give them tools to transform the conditions of their own lives and those of their community, as it assumes that children and adolescents with disabilities "cannot" do this or "are unable" to do it.

In contrast, under the human rights model, the aim is to transform special education centres into true resource centres for supporting mainstream schooling and the inclusion of pupils with disabilities in ordinary educational centres, through a collaborative effort by everyone involved in the teaching-learning process (pupils, families and the teaching and administrative staff of the educational centres).

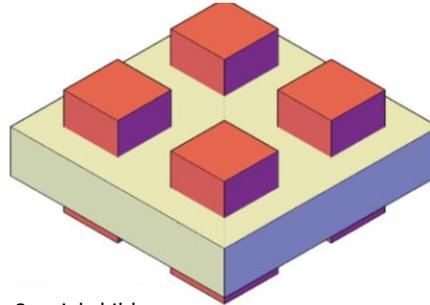[4] Valle, J.M. & Connor, D.J. (2011), p. 43

**UN MODELO PARA LA EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL Y TRANSFORMADORA,
INCLUYENTE DE LA INFANCIA CON DISCAPACIDAD**
**A MODEL FOR GLOBAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION
INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

"NORMAL" EDUCATION
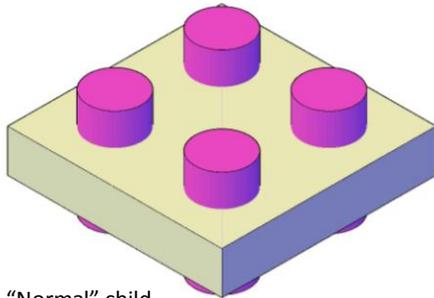
"Normal" child
Round pegs in round holes
"Normal" teachers
"Normal" schools

"SPECIAL" EDUCATION

Special child
Square pegs in square holes
Special teachers
Special schools

Drawing by Alonso Parreño, M.J. and Araoz Sánchez-Dopico, I. (2011), p. 22.

The integrative education model and its characteristics

Secondly, the "*integrative education model*" has the "*medical-rehabilitation model*" as its backdrop. Children with disabilities are expected to integrate into mainstream education, **on condition that** they can "function normally" and "adapt" to previously existing settings. The idea that there is "something wrong with them" and so they must be "made normal", generally through special classes, is maintained. The term "*special educational needs*" starts to be used, based on the Warnock Report, in order to reduce the negative effects of the classification[5]. Some authors such as Vlachou criticise the term "*special educational needs*" and especially how it is used.

In their opinion, this term merely perpetuates segregation ideologies[6]. Other authors such as Booth and Ainscow approve of the concept, although they propose "*barriers to learning and participation*" in an attempt to emphasise the social or conceptual perspective that should be adopted regarding this matter[7].

Arguments against integrative education

According to the human rights model of disability, integrative education also does not take place under fair conditions with equal opportunities; in the best case, pupils are "assimilated" or "physically integrated" when it is possible for them to "adapt" to mainstream schools. The aim of integration has, above all, focused on transforming *special education*, and not on modifying the cultural patterns and practices of

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[5] Fernández Azcorra, C., Pacheco Arjona, P., Tamayo Arjona, V. & Ávila Cisneros, L. (2011), p. 17 and 18.

[6] Vlachou, A. (1997), p. 36.

[7] Booth, T. and Ainscow, M. (2002).

The INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL for GLOBAL and DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION RESEARCH
REVISTA INTERNACIONAL sobre INVESTIGACIÓN en EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL y para el DESARROLLO

UN MODELO PARA LA EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL Y TRANSFORMADORA,
INCLUYENTE DE LA INFANCIA CON DISCAPACIDAD
A MODEL FOR GLOBAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION
INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

mainstream schools, to ensure they effectively respond to the diversity of the student body, eliminating the discriminatory behaviours that occur in them[8].

