

## **Didactics and practice of individual attention to deaf schoolchildren with educational support needs**

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### **ABSTRACTS**

The international qualitative research between the University of Oriente, Cuba and the Learn+ Foundation of the city of Cartagena, Colombia is presented. Its objective is to socialize theoretical guidelines and actions that have been conceived for deaf schoolchildren with educational support needs in Cuba and Colombia, which promote the development of inclusive classrooms. The research is a socio-educational study from the qualitative paradigm and of descriptive type of non-experimental character. The actions that have been conceived for deaf schoolchildren with educational support needs in the inclusive classroom for the attention to diversity are shown theoretically.

**Keywords:** Didactics; Deaf schoolchildren; Educational support needs; Inclusion.

Recibido: 15/03/2022

Aceptado: 10/07/2022

## **Introduction**

The inclusive education approach is based on the premise that all students, regardless of their particular condition, can learn as long as their educational environment offers the necessary conditions for access and provides meaningful learning experiences for all. It means that all schoolchildren in a given place can study together, only their education requires a diversity of educational offerings.

The tradition of inclusive education starts from the postulates approved in Salamanca in 1994; in this regard Blanco, R. and Duk, C. (2019) refer that:

Although Salamanca had an emphasis on special educational needs (SEN), it promoted, at the same time, a significant change in the conceptions, policies and educational practices for the education of the diversity of students, especially for those in situations of greater exclusion and inequality, constituting a fundamental impulse to advance towards the development of inclusive schools (p. 2).

Hence, current educational methodology refers mainly to individualized teaching, the usefulness of which is not disputed by any educational expert, since it allows detecting some barriers that interfere significantly in the process of educational inclusion of students with specific educational support needs. For this reason it is necessary to do everything possible to achieve not only the equalization of opportunities, but also of performance that will bring these students closer to their peers.

Educational inclusion and attention to diversity are a political commitment worldwide because today, inequalities have not been substantially changed, exclusion and school failure continue to be repeated, therefore it is urgent to change pedagogical, methodological and didactic practices so that there is a true inclusive education as one of the objectives for sustainable development, a quality education for all students and as established by the Ministry of National Education of Colombia (2017):

Inclusive education refers to all those abilities to recognize, favor, promote and value diversity, with special attention to situations of vulnerability, whose actions entail respect for difference, living with others and guaranteeing the equal participation of all members of the community (p. 17).

Likewise, in Cuba, quality education is a right for all. The national education system has an inclusive character, from its political platform and social projection, offers educational attention to each child, adolescent, youth and adult in accordance with their needs, potential and possibilities to achieve maximum personal development and social inclusion.

Inclusive education is conceived as the recognition of the right of all to a quality education, which favors the inclusion of all to society as full individuals in conditions of being able to enjoy the possibilities it offers and contribute to its improvement, regardless of the particularities and characteristics that condition the variabilities in development (Borges Rodríguez & Orosco Delgado, 2014).

Thus, flexibility and curricular adaptations allow providing different options for each and every student, both for those with low abilities, as well as for those who are in regularity and also for those with high abilities, that is, applying didactic individualization strategies, centered on the person.

For such purposes, the present article is considered useful, whose objective is to socialize theoretical guidelines and actions that have been conceived for schoolchildren with educational support needs in Cuba and Colombia, based on Didactics and specifically individualized learning in the inclusive classroom, for the attention to diversity, with the intention of efficiently guiding and controlling the individual educational attention offered to them and promoting the desired progress, based on a better organization, systematicity and effectiveness of the educational process.

## **Development**

Scholars of the subject related to inclusive education point out its origins as follows:

In the 1990s the term inclusion began to be used as a concept, a philosophy and a practice that goes beyond school integration and that starts from the presence of students with special educational needs in regular schools but with the ultimate goal of their full incorporation (inclusion) in the society in which they live so that this concept extends beyond the school for which a transformation of the educational system and society as a whole is necessary. (Chávez Zaldivar & Huepp Ramos, 2014, pp. 79-80)

Within the process of inclusive education, various solutions have been sought to improve the teaching and learning process from the didactic point of view, which will be analyzed below.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a widely recognized approach in the field of inclusive education, integrating a set of principles that provide teachers and other

professionals with a structure for creating adaptive learning environments and developing the educational process to meet the diverse needs of all learners.

It recognizes that each learner learns in a unique way and involves developing flexible ways of learning: creating a classroom environment of engagement; maintaining high expectations for all learners while allowing for different ways of meeting those expectations; empowering teachers to think differently about their teaching-learning process; and focusing on educational outcomes for all, including those with disabilities.