Like in special education, the "delegation of responsibilities" to specialists is maintained and educational integration maintains exclusion, under various arguments that perpetuate isolation. The constant classification of the pupils by their disability and their pigeonholing by medical and diagnostic classifications that limit them continue to be features of integrative education. For example, in the special education model, Sara, a pupil with Down's syndrome, would attend a "special" educational centre for people with disabilities, segregated from the ordinary educational centre. In the integrative model, she would be accepted by the mainstream educational centre, so long as it is established that she can adapt "normally" to the mainstream space. Consequently, *the pupil Sara is limited to being "the one with Down's syndrome"*, denying, or at least partly erasing the person, and emphasising her classification, belittling her abilities and perpetuating discrimination and segregation.

It could be said that *integrative education* was a major advance on *special education*, which directly excluded and segregated, however there is still some way for it to go to become *inclusive education*.
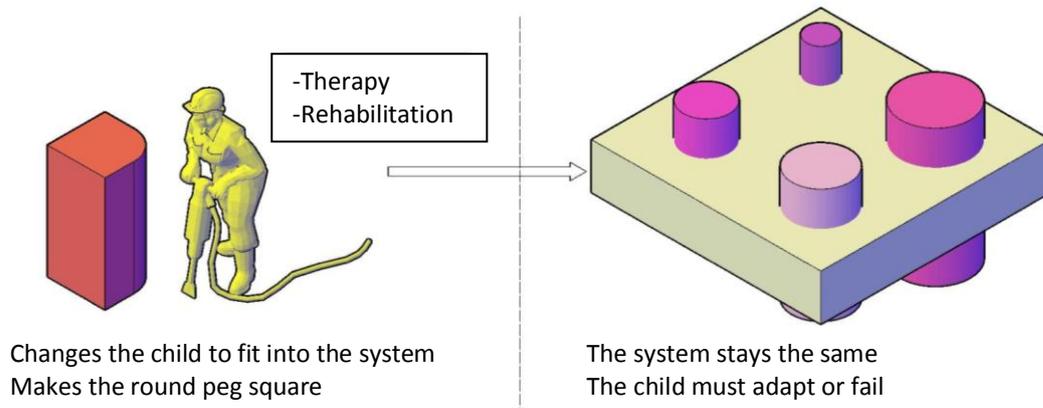
It is important to note that the terms *inclusion* and *integration* are frequently used as synonyms, even though their definitions and implications differ significantly. *Integration* means that only pupils who are close to the "norm" can benefit from mainstream education, while *inclusion* means that pupils with a disability will benefit academically and socially by being in a mainstream class, even when their objectives are different to those of the pupils who do not have disabilities.

It is hard to see integrative education as a transformative method, given that, as it does not recognise diversity and its benefits and advantages for society, this model requires everyone to "fit into" one system, a system seen as the only way for education and guarantee of personal success.

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[8] Blanco, G., R. (2006).

**UN MODELO PARA LA EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL Y TRANSFORMADORA,
INCLUYENTE DE LA INFANCIA CON DISCAPACIDAD
A MODEL FOR GLOBAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION
INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

INTEGRATIVE EDUCATION

-Therapy
-Rehabilitation

Changes the child to fit into the system
Makes the round peg square

The system stays the same
The child must adapt or fail

Drawing by Alonso Parreño, M.J. and Araoz Sánchez-Dopico, I. (2011), p. 22.

The inclusive education model and its characteristics

Thirdly and finally, the "*inclusive education model*" appears under the social paradigm of disability and in response to the two previous discriminatory focuses. This paradigm maintains that disabilities are socially constructed, in other words, they are the product of social, political, economic and cultural practices. Therefore, under this paradigm, the same possibilities for development are recognised for people with disabilities as for people who do not have disabilities, trying to recover their abilities instead of emphasising their disabilities. Inclusive education must be adapted to everyone's needs, with particular attention to those who are vulnerable (because of racial or ethnic diversity, social class, religion, gender or sexual orientation, among others). Accordingly, equality of opportunities is indispensable for making inclusion a reality in the educational sphere. This is not simply a matter of pupils accessing mainstream schools, but: under what conditions? Do they feel welcomed and valued? Do they participate actively? Are their different learning rates respected? Are their different needs and characteristics respected[9]? This should also be manifested in cultural and leisure activities, sports, outings, etc. Children with disabilities should be able to enjoy them under the same conditions as the other children, with whatever support measures need to be adopted.

Consequently, a tolerant and diverse atmosphere in the school setting is especially prominent among the essential characteristics of inclusive education. Cooperative learning between pupils is encouraged. Fears, prejudices and doubts regarding inclusion are openly confronted. All of the school's academic and administrative staff feel responsible for students with disabilities, valuing and considering the families, and so

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[9] Echeita, G., & Simón, C. (2006), p. 1462.

**UN MODELO PARA LA EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL Y TRANSFORMADORA,
INCLUYENTE DE LA INFANCIA CON DISCAPACIDAD
A MODEL FOR GLOBAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION
INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

team work becomes vital. The necessary support and adjustments are offered within the mainstream classroom to every pupil who requires them so that they can overcome barriers to learning, participation, communication and socialisation.

This describes what inclusive education involves, there being various definitions of it. Although we are reluctant to define inclusive education because definitions tend to pigeonhole and limit its scope, if we do dare to offer one, we believe that Ainscow, Booth and Dyson do a reasonably good job in the definition they provide when they state that it is "… a systematic process of educational improvement and innovation to try to promote in educational centres the presence of, learning by and participation by pupils in the school life of where they are schooled, with particular attention to the most vulnerable ones. To advance in this direction and in accordance with a social perspective on disadvantage, it is necessary to detect eliminate or minimise the different types of barriers that limit this process"[10]. Inclusive education is, therefore, a way of working towards "schools for all"[11].

Furthermore, as Echeita has observed, the core of inclusive education *is the challenge and the dilemma of diversity* that is connected to recognising that we live in a world where *the diversity of ways of being, feeling, learning, participating, loving or believing, among others, is the norm* and where the increasing and complex interdependence of a globalised world leads us to the pressing need to learn to value this diversity and to coexist with it respectfully, supportively and with dignity[12]. In later years this same scholar, in a co-authored work with other specialists working on this topic, described inclusive education as a *vortex*, a concept typical of fluid dynamics that defines it as a *turbulent movement*[13]. We could not agree more with this description, as we see it as an unfinished process undergoing constant improvement, debate and reflection, one that challenges, questions and transforms traditional education and proposes an educational revolution that, if it makes a special effort to take responsibility and seek social justice, can reach those who are in positions of vulnerability and marginalisation.

Therefore, his system requires any barriers to be identified so that they can be eliminated, and therefore it is essential to start by detecting and evaluating the types of barriers that exist, who they affect and the situations in which they appear. The most frequent are the architectural, communicational and attitudinal types that nullify friendly settings, communication and attitudes. Under inclusive education, the types of support and "reasonable adjustments" needed will be used to enable full participation by all pupils and the development of their capacities. In this way, inclusive education is an essential means for overcoming social exclusion.

[10] Ainscow, M., Booth, T. & Dyson, A. (2006).

[11] UNICEF, (n.d.). *Inclusive Education*.

[12] Echeita, G. (2008).

[13] Echeita, G., Simón, C., López M. & Urbina, C. (2014). To read more about the intrinsically dynamic nature of inclusion, see: Echeita, Simón, Verdugo, Sandoval, López, Calvo and González, 2009.

**UN MODELO PARA LA EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL Y TRANSFORMADORA,
INCLUYENTE DE LA INFANCIA CON DISCAPACIDAD**
**A MODEL FOR GLOBAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION
INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION
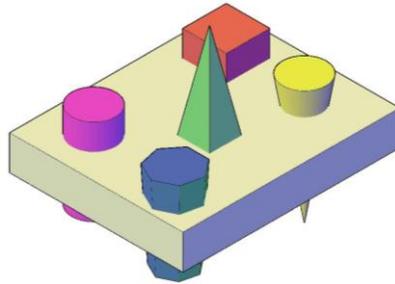
Flexible system:
The children are different
All of the children can learn
There are different abilities, ethnic groups, sizes,
ages, family settings and genders.
The system changes to adapt to the child

Drawing by Alonso Parreño, M.J. and Araoz Sánchez-Dopico, I. (2011), p. 22.