Curricula should be designed, designed and implemented to meet and adjust to the needs of each learner, and provide appropriate educational responses accordingly.

As another alternative, Individual Program Plans are now being promoted, which are defined as a plan of action on the assistance needed to live as desired, which identifies its goals, services and supports, so that the person can become more independent and participate in the community, a written agreement and contract that is written in a way that can be understood (Disability Right, 2016).

In Colombia, an Individualized Plan of Reasonable Adjustments (PIAR) has been introduced from the decree 1421 of August 29, 2019, National Inclusion Law, it is designed by the classroom teacher to promote their development, learning and participation with peers of the same age and in the same learning environment without discrimination or exclusion and that allows the elimination of existing barriers in the educational environment to allow the functionality of their daily lives and not only as a principle of access to education (Correa, 2021).

In Cuba, the National Action Plan for the care of children, adolescents and their families (PANIAF), approved by the Cuban State for the period (2015-2020) based on the principles of the best interests of the child, equality, non-discrimination and guarantee of rights, as well as participation, has as one of its main objectives to ensure the promotion, prevention and quality of care for children and adolescents with disabilities. This plan articulates with the goals of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in Cuba and the 2030 agenda.

These reasons make it essential that the teacher, as a teacher and guide of school tasks, should pay due attention to the educational needs of his students in accordance with their abilities, aptitudes, potential and personal limitations. At the same time, their educational action will have to be adapted from its organizational moments to the practical execution in the classrooms, to the individual particularities and rhythm of work or activity of each student.

Precisely, the main advantage of individualized teaching lies in the fact that the personal and active learning situation it recommends is not only not opposed to the collective learning task, specific to the traditional class, but on the contrary, it stimulates and perfects its own structure and dynamism by considering it as the harmonious gathering of individualities that contribute their personal experiences to common situations: work in groups and teams.

It can be affirmed then, that individualized teaching is individual and collective at the same time, that it takes into account the uniqueness of each student in the class as a whole and attends to the personal learning pace of each one according to his or her characteristics and cognitive educational needs. Bradley (2004) argues that the person is the center of the process: his or her rights, dreams and desires are the focus from which supports are built.

Person-centered planning (PCP) focuses on the person's capabilities, the things that are important to them, and the supports they need. It involves rethinking and reshaping the role of professionals and recognizing that they will cease to be the "experts" and become participants in the problem-solving process. It is based on continuous listening, continuous learning and continuous action. As people's lives change, so do their circumstances and aspirations. Thus PCP is an ongoing process.

In the education of students with disabilities, the principle of individual and differentiated attention during the teaching-learning process is of vital importance, taking into account the zone of current and proximal development of each student. Individualization is based on the teacher's mastery of the essence of the zone of proximal development and its structure, considering that instruction "always starts from what has not yet matured in the child" (Vigotsky, 1985, p. 333).

In recognizing this principle (Guirado 2009) rightly pointed out:

"From the previous approach it can be inferred that it is the space in which learning takes place, under the direction of the teacher and in close connection with other schoolchildren and with the system of educational influences of the environment; learning that takes place in a given sociocultural context or free movement zone (FMZ), in the environment closest to the child, but that depends on individual characteristics, depth and structuring of the developmental affectation and the sensitive period in which the child is, so the teaching-learning objective must be selected and located in the promoted action zone (PAZ), that is, focused within the free movement zone, which allows predicting what can be learned tomorrow" (p. 50). 50).

Hence, in the hands of the regular school teacher, this knowledge is one of the most fruitful didactic procedures that guarantee the successful learning of the student.

The present study is developed under the Qualitative Research paradigm; its method is descriptive-hermeneutic with a critical analysis approach.

It is a qualitative research, since it is basically based on an exercise of interpretation and theoretical construction from the experiences lived by the teachers of the republics of Cuba and Colombia, this form of research allows reconstructing or directing questions and hypotheses from data collected according to the research instruments and their corresponding analysis.

In this sense, the systematization of experiences in the inclusive classroom is proposed as a research that enables social processes, orients the practice towards the construction of experiences in which the role of all participants is taken into account, so as to integrate a social conception that values the roles and contributions of the members such as experts, teachers and students.

The steps of the research correspond in one part to Jara's (1994) proposal for the implementation of the systematization of experiences in five stages and the authors add two more steps that correspond to the inquiry of the theory on the topic in question and contribution to the theory that will be given in a systematic way until concluding the study and the socialization of the experience in an oral and written form.

From this perspective, the research collective presents a vision of the first moment.