Reasons why inclusive education is justified

Politically we know that it is "correct" to talk about inclusion, but in reality it is not enough just to be together, or to adorn educational projects with "inclusion" without understanding it, because then we run the risk of making into more of a limitation, a burden, something that adorns but does not transform. In other words, it runs the risk of ceasing to be an indispensable characteristic of life in society, that benefits the community.

To understand inclusion, we need to understand that even when laws, reforms or regulations are approved that modify the educational system by favouring inclusive spaces, even when we have diverse common rooms, true inclusion does not come about as a result of these structural changes, but instead occurs when we change how we think about disability. Particularly, when agents in education (teachers, administrative staff, academics, families and pupils) change how we think about diversity in the classroom. We cannot legislate for attitudes and thought. This is why inclusive education can only be justified by the social model and human rights paradigm.

Accordingly, educational inclusion is justified by it being a question of human dignity, equality and social justice. When it is understood like this, we can see that even when inclusive education is generally regarded as an attribute of people with disabilities, it is really a model of education that goes beyond people's abilities or disabilities to recognise the diversity of all pupils (race or ethnicity, social class, religion, gender or sexual orientation, among others).

Furthermore, inclusion should not only be seen as an aspect of education, but also as a broad general movement that involves eliminating discrimination and stigmas to enable

**UN MODELO PARA LA EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL Y TRANSFORMADORA,
INCLUYENTE DE LA INFANCIA CON DISCAPACIDAD
A MODEL FOR GLOBAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION
INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

full participation by and the maximum development of people, especially people with disabilities.

Even when special education and integrative education systems, in their period, had good intentions that, for example, culminated in the recognition that all children must have access to education, we can now identify in these systems different involuntarily adverse consequences that require the adoption of an inclusive system. One of these consequences is the way in which special and integrative education give use labels such as "disorder", "dysfunction" and "deficit" to describe children from a purely pathological viewpoint. Furthermore, segregated environments lead to the teachers having a perception based on the deficits of the pupils. [14] Neither can we neglect that the current education systems see taking standardised exams as a prerequisite for obtaining a graduation diploma that allows for studies to be completed. Nonetheless, in the case of special and integrative education special certificates and diplomas are awarded that do not have the same value for continued study or for choosing a professional career. In contrast, inclusive education promotes policies and activities that contextualise disability as a social element; it gives a voice to the interests of people with disabilities; promotes equality of opportunities, fairness and social justice; and accepts the competences and not the abilities of the pupils.

Therefore, we must recognise that segregation in one space leads to segregation in many others. Specifically, segregation in educational spaces of children with disabilities, leads to their stigmatisation and the belief that, because of their condition, they should be somewhere else. So, the segregation they undergo in childhood is carried with them into adulthood, to work settings and even recreational activities.

For example, when they reach adulthood, people with disabilities, like anyone who does not have a disability, should have the option to have lead an independent life. However, as they have not been guaranteed inclusion and equality of opportunities since childhood and at all levels, specifically in the educational sphere, employment options for people with disabilities are, in the great majority of cases, non-existent or they tend to be jobs that are unqualified, semi-qualified, manual and with very low wages. Known as "the six Fs" (because of their initials)[15], these jobs are mainly restricted to the world of food (preparation and service in franchises); flowers (arranging and selling); clothing (folding and hanging clothes in shops); cleaning; supermarkets (filling shelves, finding products); and filing (for example, paperwork).[16]

Inclusion, acceptance of diversity, recognises that the educational model is not static, but instead changing and must adapt to the needs of the students. It also recognises the possibility that not all children with disabilities can be included all of the time, but instead fights so that schools accept and adopt the idea that pupils with disabilities

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[14] *Op. Cit.* 3, p. 31-32

[15] The tasks are: Food; Flowers; Folding; Filth; Fetching; and Filing.

[16] *Op. Cit.* 3, p. 34

**UN MODELO PARA LA EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL Y TRANSFORMADORA,
INCLUYENTE DE LA INFANCIA CON DISCAPACIDAD
A MODEL FOR GLOBAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION
INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

belong in the mainstream education system. Once inclusion has been accepted as a question of equality and social justice, the debate about whether children with disabilities belong in the mainstream educational system will cease to exist.

We should recognise that any social and educational change is accompanied by enormous challenges, and even when successful inclusion models have been implemented, there have been others that have turned out to be disastrous, causing adverse and apathetic reactions from teachers, administrators and parents. The principal reasons why educators do not believe in the inclusive model are the lack of training, resources and media for providing individualised support to pupils with disabilities in the mainstream classroom. For their part, parents fear that the learning their children will acquire in the special schools could be effected and reduced in mixed environments.[17] They also value the great effort that is involved in assigning public resources to providing quality schooling for children with disabilities, even if it is in segregated spaces.

Nonetheless, the transformation in the educational system towards inclusion challenges these fears and concerns and moves forward with the recognition of diversity to confront the social injustices of the "ability" culture. As is stated above, inclusion is a system of beliefs and a change in attitudes in which diversity is seen as a resource that benefits everyone in the school and not just people with disabilities; it is a model that, from an early age, guarantees inclusion and participation in all aspects of life.

Inclusive schools are generally justified because they help to develop an empathic, diverse and supportive community, in which disability is seen as a human rights issue, and because they represent a favourable framework for ensuring equality of opportunities and participation by everyone. Inclusive education is the essential route to overcome the social exclusion that results from certain prejudices, attitudes and responses to differences deriving from socio-economic, cultural, physical, gender or sexual orientation or deriving from disabilities, among others[18].

Justification for inclusive education as a transformative means that creates global citizens

Inclusive education is intrinsically linked to global citizenship education. Both have emancipatory facets. Transformative education involves an action for change[19], supported in the pedagogy of creativity and criticality and opposed to neutrality, which it initiates in the classrooms themselves. Transformative education is implemented in the search for "more just classrooms" through the inclusion of and participation by children with disabilities as members of the mainstream student body.

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[17] *Op. Cit. 3,* p. 31

[18] Ainscow, M. & Miles, S. (2008), p.17-44.

[19] See: Jara, O. at: http://www.educaciontransformadoraglobal.org

**UN MODELO PARA LA EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL Y TRANSFORMADORA,
INCLUYENTE DE LA INFANCIA CON DISCAPACIDAD**
**A MODEL FOR GLOBAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION
INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

The global citizenship education model cannot separate the type of school it wants from the type of society we wish to attain. Accordingly, there is an effort to create transformative schools whose models facilitate the development of educational practices and processes that combine academic rigour (education as content), emotional sensitivity (emotional education) and social commitment to change. Furthermore, global education not only involves imparting knowledge, but it also encourages an understanding of the environment surrounding us and the development of skills in accordance with the capacities and interests of each person, and it promotes positive values and attitudes of respect for and recognition of diversity as well as commitment to social justice and equality.[20] These elements make it possible to transcend a purely instrumental vision of education and strengthen the function of education as a whole: the fulfilment of the person who must learn to be and to change[21].

Inclusive education is a sort of antidote for exclusion and discrimination, as we firmly believe that the only way to learn to value difference is by changing outlook from childhood. Therefore, solidarity should be encouraged in practice, recalling what Edgar Morin called "symbiosophia", *the wisdom to know how to live in unity, educating to live*. As Morin said, "we do not understand the other, because we do not know what he does, or how he does it, nor what he needs to do it. Insofar as each individual understands the other, the question of responsibility will be a priority for mankind, which will be reflected in its actions, in respect, in harmony"[22]. In a way, Morin refers to inclusion with the conviction that the best way of attaining harmonious coexistence is to live, from childhood, in diverse settings and welcoming groups that need more protection.