The population for the present study is made up of students with physical and mental disabilities from the republics of Colombia and Cuba. The sample is centered in the Colombian Central and Caribbean departments and the Provincial Directorate of Education, the Special Education Department of the University of Oriente and the Pedagogical Observatory in the "Cuba-Vietnam Friendship" school in the province of Santiago de Cuba. The research instruments are direct observation, survey, semi-structured interview and a focus group.

The pedagogical response was established to achieve the improvement of the educational practice in the integral attention to schoolchildren with disabilities within any school group.

The most effective didactic actions are:

- Careful observation of each student in different activities, since not all students are in the same situation and not all work in the same way, identifying in each student not only

their weaknesses, but also their strengths and potentialities, in order to take them into account in the search for educational responses that promote their development. In doing so, it was kept in mind that all educational action must be based on the principles of equity and respect for students.

- Attention to the diversity of the group as a strength: The groups were organized in teams or work subgroups, in pairs, trios, favoring interaction among the students whenever the number of students allowed it, directing a cooperative learning in the different subjects of study, given the individual characteristics of the students (possibilities and willingness to help and receive help).
- Use of more active methodologies to teach them all: cards, worksheets and other media were created with exercises of different degrees of complexity (levels of assistance) stimulating the participation of all students in the class, taking into account their performance, motivations and interests. Assignments were rationally distributed in the classroom, according to the potentialities and needs of the students, promoting the participation of the students with the realization of real activities with significant content that encourage thinking and collaboration, so that all students were the protagonists of their own learning and that each one contributed the best they had.
- Structuring teaching, learning and evaluation in a different way, designing from the planning of the class, to whom each of the questions and tasks of the class are addressed. The students were given the necessary time to think, offering the levels of help they required to answer adequately, as well as stimulating the need to ask for help, through problematic situations, contradictions, etc. The evaluation was applied focusing not only on the quantitative qualification but also on an evaluation that allows learning from the error.
- Demonstration of the value of sponsorship among students: In order for students to feel like protagonists in the classroom, it is necessary to let them foster creativity, motivation and initiative, and proposing activities to work on the contents of the subjects is a valuable idea. The tutoring is organized with all the students in the class and in this way group dynamics are promoted, which allow students to get to know each other better, to interact in a positive way, to be motivated to work as a team so that they make the right decisions among all of them.

- Establishment of possible and measurable goals in the classroom: In this sense, it is important to design attainable objectives, but which imply a certain challenge and effort on the part of the student.
- Application of the Theory of Multiple Intelligences: This proposal made it possible to value the strengths of all students and to consider that everyone has something to contribute. Some students learn best by reading, others by manipulating, others by drawing. The contents of the subjects were presented using different media so that everyone had the opportunity to understand them in the way that was easiest for them.
- Careful attention to communication with the students: It was proposed to always plan a space to talk with the students about various topics, and share their impressions, concerns and opinions, getting to know them better and getting to know them better too. It was sought that all students feel that they are part of the common project of the class, as something of vital importance, maintaining good communication with them. In this way it was proven that the changes made in the group work dynamics had positive results.
- Involvement of families as promotion and verification of results: Family members as they know their children very well discover how they work more effectively and became a very valuable resource for teachers working in an inclusive classroom. By establishing a relationship of trust with them, keeping them informed of everything that happens inside the classroom with their children, and asking for their commitment to achieve the objectives of the teaching-learning process, through concrete tasks according to their potentialities, constituted an effective way to stimulate parents for their child's progress.

To test the effectiveness of these proposals, two subjects were chosen that require systematization and creativity in the organization of individual and differentiated attention, which are part of the school curriculum: Spanish Language and Mathematics, because they are essential subjects, given the volume of information and skills they provide and because they are the basis for the rest of the subjects in the school curriculum. They are considered the most significant and easy to organize by the individual attention system.

Based on the research experience of the authors and the teachers involved in the study, it was applied as a variant:



- The grouping of students according to their development in subgroups, i.e., those who have not acquired skills to start learning reading, writing and mathematical notions, those who are already able to start, and those who can understand with little help from the teacher. The teacher initially devotes himself equally to all students, taking care to be proportional to each one. For this purpose, the teacher relies on frontal activities for the whole group and subsequently designates individual or subgroup tasks that generally consist of leaving personal indications in the seats according to the possibilities of the content and the curricular needs of each student. To this end, procedures were used to ensure that the student:
- Read directions for exercises or assignments from the workbook or workbook, so that the teacher can see that the student understands the given command (read, write, and compute).
  - Exercise reading, writing or arithmetic.
  - Be prepared to overcome obstacles that he/she encounters, either because we make him/her read or ask questions in front of us, or because he/she comes to ask for help. This is important because the teacher's ability has to be in the student not to acquire the feeling that his questions are counterproductive to him; in addition, it gives him confidence and security.
  - Reading in front of the teacher, because reading aloud is much less important than silent reading, although at some point in the development of the class they were able to read for others as well as possible.