We can at present state without any doubt that both models of education — inclusive education and transformative education — are based on human rights. This is clearly reflected in the CRPD, which not only identifies the inclusive model as the main guarantee of the right to an education but also recognises the full development of human potential and the sense of dignity as an aim of education; respect for rights, freedoms and diversity; the full development of the personality, talents and creativity; and full participation in society by people[23].

Accordingly, the intrinsic relationship between the inclusive model and global and transformative education is clear as they not only share a philosophical basis and objectives, but they also understand that an inclusive society is required to transform and create global citizens, one where all people have a full and participatory life that contributes to attaining social justice. To achieve this — in all areas, not just the classroom — a transformative education is required that changes social norms, myths,

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[20] Oxfam (2006). p. 5
[21] De Paz, D. (2011). pp. 150 – 178.
[22] Morin, E. & UNESCO (1999). p. 72 *et seq*.
[23] CRPD, Article 24 "Education".

The INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL for GLOBAL and DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION RESEARCH
REVISTA INTERNACIONAL sobre INVESTIGACIÓN en EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL y para el DESARROLLO

**UN MODELO PARA LA EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL Y TRANSFORMADORA,
INCLUYENTE DE LA INFANCIA CON DISCAPACIDAD
A MODEL FOR GLOBAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION
INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

beliefs, stigmas and existing prejudices about people with disabilities, which are based on fear and disinformation and affect the community as a whole.

Empowering children with disabilities

Transformative education and inclusive education are realised by empowering children with disabilities and their families in the learning-teaching process. This is indispensable for them to achieve the maximum development of their personality and participate actively in society, and *the burden of proving*[24] "their difficulties" so that they are entitled to be included must stop falling on their shoulders and those of their families.

This is why inclusive education should place pupils at the centre of education: as the most important figures in their activities. The voices of people with disabilities have traditionally been silenced. They are not taken into account in the decisions and processes that affect their lives. It is vital to change this situation from an early age, especially in the school setting, as exclusion in the educational setting frequently continues throughout people's lives into other spheres such as work, health care systems and independent living.

It is important for children with disabilities to participate in the processes and to be involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of teaching and learning activities. In this way, students are empowered, and they develop self-confidence and confidence in their surroundings, giving them the tools to recognise injustices. The objective of empowerment in schools it to guide everyone's thinking towards diversity[25].

What path should we follow?

International human rights law has already shown the path education should take: towards inclusive education. In the wake of the approval of the CRPD, "inclusion" and "education" have become inseparable terms[26], and states must work in this direction to guarantee all pupils the right to an education[27].

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[24] *Op. Cit. 12*, p. 30.

[25] Unicef (2014).

[26] Campoy Cervera, I. (2015).

[27] Similarly, the General Comment on the Right to inclusive Education was very recently approved, by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of the United Nations, and which, as its name indicates, legally recognises the necessary conditions to which inclusive education should be circumscribed. General Comment No. 4 (2016).

**UN MODELO PARA LA EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL Y TRANSFORMADORA,
INCLUYENTE DE LA INFANCIA CON DISCAPACIDAD
A MODEL FOR GLOBAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION
INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

Therefore, at an international level, legislation promoting inclusive education has already been approved. Children with disabilities have already been moved from segregated spaces to mainstream classrooms. There are even examples in some school centres of two teachers working together (a mainstream teacher and a support teacher for children with disabilities) at the same time[28], or a range of adjustments and accessibility measures are implemented. However, inclusive education is not just implemented through structural changes. Educational inclusion begins when we propose a change in how we conceive diversity in schools, not as a threat or as a problem but as an asset derived from the inherent nature of human diversity. A basic understanding of inclusion as educational equality is required. An understanding that the human right to education is for everyone and that this means **everyone without exceptions**. In the words of Calderón Almendros, it would be desirable "to make schools into spaces for hope where differences are accompanied, languages are brought back and resilient alliances are created that give the institution educational and social meaning"[29].