Correction will be done to achieve efficient readers supported by questions about the content, oral or written abstracts and the help of family members in this task, among others.

Although textbooks, notebooks and worksheets, and notebooks constitute didactic materials and resources, others, such as individualized teaching cards, were used as part of the individualized attention of the students.

The use of cards facilitates individual activity in learning. Sometimes they have been conceived as a substitute for school books or textbooks and sometimes as a complement to them. The cards, depending on their type, can fulfill different functions in the hands of the expert teacher. The following is an explanation of how each type of worksheet can be used.

- Directive cards. These indicate to the student the work process to be followed and the necessary means to perform the activity: books, workbooks, cards, dictionary, manipulation material, etc.
- Information cards: They constitute the development of the contents. The student finds in them the required knowledge and information, vocabulary, exercises, problems, situations, etc., as a starting point for learning. Depending on whether they are written in greater or lesser length, they can replace the textbook and can even send the student to consult the topics or pages of a specific book.
- Activity sheets: Contains all the rules for the practical completion of assignments. The exercises are graded or sequenced according to their difficulty to facilitate accommodation and progression according to the pace of each student. They represent the application of the acquired knowledge; above all they suppose a reinforcement of the information and the acquisition of habits and cultural attitudes.
- Control cards: They facilitate the continuous or periodic verification of the results that the students are reaching according to the objectives to be achieved. They are applied at the end of the phases of the learning process, generally at the end of a certain number of cards or the development of each study unit.
- Recovery and extension worksheets: The first ones contain the minimum information and suggest activities and exercises sequenced according to degrees of less difficulty. They are intended for students who, due to their characteristics, did not reach the objectives during the normal development of the program. The extension cards have the same characteristics, but in the opposite direction, that is to say, for those students who have satisfactorily achieved the objectives and are in conditions to expand their knowledge and to carry out activities of greater complexity around the program already passed.

It is considered that the principles of individualized and person-centered didactic planning involve discovering and using practical strategies that facilitate support for individuals, using teaching experience and professional knowledge as an essential feature of the teacher's socio-educational action. The above reaffirms what Cruz (2018) pointed out when he states that it is necessary to establish didactic and methodological strategies to ensure the interaction and participation of all students in the inclusive classroom.

The pedagogical and didactic planning should be a first way, in the possibility of solving the educational problems presented by students in condition of disability in the inclusive classroom. Thus, individualized planning, centered on the person, is the beginning of the necessary development for students with disabilities and this must continue to be nurtured, given the scope, achievements, circumstances and aspirations that are changing throughout the student's life.

Currently, in the face of an education understood as adaptation to the diversity of the student body, it is valid what Muñoz Morán (2019) states "Inclusive education implies a radical transformation of the educational paradigms, since it states that it proposes to move from an approach based on homogeneity to a plural and heterogeneous vision of education" (p. 1).

The above is congruent with what is considered to be the starting point for the deployment of individualized educational work with a corrective-compensatory and stimulating nature for the learning and development of students, the identification of the needs and potential of these, in which the elements or individualization strategies that are applicable in group contexts aimed at achieving a fuller participation and inclusion are incorporated. In this sense, the contributions of researchers such as Guirado Rivero & González Piedrafita (2013), Chávez Zaldivar & Huepp Ramos (2014), Arnaiz Sánchez, Escarbajal Frutos, Alcaraz García, & de Haro Rodríguez (2021) who reaffirm the study of the inclusion process as a current educational fact are important.

They agree with Manghi, Saavedra, & Bascuñan (2018) that in the case of schoolchildren with specific educational support needs, curricular adaptations should be applied that allow individualizing and adjusting teaching to the needs, abilities, interests and motivations that are different in each schoolchild and his or her environment.

From this point of view, the success of the school will depend on the concern of permanently attending to the individuality of each student, his or her needs, the essence of each situation.

## **Conclusions**

This didactic development proposal, born from the reflection, experience and theorization of the authors in international joint research, is a way to find possible solutions for students with disabilities in the regular classroom.

The creation of this proposal represents a didactic guide for teachers of inclusive classrooms for the achievement of an individualized pedagogical response and the achievement of comprehensive educational attention to students with special educational needs associated or not to disability, taking into account the educational identities that characterize Cuba and Colombia.