Reflecting on inclusion in terms of civil rights, the following question can be posed: does any teacher have the right to exclude a child because of their disability? After all, nobody can be excluded from mainstream education based on race, social class, gender, religion, linguistic heritage, culture or sexual orientation, so why have children with disabilities been excluded based on various arguments such as the severity of their disabilities, their lack of normality or their different learning rates, to cite some pretexts that have been used to justify this? The decision to establish parallel special education systems, created with the best intentions, has led to a "separate but unequal" education for children with disabilities[30].

Accordingly, from the perspective of human rights inclusive education is the only style of education that is transformative, that is intended to empower pupils, celebrate diversity and fight against discrimination. It is the only one able to create global citizens, concerned with transforming their lives and the lives of their families and communities, specifically those groups in a position of vulnerability, marginalisation or exclusion. We must overcome the reality, the limited attendance and retention of children with disabilities in mainstream schools in order to achieve inclusive and diverse societies. This is a utopian ideal that has been achieved in some parts of the world, and which those of us in the rest of the world hope to achieve. The road to achieving it involves deconstructing the segregationist schemata that we all have firmly implanted in our heads.

Traditional educational systems that teach homogeneous content, pursuing equal results and in which everyone simultaneously learns identical content at the end of the

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[28] In New York's public schools in particular, this is known as *Collaborative Team Teaching (CTT)* and this is the term used to describe an inclusive classroom in which the mainstream teacher and the special education teacher deliver the class. *Op. Cit.* 3, p. 73.

[29] Calderón Almendros, I. (2015).

[30] Valle & Connor (2011).

**UN MODELO PARA LA EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL Y TRANSFORMADORA,
INCLUYENTE DE LA INFANCIA CON DISCAPACIDAD**
**A MODEL FOR GLOBAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION
INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

educational cycles disregard the inherent diversity of people and, therefore, excludes from the system specific groups of people, which include children with disabilities. This unacceptable situation goes against the right to an education. Accordingly, it is proposed that traditional evaluations be restructured as well as the standardised exams that should be reconsidered under the perspective of diversity — specifically disability — redesigning them with a more sensitive focus that takes into account the considerations of the families, making them less competitive and better at valuing the diversity of the pupils.

Consequently, what education of and for children wants and urgently requires at present, is solidarity and empathy, a lot of solidarity and empathy, more solidarity and empathy. Not the imposition of a homogeneous vision, a uniform one that labels people, classifies them, excludes them, that without reflecting turns its back on anything that is different instead of recognising that the most rewarding aspect of our humanity is to be found in our inherent diversity. In short, school should be inclusive and should educate for global citizenship, it should go beyond the idea of the "standard pupil" to focus truly on each pupil in accordance with their own characteristics in order to guarantee educational equality. It should be based on ideals of global justice that motivate pupils to question their situation, step away from competitiveness and move closer to cooperation, thus creating an inclusive education with room for everyone⊙.

**UN MODELO PARA LA EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL Y TRANSFORMADORA,
INCLUYENTE DE LA INFANCIA CON DISCAPACIDAD
A MODEL FOR GLOBAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION
INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

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The INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL for GLOBAL and DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION RESEARCH
REVISTA INTERNACIONAL sobre INVESTIGACIÓN en EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL y para el DESARROLLO

**UN MODELO PARA LA EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL Y TRANSFORMADORA,
INCLUYENTE DE LA INFANCIA CON DISCAPACIDAD**
**A MODEL FOR GLOBAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION
INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

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**UN MODELO PARA LA EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL Y TRANSFORMADORA,
INCLUYENTE DE LA INFANCIA CON DISCAPACIDAD**
A MODEL FOR GLOBAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION
INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES